

## BOOK REVIEW

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### Review of: *The Forensic Mission: Investigate Forensic Science Through A Killer Mystery!*

**REFERENCE:** Hein EK. *The forensic mission: investigate forensic science through a killer mystery!* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publish, Inc., 2007, 260 pp.

The trend of attracting middle and high school students to science through forensic science has become commonplace in the media. In addition, the number of books whose genres are geared toward forensic science and this audience has increased substantially in recent years. *The Forensic Mission: Investigate Forensic Science Through a Killer Mystery!* is one such book. In this book, the author utilizes a murder investigation to hook the reader while introducing them to a variety of forensic science disciplines.

The majority of the book's 260 pages are devoted to the development of the murder investigation storyline. For the most part, I found the storyline for the murder investigation to be realistic and of interest for the target audience. The types of forensic analyses performed during the murder investigation fairly depicted the types of analyses performed in real world forensics. The author's inclusion of negative forensic findings definitely added to the realism of the text.

Included in the text are two appendices containing lists of additional reading and websites. This resource is essential for the reader who desires additional information regarding specific forensic disciplines.

Forensic science concepts are addressed as they arise during the murder investigation. At the end of the respective chapters, the author introduces the reader to the forensic science concepts that had arisen within the storyline of the murder investigation. The forensic science portions of each chapter were divided into three categories: Vocabulary, Background Information, and Forensic Implications and Jurisprudence. The forensic disciplines discussed in the book included entomology, pathology, DNA, toxicology, firearms, fingerprints, and bloodstain pattern analysis. The author's inclusion of the types of academic qualifications one should attain in order to enter these forensic disciplines was certainly a positive quality of this book.

Unfortunately, a few errors do exist within the scientific portions of this text. These were especially evident in the vocabulary sections where terms were either defined incorrectly or their definitions were overly minimized. The following are a couple of examples. In Chapter 2, "Arterial spray: Bloodstain pattern caused when a major artery or vein is cut open," in the actual text the author appears unaware of the difference between an artery and a vein! In Chapter 4, "Livor mortis: The outward appearance or color of a deceased body," the incorporation of the vocabulary section within the text of the individual chapters was a definite distraction and would have been better suited as an appendix.

The transition between the "fast" reading murder mystery and introduction of the scientific concepts was awkward at times. Additional consideration should have been given to the degree of detail and extent to which some of the forensic disciplines were discussed. For example, in Chapter 8, the author used a cross-section diagram of a shotgun shell and an extraction diagram of a shotgun shell rather than a .45 caliber cartridge and a semi-auto pistol which were a central portion of the murder investigation storyline. Neither a shotgun nor shotgun shells were a part of the investigation. In Chapter 7, the author expounded upon the historical contributions made in the field of fingerprints; this is not to say historical contributions are not important, but for this type of book, I fail to see the need.

*The Forensic Mission: Investigate Forensic Science Through A Killer Mystery!* was not meant for the practicing forensic scientist. Nor do I believe it was the intention of the author to have this book used as a resource for practicing forensic scientists, but rather it is focused toward the layman (student) who may have an interest in forensic science. Even with the flaws identified in this text, the majority of the information within the forensic science portions is fairly depicted and it will hopefully entice another generation of young people into a career in science or forensic science.

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