

The Teddy Baby Bureau of Investigation: An Open-Ended Scavenger Hunt

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SUMMARY: In this session, we will try and solve the case of the disappearance of Teddy Baby, a beloved teddy bear, by creating our own scavenger hunt as we go, including the clues, interview questions, and figuring out how the pieces of the "puzzle" we create fit together!

GOALS:

- Feel a sense of autonomy from using your creativity and imagination
- Connect with others as you combine ideas to create a shared product
- Identify successful ways to collaborate and problem-solve in a team setting

AUDIENCE: Originally designed for and ran with 8- to 10-year-old campers

TIMING: 60 minutes

MATERIALS:

- 1 notebook per team (each team should have 3-5 participants)
- Pens and colored pencils for each team

SET-UP: The initial and final gatherings should be in a room where everyone has a seat, ideally with one round table per team (3-5 participants per team)

SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:05 – Explain why this group of investigators has convened
- 00:05-00:10 – Break into teams & strategize
- 00:10-00:25 – Go out “into the field” to conduct interview and collect evidence
- 00:25-00:45 – Return to the large group meeting place and write your story/hypothesis
- 00:45-00:60 – Share stories/hypotheses & Wrap-up

SESSION OUTLINE

It is VERY important to note that, because this is an “open-ended scavenger hunt,” there is no preparation required. In other words, anyone a team interviews will likely not know about Teddy Baby and the “evidence” that is gathered is not planted, it’s just whatever random items teams decide are important.

00:00-00:05 – Explain why this group of investigators has convened

“Teddy Baby, a beloved teddy bear who has been coming to camp for many years, has been bear-napped!

- We need everyone here to help to try and find Teddy Baby.
- This group is officially now the Teddy Baby Bureau of Investigation (TBBI for short), which makes me the proud Captain of the TBBI.
- Your mission is to go out and gather evidence that will help us piece together the story of what happened to Teddy Baby.”

“You are going to be put into teams and, as a team, go out around camp—what investigators here at TBBI (like you!) call ‘going out into the field.’

- While out in the field, you must accomplish two tasks:
 - Interview at least 3 people to gather information about the bear-napping. Take good notes in your notebooks!
 - Identify at least 3 pieces of evidence and sketch them in your team’s notebook. DO NOT touch any evidence (and do not bring any evidence back with you).”
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“If I had more information, I’d share it, but I don’t. Get into your teams, strategize your plan for going out into the field, and then it’s go time. We must find Teddy Baby!”

00:05-00:10 – Break into teams & strategize

Break the group of campers into teams of 3-5 people per team, with at least one staff member per team

Give them a few minutes to strategize their plan for interviewing people (i.e., what questions they are going to be asking) and collecting evidence.

00:10-00:25 – Go out “into the field” to conduct interview and collect evidence

00:25-00:45 – Return to the large group meeting place and write your story/hypothesis

Teams should come back to the initial meeting place

“Welcome back TBBI teams. I know Teddy Baby would appreciate your hard work from the bottom of their little bear heart. Now that you have more information and evidence, each team should

discuss/brainstorm what you think happened to Teddy Baby. Come up with a story and/or hypotheses (educated guesses) about what your team thinks happened and pick a spokesperson who will share with the rest of the group.”

“Remember, and you probably remember this from your TBI training, we really don’t know what happened to Teddy Baby, so all ideas at this point are good ideas and worth considering!”

00:45-00:60 – Share stories/hypotheses & Wrap-up

Have the spokesperson from each team share their team’s story/hypotheses

Tell everyone the Captain/Captains are going to analyze all the amazing information presented and see if you can find Teddy Baby (and then rescue Teddy Baby publicly later that day, week, session).

Finish the program by asking one or more of the following questions:

- What was it like being an investigator with the TBI?
- What was it like working with your team?
- What was it like trying to solve this mystery/puzzle/challenge?

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

The focus of the investigation could be any stuffed animal, mascot, person, or inanimate object that has gone missing—make it something meaningful to the group of campers this program is being run for.

You can create more context for the program in the days leading up to it by having notes from Teddy Baby or the bear-nappers delivered to staff who can then read them to the campers. Be sure to keep this part of the program fun/funny and not scary.

You can extend the amount of time provided for “going out into the field” to conduct interviews and gather evidence, and then either extend the program for the writing of stories/hypotheses or make that Part 2 of the program later in the day or week.

Think about ways to adapt this program for older age groups—this could include adding complexity to the framing of the mystery, more (and/or more complex) task they must accomplish while “out in the field” conducting their investigation, and additional layers to the stories/hypotheses they create.