

**It's No
Mystery:
Clue Into
Reading!**

SRC 2006

**Cheap Ideas for Library
Decorations**

Or

How to Lend an Air of Mystery to Your Library Without Alluding to Murder, Blood, or Weapons

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Magnifying Glasses

Using a piece of thin cardboard, cut out the shape of a magnifying glass, including a hole in the center for your “glass.” Glue a piece of plastic wrap to each side of the cardboard, surrounding the opening. Cut two pieces of black paper to correspond with the cardboard shape, just slightly larger. Cover both sides of the cardboard with the black paper. Attach it to wall with tape, or punch a hole in the handle and hang it from above.

Top Secret Envelope

Use two rectangular pieces of brown paper, approximately 8 ½” x 11”, and cut one about three inches shorter than the other on a long edge. Glue the papers together along three of the edges to form an envelope. Fold down the three inch long flap to create a seal. Cut a 1”- 2” black circle from construction paper for the sealing button. Attach it to the outside of the shorter piece of paper just below the fold of the longer piece with a brad or staple. Attach a 6” piece of yarn to the center of the inside of the flap to create the closure for the envelope. Wrap the yarn around the “button” and your envelope is sealed. Mark the envelope “Top Secret” with a black marker and display. You can also substitute recycled brown packing paper for this project.

It Was a Dark and Stormy Night

Paint, draw, or make a collage of a large mural-size creepy scene, perhaps a windy night on a desolate hill. You can use any image or illustration you like as inspiration. Then make a spooky house shape for the kids to color. Decorate the creepy hill with the spooky houses. You can also

use this as a writing prompt in your writing center, asking kids to add a creepy story to the side of the hanging.

Who Stole the Cookie from the Cookie Jar?

For your younger patrons, paint, draw, or make a collage of a giant cookie jar. Use different patterns of cookies to show them disappearing from inside the jar, or let the kids decorate cookies to replace the missing ones!

Black and Yellow Fabric Design: Dress your Desk like Matthew Lesko

From your local discount store, purchase inexpensive black and yellow fabric. Use the black as a base, and cut out various yellow question marks. Securely glue the question marks onto the black fabric and use it to wrap the base of your information desk. (You can attach the fabric to a laminated desk using the strong, wide tape used to repair books, or sticky-backed Velcro.) This will create a dramatic and immediate transformation into mystery. Felt is very easy to use for this project, but if it is too expensive, other fabric can be substituted.

Giant Jigsaw Puzzle Pieces

Draw freehand or use an old-fashioned Opaque projector to blow up individual pieces of a commercial jigsaw puzzle. (Also available on www.jigzone.com) Cut pieces out of different colors of construction paper or poster board and tape them around the branch. The puzzle pieces can also serve as the backing for children's mystery Book Reviews collected over the summer.

Commercial Hazard Tapes

From your Facilities Department or a local Industrial Supply store (Grainger's, for example), obtain yellow plastic "CAUTION" tape or red plastic "DANGER – DO NOT ENTER" tape. Use as appropriate, given your library customers and community.

Black on White Silhouettes

What you need:

- 2 pieces of white paper (at least 8 ½ x 11")
- Piece of black paper
- Pencil
- Lamp or flashlight
- Scissors

- Double stick tape

How to Make One:

1. Tape the piece of white paper to the wall.
2. Have a child stand sideways in front of the paper.
3. Have someone hold the lamp or flashlight in front of the child where there is a clear shadow.
4. Trace around the shadow of the child's profile.
5. Cut out the silhouette.
6. Trace the silhouette onto the black paper and cut out.
7. Mount the black silhouette on the full sheet of white paper with glue or double stick tape.
8. Post in your Children's Area with a sign asking, "Who Was Here?"

Make silly silhouettes for prominent children's characters: Arthur, Dora, Thomas the Tank Engine! Use your collection, and your imagination....

String of Questions: Banner

- 1.) Open a blank Microsoft Word document. Through FILE/PAGE SETUP, set all four margins to .3 inches.
- 2.) Play with fonts and sizes in Word and print 15-20 different and distinctive question marks in BOLD type, each as large as possible on a separate sheet of paper. (You might want to play with ITALIC type, as well.) Depending on how they appear on the page, you may have to use a photocopier later to blow up and center each one on the page. Use white or colored paper, or mix them up! The paper you use could even be purchased with a border, or later cut around in spikes or waves or puffs. The top edge, however, should remain straight.
- 3.) Arrange the different question marks in a row so that they are visually balanced: put heavy, dark question marks between light, airy ones so that overall, each question mark is distinct and contrasts well with its neighbors. Flip them face down, making sure you have all the "tops" going the same way.
- 4.) Leaving about 3 feet of string, begin taping your banner, using flat-finished transparent tape. You can leave ½" to 1" of string between the sheets, or align the sheets tightly side by side. (In this case, after all the pages are taped together, you will have to snip the tape up to the string so that the banner will hang in a nice arc.) You might want to reinforce the ends of your banner with a second piece of tape.

Here are 2 different places to apply the tape. In both cases, cover the entire 8 ½” with tape, since this will avoid the sheet of paper later “bagging” off the string at the top.

- a. Gently stretch the string consistently ¼” or ½” below the top edge.
 - b. Gently stretch the string perfectly along the top edge of the paper and apply half the tape to the paper and half the tape to the clean table beneath. When all the question marks are attached to the string, carefully peel the pages up and carefully smooth the tape over the top edge of the “good” side.
- 5.) Snip the string off about 3 feet beyond the last question mark. Your banner will work most effectively hung flat against a wall, or dangling where it will be seen only from one direction.

Note: This could also be effective as six short banners, repeating throughout the library:

WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? WHY? HOW?

“Who Goes There?” Footprint Banner

What you need:

- Long roll of paper—either plain white shelf paper or art paper used to cover school bulletin boards
(Note: If your paper has a shiny side, apply paint to this side! The paint will offset the “curl” factor of the paper.)
- Washable tempera paint in various colors
- Various types and sizes of paired shoes: hiking boots, running shoes, flip flops, stiletto heels, etc. (Flea markets and garage sales are great sources)
- Reverse templates of animal tracks: deer, cat, dog, bird, etc. (See last page of this packet for sample tracks. Trace the footprint onto tops of margarine containers and cut away the track; you will daub the paint through the footprint onto the paper.)
- Kitchen sponges (can be cut in half) or foam brushes
- Newspapers and paper plates

How to Make One:

1. Roll the banner paper out onto an expanse of floor; anchor the ends if it is curling.
2. Use a different paper plate and sponge for each color of paint and for each pair of shoes.
3. Pour a little paint onto a paper plate. Using a sponge, dab paint evenly on the sole of one shoe. A dry sponge will quickly absorb enough paint to become flexible.

4. Make a test print on some newspaper so that you can best gauge the amount of paint and the pressure needed to create a “clean” print.
5. Repaint the sole for each footprint and walk your shoes across the banner one by one, approximating the distance between steps according to the size of the shoe (or the stride of the animal).
6. Have some prints walk off the paper by scooting some newspaper under the edge as you apply the wet shoe.

Use your own footprints! If you’re not ticklish and have a buddy willing to paint the soles of your feet, take the slow walk across your banner.

Use the animal tracks to create a “critter-only” banner, or mix the animal tracks in with the shoe prints for an extra mysterious effect.

Single footprints can be cut out and attached to any vertical surface.

Beware of creating footprints on carpets. Adhesive will stain, and library customers can trip as the footprints begin to peel up.

Use the banners to wrap your service desks, or post them in your Children’s Area with a sign asking, **Who Goes There?**

Here’s a list of additional MYSTERIOUS ideas you might use to brainstorm some great decorating ideas of your own!

Black crepe paper and balloons

Children’s detectives:

Nate the Great, Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys, Boxcar Children, Encyclopedia Brown, etc.

FBI badges

Fingerprints

Flashlights

Footprints

History/Archaeology Mysteries:

Mummies and Ice Mummies, Egyptian and South American Pyramids, Petroglyphs, Anasazi/Mesa Verde, Pompeii, Kennewick Man, Hieroglyphs, Minotaur, King Arthur and the Holy Grail, etc.

Mazes

Mirror image writing

Morse Code

Mug shots of favorite book characters

Old fashioned candle holders with flickering, melting candles

Puzzle pieces

Ransom note lettering: letters or words cut from various sources; pasted down to create a new message

Sherlock Holmes gear:

Deerstalker cap & Meerschaum pipe

Silhouettes

Spies (trench coats and fedoras)

Unsolved Mysteries:

Loch ness Monster, Yeti, UFOs, Stonehenge, Easter Island, El Dorado, Bermuda Triangle, Nostradamus, Ghosts, Haunted Houses, ESP, Telekinesis, other paranormal experiences, etc.

**WHO – WHAT – WHERE – WHEN –
WHY - HOW**