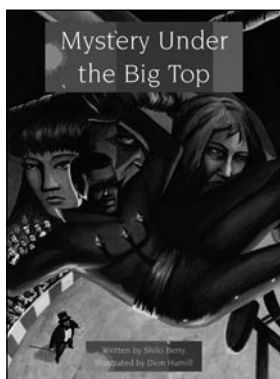




# Mystery Under the Big Top

Text Type		Lower 1500–1800 words RA 8.8–9.2	Middle 1900–2400 words RA 9.3–9.7	Upper 2500–3000 words RA 9.8–10.2
<b>Fact</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	Build Your Own Easel	Making a Cheesecake	So You Want to Be a Cartoonist?
	<b>Recount</b> (Explanation)	Ten Milestones in Space	Rail Accidents	Three Terrible Hurricanes
	<b>Information Report</b> (Description)	Mythical Creatures	The World of Caves	Top Towers
	<b>Information Report</b> (Explanation)	A Weather Counting Book	Two Polar Regions	Seven Ancient Wonders
	<b>Interview</b>	Food Science FAQs	Hobbies	Fireflies and Glow-worms
	<b>Biography</b>	Ned Kelly	Mother Teresa: Saint of the Gutters	Edmund Hillary
	<b>Explanation</b>	How Forensic Scientists Work	How Musical Instruments Work	How Solar Energy Works
	<b>Procedural Recount</b>	How I Learned to Be a Nipper	How I Trained for the Junior Triathlon	How I Learned to Snowboard
<b>Fiction</b>	<b>Realistic Fiction</b> (Out of School)	Junkyard Treasure	Outback Betty's	Harry's Dream
	<b>Realistic Fiction</b> (In School)	On the Case	The Real-Life School Project	Ms McMahon
	<b>Historical Fiction</b>	The Wooden Horse Trick	Cheung Saves the Day	The Slave
	<b>Fantasy</b>	The Cloud Washerwoman	Sammy Stevens Sings	Finbar and the Long Trek
	<b>Science Fiction</b>	A New Source of Power	The Intergalactic Race	Eighth Moon
	<b>Humour</b>	The Upstairs Dragon	My Rhyming Grandpa	Catty Bimbar and the New-Age Pirates
	<b>Mystery</b>	Mystery Under the Big Top	The Mystery of Autoplane 500	The Mystery of the Missing Food
	<b>Folktales</b>	The Wicked Witch of the Singing Sands	Gulnara	Momotaro, Little Peachling

We have designed these lesson plans so that you can have the plan in front of you as you teach, along with a copy of the book. Suggestions for teaching have been divided into questions and discussion that you may have with students before, during, and after they read. You may prefer to explore the meaning and the language in more detail before students read. Your decisions will depend on the gap between students' current knowledge and the content, vocabulary, and language of the book they are about to read. The more information students have up front, the easier it will be for them to read the text.



## MYSTERY UNDER THE BIG TOP

**Lower level fiction**  
**Text type: Mystery**  
**Reading age 9.0**  
**Word count 1,662**

### Before Reading

Tell students that authors use different styles, words, and ways to organize their writing. When readers know how authors write particular stories, it can make it easier to read them.

Activate prior knowledge by asking students if they have read any mystery books or seen any mystery films like *Scooby Doo*.

*What generally happens in these stories?*

Guide the discussion so that students understand that something happens at the start and the rest of the story is spent asking questions, uncovering clues and working out what is true or untrue.

At the end, the mystery is solved by one of the main characters.

*What makes it tricky for the reader to solve the mystery?* Guide the discussion to build understandings that the author will give some clues that are designed to throw the reader off the track. These 'red herrings' create twists in the plot that keep the reader guessing.

### COVER

#### Before Reading

Read the title and ask students to consider what this story might be about.

Discussion and question guide:

- *Where do you think this story is set?*
- *Has anybody been to a circus? Discuss what you did and saw at the circus.*
- *What aspects of the front cover tell you that this book is set in a circus? This should lead into discussion about the words 'big top' and the characters featured on the cover. Link characters on the cover to those described by students. Build knowledge of the characters in this story. For example, *What is the role of the Ringmaster? Tight rope walker? Contortionist?**

Read the blurb on the back cover. *What do the words false trails and red herrings mean?*

Consider all the information contained in the title, cover illustration, and blurb. *What do you think happens in this story?*

## CHAPTER 1

### During Reading

Read Chapter 1 and be ready to discuss what happens to Daredevil Diamond. Think about the factors that cause the incident involving Diamond and what or who may have been responsible. Consider the incident from two points of view. Firstly, that it was an accident. Jot down how the incident could have occurred accidentally. Secondly, consider that this was not an accident. Jot down some ideas about how and why the incident may have occurred, and who may have been responsible. If it was not an accident, think about why the perpetrators would have planned for this to occur during a show and not during a practice session. Finally, be prepared to discuss your true thoughts and opinions about what occurs in Chapter 1.

### After Reading

Encourage responses to the focus questions. Probe for additional information.

*Which elements contributed directly to Diamond's accident?*

Prompt students to consider the wobbly wheel, the height of the tightrope and the faulty net. Students may mention that Diamond stopped looking at his focal point, causing him to lose balance.

*What do you think may have caused the wheel to wobble?*

*In addition to the wheel, can you think of another aspect of the incident that may have been tampered with?* Students should assume that the net may have been tampered with. *What kind of net would you expect to be used for an act like Diamond's?* Help students understand that nets used for dangerous acts would be checked regularly for safety.

*What do you really think? Was this an accident or was it planned?* Encourage discussion.

## CHAPTER 2

### During Reading

Read Chapter 2 and consider the comments from the characters about Diamond's accident. Think about the way each character reacts. List the characters in two columns, *Suspicious Characters* and *Truthful Characters*. Make notes about each character regarding their comments about either Diamond or the incident, and why you think their behaviour or comments may be viewed as being suspicious or truthful.

*The Ringmaster assumes the role of investigator. There is one character whom he quizzes more than others. Find the character he questions more than the other characters. Think about whether you think this character is somehow involved. Why or why not?*

*Be ready to discuss the characters you think may be involved and why. What would you think at the end of Chapter 2 if you were the Ringmaster?*

### After Reading

Encourage students to share their opinions about the characters. In two columns, list the characters that students agree are 'Suspicious' and 'Truthful.' Add the remaining character names to a third column, headed 'Undecided.'

*Let's reread the part about Missy, the contortionist. What is it about the way Missy responds that makes you think she is innocent or guilty?* Assist the students to understand that the way Missy responds tearfully makes us think she is not involved.

*Let's look at Marco's reaction. Does he*

*seem to be upset or worried about Diamond?*  
Assist students to notice the lack of emotion displayed by Marco.

*How does Mary feel about what happened?*  
*What does Mary say that makes you think she is involved or not?*

*What do you think about Billy's comment? How do you think he feels?*

*How do you think the blood got onto the net?*

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **During Reading**

*As you read Chapter 3, think about the clues that help the Ringmaster to solve the mystery. Write down the clues he uncovers, and think about how they may connect characters to the incident. As you read, think about who the Ringmaster suspects along the way.*

*Consider how the behaviour of the characters makes them look either suspicious or truthful. Read carefully and take note of:*

- *the words the characters say*
- *the way the words are spoken (for example, sad, angry, etc.)*
- *the actions of the characters*

*It may help you to organize your thoughts to write the character's name at the top and in three columns underneath to jot down some notes about what was said (column 1), how the words were spoken (column 2) and actions (column 3).*

*Be ready to share ideas on who you think committed the crime and why.*

### **After Reading**

Share students' responses and guide them to revisit the text to discuss the behaviour of Mary and Marco.

*Turn to page 14 of your book. What did Mary say that would suggest that she is the only one who could have used the sword? What did the Ringmaster notice outside Mary's window? Discuss the term "hand span"? When the Ringmaster left Mary, do you think he suspected her of the crime?*

*Turn to pages 14 and 15. What does Marco say and do that makes him look suspicious?*  
Prompt students to notice:

- *Marco's shouting on the telephone*
- *the comment, "I did everything you asked me to do."*
- *Marco's anger as he left his trailer*

*What does the Ringmaster find out on page 16 that makes him want to talk to the set-up team? What do you think will happen in Chapter 4?*

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **During Reading**

*Read Chapter 4 and be ready to discuss the things that may make the set-up team appear suspicious. Think about any details about the characters that may add to the Ringmaster's suspicions.*

*Look for the comment made by the team leader that helps the Ringmaster to solve the problem. Jot this comment down and think about how it helps him to solve the mystery that occurs under the big top. Before he tells us who caused the incident, the Ringmaster does something that shows us that he has solved the mystery. What does he do?*

*In this chapter the author does not tell us the names of the set-up team. Why do you think this is? Was there anyone else who could have been involved?*

*Predict who is involved in Daredevil Diamond's incident and why.*

### **After Reading**

Encourage students to share responses to the During Reading questions. During the discussion, guide students to revisit sections of the text to confirm and deepen understanding.

*Turn to page 18 and find the sentence or words that may lead the Ringmaster to suspect the set-up team.*

The team leader's injured hand should identify him as a suspicious character. *What do you think about the excuse given for his injury?* The set-up team's involvement to prepare the equipment may also prompt suspicion.

*Could anyone else be considered suspicious? Go to page 19 to find out.* Prompt students to identify Billy. *Would Billy have any reason to hurt Diamond? How do you think Billy and Missy might feel about Billy being the cleaner? What might Missy want Billy to do at the circus?*

*Who do you think is in the yellow van and why might the engine be running?*

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **During Reading**

*As you read the final chapter think back through the story to the clues that the Ringmaster uncovered during his investigation. As the Ringmaster explains who committed the crime, think about how the clues link the guilty character or characters to the incident. Jot down some notes to help you piece the clues together.*

*Be ready to explain why the crime was committed and what was to be gained from*

*Diamond's accident. How do you think the guilty character or characters felt about Daredevil Diamond?*

*Be ready to discuss how this crime could have gone terribly wrong and had serious consequences for Diamond. Do you think that the character or characters involved felt any guilt about causing Diamond's injuries?*

### **After Reading**

Encourage students to share their responses to the clues and connect the characters involved. Revisit the text to examine the clues and encourage students to discuss how Missy and Billy are linked to each clue.

*Look at the top of page 22. What does Missy do when the Ringmaster asks her about Billy?* Prompt students to notice that Missy looks at the yellow van and responds to the Ringmaster in a trembling voice.

*What else did Missy do to make the Ringmaster suspicious?* Guide students to understand that Missy hadn't been open about Billy when he asked for a job. *Why didn't Missy tell the Ringmaster that Billy had tried to get a job as a tightrope walker with another circus?*

*Missy keeps looking at the yellow van. What do you think she is thinking?*

*How does the Ringmaster think Missy got Mary's sword?*

## ▲ CODE BREAKER

*A simile is a technique used by an author to compare something that happens in the book to something else. This helps the reader to understand what the author wants us to think or feel.*

*Turn to page 5. Read the first paragraph aloud together.*

*The author describes the way Diamond feels – “His heart was beating like a bass drum in a rock band.” Why do you think the author uses these words? Describe what the author would like us to know about the way Diamond feels.*

*Think of a time that your heart felt like it was beating like a bass drum. Encourage students to share their responses. Support students to make a generalization about the kind of things that make our hearts beat like a bass drum.*

*Work with a partner to read pages 7, 15, and 24. Write the simile on each page.*

## ■ MEANING MAKER

*Chat with a partner and be ready to discuss your responses:*

*Think of another way for Billy to have shown that he was a tightrope walker, without causing Daredevil Diamond to be injured.*

*What do you think may have happened if Billy was a trapeze artist or a clown instead of a tightrope walker? How would he have gotten a performer’s job?*

*How do you feel about what happened to Diamond? What sort of punishment do you think would be appropriate for this crime?*

*Guide students to share their responses. Probe for clarification and elaboration as needed.*

## ◆ TEXT USER

*On the blurb of this book, it reads, “There are many false trails and red herrings.” Why do you think that in a mystery or crime story, the author creates false trails or red herrings? Is it to trick the reader or do they have another purpose?*

*Encourage student responses while supporting them to understand that, in a mystery fiction, it makes the story more interesting if the reader is kept guessing. As you read a story like this, what are you thinking? Are you trying to solve the mystery along the way? Do you think it would be as enjoyable if this story were easy to solve? How do you think it would feel to solve the mystery? Guide students to understand that a mystery fiction is written to entertain and involve the reader to solve. This increases enjoyment and makes the reader want to keep reading.*

## ● TEXT CRITIC

*To keep the reader guessing, the author needs to make us think about the characters in a certain way. This means that the author carefully chooses words to describe characters and their actions. In this book, the author uses the word ‘tearfully’ to describe Missy’s response to Diamond’s accident. How does this make us think about Missy? Lead students to understand that this is done deliberately to make the reader believe that Missy is upset and surprised about what happened. It also makes the reader think that someone else must be the guilty party.*

*Lead students to analyse the way other characters have been constructed in this text. Turn to page 10 and read Marco’s comments after Diamond’s accident. How has Marco been presented? What does he say that makes him*

*appear uncaring?* Support students as they analyse the way Marco's character has been constructed.

## USING MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Seat students in a circle. Use the circus theme to engage students in the following task.

**Share:** Each student briefly acts out and then tells the group which circus performer they would like to be and why. (V, B, P)

**Graph:** Make a bar graph on the floor to show preferences. Students count the number of preferences for each performer and think of a sentence to describe the data. (V, L, S)

**Design:** Ask students to design costumes for their preference and then present their design to the group. (V, B, L, S)

**Innovate:** As a group, write a jingle using circus characters to the tune of Humpty Dumpty. Add actions. (V, M, B, P)

## MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

The theory of multiple intelligences was developed by Howard Gardner, a professor of education at Harvard University. Howard Gardner's theory suggests that the current view of intelligence, as measured by IQ tests, is far too limited and discriminates against students who think in different ways. He proposes taking a broader perspective and has identified eight different intelligences. These are:

- verbal-linguistic intelligence – word smart
- logical-mathematical intelligence – number/reasoning smart
- visual-spatial intelligence – picture smart
- bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence – body smart
- musical-rhythmic intelligence – music smart
- interpersonal intelligence – people smart
- intrapersonal intelligence – self smart
- naturalist intelligence – nature smart

Multiple intelligences have enormous potential as a tool in furthering reading and language development. Traditionally, the teaching of language and reading has focused mainly on two intelligences: logical-mathematical and verbal-linguistic. This means that many students who possess different intelligences do not receive the necessary opportunities, encouragement, instruction, or reinforcement to succeed with reading as well as they might.



# Mystery Under the Big Top

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Prediction Chart

What I predict will happen.

What did happen.

Chapter 1	→	
Chapter 2	→	
Chapter 3	→	
Chapter 4	→	
Chapter 5	→	



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# Mystery Under the Big Top

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Write the number of syllables in these words from the book:

Ringmaster \_\_\_\_\_ crowd \_\_\_\_\_ bicycle \_\_\_\_\_

Marco \_\_\_\_\_ faces \_\_\_\_\_ wheel \_\_\_\_\_

balance \_\_\_\_\_ tightrope \_\_\_\_\_ tent \_\_\_\_\_

contortionist \_\_\_\_\_ tearfully \_\_\_\_\_ rope \_\_\_\_\_

swords \_\_\_\_\_ trailer \_\_\_\_\_ equipment \_\_\_\_\_

Think of two other words with:

one syllable: \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_

two syllables: \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_

three syllables: \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_

Write the end of these similes:

As fast as \_\_\_\_\_.

As sharp as \_\_\_\_\_.

As cold as \_\_\_\_\_.



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# Mystery Under the Big Top

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Making Connections

Text to Self

Write about something that has happened to you that this book reminds you of. For example, it may remind you of a time you went to the circus, or perhaps you tried to learn to juggle.

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Text to World

Write about something from this book that reminds you of something that you have seen in a newspaper or a magazine, or that you have seen on television, on the Internet, etc.

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Text to Text

Write about something else you have read or viewed that reminds you of this book or something from this book.

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# Mystery Under the Big Top

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Does the title of the book tell you what it is about? Why or why not?

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2. Did the title, cover illustration, and blurb make you want to read this story?  
Give reasons.

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3. What will you remember about this book?

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4. Why do you think the author wrote this story?

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5. Did you enjoy this story? Give reasons.

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6. Have you read other mystery books? If yes, what were their titles?

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7. What does a reader need to know in order to understand this story?

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8. Did you get excited about solving the mystery?

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# Mystery Under the Big Top

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Think about how you felt as you read this story. The author carefully chose characters, words, and events to make the you feel a certain way.

1. What sort of mood did the author create for this story?

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2. Think of some words that describe how you felt as you read the story. Find words in the story that made you feel this way.

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3. Choose a character you liked and write what you liked about this character.

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4. Choose a character you disliked and write what you disliked about this character.

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5. How did your feelings change as you read the story? Did the author intend to make you feel this way?

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6. Was there any tension in this story that made you want to finish it?

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7. What did the author want you to think about Missy and Billy?

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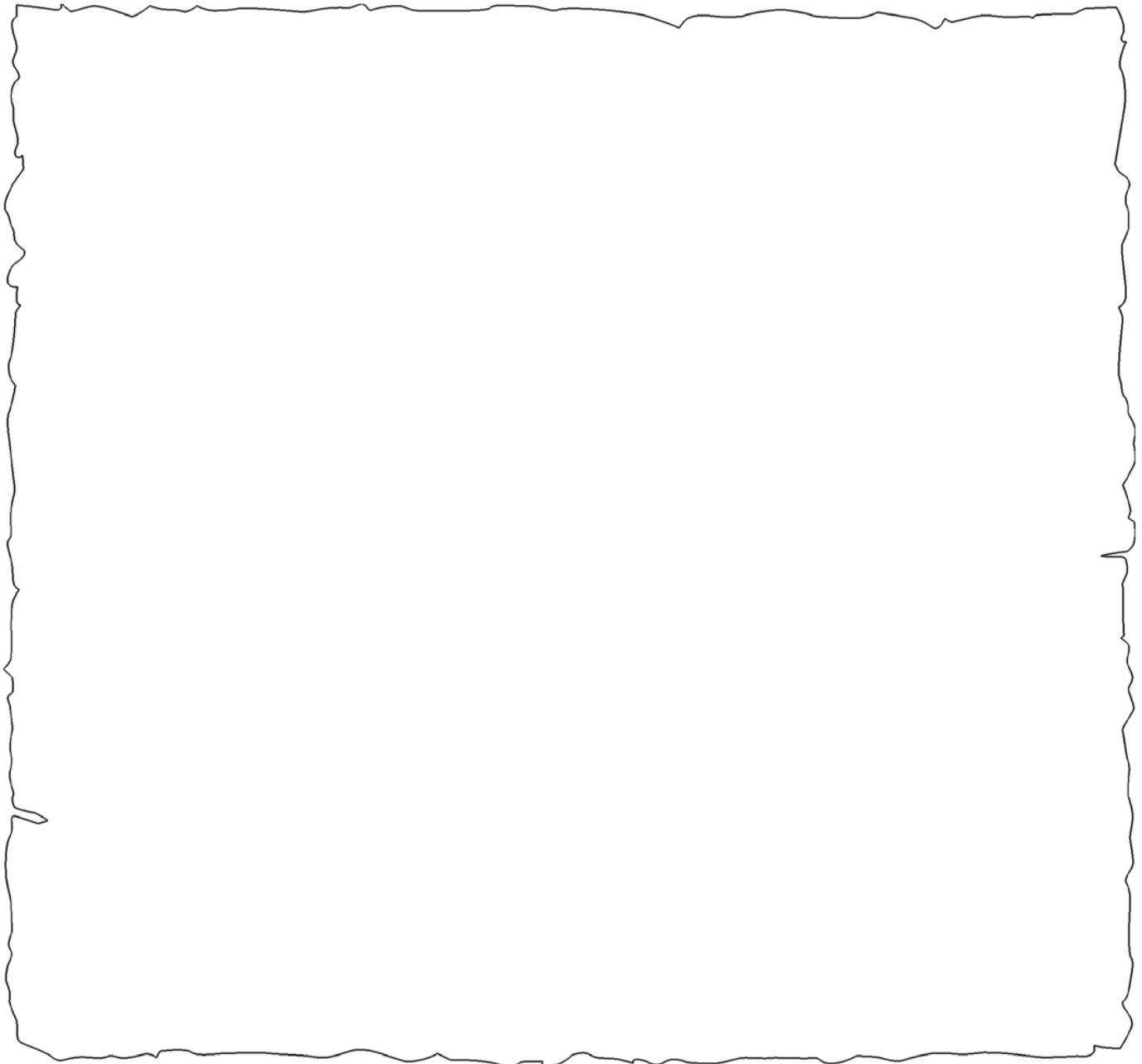
# Mystery Under the Big Top

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Intelligences (verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial)

Design a poster to advertise the circus. Make the circus look fun and appealing. You will need to incorporate the following elements into your design:

- Catchy heading and blurb
- Date, start time, and location
- Cost



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# Mystery Under the Big Top

Name \_\_\_\_\_

The author created false trails and red herrings to keep the reader guessing.  
What did the author do to make these characters appear as though they could be involved?

Check the book and write down some of the words used by the author.

Marco

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Mary

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Team Leader

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What did the author do to make this character appear innocent?  
Check the book and write down some of the words used by the author.

Missy

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