

Trial Mechanic Ideas

Roles

Trial Leader - they're responsible for setting the topic of discussion, answering questions the players have about testing theories, giving hints if the class gets stuck, keeping track of time, managing lifelines, collecting the votes at the end, and posting plot points (Pre-trial, gathering, post-trial, result.)

The Blackened - Every trial needs a guilty party. There can be an accomplice in a case, but only one person is ever Blackened for the crime. Their goal is to get away with whatever "crime" they have "committed." (Note: Depending on the circumstances of the trial, the quotes may not actually exist.) They can certainly still help out, but they usually aim to mislead the others if they arrive too close to the truth. ~~Their goal, however, should not be to spoil the plot of the trial.~~

The Accomplice - Helped the Blackened achieve their goal. Normally there would be no benefit, but since there is no Graduation Clause anyway... During the trial, the Accomplice can also try to mislead the rest of the class. However, they and the Blackened had better be on the same page, or things could go south for them quickly.

The Victim - For every person who does unto someone, there must logically be someone who has been done unto. They could be the one to start the trial in the first place, or just the one who reported the crime. The credibility of the victim will depend on the nature of the trial.

The Participants - Every volunteer who isn't one of the other three special participant roles or the Trial Leader will be doing their best to use what information everyone has gathered to find the Blackened culprit and bring them to justice!

The Spectators - Every character who isn't participating may cheer the participants on or offer suggestions for theories, but may not directly influence the trial, ask the Leader a question, or cast a vote. While it's fun to cheer people on, keep posting to a minimum if there is a lot of activity, in order to keep the thread somewhat manageable. Those with both participant and spectator characters must have their participant contribute in every post they make.

Timeline

Volunteering - 1-2 days - When "Run a Trial" wins the Event Poll, the volunteering period will begin. Each player is allowed to volunteer one of their characters to participate in the trial. Those who do not participate are allowed to spectate. This is done because it's impossible to have one of your characters be the culprit and the other(s) not know who the culprit is, no matter how good your RPing skills are. One person can volunteer to be the Trial Leader on a first come, first served basis. Obviously, the Trial Leader cannot have another character participate in the trial as well. Note: You must be Trusted or have submitted a trial idea of your own in order to be eligible for the Trial Leader role. If nobody elects to be the Trial Leader, then I, Slezak, will take the helm.

Trial Setup - 1-3 days - Once there is a sufficient number of volunteers, a trial idea will be selected which accommodates that number. Note: Once Trial Setup starts, all volunteers will be expected to stay relatively

active (at least one post per day) or they risk losing Standing Points. The Leader will write up alibis and, if there is no Investigation Phase, investigation results.

The Caper Begins (Investigation) - 1 day - The students will be alerted that a crime has been reported and that a Class Trial will begin soon. Everyone will meet to talk about the crime and their alibis. The Trial Leader will post a list of relevant locations and the students can discuss who will search where. Every location must be searched by at least two participants. After everyone has chosen where they will go, or after a day or two passes, investigation will end and results will be written. Those who do not choose will have a location randomly assigned to them.

The Trial Proper - 2-7 days - All participants must gather at the elevator and head down to the Trial Room. Spectators can come and go as they please, but participants will be locked into their podiums for the duration of the trial, barring an incident requiring immediate attention. Throughout the trial, the Leader will post topics to discuss to preserve the coherency of the trial, or can let the participants talk about whatever. The first topic will always be (further) discussion of alibis as well as sharing investigation results. During the trial, the Leader will occasionally post hints to aid the class and will provide truthful (but not always helpful) answers to questions and theories the class has.

Voting Time - 1 day - Participants are allowed to vote whenever they want, for whomever they want. Once over half the class has voted for the same culprit, the trial will automatically move straight to Voting Time. Otherwise, it will start once the class runs out of time. Further discussion will be prohibited and a one-day voting grace period will commence. Afterward, the votes will be revealed and the class will learn whether they made the right choice or the (dreadfully) wrong one! Once the answer is revealed, everyone will be allowed to discuss it for a bit while the Post-Trial is completed.

Post-Trial - The Leader will post an Ending Sequence depicting the outcome of the trial and the culprit's fate (which will (usually) be a mere slap on the wrist.) The Leader will then pick 1-3 MVPs who went above and beyond, making the most headway and positing the best theories. The MVP(s) will earn Standing Points, and the Leader, if they are not me, will earn Standing Points depending on how well they handled things. Everyone will be allowed to leave the trial room and Break Time will commence.

Trial Difficulty

Trials will have a Difficulty Rating from 1-5 stars. Some traits of each difficulty:

- (1) **Relaxed** - F game duration: 2-3 days. Very simple mysteries. The culprit could be narrowed down via the alibis or there is some evidence (a “smoking gun”) which subtly points to them.
- (2) **Kind** - F game duration: 3-4 days. The alibis will eliminate most of the suspects, but some consideration of the evidence and testimonies will be required to find the actual culprit. There may still be a Smoking Gun, but it will be much less obvious.
- (3) **Moderate** - F game duration: 4 days. Some alibis will clear a few suspects, but others will be pretty weak. Requires some good deduction skills, and possibly some hints, to solve. Paying close attention to the evidence, and putting forth theories based on it, will land you on the right track.
- (4) **Brutal** - F game duration: 4-5 days. There will most likely be holes in all the alibis, which may affect who is cleared by the actual time of the crime, which will probably not be obvious. Clever thinking will be required, with the aid of hints and frequent querying, to arrive at the answer.
- (5) **DESPAIR** - F game duration: 5-6 days. Alibis will probably be mostly useless for figuring out anything. The evidence will get you part of the way there, but everyone must cooperate and ask lots of questions to reach the truth. Present lots of theories, pay close attention to the hints, and don't lose hope!

Lifelines

Each trial has the same options for Lifelines. You get two (Relaxed/Kind/Moderate) or three (Brutal/DESPAIR) per trial, but you may not use the same kind of lifeline more than once.

Rebuttal Showdown - You dare disagree with me? Prepare to sample my blade! When the class is divided on a topic, they can pick two participants to argue for either side. After both sides have had their turn, the Trial Leader will decide which one was closer to the truth.

Scrum Debate - SPLIT OPINION! The class must decide on an equal number of participants to argue for each side (2 for 4-7 total participants, 3 for 8-11, and 4 for 12-16). Either the Trial Leader or the class (depending on trial difficulty) must pick keywords for each argument. Each opposing pair must use that keyword in a point arguing for their side. After all three have gone, the Trial Leader will decide who made the better point each time, and overall which side won the debate and is thus closer to the truth.

Hangman's Gambit - It's right on the tip of my tongue! Pick a question with a definite answer. The Trial Leader will reveal how many letters are in the answer. Then one by one (order determined by the participants, or just whoever posts first,) the students guess letters they think are in the answer. Guess two wrong letters and the answer will remain incomplete!

(Improved) Hangman's Gambit - WHY IS THIS A THING!? Differs from the OG HG in that you must guess the letters in order! The Trial Leader may help you out by initially filling in a number of letters depending on the trial difficulty. The class can make up to five mistakes over the course of the guessing, if that's any consolation (which it probably isn't.)

Logic Dive - Think, think, think! Choose a topic of discussion and one person to be the Diver (Holy or otherwise.) They will have to answer multiple choice questions in rapid succession. This will continue until they mess up twice or reach the solution.

Mind Mine - We need to go...deeper. The class will be presented with three investigative tools which may reveal something new about the crime. They must vote on the one to use and, if applicable, on a location or object on which to use it.

Climax Reasoning - Let's go over everything once more! Pick one participant to be the Reteller. The Reteller will be given a Mad Libs-style sequence of facts with key details removed. They must fill in the blanks as instructed. Afterward, the Trial Leader will tell them how many they answered correctly, but not which ones. If the Reteller missed at least one, they will be allowed to try once more to correct the timeline. Once again, they will learn how many, but not which ones, they answered right.

Panic Talk Action - Argh, we're going nowhere fast! Use this lifeline to extend the time limit by 24 hours. Really, that's...all it does. NOTE: Cannot be used to resume discussion once Voting Time starts.

Trial Idea Framework (For use in prewriting trials)

Decide Your Role(s) - Plot it out by yourself as the Leader, or with someone else as a predetermined role. If you choose to not be the Leader, someone else *must* be the Leader. Only the Leader will be credited with the submission to conceal the identity of the other roles, but they will receive credit during the Post-Trial.

- Leader: Does not count as a participant. Must be assigned before the trial is eligible to run, but need not be the creator themselves.
- Blackened: Predetermined or left up to chance.
- Accomplice: Optional.
- Victim: Optional, doesn't have to be one of the participants.

Mystery Location - Where and when did the crime happen?

Storyline - Why was the crime committed? Who reported it? What led up to the crime? What is the aftermath?

Number of Participants - How many players should the case accommodate, not including the Trial Leader? 4 is the absolute minimum and 16 the absolute maximum. For most trials, 5-10 participants works well. For more than that, plan for a lot of redundancy and to have a somewhat simpler overall mystery to balance out the chaos that will no doubt ensue.

Trial Difficulty - Difficulty should be measured on a scale from 1-5, with higher numbers meaning a harder trial. Idiosyncratic terms for these levels are: (1)Relaxed, (2)Kind, (3)Moderate, (4)Brutal, and (5)DESPAIR. (Please keep in mind that DESPAIR trials should not be unsolvable, but rather require careful attention to detail, critical thinking, and some major leaps of logic.)

Time Limit - About 2-3 days for easy trials, 4-5 days for moderate ones, and 6-7 days for difficult ones.

Timeline of the Case - Pick a span of time before (and potentially after) the crime and plan out what certain roles would be doing throughout this time. Make sure most of your planned number of participants play a necessary role in the timeline. Too many people just faffing about makes for a disappointing trial. This timeline will really help when writing out character-specific alibis.

Evidence - The Investigation phase is optional, but can add some interesting variation to your trial. If you plan to add one, the number of relevant locations should be somewhere between one quarter and one half of the expected number of participants. That way, teams can pair or group off. Every location should have something important to the case, obviously. Red herrings should be used sparingly. Whether or not you have an Investigation phase, plan for what interactions will take place within the room while investigating. This will aid immensely in writing the character-tailored investigation results.

Leader Hints and Theory Confirmations - Some people just don't get it, so come up with a hint you can give for each day the trial is expected to last. Also, it's helpful to think about what questions the class may ask and prepare answers beforehand.

Lifelines - Most Lifelines require the Trial Leader's input. It would be wise to pre-plan a few lifeline scenarios. The Leader can then use those ideas to offer suggestions to the class if they're stuck.

Story Scenes: Create scene templates that describe:

Initial Setup: What happens before the crime occurs?

Crime Aftermath: The crime has been reported and the volunteers go to check what's up. Should be posted once alibis are sent out. Only needed if there is an Investigation Phase.

Gathering: The investigation concludes and the volunteers convene at the elevator. Should be posted once investigation results are sent out.

Climax Reasoning: A case summary to be delivered by the student who figured out the most aspects of the mystery, or the culprit themselves should the class choose incorrectly.

Post-Trial: What happens when the class makes the correct choice? The wrong one? Optionally, create a different scene for if the class chooses the accomplice or even the victim instead of the blackened. When the trial is selected, you can just slot in the names of the volunteering characters which would most likely fit the roles of the players in each scene.

Post Your Suggestion! - When everything else is filled out, add your suggestion to the Event Log's "Trial Suggestions" tab. Remember to only list the Trial Leader. Make sure the Trial Leader is aware that you have posted the suggestion.