

MURDER AT MR. GRIM'S MANSION

ESL SPEAKING ACTIVITY

Mystery at Mr. Grim's Mansion

Class time: 60-90 minutes

No. of students: 1-11 * (*You can create more characters, but this increases the time it takes for everyone to interview each other. For larger classes, divide them into two separate groups)

Level: Generally, this activity was written for **intermediate** to **advanced** ESL levels for speaking practice. It could also be used with non-ESL students.

Preparation

- Cut one character card for each student.
- Print one map of the house and one interview sheet for each student
- Cut out 16 small room cards. Put the 8 p.m. cards in one envelope (or pile), and the 8:30 p.m. cards in another.

Basic Idea Behind the Story

The *twist* in this story is that it is not a murder mystery; rather, it is just a mystery. The students are told that Mr. Grim has died and they must figure out how he died. Naturally, they assume he has been killed. Later, in the end, they discover that he'd had a heart attack after coming across a cobra in the house.

The **first part** of the activity has students question each other in order to get background character information, possible weapons, and motives.

The **second part** requires students to ask each other what rooms they were in (a map is provided) before and after the murder.

The story contains elements of the game Clue (or Cluedo).

In this file, you will find:

- ☐ 11 Character cards (assign one character to each student)
- ☐ A map of the house (give one to each student)
- ☐ An interview worksheet (give one to each student)

Notes

- ☐ Pre-read the character cards and modify as necessary. Some notes regarding this:

- Two of the characters, Wanda and Takeshi, are meant to be lovers; remove this if you feel it's too silly.
- The gardener Randy has a bottle of vodka which isn't essential to the plot.
- The **necessary characters** are Wally (the cobra-bringer), Dr. Patel (the doctor who diagnoses Mr. Grim's heart condition), and Todd Grim (the son who was meant to bring the cobra). The rest are optional. Some pairs (e.g. the lovers Wanda Grim and Takeshi Fujimoto) go together.

Activity Execution

1) **Assign Roles:** Distribute character cards + props (wigs, hats, etc.) in the hall. (Cards on pgs. 6-8)

2) **Set the Scene:** Announce the following:

"You've been staying at Mr. Grim's large mansion for the weekend. Many other guests are there too. It is now Saturday at 9 p.m. Suddenly, the Butler, Barton, calls all of you into the living room."

3) **Announce the Death**

(Put on fake mustache, pretending to be the butler)

"I am the butler. Mr. Grim is dead, and I believe one of you killed him!

No one is leaving here until we find out who it was. You are all suspects. If you can't find out *how* he died, then I'll call the police and **you are all** going to jail! You all knew him. Interview each other and find out each other's names, jobs, relationship with Mr. Grim, and if you brought anything to the party."

4) **Students Interview Each Other (20-40 mins)**

Guests **interview** each other to get character information. Give each student an interview sheet on page 9 so they can write down information about the characters. They only need to fill in the **first three columns**. The other two columns about time are for later.

Each character has the answers pertaining to the first three columns on

their character cards. While the interviewing is happening, monitor Wally, Dr. Patel, and Todd Grim to ensure they are sharing the key information for the plot.

5) **Distribute a map** to each guest (on pg. 10)

6) **Announcement** by the butler:

"I found the body 8:15. This was after dinner.

Find out where everyone was *before* and *after* this time."

Before they start interviewing each other again, you'll need to distribute room cards to certain characters, not others. Have the students look at their **character cards**. They will either describe what they were doing at 8:00 and 8:30 p.m. or if they say "take room card" for one (or both) of the times. If it says "take a card," get them to draw a card for that time from the envelope containing the room cards (found on pg. 11).

7) **More Interviewing** (20-30 mins)

Tell the guests to find out where everyone was *before* and *after* 8:15, the time the body was found. Note that this is *not* practice for past progressive/continuous tense. Tell them to write the answers in the **final two columns** of the interview sheet.

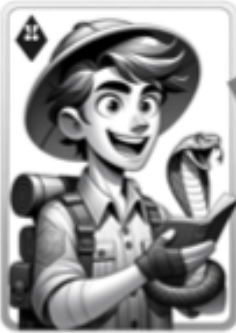
8) **Final announcement** by the butler:

"The body was found in **the study**. There was no blood anywhere or on the body.

Please think about it. That is all the information I have. Discuss what you think happened in groups. If you think you know what happened, please come see me."

(Looking at the map, they'll be able to see that no one was in the study during the night. However, they should be able to notice that Wally found his snake in the adjoining room at 8:30. And the fact that there was no blood on

Character Cards



Name: Wally

1) You are a good friend of Mr. Grim's son, Todd Grim. You often travel together. You are at the mansion because you want to invite Mr. Grim's son to go hunting with you next month in Africa.

2) **Items:** cobra- you brought it to give to Todd as a present. You have had the snake's poison removed so it is safe. You also have your hunting knife in your bag.

8:00 pm: [take 8:00 room card] the snake, so you were looking for the snake in the **billiard room**

8:30 pm: [take 8:30 room card] you found your snake in the **library**.



Name: Dr. Foster

1) You are Mr. Grim's doctor. You came to the party because you are very worried about his health. Mr. Grim has a very bad heart. You were worried that he might have a heart attack.

2) **Items:** You have medicine in your bag.

8:00 pm: [take 8:00 room card]

8:30 pm: [take 8:30 room card]



Name: Todd Grim

1) You are Mr. Grim's son. You are a traveler and have traveled the world. You recently just came back from a trip to Africa. You are at the mansion because you live there. Your friend named Wally is also visiting the mansion.

2) **Items:** wasabi, samurai sword

8:00 pm: [take 8:00 room card]

8:30 pm: [take 8:30 room card]



Name: Randy

1) You are Mr. Grim's gardener. You are at the mansion because you work and live there. You hate Mr. Grim because he's cheap. He's been paying you the same amount of money since 1980.

2) **Items:** a chainsaw, bottle of vodka

8:00 pm: [take 8:00 room card]

8:30 pm: [take 8:30 room card]



Name: Norman Franklin

1) You are Mr. Grim's business partner. Secretly, you hate him. You wish he were dead so you could control the company.

2) **Items:** your computer and knife for opening envelopes.

8:00 pm: you are still at work. You didn't arrive at the party until 8:30 pm.

8:30 pm: [take 8:30 room card]



Name: Meredith Grim

1) You are Mr. Grim's 17-year-old daughter. You are rich. You hate your dad because he doesn't let you do what you want to do. You wanted to go to Paris this summer, but he told you that you had to stay home and study.

2) **Items:** makeup, lipstick, tickets to Taylor Swift concert

8:00 pm: [take 8:00 room card]

8:30 pm: [take 8:30 room card]



Name: Takeshi Fujimoto

1) You are Mr. and Mrs. Grim's personal fitness trainer. You are in very good shape. You have a black belt in karate. You came to the mansion because Mrs. Grim's wife (Wanda) invited you. Secretly, you have been in a romantic relationship with Wanda for a year, but Mr. Grim doesn't know.

2) **Items:** energy drink, jump rope, comb

8:00 pm: [take 8:00 room card]

8:30 pm: in the **basement** (with Wanda)



Name: Wanda Grim

1) You are Mr. Grim's wife. You are rich, but you are not happy with Mr. Grim. He's boring, and you're bored. Secretly, you are in a romantic relationship with your fitness trainer, Takeshi Fujimoto. You like the excitement of having a secret lover.

2) **Items:** mobile phone, a book about yoga

8:00 pm: [take 8:00 room card]

8:30 pm: in the **basement** (with Takeshi)



Name: Mrs. Agatha Royce

1) You are Mr. Grim's neighbor. You have been living beside the Grim family for 20 years. You hate them, especially the daughter who always plays loud music at night. You wish they would leave the town so you could live peacefully.

2) **Items:** peanuts, tissues, yarn and needles for knitting

8:00 pm: [take 8:00 room card]

8:30 pm: [take 8:30 room card]



Name: Mr. Badger

You were invited to the party, but you heard music so you walked in off the street. You overheard about how rich Mr. Grim is. You are amazed at all the expensive stuff in his house. You don't have much money. You are starting to wonder if Mr. Grim could notice if some of his items went missing....

2) **Items:** chicken wing, deer

8:00 pm: in **the kitchen** looking at the wine collection

8:30 pm: [take 8:30 room card]



Name: Kelly Dolorosa

1) You have been Mr. Grim's long-time friend since high school. You've been a quite worried recently about some financial issues (you lost all your money!). Tonight, you were planning to discuss your money problems with Mr. Grim. Maybe he might have a job available for you.

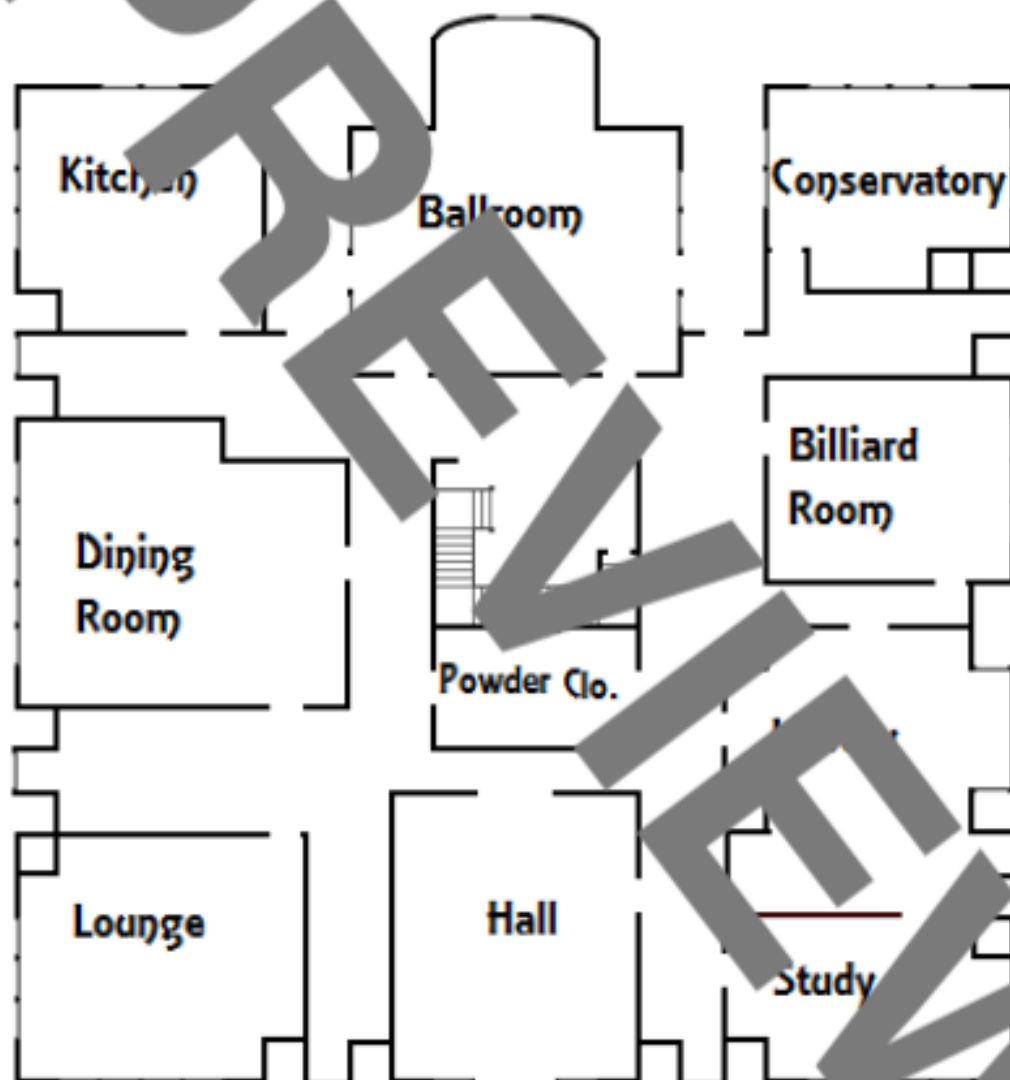
2) **Items:** old photograph (from the high school days), a letter from your bank

8:00 pm: [take 8:00 room card]

8:30 pm: [take 8:30 room card]

Name	Identity	Reason for Visit	Item(s)	8:00 pm	8:30 pm

Map of Mr. Grim's Mansion



8:00 P.M. Room Cards

8:00 lounge	8:00 library	8:00 power clo	8:00 dining room	8:00 ballroom	8:00 basement	8:00 conservatory
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8:30 P.M. Room Cards

8:30 lounge	8:30 billiard room	8:30 hall	8:30 power clo	8:30 dining room	8:30 ballroom	8:30 kitchen	8:30 conservatory
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