

The Murder of Harry Truman

by Dr. Matthew McGrath

On the night of 15 January 1953, President Harry S Truman delivered his farewell speech to the nation; his presidency was to conclude five days later, when Dwight D. Eisenhower would take the oath as the nation's 34th president. After concluding his address, Truman stepped out into the wintry air for a casual stroll around the White House grounds. From the darkness a shot rang out, and Truman fell dead.

It is possible you were not aware of these events, but don't let that worry you. After all, none of this actually happened. In real life, Harry Truman died in December 1974 at the grand old age of 90. That won't stop us from investigating this imaginary crime.

The Secret Service began an immediate search of the crime scene. In a garbage can on a nearby street corner they discovered an old duffel bag. Inside there were a number of items that might be clues: a torn piece of paper on which was written "Good luck, my friends! I know we can do it"; a few foreign coins, a copy of *Variety* (the entertainment industry's newspaper); a baggage claim check from the Washington D.C. bus station; a Kansas City Monarchs baseball cap; a gallery pass to the Supreme Court; and a CIO membership book with the members' name redacted.

These clues are helpful but much work remains. With so many suspects, the Secret Service cannot possibly investigate them all. That's where you come in. Each of you is an FBI detective assigned to three potential suspects. Your task?

FIRST: You must write up a **one page background check "dossier"** on each suspect assigned to you by the FBI Inspector, which includes a brief summary of that persons' important activities during the Truman administration AND your analysis of their potential as a suspect. In other words, how were they related to Truman? Did they have any motives for killing him? How likely is it they did it? These dossier reports are due to FBI Inspector **NO LATER THAN MONDAY, MARCH 11th**

A few helpful hints as you begin your investigation:

-In order to put the people/events of the time in context, you should start by reading syllabus assignments in Foner and Amsco (probably in that order)- you will need this general info before the case can be solved.

-search the indices of books on the AP shelf for detail on your suspects

-Use the standard internet search engines but don't rely on them exclusively. You must use at least 1 non-internet sources (books, mags, scholarly journals) to research your suspects, **NOT INCLUDING FONER**. Compile all your sources for the background check on a separate typed page alphabetically to be submitted with the out-paper.

-Try to incorporate some direct quotes and period-specific terminology into your background checks (laws, ideas, terms associated with your suspect)

SECOND: FBI COMMITTEE and INTERROGATIONS:

They day after dossiers have been submitted, the investigative committee will meet on **TUESDAY, MARCH 12th (Red) and WED, MARCH 13th (white)** to hear reports on the suspects. Each of you will be expected to talk for a minute or two, giving your analysis of each suspects potential as a Presidential assassin. Don't read verbatim from the dossier but give the committee an overview of each suspect. These brief talks should be conversational yet informative. Other investigators are encouraged to ask questions of the presenting detectives. Since many of these suspects knew each other, each of you should find references to other suspects while researching your own. Perhaps there was a conspiracy? After the investigative committee has looked over each suspect, it must decide jointly on 6-7 suspects who seem most likely to have committed the crime. **These suspects will be interviewed in person by the detectives ON THE LAST DAY OF THE GAME** (whoever did the write-up on these 6-7 suspects will "play" them during the interrogation on FRIDAY). During this interrogation, each suspect can be asked any questions at all for 3 minutes by the FBI. ALL FBI AGENTS NOT "playing" suspects must prepare questions the night before!

THIRD: INVESTIGATOR REPORTS (Out-Papers):

Each detective will type a 2-3 page report (out-paper) for the FBI Inspector identifying who you believe killed Truman. These reports should be based on your own background checks, the initial detective reports, the clues in the duffel bag, the interviews with the suspects, your textbook reading and your research. In the reports, indicate **WHY** you believe the suspect(s) you have chosen must have committed the crime and **WHO** was involved (a lone wolf or a conspiracy?), and **HOW** they pulled it off. You may also include (but are not required) to include **WHY** you believe other suspect(s) did not commit the crime.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO INCLUDE ALL SUSPECTS NOR ALL THE DUFFEL BAG CLUES IN YOUR REPORT!

Out-Paper Note: Don't be afraid to get creative- not all suspects have direct connections to Truman but still may have done it! Certainly, an explanation of a few of the clues should be included in your final report. It is NOT necessary, however, to incorporate ALL of the clues into your report. It is probable that you will selectively choose to ignore some of the clues that are not useful to your murder theory. Other clues may have been planted as red herrings by the guilty party! Since many of these suspects knew each other, each of you should find references to other suspects while researching your own.

Once the chief has read all the reports, he will announce whodunit based on the logic of the theories that the detectives have provided.

Turn the page to see whom you will investigate...

The Usual Suspects

Tector: Mao Tse-Tsung
A. Philip Randolph

Katz: John L. Lewis
Richard Nixon

Baxter: Henry Wallace
Adam Clayton Powell

Fisher: Syngman Rhee
Owen Lattimore

Ling: J. Robert Oppenheimer
George Kennan

Sullivan: George C. Marshall
Jackie Robinson

O'Neill: Alger Hiss
Dwight Eisenhower

Rahman: Kim Il Sung
Robert Taft

Snow: Joseph Stalin
Strom Thurmond

Lacy: Ho Chi Minh
Dean Acheson

Lamb: Julius & Ethel Rosenberg
Chiang Kai-Shek

Cai: "Rosie the Riveter"
Sen. Joseph McCarthy

Zhao: Dalton Trumbo
John Service

Rahman: Douglas MacArthur
William J. Levitt

*****If in your detective work you come across someone not on this list whom you suspect of participating in the crime, you may include special insights on that person in your final report.

The Usual Suspects

A. Isaac: Mao Tse-Tsung
A. Philip Randolph

C. Smith: John L. Lewis
Richard Nixon

Lueck: Henry Wallace
Adam Clayton Powell

E Issac: Syngman Rhee
Owen Lattimore

Clouse: J. Robert Oppenheimer
George Kennan

Rothbaum: George C. Marshall
Jackie Robinson

Divens: Alger Hiss
Dwight Eisenhower

Misurec: John Wayne
Henry Luce

Datillo: Kim Il Sung
Robert Taft

Anderson: Joseph Stalin
Strom Thurmond

Patel: Ho Chi Minh
Dean Acheson

G. Hillman: Julius & Ethel Rosenberg
Chiang Kai-Shek

Ehrlich: "Rosie the Riveter"
Sen. Joseph McCarthy

J. Hillman: Dalton Trumbo
William J. Levitt

Untama: Douglas MacArthur
John Service

*****If in your detective work you come across someone not on this list whom you suspect of participating in the crime, you may include special insights on that person in your final report.