

Marine CSI [ME]

Grades: 6-8

Time: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Goals: To investigate a marine science crime scene in order to explore a career in environmental law or wildlife investigations.

Objectives:

Students will be able to: follow clues to discover who committed an environmental crime; understand how crime investigations are important to environmental law enforcement; and examine career options in environmental law and wildlife investigation.

Key Words:

Crime scene

Investigation

Suspects

Innocence

Detective work

Law enforcement

Environmental law

Non-point source pollution

Point-source pollution

Detritus

Necropsy

Background Information:

We all had an affliction for procedural cop shows. Whether it was CSI, NCIS, Law and Order, or any of the others, we watched intently and tried to figure out who committed the crime before the detective could. Even with all the plot twists and turns, we still watched until the very end, hoping we were better detectives than the ones the actors were portraying.

Whenever a crime is committed against the marine environment, an investigation must take place, in order to determine who the responsible party is. Most of the causes of these crimes are non-point source pollution – pollution that enters a waterway without a direct lead to its source. Point-source pollution is that which you can point to as the culprit for water pollution, such as a drain-pipe leading directly to a chemical factory. This is where the investigation begins. All the evidence must be collected and analyzed until you are able to determine the exact cause of the crime.

Once the “how” has been deduced, the “who” must be investigated. Through a series of questions and interrogations, you are able to determine who committed the crime. These criminals can then be prosecuted in a court of law and tried for their crimes. Sometimes, it is more difficult to determine who committed the crime when more than one person could have done it. This is where deductive reasoning and critical thinking skills come in.

In the environmental crimes law enforcement, the first person many people will call on is the Park Ranger, Park Manager, or Environmental Advocate (of a non-governmental agency). These people are charged with arresting those committing crimes against nature, investigating a crime that has been committed, and reporting such crimes to a higher authority, such as the state Department of Environmental Protection.

Even with non-point source pollution being virtually non-traceable, it has become easier to process with more modern technology. Criminals are being held accountable for crimes no one would otherwise know about. With this modern technology, detectives have the ability to use many different devices to determine what crime was committed. With the use of water quality probes to test water for pollutants, necropsies to go inside organisms, and microscopes to take a closer look at the marine world, more and more criminals are being prosecuted.

As a career, you can explore jobs as law enforcement officers within the state departments of Fish and Wildlife and Parks and Forestry, or within the federal departments of Environmental Protection, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Forest Service. They can also look into opportunities with environmental advocacy groups, such as Greenpeace, Student Conservation Association, or Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG).

Environmental Crime Report

Directions: You are an environmental reporter for a local newspaper. A crime has been committed. Use the basic tools of journalism to write a compelling article about what has happened and who the suspects are based on your observations of the crime.

WHO:

WHAT:

WHERE:

WHEN:

WHY:

Environmental Crime Report

Journal Article: