

Worksheet: Pre-Reading Critical Engagement: The Zodiac Killer Case

Assigned Text: THE ZODIAC KILLER: THE UNSOLVED CASE THAT HAUNTS CALIFORNIA

Goal: To use active reading strategies (Previewing, Predicting, and Inferring) to establish a foundation for critical analysis and prepare for a focused class discussion.

Part 1: Previewing and Structural Analysis

Perform a quick structural review (review titles, headings, and visuals) to understand the document's main topics.

1. **Contextualizing the Source:** The article is from October 2024. In one sentence, explain why a newspaper would publish a major story on a murder case that began over 50 years ago.

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2. **Mapping the Argument:** Look at the main section headings (Attacks, Ciphers, Suspects, Media Legend). Which of these four topics do you think the article will spend the least amount of time covering?

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3. **Evaluating Finality:** The final section states the case "remains open." In one sentence, summarize the core question the case raises for readers, according to the text.

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Part 2: Predicting and Hypothesis Generation

Use the textual clues and headings to form testable predictions about the content.

4. **Scanning and Predicting:** Based on the heading "A Series of Attacks," what are the two main facts (who, when, or where) you expect to learn about the confirmed victims?

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5. **Scanning and Predicting:** The Zodiac threatened violence if ignored. What physical piece of evidence did he send to police after the Paul Stine murder to prove he was the killer?

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6. **Information Gap Prediction:** The case is unsolved. Besides the killer's name, what is the most important motive or reason for the crimes that you predict the article will not be able to explain?

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Part 3: Critical Inference and Analysis

Combine clues from the text with your general knowledge to draw logical conclusions that are not directly stated.

7. **Inference on Messaging:** The Zodiac used simple ciphers that were quickly solved, and other ciphers that took decades. What do you infer was the purpose of using both easy and complex messages?

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8. **Inference on Persona:** The Zodiac wore a black hood marked with his symbol. What does this use of a symbol and disguise suggest about his goal for his own public reputation?

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9. **Inference on Investigative Challenges:** A main suspect was cleared by "modern DNA tests." What does this suggest is the main difficulty for investigators when using original physical evidence from a 50-year-old crime?

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Note: If you use AI to solve this, just know that I have a cipher key for every known model, and unlike the Zodiac, my methods always get a conclusive match.