

Homecoming Homicide: A Murder Mystery

The victim: Bianca Santiago, age 16, library volunteer & Homecoming Queen

Found: 3rd floor auditorium, Central Library

Time of death: Approximately 6:30 PM, Monday October 13

Suspects: Erin, librarian (auditorium)
Emily, student worker (children's room)
Katie, student worker (Art/Music)
Sherryl, library employee (circulation)
Murphy, student worker (circulation)

Your job tonight is to discover who killed Bianca Santiago, this year's homecoming queen at Wichita's Eastern Hills Girls Academy! You may interview the witnesses to this horrible deed, and review the official statements taken by the police who responded to the scene.

The Coroner, who inspects deaths, decided there was foul play involved because it appears Bianca was struck in the back of her head. But who would hurt Bianca? Were there jealous classmates who wanted her crown? Was she standing in anyone's way?

You have a chance to investigate before the FBI arrives at 7:15 PM to clear the crime scene! Remember, use your powers of persuasion when you question witnesses... they're suspects in a crime investigation and may not want to share their information directly!

Official Statements Taken by Police

STATEMENT BY THE CORONER.

The body of one Bianca Santiago was discovered by an employee of the library, at 9 AM on Tuesday October 14. The body was located behind a large stage set up for the Eastern Hills Girls Academy homecoming dance the night of Monday, Oct. 13. The cause of death appears to be a blow to the back of her head, which may or may not involve foul play. The murder weapon did not appear to be present at the scene. From the position of the body and other physical evidence, it appears that the victim was knocked unconscious, and then bled freely from her wounds before expiring at approximately 6:30 pm, Monday October 13 2014.

STATEMENT BY SHERRYL.

“Bianca sure was a surprise, winning Homecoming Queen like she did. I didn’t know that she was so popular with the kids at Eastern Hills, but we liked her okay. She had an after-school job here at the library, you know. But I know Murphy best, he works with me down here. I still can’t believe that she was killed. It’s a shock to the system, you know? And the dance – that night was so chaotic, I couldn’t keep track of what was going on Monday. It was a whirlwind.”

STATEMENT BY KATIE.

“What is happening? Bianca didn’t deserve this! Sure, she could be sort of grumpy at work. But I don’t think anyone would hurt her. I like to get to know all my classmates, and although she was sort of stand-offish I think she really wanted to have more friends. I saw her sitting alone in the cafeteria a lot, so I liked to go sit with her. She was pretty cool once you got to know her. I still just can’t believe this.”

STATEMENT BY EMILY.

“I knew having the dance at the library was a mistake. We have a lot to do here, and besides – although I was on the committee, it wasn’t like I was going to have time to attend. I had to work. That’s my bad luck, I guess. Well, there’s other ways to have fun. I was helping out in the Children’s Room all night and didn’t see anything – not the dance, not the crowning, nothing. So good luck with your investigation, because I can’t help you.”

STATEMENT BY MURPHY.

“Yeah, I knew Bianca. There are a lot of students who work at the library, but we don’t work together. And I’m not into stuff like Homecoming, so nobody asked me to the dance. I just work here. No, I wasn’t here on Monday night. And I didn’t go to the dance. I don’t have anything to do with Bianca or anyone on the 3rd floor. The only thing Sherryl has me do up there is make copies for her. That’s it.”

STATEMENT BY ERIN.

“Well, there was a lot of strange things happening that night. I don’t know who would have killed Bianca, but I know for sure someone was planning a big fancy after-party for Homecoming! And you know that’s not allowed. I had enough on my hands dealing with a laptop someone found in the dumpster out back. I hate the paperwork dealing with found property. These darn teenagers, causing trouble. Then ending up dead! I’m stumped – sure hope you know how to solve this.”

Team Members: _____

HOW TO SOLVE THIS CRIME.

Inspect the crime scene, gather clues, and interview witnesses. Ask the witnesses more about the events they describe in their statements to the police, about what they saw versus what the coroner described in her statement, and inspect the crime scene closely. Question the witnesses to see if their statements to the police add up. Also, ask the witnesses if they have any further clues—you might get a secret hint from them! Keep track of clues on this sheet so you don't forget what you discover. **YOU ONLY HAVE AN HOUR, SO GO!**

Witness: **Erin**

Witness: **Sherryl**

Witness: **Emily**

Witness: **Katie**

Witness: **Murphy**

READY TO SOLVE THE CRIME?

Who killed Bianca Santiago? What was the murder weapon? What happened?

Investigation Tips!

- Stay together as a team, and appoint one person to record all your ideas and clues on your team sheet.
- Ask a librarian for help if you can't find something, or come back to the children's desk.
- Be sure you ask each suspect for *all* their information—they might be reluctant to share!
- Be very polite and wait your turn to ask a library staff member for information. If they are helping a customer, you must wait until they are finished.
- Do not remove any evidence, no matter where you found it.
- Take the time to sit down and logically think through your clues and evidence... grab a table as a team and see if you can't reason it out together!

Scripts for actors:

SHERRYL.

Tell investigators that you are very shocked about this murder. You know a lot of the girls from Eastern Hills and that they are never going to get over this. Add something about how you didn't think Bianca would win – she's not the most popular girl you know. You know that Murphy is a hard worker because his family really needs the money. He is really into computers and he uses the ones at the library a lot. If investigators press you: allow them to see Murphy's work file, but don't let them take it from you.

KATIE.

Repeat the idea that Bianca would be more popular if she just let people get to know her. You're really sad that you didn't win Homecoming Queen, and you did cry a little on Monday night. Bianca saw you and you feel bad that you showed her your emotions. You don't know why Bianca hung out at the library all the time, but that you saw her in the copy room a lot, especially in recent days. If pressed, share the items from the police file with investigators. They can each take one swab and one set of fingerprints. You know the police left the file here, but it couldn't hurt to share evidence with such helpful people, right?

EMILY.

If asked directly, you were NOT planning to throw an after-party at your house. It's strictly forbidden by Eastern Hills Girls Academy, and besides... you were on the Homecoming committee. That would look bad. You've been looking for Murphy tonight – have investigators seen him? Ask about him a couple of times, try to keep it casual. If investigators press you, have them look for an author you've been just dying to read: **TEEN MCGARRY KATIE.** You think that if Murphy read those books, he'd understand you a lot better.

MURPHY.

Murphy isn't at work tonight. Sherryl & Erin will point this out in their interviews, but only if asked directly.

ERIN.

You're mad because everyone was first distracted from their work by this dance, and now they're distracted by the Santiago girl's murder. Emily has been very spacey lately, but don't be fooled – it's not because she's on the homecoming committee, it's because she only took this job to get closer to Murphy! You are always having to chase her away from Circulation because Emily just loves to hang out down there. But you see her game and you are not fooled! If pressed by investigators, allow them to look through Emily's file, but don't let them take it from you.

EVERYBODY:

If asked, **Katie** is the most popular girl in school. She deserves it because she's nice to everyone and is a really genuine person.

If asked, **Bianca** was quite rich. She volunteered at the library because she didn't need the money.

What happened? The Crime:

Murphy Blake, Katie Smith, and Emily Harrison all had after-school jobs at the library. Bianca Santiago was a volunteer in the Children's Department - she didn't need the money. Unlike Bianca, Murphy really needed his job at the library because his family didn't have lots of money. Katie kept her job because she really liked being around people and loved being helpful. Emily took her job because she really liked Murphy and wanted to be around him more often.

Although Bianca was rich, she sure wasn't popular. One day, Murphy caught Bianca in the library's copy room making photocopies of the ballots for the Homecoming Court vote. She was forging votes for herself at the library during her after-school job, and had plans to try and drop them in the ballot boxes at school to help her win (which would definitely help make her more popular). Murphy saw an opportunity and agreed to assist Bianca - for a price! One of the prizes for the Homecoming Queen was a new, high-powered laptop, and if Murphy could just get a computer it would mean he could quit his job at the library and use his time to design video games. So Murphy blackmailed Bianca: as long as he got the computer after she won, he'd help her rig the election.

But Bianca had an attack of conscience after the Homecoming Dance. She saw how sad Katie was that she lost the election, and felt terrible that she'd rigged the vote rather than just trying to win on her own. She asked Murphy to meet her behind the stage in the auditorium towards the end of the dance and told him she planned to give it all back. Murphy pled with her not to tell, as it meant he'd be in trouble, too. But Bianca insisted, and when she turned to go confess Murphy hit her over the head with the laptop. He just wanted to knock her out so he'd have time to make a new plan, but he panicked when he saw all the blood! Murphy grabbed the laptop and tried to get away, but thought better of hauling it around so he hastily wiped it down and threw it in the library dumpster. But Bianca never woke up, and so Murphy was guilty of voter fraud.. AND murder!

Props Needed:

- Décor for auditorium, inc. **balloons, streamers, & a large sign/banner** reading “Happy Homecoming Eastern Hills Girls Academy!” Can be tatty & worn – balloons half-full, streamers torn, sign crooked.
- Tape off crime scene towards the back of the room. Should include **bloody “Queen” sash**, some sort of **crown or tiara**, a **receipt** for BIANCA’s expensive shoes, and other neutral purse detritus. (use <http://www.redoreceipt.com> for the shoes; be sure to make the shoes expensive & date it PRIOR to the homecoming vote to show BIANCA’s confidence in her win. Example included in file.) Also, a **party invitation** with invitees’ names written on the back... BIANCA’s name should be listed then crossed out. (The party invite should be near Bianca’s body but NOT in her purse.) The party invitation should have an address (EMILY’S) listed on the invite, but no host’s name. You also need a **ballot box** with counted and tallied ballots staged near the crime scene. Ensure the ballots themselves are a distinct color of copy paper; use torn or crooked ballot samples for the notes in MURPHY’s folder that SHERRYL’s character will supply for clues.
- Create the Police Lab against another wall, away from crime scene. Supply a **box with a black light** in it (labeled “Luminol detector”) for detecting trace amounts of “blood”, and the page of **fingerprints** from the library workers.
- **SHERRYL**’s character needs a personal **folder** for MURPHY. (From his employee locker.) MURPHY’s folder has a printout of info about college gaming courses printed on the back of a forged **ballot** (how he found out about Bianca’s plan; she left a forged ballot in the copy machine), his **timesheet** (that clearly shows he was at work the night of the murder) and a sad **budget** that shows his wages at work aren’t helping him reach his goals.
- **ERIN** has EMILY’s personal folder. Inside are a bunch of **notes** about the homecoming committee, **lists** of things for her to do (among which was to pick up the computer from Best Buy). Prominent should be a flyer advertising how to run for Homecoming Court: information about a \$1000 cash prize to the Queen, who also gets her own laptop from Best Buy. Emily’s time sheet, like Murphy’s, should have her address listed... this links her to the illegal party invitation!
- **KATIE** has a police evidence folder that they dropped during their continuing investigation. (Tell Katie to keep the folder, but give her several sets of evidence to keep inside it – each team can take the “evidence” with them.) Inside is a document listing suspect fingerprints (they can match them at the Police Lab), and a cotton swab dipped in detergent solution kept in an evidence baggie – do NOT color the detergent! (liquid Tide works fine.) They can take the swab to the Police Lab to discover that the laptop was covered in Bianca’s blood (detergent under black light fluoresces like you’ve used Luminol to find traces of blood).



OFFICIAL EVIDENCE
Case # 98723465
SUSPECTED HOMICIDE

Victim: Santiago, Bianca

Evidence type: Residue from laptop recovered outside library, in dumpster.

Notes: Laptop was Homecoming Queen prize. Belonged to victim. Appeared unused, but with unusual staining as if it had been wiped down. Sprayed surface with Luminol, took swabs of the surface and logged into evidence to await laboratory testing.



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Example of shoe receipt:

MANOLO-A-GOGO
DESIGNER SHOES
200 N. Main St.
WICHITA, KANSAS 67202
123-456-7890

R E C E I P T

PRINTED: 09/30/14 17:10

1 2 9 9 9
CLERK: LAUNCE DE VERONA

LOUBOUTIN AUDREY SANDALS 395.00

TOTAL ORDERED: 1

SUB TOTAL 395.00
SALES TAX 16.98
PURCHASE TOTAL 411.98

PAID IN CASH

Hint: cut vertically up the right and left sides of the receipt to leave plenty of room at the header & footer. Insert into a receipt printer and tear off to leave "authentic" receipt marks on your evidence! Add a handwritten note if you wish - the clerk obviously knows Bianca well, and was holding the shoes for her for a special occasion.

Sample time sheet for Murphy & Emily's work folders:

Wichita Public Library

223 S. Main

TIME SHEET

Employee Name: Murphy Ryan, 882 Royal Ln. Title: Clerk – student worker

Department: Circulation Supervisor: Sherryl

Date	Start Time	End Time	Regular Hrs.	Overtime Hrs.	Total Hrs.
Weds 10/8					
Thurs 10/9					
Fri 10/10					
Sat 10/11					
Sun 10/12					
Mon 10/13					
Tues 10/14					
Weekly Totals					

Employee signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor signature: _____ Date: _____

Print this on the back of a homecoming queen ballot:

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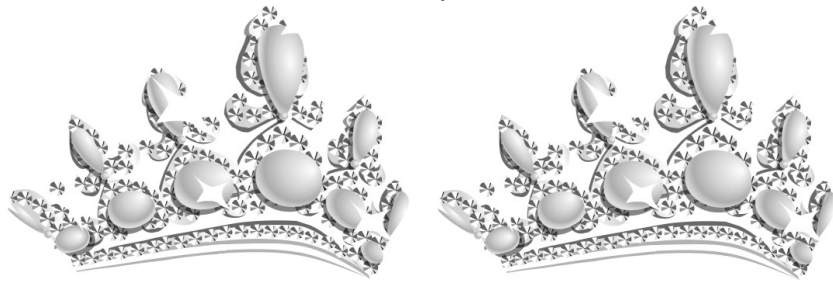
All Programs info for program duration, tuition, fees, and other costs, median debt, federal salary data, alumni success, and other important info.

Homecoming Homicide: a Teen Murder Mystery by Erin Downey Howerton

Sample homecoming queen flyer:

Homecoming 2014!

Eastern Hills Girls Academy



Voting for Homecoming Queen will be held from September 30 to October 8. The Queen will represent the school for an entire year, and receive prizes including \$1000 cash and a state-of-the-art laptop!

The winner will be announced October 9, and the homecoming dance is at the Central Library, 233 S. Main, 5 PM Monday October 13.

Ballots will be accepted in the cafeteria, the commons, and at the Head of School's office during school hours. Vote today!

Sample police file of fingerprints:



Fingerprints found on recovered laptop:

OFFICIAL EVIDENCE

Case # 98723465

SUSPECTED HOMICIDE

Santiago, Bianca



Sample police file of fingerprints:



Fingerprints taken from witnesses:

OFFICIAL EVIDENCE

Case # 98723465

SUSPECTED HOMICIDE

Santiago, Bianca



Murphy



Bianca



Erin



Sherryl



Emily



Katie