



The Mystery of

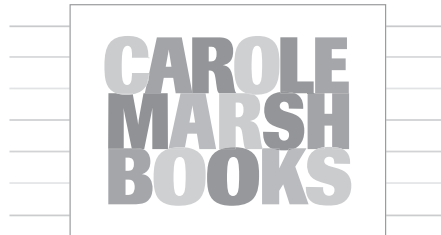
BILTMORE HOUSE

Teacher's Guide

by
Carole Marsh



Art & Design: Lynette Rowe



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INTERNATIONAL



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#1 THE MYSTERY OF BILTMORE HOUSE

#2 THE MYSTERY AT THE BOSTON MARATHON



#3 THE MYSTERY OF BLACKBEARD THE PIRATE



#4 THE MYSTERY OF THE ALAMO GHOST

#5 THE MYSTERY ON THE CALIFORNIA MISSION TRAIL

#6 THE MYSTERY OF THE CHICAGO DINOSAURS

#7 THE WHITE HOUSE CHRISTMAS MYSTERY



#8 THE MYSTERY ON ALASKA'S IDITAROD TRAIL

#9 THE MYSTERY AT KILL DEVIL HILLS

#10 THE MYSTERY IN NEW YORK CITY

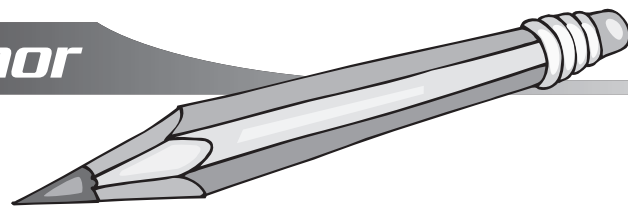


#11 THE MYSTERY AT DISNEY WORLD

#12 THE MYSTERY ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD



A Word from the Author



Dear Teachers,

In 1979, I began writing children's mysteries set at historic sites that still existed—primarily so that kids could go and see what they had read about. Frankly, I found no more fun, educational, and stress-free (actually, just plain joyful!) activity to do with my then school-age children than to visit a fascinating historic site!

While some of these sites were certainly off the beaten path (like North Carolina's Outer Banks!), and some were numerous places (such as Historic Bath), and some were plain and even painful to contemplate (the plantation and slave quarters of Somerset Place, for example)—no place was as dramatic, exciting, and awe-inspiring as Biltmore House! If you've been there, you know what I mean. If you have not, well, GO!

Yes, Biltmore is a tourist attraction, but it's also one gigantic history lesson. At every site, I tried to introduce my children to the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the place. Not only was it surprising to me how fascinated the kids were, it was amazing to witness the depth of their interest. Each of these magical experiences eventually transcended into a lifelong ongoing connection between me and my children.



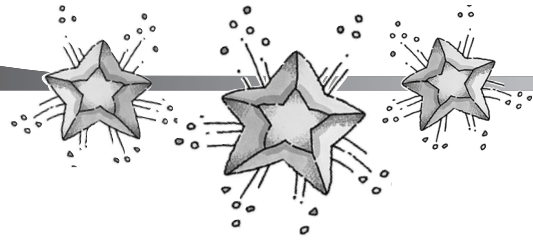
We learned a lot, but what we learned best is that kids and adults can learn together, that reading and going and seeing and doing is what education is all about, and most especially, that "adopting" a subject or place leads to a lifelong interest in an era, a place, the people, and all the fascinating facts that made up their lives. That this history is still "living" is not lost on kids! In fact, it is quite a revelation!

Enjoy your Biltmore House mystery and studies,

Carole Marsh

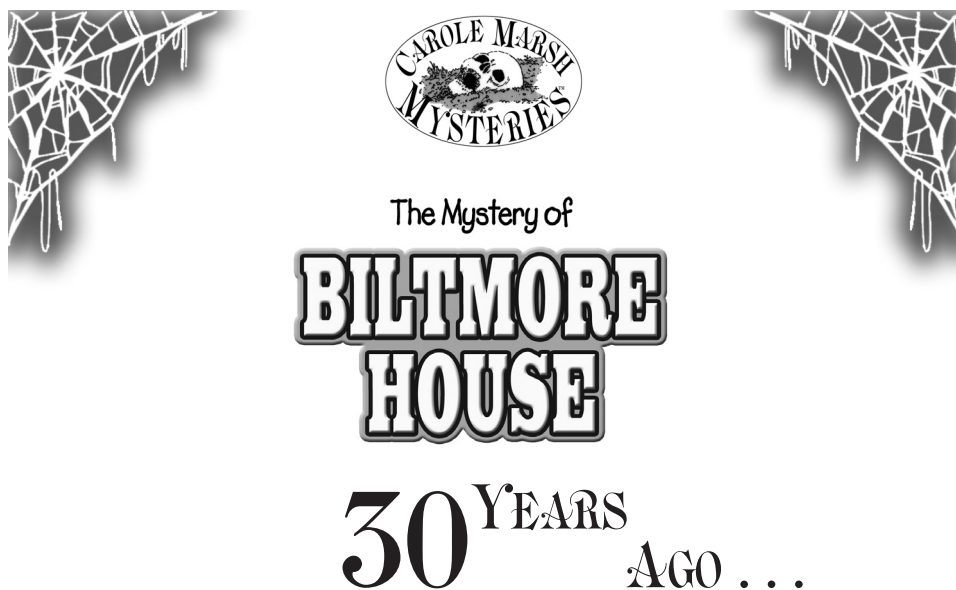


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As a mother and an author, one of the fondest periods of my life was when I decided to write mystery books for children. At this time (1979) kids were pretty much glued to the TV, something parents and teachers complained about the way they do about video games today.

I decided to set each mystery in a real place—a place kids could go and visit for themselves after reading the book. And I also used real children as characters. Usually a couple of my own children served as characters, and I had no trouble recruiting kids from the book's location to also be characters.

Also, I wanted all the kids—boys and girls of all ages—to participate in solving the mystery. And, I wanted kids to learn something as they read. Something about the history of the location. And I wanted the stories to be funny.

That formula of real+scary+smart+fun served me well. The kids and I had a great time visiting each site and many of the events in the stories actually came out of our experiences there. (For example, Michael really did keep disappearing into secret passages and doorways at Biltmore House!)

I love getting letters from teachers and parents who say they read the book with their class or child, then visited Biltmore and saw all the places in the mystery for themselves. What's so great about that? What's great is that you and your children have an experience that bonds you together forever. Something you shared. Something you both cared about at the time. Something that crossed all age levels—a good story, a good scare, a good laugh!

30 years later,

Carole Marsh



Biltmore Information

If you and your children/students would like to visit Biltmore House, spring or fall is the best time. For maximum impact and enjoyment, read *The Mystery of Biltmore House* first, complete these activities with your students, then arm them with copies of "The Biltmore House Scavenger Hunt" (found in the mystery) and take your tour. Afterwards, back home or in the classroom, ask students how what they saw compared with what they read and learned about Biltmore House.

For additional information, contact:
Biltmore Estate
One North Pack Square
Asheville, NC 28801

Web Site:
www.biltmore.com

Open to Guests: Daily, year-round, except for Thanksgiving and Christmas days.

Group Tickets: For group rates for daytime or evening visits, make reservations for 20 or more in advance by calling 828-274-6230.

Individual daytime tickets require no reservation. Evenings, concerts and special events may require reservations.

Chapter Subject

EXPLORE!

Table of Writing Contents

2 Life



The author wants you to be interested in the story before you even begin. Does the Table of Contents interest you in the story? How? What words do you see that the author picked especially to appeal to you? (Stress that writing can be all kinds of things. That even Tables of Contents are written in drafts and edited and revised.)

Mr. Vanderbilt believed in using your resources to the best of your, and their, ability. Of course, Mr. Vanderbilt was very wealthy. Does that matter? What resources do you have? Do you use them as fully as possible? If yes, how? If not, why not? What are the benefits of this attitude? The consequences of not having this attitude? Do you think Mr. Vanderbilt would have had the same attitude if he had been poor?

Also discuss whether this is a new idea or not. In the past, it was a matter of necessity. Then we went through a period of being a "disposable" society. Now, people seem more concerned with recycling things, etc.

3 Money



Do you know how to pay the check in a restaurant? Are you sure? (Have students order from a menu on the board. They will have to add ___% state tax + a 15% gratuity. Assume they pay with a \$20 bill. What are they due in change?) TEACHERS: This is the kind of simple math we often have for our student employees. They make a sale of six

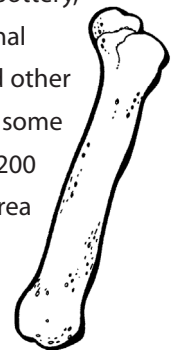


Prehistoric Village Relics at Biltmore House

Arrowheads, shards of pottery and other remains of a prehistoric Indian village have been unearthed on the grounds of the Biltmore



Estate. In four weeks of digging in a cornfield, estate curators and archaeologists from Appalachian State University found 30,000 pieces of pottery, tools, animal bones and other artifacts – some dating to 200 B.C. The area was once home to a group of people known as the Connestee, but historians do not know much about them.



books, add tax and shipping. VERY OFTEN even the best student's math is wrong! They either do not know how to figure something "for real," are not confident, are sloppy with the math, or seem to think close counts. Hopefully, your students will do quite well. I always tell my employees that future errors will be deducted from their paychecks (this improves their math fast!).

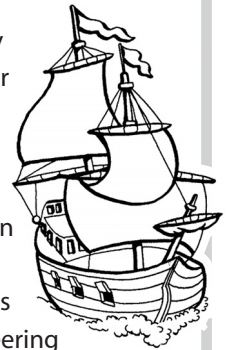
- 3 Words What does "Rampe Douce" mean? (Gently-sloping walkway) What language do you think this is? (French)
- 3 Geography Where is Transylvania? (In Rumania formerly Hungary – see a world map or the encyclopedia.) True or false: There is a Transylvania, North Carolina? (True – a Transylvania county in western N.C. – see a state map.)
- 3 History Who was Dracula? Why does the author also refer to him in *The Mystery of Bat Cave*?
- 4 Careers What would you call a person who creates the designs for parks and gardens? (A landscape architect) For whom would a landscape architect do his or her work? Would a landscape architect be an artist or more of a technical person? (Very much both!) What would you have to study to be a landscape architect? (You would have to know about agriculture, architecture, technical drawing and design, history of gardens, horticulture, etc. In other words, even "just a gardener" can be a very complex profession. Parents often tell me that they are concerned when someone asks their



Historic Conservation

Today, historic conservation is a course of study you can take in college that can lead to a rewarding career! Biltmore House has done an outstanding job of preserving the house and grounds, while also establishing the things necessary to produce tourist income to help provide the funds to keep the home and grounds in outstanding condition. Ask students if such a career might interest them!

Your really talented or serious history students might even find internships or volunteering as a way to introduce themselves to historic sites. I know two young brothers who served as "characters" on a historic ship one summer. They had to dress up as well as talk and act like people from the era they were representing. Kid visitors to the ship were fascinated to talk to kids who lived 400 years ago!





child what their father does, for example, and they reply, “He’s an attorney.” Then when pressed for exactly what he does, they might add, “Lots of paperwork, and he takes clients to lunch.” In other words, the names of even the most common professions often have little practical meaning to a child. Often, such rewarding occupations as landscape architecture are overlooked because children – even career counselors – are not aware of them. This particular occupation would be challenging and rewarding, especially for the bright creative person. Can your class think of other interesting alternatives to doctor, teacher, lawyer? Discuss the rewards of a job – both in money, opportunity, control, etc. and in smaller yet important ways (such as being outdoors versus inside all day.)

4 Literature Have you heard of the book, *The Secret Garden*? Why do certain books come to have special meaning to us? What is your special book? (The author picks *A Wrinkle In Time* – today!)

4 Culture What do you know about gardens? Carole Marsh once had to give a talk to a garden club – and she thought there would be very little literature on gardens. Was she surprised! Gardens have a fascinating history, full of myth and legend and amazing trivia. Find out what an English garden is. Do you know the famous gardens in your state and city? Perhaps you can visit one.



4 Literature Who was O. Henry? Who was William Sidney Porter? (O. Henry’s real name.) What is a “pen name”? What is a pseudonym? What would be the point in



My kids and I really did have a blast at Biltmore House! I was not really prepared to see the entire house—that’s exhausting! At least I had worn flat-heeled shoes. The ducks almost ate my son,



Michael; they are used to being fed by tourists, but they seemed to think Michael would be just as tasty as stale crackers! I was afraid the curator would just give me a cursory tour of the house, but when she pulled out this enormous ring of keys and unlocked the gate in front of the curved stairway that led upstairs, I knew I was in for a treat! It was especially amazing to go up into the very attic of the house and see the beautiful mountain views from the tiny rooms the servants slept in.

Many of the instances you read about in the book actually happened! That’s how I got some of the ideas. Even though they were warned, the kids really did set off the alarms, vanish through a secret panel, and rock in the big, marble bathtub. It is always fascinating to me to ask kids, “What do you think I made up in the story and what do you think is really true?” They almost always pick the exact opposite! Try them!!

having one? Is Carole Marsh a pen name? (Yes – the author’s true married name is Carole Longmeyer!) If you had a pen name, what would it be? What other authors write under a pseudonym?

Who was Carl Sandburg? Is that his real name? What did he write?

How about Thomas Wolfe? He wrote a book called, *Look Homeward Angel* which was about Asheville and his family, though he called them other names. In this book, he said, “You can’t go home again.” What does this mean?

Teacher trivia:

Wolfe really couldn’t go home again! People were so angry that he had written about them – though the book was fiction – his life was threatened. Discuss fact and fiction and how it can get authors in trouble. Talk about libel; the *National Enquirer*, and being a responsible writer and reader. Also, Wolfe was so tall he wrote standing up with his typewriter on top of a refrigerator!

Carl Sandburg moved to Flat Rock, N.C. where his wife raised prize-winning goats! He wrote on orange crates, sitting on other orange crates! Get some of these authors’ works in your classroom and encourage the children to sample a little of each.

5 Common Sense

How do you find out about who creates the designs for parks and place you might want to visit? (Teacher: have your students write to the Asheville Chamber of Commerce, Biltmore House, North Carolina Department of Travel and

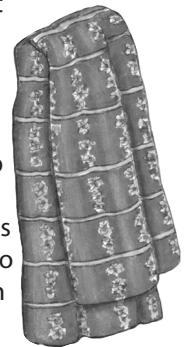
Other things you might want to read up on while studying Biltmore House:

•**The Victorian Era.**

Crabtree Press does books with color pictures that might interest your students. From amazon.com, you can order a book called “*The Good Old Days—They Were Terrible!*” by Otto L. Berrmann. Even though the Vanderbilts lived in wealth and splendor, this was not the way most folks lived. Also, money could not protect you from diseases such as yellow fever, which prevailed during this era.

•**Asheville, western North Carolina, the Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains.**

Kids might enjoy reading about quilting, putting up food, and other crafts common to this area in the past and present.



The Foxfire Books, which tell about these things, are easy to find in libraries.

•**Chess.**

This will help students understand the chess-related comments in the book. (See “*Go, Queen, Go!*”: *CHESS FOR KIDS* and other chess books that have information on the history of chess as well as instructions on how to play.)





Tourism, etc. for information on places mentioned in the book. Don't give kids the addresses – let them go to the library and get help with directories; there may be a toll free number they can call. If you are fortunate enough to be able to plan a field trip to Biltmore, again, let the children do all the planning they can, including a schedule, budget, etc. I know that is a lot of trouble, but they may be more help than you suspect, and, this is a “real life” experience they will get more out of if they participate in the planning.

6 Life

How do you feel about the killing of wild animals as trophies for the wall? How did people used to feel? Has the general attitude about such things changed over the years? If Mr. Vanderbilt were still alive, do you think he would be in favor of environmental protection? Protecting endangered species? Why?

7 History



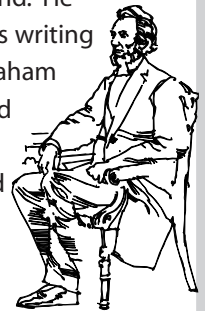
Biltmore House was one of the first private homes to have such “modern contraptions” as electricity, indoor plumbing, refrigeration for food, etc. Does this seem surprising? What do you think homes will commonly have 50 years from now that your children will be shocked you didn't have when you were a child? What will be the antiques of tomorrow?

7 History

How would the lives of the servants at Biltmore House have been different from that of the residents? Which position would you have preferred? How do you think the servants liked being servants in such a home to such a wealthy family? How would you have liked it?

Connemara

Another fascinating tour nearby Biltmore House is Connemara, once the farm home of Carl Sandburg. It is an interesting comparison since it is a very simple, plain farmhouse, unlike the castle-like Biltmore House! I guess you could say Sandburg's wealth was his mind. He spent years writing about Abraham Lincoln and was considered a national treasure before his death. Have students discuss how people can live so differently and make enormous contributions that have nothing to do with wealth, status, or material possessions.



For more information, contact:

Carl Sandburg Home
National Historic Site
1928 Little River Road
Flat Rock, NC 28731
(828)693-4178

Or, visit the National Park Service's website on Connemara at www.nps.gov/carl/



- 8 Literature Who were the Knights of the Roundtable? What was King Arthur’s Court? (Stress the relevancy of one thing you learn to another – how nothing we study and learn is ever wasted; we never know when we will run across references to such information. Discuss what being “educated” means. What are the consequences of being “uneducated”? Can someone “give” you an education? How would our country be different if we didn’t have this common bond of mutual knowledge? How would the world be different if each nation learned something of the heritage and culture of other nations? Do we do this now? Why not? Do you think we will? Why or why not? Should we? Why or why not? What can we do about this individually?)



- 8 Careers What is a curator? What might you have to study or know to be one? What would you like to be curator of?

- 8 Economics How would having a million dollars 100 years ago be different than having a million dollars today? What could you have bought then? Now? What about 100 years from now? Discuss inflation.

- 8 History What was the Victorian period? Why did they think Christmas should not be celebrated? What would they think of our Christmas celebrations of today? What do these words mean: topiary; yule; poinsettias; cornucopia?

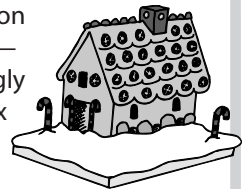
- 10 Literature Discuss Mr. Vanderbilt’s library: what books might it have contained? If you had a library, what subjects would you focus on? What is a scholar? Do you



The Thomas Wolfe House would be another interesting visit near Biltmore House. It may be more interesting to older children. Have students consider how it would have felt to live in a boarding house where, when the rooms were filled up, you had to sleep in the bathtub!

For more information, contact:
 Thomas Wolfe Memorial
 52 North Market Street
 Asheville, NC 28801
 (828) 253-8304
www.wolfememorial.com

Also, if time, you might enjoy taking kids inside the lobby of the famous Grove Park Inn. This is where the enormous fireplaces are, a great view from the outside verandah, and, kids might get to take a peek inside the tiny fireplace elevator. During part of November and December, they have incredible gingerbread houses on display—amazingly complex ones as well as some done by children—all award winners!



For more information, contact:
 The Grove Park Inn
 290 Macon Avenue
 Asheville, NC 28804
 (800) 438-5800
www.groveparkinn.com

have to be wealthy to be one? Discuss various types of libraries – perhaps the ones in your city or state, including private libraries, corporate libraries, and how school and public libraries are different. Stress one library is not enough!

11 Words

What is a parapet?

13 Careers

How was Carl Sandburg’s life different from Mr. Vanderbilt’s? How would you have liked Mr. Sandburg’s part-time jobs? What part-time jobs have you had? What’s the advantage of having a job such as cleaning spittoons? (Some of my student employees resent taking out the trash, sweeping the floor, etc.!) Discuss this with your class. Who do they think does these jobs? Can you supervise a person if you have done their job better than if you never had? What does “starting at the bottom and working your way up” mean?



13 Life

What does persistence mean? Do you think you would have the discipline and dedication to spend a total of 47 years to write 6 books on one subject?

What do you think about the family reading together instead of watching television? (Try reading aloud to the class from *Thistleworth: Poetry to Read Aloud* – much of it rhymes and is humorous, such as a poem about a kudzu monster that eats up a family and its possessions and a balding teddy bear who gets a hair transplant via a piece of shag carpet.)

History is Always Changing!

Have students discuss how history is always changing! Mr. Vanderbilt had great vision and was always changing and improving things. Instead of just keeping Biltmore House as a living museum, those responsible for the house have been creative in building a quality tourist attraction.

They have revived the vineyards to use the land to produce fine table wines which are sold in the shop, and many other things to keep Biltmore House up with the 21st century! Part of this is essential; it takes a great deal of money to run an operation like Biltmore House. And part of this is what Mr. Vanderbilt would have done – keep things moving on, improving, up with the times. How do students think this applies to history, schools, careers, learning?



Questions for Discussion

❖ Needless to say, Biltmore House is a very unusual tourist attraction. If you had inherited Biltmore House, what would you have done with it? What do you think Mr. Vanderbilt would do if he were still alive?

❖ Do you think there will ever be such a private home as Biltmore built again? How has architecture changed over the years? What would the Mr. Vanderbilt of the 21st century build?

❖ What does being a “person of vision” mean? Was Mr. Vanderbilt such a person?

❖ Since Mr. Vanderbilt was quite wealthy, why do you think he had such ideas about using everything to its fullest use?

❖ What do you know about your family’s history? Former family homes? Where were they? Did they have names? What type of architecture would they have been? Do you have any photographs to share?

❖ What is historic fiction? Is *The Mystery of Biltmore House* an example of historic fiction? If not, what is the difference? (It is set in contemporary time; the history is incidental to the main story.) Does reading about history, people, etc. within the context of a fictional story, make the information more interesting? How can you use very specific, concrete facts and figures to make your own writing more interesting?

❖ What would be the most interesting way to study Biltmore House: through a mystery book; the encyclopedia; non-fiction books; original documents such as letters, bills, etc.; an actual visitation to the site; a seminar by the curator? Discuss various approaches to learning about any subject.) What do history, geography, economics, language, and math have to do with one another?

Kudzu

What is kudzu, anyway?

Kudzu was first brought to America around 1876 as an ornamental shade plant. Before air conditioning, the prolific vine was a welcome drape for porches and arbors, protecting shelter from swelter. On U.S. 90 in Florida, a bronze marker reads KUDZU WAS DEVELOPED HERE. You can almost always find someone with a Georgia license plate cursing it.

For a while, it was intentionally grown as a ground cover and for forage. This was the period when the South did rise again – mean and green. By 1945 the “miracle vine” was king instead of cotton, until folks began to discover they had to close their windows at night to keep the kudzu from growing inside! How fast does kudzu grow – you measure it in miles per hour, some say!

But one country’s creepy creeper is another’s culinary cure-all. In Japan, kudzu is used in their fine cuisine as well as for highly-regarded medicinal teas. Then, there’s kudzu honey, kudzu cloth, kudzu cat food, kudzu paper, and kudzu clothes.



Ø Do a map of how the characters got to Biltmore. Stacy came from Asheville; Michael from Tryon, N.C.; Trent from Spartanburg, S.C. Now add Flat Rock & Carl Sandburg's home, Connemara. People came to Biltmore from the states that are nearby. Add the states and nearest main cities that border western North Carolina. Mr. Vanderbilt picked this site because it had such a great view. Add some of the things he might have been able to see from the top floor of his home: Mt. Mitchell; Bat Cave; Caesar's Head; the Great Smoky Mountains; and Nantahala Forest. Add your town. How would you have to travel to get to Asheville?

Ø Find the county of Transylvania in North Carolina; find the Transylvania of Dracula!

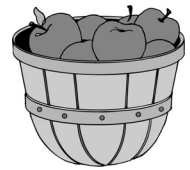
Ø Look at a map of New York City. Find Central Park. How large do you think it is? Are you surprised at the size it takes up? Would that have been a major landscape design job for Frederick Law Olmsted?

Ø Use a world map. Go through the book and mark on your map the city, state or country related to every person mentioned. For example, where was Napoleon from? You can speculate: Thomas Wolfe had his books published in New York City; Carl Sandburg lived in Chicago. Do you see how one spot can be connected in many ways to the whole, wide world? Does this give geography a new meaning to you? Won't we have to know the geography of space as well? Take yourself or your school and do the same type of map (where family is + from, etc.; or for the school, where the principal is from, where supplies come from, etc.)

Here is a recipe for a treat young guests at Biltmore House might have enjoyed. The apples would have been grown right on the grounds!

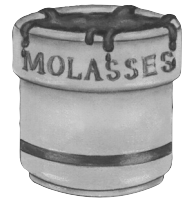
TAFFY APPLES

Wash 12 apples



Push a wooden skewer into the stem of each

In a saucepan on the stove put: 1 cup of molasses, 1 cup sugar, 1 teaspoon vinegar, 1/4 cup of water.



Heat all until boiling and continue to cook to reach 270 degrees.

Remove from heat and add 2 tablespoons of butter

Dip the apples into the hot syrup until they are coated

Cool the apples on waxed paper

Tip: Put the pan of syrup into a bowl of hot water if it tries to get thick too fast while you are dipping the apples.



Math Activities

1. If the gardens had 3,000 rose bushes and each had 47 roses, how many roses would be in the garden? If 1 gardener could prune 25 bushes an hour, how long would it take her to complete the task? If she was paid \$5.15 an hour, how much would she make for this work?
2. There are 250 rooms in Biltmore House. If it took you 10 minutes to vacuum half the rooms (each), and 20 minutes to vacuum the rest of the rooms, how long would it take you to finish the job? If the average square feet of a room was 144 square feet, how many square feet would the house have? If building costs were \$60 per square foot, what would it cost to build the house?
3. If it took 1,000 workers 5 years to build the house, and each worker worked 10 hours a day, 6 days a week – how many man-hours did it take to complete the house?
4. If 1 limestone block for the house weighed 3 tons and there were 20,000 of the blocks – how much would the house weigh?
5. If it took the workers 30 minutes to ride the train the 3 miles from Biltmore Village to the house, how fast did they travel?
6. If the house was opened in 1895, how old is it today?
7. If they put 5,000 ornaments on 40 Christmas trees, how many ornaments would each tree have?
8. If you had 20,000 library books and wanted to build shelves for them – and each book was an average of 2 inches in width – how many running feet of shelves would you need?
9. If you could speak 6 languages and you knew 15,000 words in each – how many words would you know?
10. If Carl Sandburg's biography of Abraham Lincoln has a million and a half words, and he wrote 1,250 words a day – how long would it take to write that much?
11. If Mr. Vanderbilt locked up \$986,432 worth of jewels in 27 of the compartments of the jewel box, how much was each compartment worth – if they were about equal in value?

Here is a Victorian-era parlor game holiday visitors to Biltmore House might have enjoyed playing!

HUNT THE SLIPPER

Guests sit in a circle on the floor or in chairs. One guest sits in the



middle. The boot from around King Crispin's* neck is removed. The person in the center closes his or her eyes, and chants, "Cobbler, cobbler, mend my shoe. Make it, make it all like new. Three stitches will do!" In the meantime, the others are passing the boot behind their back. When the person in the center opens her eyes, the person holding the boot keeps it. BUT, everyone pretends to continue to be passing it. The person in the middle has 3 chances to guess who has the boot in spite of all the wiggly hands behind backs. The person with the boot then goes to the center of the ring to try.

*King Crispin was really Saint Crispin, patron saint of the shoe and bootmakers.



Writing Activities

The Mystery of Biltmore House Suggestions for Writing Activities

✍ Write 3 other possible titles for *The Mystery of Biltmore House*: 1) as an adult mystery; 2) as a humorous book; and 3) as a serious work of non-fiction.

✍ Write a shopping list Mr. Vanderbilt might have taken to town to plan a Christmas grand opening for 500 friends!

✍ Write a poem about the Biltmore House – it can be silly or serious.

✍ Write an “ode” to an ice cream sundae.



✍ Write a fictional page in a journal as if you were: a) Mr. Vanderbilt in 1895; b) a servant; or c) a visitor.

✍ Pretend you have a friend who is blind. Using the photograph on the cover of the book, write a description of Biltmore House so they could picture it accurately in their mind.

✍ Pick one of your favorite parts of the book. Now write it as if: 1) it were the headline story in a newspaper; or it were being announced on the six o'clock news.

✍ See the last page of the book. Write an additional paragraph.

✍ Write a title to a sequel to *The Mystery of Biltmore House*. Do a list of possible characters. Do a tentative table of contents. Write a first sentence. Write a last sentence. Now, think about writing a book.



Have students discuss how not everything was “store-bought” during the Victorian Era. People had to be creative and ingenious! Even everyday folks invented new ways to do the many things that had to be done. Here’s an example!

A Home Fire Extinguisher



Lacking the protection of a horse-drawn fire wagon or a pressurized water system, country folks often devised their own homemade fire extinguishers from common household substances. One part baking soda mixed with three parts fine sand yield an adequate powder extinguisher. Stored in bottles or tins at strategic locations throughout the home, the inexpensive concoction could be thrown at the base of the flames in the event of a flare-up.



Spelling Words

Study words, then fold page in half and take a spelling test. Unfold the page to check your work.

ASHEVILLE _____

SPHINX _____

DRACULA _____

CONSERVATORY _____

GYMNASIUM _____

VICTORIAN _____

MANUSCRIPT _____

MILLIONAIRE _____

ARCHITECT _____

BOTANICAL _____

CASTLE _____

ELEVATOR _____

KUDZU _____

PARAPET _____

VILLAGE _____

CHATEAUX _____

TRANSYLVANIA _____

ROTISSERIE _____

TOPIARY _____

CURATOR _____

VINEYARD _____

RENAISSANCE _____

DAIRY _____

MANSION _____

BANQUET _____

BILLIARDS _____

HALLOWEEN _____

NAPOLEON _____

An old Victorian poem – wonderful for reading aloud with great emotion and acting out movements.

Either read aloud to the class or let each child read a line – allow time for laughs!!

JEST 'FORE CHRISTMAS

Father calls me William, sister calls me Will,
Mother calls me Willie, but the fellers call me Bill!
Mighty glad I ain't a girl – ruther be a boy,
Without them sashes, curls, an' things that's worn by Fauntleroy!
Love to chunk green apples an' go swimmin' in the lake –
Hate to take the castor-ile they give for belly-ache!
'Most all the time, the whole year round, there ain't no flies on me,
But jest 'fore Christmas I'm good as I kin be!



Got a yellor dog named Sport, sic him on the cat;
First thing she knows she doesn't know where she is at!
Got a clipper sled, an' when us kids goes out to slid,
'Long comes the grocery cart, an' we all hook a ride!
But sometimes when the grocery mane is worried an' cross,
He raches at us with his whip, an' larrups up his hoss,
An' then I laff an' holler, "Oh, ye never teched me!"
But jest 'fore Christmas I'm good as I kin be!

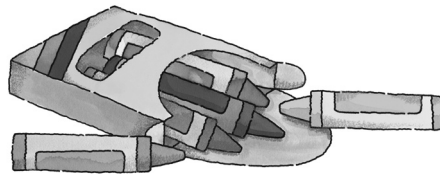
Gran'ma says she hopes that when I git to be a man,
I'll be a missionarer like her oldest brother, Dan,
As was et up by the cannibuls



Coloring Activities

- ❖ Draw one scene from the mystery.
- ❖ Color a Christmas tree from Victorian days.
- ❖ Do a “cutaway” of Biltmore House’s 250 rooms! (Take the outside wall away – like a dollhouse – and do the rooms you can see from that perspective.)

- ❖ Draw a portrait of:
Michael
Stacy
Trent
Wendy
Uncle Ed
the Curator
Mr. Vanderbilt
the Christmas topiary goose



- ❖ Draw a topiary garden of animals
- ❖ Draw the ugliest gargoyle you can imagine!



- ❖ If you had been at the Halloween party where Mr. Vanderbilt let his guest draw on the brick wall, what would you have drawn? Take a piece of paper and draw a brick wall – now do your picture in chalk.

- ❖ Draw a design of a chess set – it can be traditional, silly (like a sports team) – anything!

- ❖ See the title type on the cover of the book. This typeface is called “Mardi Gras”. Make up your own typeface alphabet for the letters in: a) Dracula; b) Millionaire; c) Toytown



(continued)

that lives in Ceylon's Isle,
Where every prospect
pleases, an' only man is vile!
But gran'ma she has never
been to see a Wild West show,
Nor read the Life of Daniel
Boone, or else I guess she'd
know
That Buff'lo Bill and cow-boys
is good enough for me!
Except, just 'fore Christmas,
when I'm good as I kin be!

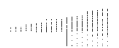
And when old Sport he hangs
around, so solemn-like an'
still,

His eyes they keep a-sayin':
"What's the matter, little Bill?"
The old cat sneaks down off
her perch an' wonders
what's become
Of them two enemies of
hern that used to make
things hum!



But I am so perlitte an' tend so
earnestly to biz,
That mother says to father:
"How improved our Willie is!"
But father, havin' been a boy
hisself, suspicions me
When jest 'fore Christmas, I'm
as good as I kin be!

For Christmas, with its lots an'
lots of candies, cakes an' toys,
Was made, they say, for
proper kids an' not for
naughty boys;
So wash yer face an' bresh yer
hair, an' mind yer p's and q's,
An' don't bust out yer
pantaloons, an' don't wear out
yer shoes;
Say "Yessum" to the ladies, an'
"Yessur" to the men,
An' when they's company,
don't pass yer plate for pie
again;
But, thinking of the things
yer'd like to see upon that
tree,
Jest 'fore Christmas
be as good as yer
kin be!



Reading Activities

Try to get some of the works of the following authors and read a little of them:

 O. Henry (Read *The Gift of the Magi*. Talk about surprise endings.)

 Read some of Carl Sandburg's poetry.

 Get a copy of *Look Homeward, Angel*. Read the first part about when Thomas Wolfe was a boy.

 Read *The Marshes of Glynn* by Sidney Lanier. He was poet laureate of the State of Georgia.

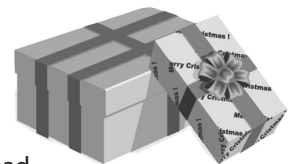
 Read *The Raven* by Edgar Allen Poe.

Teachers: Asheville was a center of authors. F. Scott Fitzgerald often visited there. Many came because the mountains were supposed to be better places for those with tuberculosis. You might discuss how a writer's life was different then. These were very talented writers, yet they often lived under great financial pressure and hardship.



O. Henry

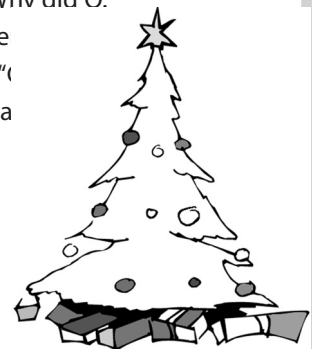
O. Henry was born in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1862. Known then as Will Porter, he worked as a druggist's clerk while he wrote on the side. He later lived on a ranch in Texas, served time in prison, and fled to Central America. His famous Christmas story, *The Gift of the Magi*, was written in three hours to meet a deadline.



Read this story aloud to your students, then discuss the following:

- Is this a love story?
- Would you have done what he did?
- Would you have done what she did?
- Do you think Della and Jim had a happy Christmas? Why or why not?

•Why did O.
He
it "
Ma




Halloween Activity

MAKE YOUR OWN "HALLOWEEN ROOM" AND DO THIS ACTIVITY:



GHOSTEST WITH THE MOSTEST!

WHO says that the traditional has to be boring? Pick 6 of the 12 customary (well, sort of!) Halloween things below and write an original story using all 6 items! (C'mon – show Stephen King your stuff!)

- 🌀 A dark and stormy night
- 🌀 A witch in a blew dress (not blue . . . blew!)
- 🌀 Siamese bats!
- 🌀 A magic Apple (the computer – not the fruit!)
- 🌀 A two-ton PUMPKIN
- 🌀 An original curse (not bad words! – a curse!)
- 🌀 The phone number: Transylvania 232-2666 (it's long distance)
- 🌀 A mummy name – Chrysanthe (as in Chrysanthemum-my!) 
- 🌀 A boy who looks just like your best friend
- 🌀 A girl who looks just like your best friend
- 🌀 A crystal ball (not like a round clear ball - like a big dance!)
- 🌀 (?What's the last item? An invisible ??? – I don't know since it's invisible!)





Scavenger Hunt

Kids love scavenger hunts! There is one in The Mystery of Biltmore House kids can use when they visit. Otherwise, kids might enjoy this Halloween Room Scavenger Hunt—anytime of year!

HALLOWEEN ROOM SCAVENGER HUNT!



See how many of the things listed below you can round up! Also: write a poem that uses each item!

1. A black cat (it could be stuffed!)
2. A witch curse from Shakespeare
3. Six synonyms for ghost
4. The title of a mystery book
5. Something invisible
6. A shriek! 
7. A pumpkin pie recipe
8. Something that would hold tricks and treats that's not a bag or sack
9. Two black things and three orange things
10. A ghost story, poem or riddle
11. The numbers on the telephone that would spell B-O-O
12. One tombstone epitaph (you can make one up!) 

Christmas Activities

COBWEB PARTY! *A popular Victorian party for children!*

Pick a room. Take a ball of yarn (a different color for each guest) and string it across the room – up, down, under cushions, etc. At the end of the yarn put a wrapped gift. You can tie old fashion pull taffy on the yarn along the way. Now do the same for each guest. The colored yarn will make a giant “cobweb” of the room. Each guest can take a turn trying to weave their way to their gift while the rest cheer on the “fly” tangled in the Christmas web!



OLD FASHION PULL TAFFY



2 1/2 cups sugar	1/2 cup water
1/4 cup vinegar	1/8 teaspoon salt
1 tbs. butter or margarine	1 tsp. vanilla extract

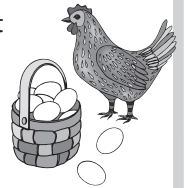
Combine first 5 ingredients in a small Dutch oven; cook, without stirring, over medium heat just until mixture reaches soft crack stage (270°). Remove from heat. Stir in vanilla.

Pour candy onto a well-buttered 15 x 10 x 1-inch jellyroll pan or slab of marble. Let cool to touch; pull candy until light in color and difficult to pull. (Butter hands if candy is sticky.) Divide candy in half, and pull into a rope, 1 inch in diameter. Cut taffy into 1-inch pieces; wrap each piece individually in waxed paper. Yield: about 40 (1-inch) pieces.



Eggnog!

Well, we can't use raw eggs (as the Victorians would have!)



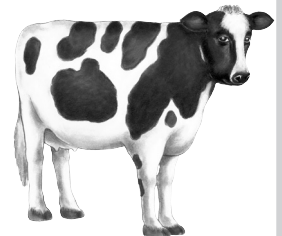
or lots of rum or brandy (as the Victorians also would have!), but here's a fun form of a popular “nog” your students can enjoy making for parent/teacher night?!

Biltmore House Ice Cream Eggnog

1 gallon store-bought eggnog
1 quart vanilla ice cream
1 tub Cool Whip topping
Nutmeg

In a large punch bowl pour 1 gallon eggnog. Put scoops of vanilla ice cream in the bowl. Top with dollops of Cool Whip. Sprinkle lightly with nutmeg. Serve in chilled punch cups.

E-Z Method: Fill small paper cups with small scoop of ice cream. Pour eggnog over. Add dollop of Cool Whip and sprinkle with nutmeg.



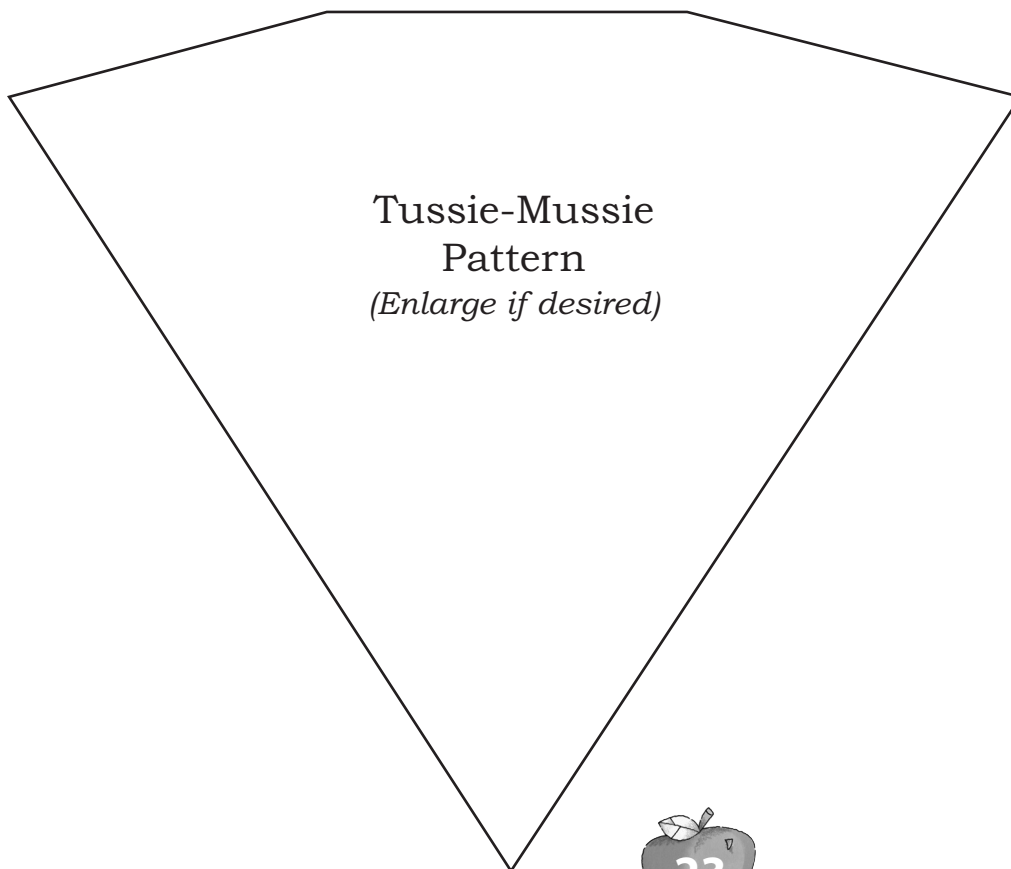
BILTMORE HOUSE CHRISTMAS "TUSSIE - MUSSIES" A Cornucopia

Materials:

shirt cardboard
velvet, brocade, or other rich materials
flowers, lace, and ribbon for trimming
pipe cleaners

Directions:

1. Cut a piece of shirt cardboard by pattern. Cut velvet, brocade, or desired material and glue to cardboard, turning under top edge for finished appearance.
2. Form a cone and staple or glue at lapped edge.
3. Trim with lace, ribbon, or flowers, as desired.
4. Cover an 8" pipe cleaner with braid or ribbon and staple to cone.



Carolina Potpourri

*(tell kids to pronounce it
poe-poe-ree)*

Fill your Tussie-Mussies with this if you do not fill them with candy.

Into a bowl, put:

Flower petals (dead or dried ok)
Nuts (acorns, etc.)
Pinecones (the very small ones)
Pieces of pretty colored fabric
Pieces of confetti-cut paper
Crayon shavings

Sprinkle with a few drops of perfume; stir.

Fill your tussie-mussie almost full. Kids can tell their Moms that they are good to hang on the Christmas tree, a doorknob, or in your clothes closet.



Chess Trivia

♣ In the twelfth century, a king named Knud V was playing chess with another king in the country of Denmark. An enemy king sneaked into the room and killed one of the kings. The other escaped by hiding behind the chessboard and using it as a shield!

♣ In the sixteenth century, the Great Akbar of India built a giant chessboard on his palace grounds. As playing pieces, he used real horses, elephants, camels – and even some of his own wives!

♣ A man named Howard Staunton designed the pieces you see in most chess sets today. Although you can find all kinds of crazy chess pieces, these are the ones still used in chess tournaments and pictured in most books where you learn to play chess.

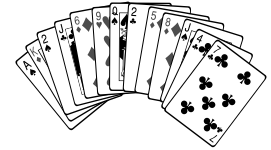


♣ Around 200 years ago, a machine was built which played chess with anyone who wanted to challenge it to a game. Expert players from all over Europe came to play with the mechanical player – which almost always won. Then one day, someone accidentally opened the machine and found a real chess player hidden inside!

♣ How would you like to go out to dinner (in the 1400's) and for dessert have a cake with a chessboard top of brown and white icing and chessmen made of molded sugar? When you captured a piece you could eat it!



Stacy loved to play bridge. Do you students play? (See my "Six Puppyfeet: BRIDGE FOR KIDS.")



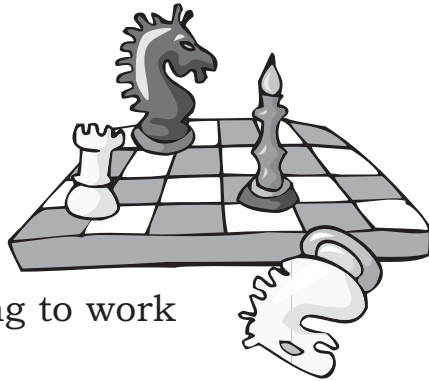
Here is some bridge trivia to share:

The Chinese invented playing cards over a thousand years ago. Once, cards were banned in Florence, Italy for religious reasons. In 1615, King James made people pay a tax on playing cards – to complete your deck, you had to buy the Ace of Spades from the government!

The meaning of the symbols and numbers used on playing cards is still a mystery. There are many ideas that the Hearts, Clubs (which kids often call Puppy Feet), Spades, and Diamonds represented warriors, peasants, priests, and merchants.

At first, playing cards were made by hand using stencils. Later, cards were printed by such people as James Franklin (Ben Franklin's older brother). It is said that Ben used discs cut from his brother's playing cards for his famous kite experiment!

♣ The first czar of Russia – Ivan the Great – died while trying to work out a chess move!



♣ In 1960 Georges Koltanowsky played chess with 56 people, one after another. He was blindfolded! How many games did he win? 50! Six were ties. He did not lose a single game!

♣ If you were a medieval minstrel or troubadour, you were expected to carry your chess set from castle to castle to play with anyone who wanted you to.

♣ Chess was one of the main things the kings and knights and ladies did for fun!

♣ In the Middle Ages, tavern-owners hung a chessboard outside the door so traveling knights would know they could stop and play.

♣ To be a knight, you had to accomplish seven knightly things. One of these was the mastery of the game of chess!

♣ In 1027 two kings were playing chess. One of the kings took back a move (you know how mad that makes you in any game!). But this king had the other one executed!



Six "Puppy Feet" Reasons To Learn To Play Bridge

1. Bridge is fun; a great way to relax from studies or chores.
2. Bridge is interesting – each and every game is different.
3. Bridge is challenging. It makes you use your head: thinking, planning, memory and creative thinking are all used in this game.
4. Bridge is good for your math skills– you have to add up the value of your cards in your head, and you will learn to remember how many cards of a certain suit have been played.
5. Bridge teaches strategy–how you will do something with the things (good or bad) you have at hand–a useful skill in all aspects of life!
6. Bridge is a great way to meet friends of all ages and learn to work and play together as a team. But most of all, bridge is just plain fun!





Biltmore Word Scramble



*Unscramble the words and solve the “mystery”
of these mixed up letters!*

S S C E H T S E

R Y I A D

L E T A S C

V Y D R N I A E

E E L L H A S I V

M Y G

T V N D I A E R L B

A A D U R C L

K D U C

R T C U R O A



Biltmore House Word Search

*See if you can find the "Biltmore House" words hidden
in the maze of letters below!*

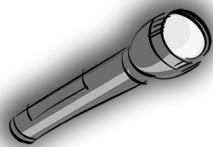
V I L L A G E C R Y J M L P O P Q
 I C V V V C O N S E R V A T O T Y
 C H L R K A R C H I T E C T X X X
 T A R E N A I S S A N C E R R Y T
 O T O C L U E V S P H I N X X Y Z
 R E A C H R I S T M A S R G J O A
 I A D I C E C R E A M N Y R W Q D
 A U B M I C H A E L X Z Q W D F H
 N X V M N B V C X Z L K J H G F S

MICHAEL
 VILLAGE
 CONSERVATORY
 VICTORIAN
 CLUE
 ICE CREAM



ARCHITECT
 SPHINX
 RENAISSANCE
 CHRISTMAS
 CHATEAUX
 ROAD



Biltmore Fill-in-the-Blank Crossword

1. A county near Biltmore:

T/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___

2. Give a bush a funny haircut =

T/___/___/___/___/___/___/___

3. Written words before they are published in final form:

M/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___

4. Of handymen mechanical and gardens

B/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___

5. "Round & round" =

R/___/___/___/___/___/___/___/___

6. Ugly is the:

G/___/___/___/___/___/___/___!

7. Wouldn't any kid want to live in:

T/___/___/___/___/___/___?

8. What Biltmore's gardens have in common with Dungeons & Dragons!

M/___/___/___/___/___



Biltmore Matching

Match the following authors with some special fact about them!

1. O. HENRY

A. Has a sheepdog mascot

2. CAROLE MARSH

B. Wife raised goats

3. THOMAS WOLFE

C. Short story surprise-ender

4. SIDNEY LANIER

D. Poet of the *Marshes of Glynn*

5. CARL SANDBURG

E. Wrote scary poems

6. EDGAR A. POE

F. He couldn't go home again

7. F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

G. Wrote *The Great Gatsby*



Biltmore Fill-in-the-Blanks

1. A disease that people often went to the western North Carolina mountains to try to find a cure for was

_____.

2. Where Thomas Wolfe wanted the angel to look:

_____.

3. A gratuity is also called a _____.

4. If Mr. Vanderbilt were still alive he would probably _____ paper and aluminum cans, he was so resource-conscious.

5. A Rampe Douce slopes very _____.

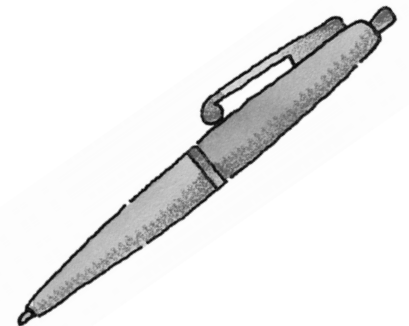
6. If you design yards and gardens, you are a _____ architect.

7. William Sidney Porter was also known as _____.

8. A pseudonym is also a _____ name.

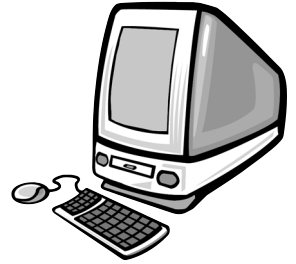
9. What Carl Sandburg used as a desk: _____.

10. For travel information, you can always write to the _____ of _____.



True or False?

- ___ 1. Mr. Vanderbilt would have been a foe of environmental protection.
- ___ 2. Today's computers are tomorrow's antiques.
- ___ 3. The servants at Biltmore were probably very happy living in such a nice, big house as Biltmore.
- ___ 4. A curator cures hams for Thanksgiving and Christmas.
- ___ 5. Yule is a short term for "you all."
- ___ 6. Mr. Vanderbilt was illiterate.
- ___ 7. A poinsettia is a settee.
- ___ 8. A cornucopia is usually eaten on the cob.
- ___ 9. A parapet is a pet parakeet.
- ___ 10. The Vanderbilts were deprived because they didn't have television.



Answer Key...

to The Mystery of Biltmore House Activities



Biltmore Math Activities

1. 141,000 roses, 120 hours, \$618.00;
2. 1250 minutes (62.5 hours), 36,000 square feet, \$2,160,000.00;
3. 15,600,000 man hours;
4. 60,000 tons;
5. 6 mph;
6. today's year - 1895;
7. 125 ornaments/tree;
8. 3,333 $\frac{1}{3}$ running feet;
9. 90,000 words;
10. 1,200 words;
11. \$36,534.52 per compartment

Biltmore Word Scramble

Chess Set; Dairy; Castle; Vineyard; Asheville; Gym; Vanderbilt; Dracula; Duck; Curator

Biltmore Fill-in-the-Blank Crossword

1. Transylvania;
2. Topiary;
3. Manuscript;
4. Botanical;
5. Rotisserie;
6. Gargoyle;
7. Toytown;
8. Mazes

Biltmore Matching

1. O. Henry & C. Surprise ending;
2. Carole Marsh & A. Sheepdog;
3. Wolfe & F. Couldn't go home;
4. Lanier & D. Poet of Marshes of Glynn;
5. Sandburg & B. Raised goats;
6. Poe & E. Scary poems;
7. Fitzgerald & G. Great Gatsby

Biltmore Fill in the Blanks

1. Tuberculosis;
2. Home;
3. Tip;
4. Recycle;
5. Gently;
6. Landscape;
7. O. Henry;
8. Pen;
9. Orange Crates;
10. Chamber of Commerce

True or False

1. False;
2. True;
3. False;
4. False;
5. False;
6. False;
7. False;
8. False;
9. False;
10. True and False?!

