RESEARCH DETECTIVES

1920-23, Littlehampton, West Sussex. A wave of scurrilous, libellous postcards hits homes, shops and even the local vicarage. Police arrest Rose Gooding, but the letters keep coming, suggesting another hand at work. Was another neighbour tyring to frame Rose to defend "female respectability"?

Your job is to sift primary documents, books, laws and press coverage, then name the true culprit and explain the bias or motive through your chosen research lens.

SOLVE THE LITTLEHAMPTON POISON-PEN MYSTERY

How It Works

Find three core sources

- Book – search the catalogue for The Littlehampton Libels; note the Dewey number.
- Journal – Download or view an open-access article.
- One other type – statute, blog, newspaper, or data.

Optional Lens work

- For each Lens Card, add two more sources.
- Use the keyword tips printed on the card.

Evaluate

- Use the CRAAP test   to verify your sources.

Write

- In this booklet, hand write a 40 word Verdict naming the culprit.
- On each Lens Card, hand write a 40 word lens paragraph.

Reference list

- Type all sources on the Reference Sheet.
- Attach the sheet to your booklet.

Turn in on induction day!

- Hand the completed core and lens work to the librarians during your session on the day.
- Each Lens Card = one entry to win a prize draw!

Resource Types

BOOKS	**NEWSPAPERS**	**PEER REVIEWED JOURNALS**	**PRIMARY DOCUMENTS**
Physical or eBooks West Sussex Libraries has *The Littlehampton Libels*	BBC, The Guardian, The Times, The Independent, Sky, Reuters, The Economist & more. Public Library - Free!	JSTOR, Google Scholar, DOAJ, Science Open, ResearchGate	Postcard , police log, 1911 census scan
POLICY / LEGISLATION	**REPUTABLE WEBSITE/BLOG**	**DATA / STATISTICS**	**AUDIO / VIDEO**
Legislation.gov.uk	The Conversation, Collabrative Insights, LSE Review of Books, Edge, Natonal Archives	Scholarly Journals, Government Reports, Academic databases, Statistical websites	Podcasts, Documentaries, Films, YouTube, TedTalks

Library catalogue: https://uk.accessit.online/bsh03/

Core Investigation Steps

Study the original sources on the <u>National Archives</u> blog and any two credible sources of your choice, then write a single 40-word verdict naming the true author of the Littlehampton "libellous" letters and citing the evidence that seals their guilt.

1. Write a one-sentence research question:

2. Find your anchor quote (include as an in-text citation):
   Example:
   The Littlehampton Libels (Hilliard 2017) – page no.: ___

   Quote:

3. 40-word verdict

Lens Menu: Maximum 2

Psychology

Explore how profanity can shift power dynamics. Locate one postcard or courtroom line where Edith Swan's choice of swear-word seems calculated, then consult the <u>Conversation essay</u> *on "Wicked Little Letters" to capture its insight into purposeful swearing. Finally, draw on a peer-reviewed psychology study that measures the benefits or costs of strategic profanity. Using these three pieces of evidence, craft a tight, 40 word verdict that decides whether Swan's swears were a shrewd psychological weapon or a self-defeating outburst.*

Media Studies:

Find a 1921–23 national headline (<u>AccessIt</u>*) that inflamed the Littlehampton poison pen story. Quote the headline's sensational hook. Name the technique (e.g. 'moral shock', 'human-interest angle'). Locate information on tabloid practices and quote one supporting stat or definition. In about 40 words decide whether today's clickbait is any worse.*

Class & Social History:

Read the FindMyPast blog post and read the section about Rose Gooding's household (<u>Findmypast</u>*). Note her occupation . Do the same for Edith Swan. Locate a peer reviewed article on inter-war working class community conflict and quote one stat. In 40 words decide whether class friction tipped the libel case.*

Gender: Respecatbility & Speech:

Select a line from the poison-pen case, postcard, courtroom exchange, or press report, that hinges on the belief "respectable women don't swear." <u>Pair it with Bee Wilson's essay on the Littlehampton Libels</u>, which dissects how gendered notions of purity let Edith Swan weaponise obscenity. Add one scholarly work on gender bias in language or courts. With those three voices, craft a 40-word verdict: did rigid ideas of feminine respectability enable Swan's campaign or expose her?

Lens Menu: Maximum 2

Law:

Quote a primary legal moment, verdict, jury direction, or statute excerpt, that shaped Rose Gooding's convictions. Set it against Bee Wilson's critique of the trials as a "flaw in the English justice system" in Merely a Warning That a Noun is Coming and one peer-reviewed article on early-20th-century libel law or wrongful conviction. In about 40 words decide whether the Littlehampton saga proves libel law protected reputation or merely punished the powerless.

Language:

Select a postcard or press line in which a swear-word delivers the sting, then weigh it against the Conversation essay   on "Wicked Little Letters" and its claim that swearing can help rather than harm when used judiciously. Add insight from any scholarly pragmatics or sociolinguistics study that measures when profanity sharpens communication, be it in workplaces, sport huddles, or online chats. With those three perspectives, write a concise 40-word judgement deciding whether Edith Swan's choice of expletives was rhetorically brilliant or merely self-sabotage.

Digital-Age Parallel:

Identify one trolling tactic Edith Swan used (e.g., personal ridicule, obscene language, reputation smearing) by quoting from this article from ABCnet comparing today's trolling with the letters of the 1920s.   Find a peer-reviewed article on modern cyber-harassment that describes the same tactic and quote one diagnostic sentence. In 40 words decide whether today's tech makes the tactic more damaging.
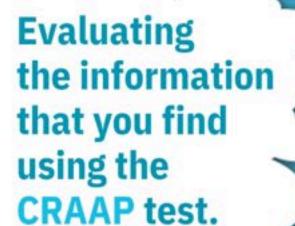
Geography:

Trace how tight physical proximity can sour neighbourly ties. Start by marking Edith Swan's and Rose Gooding's cottages on any historic or modern map and note their door-to-door distance. Read the Substack essay "The Case of the Littlehampton Poison-Pen Letters"   for its account of the once-friendly households whose shared garden became a fault-line of gossip and hostility. Then consult a human geography study on how micro-spatial closeness intensifies conflict in communities and quote one statistic or definition. With these three pieces of evidence, craft a 40-word verdict deciding whether the street's people-geography helped intensify the letters.
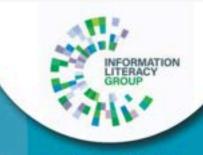
Referencing

Referencing

Click here to learn more

Learn how to cite your sources:
https://bit.ly/referencebls

Evaluating the information that you find using the CRAAP test.

Once you have found your information it is important to evaluate it so that you can ensure that you use the information that works best for your project or research. One way of doing this is by performing the **CRAAP** test on your sources.

Currency, Relevancy, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose

Asking the questions below about each website, document or piece of information that you find will help you decide which ones are relevant for your project.

Currency

When was it published? Is the information too old? Does it have a date on it? When was it last up-dated? How important is it that you have up-to-date information?

Relevancy

Does it fit your project? Will your project be stronger if you include this information?

Authority

Who has published or written the information? Do you trust them? Is it easy to find out anything about them? Who was it written for?

Accuracy

Is the information correct? Check with another source, if you are not sure to see if they say the same thing. Are the details correct?

Purpose

Why does the information exist? Is it trying to sell you something, persuade you or give you an opinion? Once you figure this out, you can then decide how to use the information that you have found.

There is lots of information available on the **CRAAP** test produced by universities and other libraries that can show you the test in action. You can find it by doing a simple search on the internet.

REMEMBER if you are not sure how to apply any part of the test, ask your librarian or teacher for help and support. Always evaluate the information you find.

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS

CONSIDER THE SOURCE
Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.

READ BEYOND
Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?

CHECK THE AUTHOR
Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?

SUPPORTING SOURCES?
Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.

CHECK THE DATE
Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.

IS IT A JOKE?
If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.

CHECK YOUR BIASES
Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.

ASK THE EXPERTS
Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

How Can I Access Newspaper Archives?

The West Sussex Public Libraries will give access online for free!
All you need is your library card number.
Browse the <u>West Sussex e-Library</u>

Don't miss out on all the free services the Public Library provides.

Lost your card or don't already have one?

Sign up using this link:
https://arena.westsussex.gov.uk/protected/join-the-library

Bishop Luffa Libraries have also stored a few newspaper articles for this task. Login to the AccessIt catalogue to view them.

Temporary Library Catalogue Account
Login: research **Password:** 5259

Need help?

Email Mrs Shuttleworth:
shuttleworthv@bishopluffa.org.uk

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westsussex.gov.uk/ askalibrarian

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