

Let's Make a Dill

By **Lori Hypes** for Blue Ridge Public Television (WBRA, WMSY, WSBN)
Tazewell Middle School, Tazewell, VA

GRADE LEVELS: 4th – 8th grade

TIME ALLOTMENT: 3 – 45 minute blocks

OVERVIEW:

Writing an Epitaph. In this lesson students will get their inspiration to write an epitaph from performing an autopsy on a dill pickle. Students will try to determine cause of death and then use this information as they write an epitaph for the pickle. Students will have fun letting their imagination run wild as they perform the autopsy and find clues buried inside “the body”. The software programs *Kidspiration* and *Inspiration* may be used to organize the facts.

SUBJECT MATTER: Language Arts/Science

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Invent a series of events and arrange them in a chronological order.
- Use descriptive words that will convey images and tone.
- Compose an epitaph as defined in the video.
- Use dictionary, thesaurus, spell checker to edit their final copy.

STANDARDS

State Standards:

The objectives listed may be used in part to address the Virginia Standards of Learning at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us>

- The student will focus on one aspect of a topic. VA SOL Writing 4.7
- The student will develop a plan for writing. VA SOL Writing 4.7, 5.7
- The student will organize writing to convey a central idea. VA SOL Writing 4.7 & 5.7
- The student will choose vocabulary and information that will cause a reader to perceive images and tone. VA SOL Writing 7.8
- The student will write several related paragraphs on the same topic. VA SOL Writing 4.7
- The student will edit final copies for grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. VA SOL Writing 4.7, 5.7, 6.7, 7.8, 8.5
- The student will use available technology VA SOL English 8.5
- The student will plan and conduct an investigation. VA SOL Science, 6.1, LS 7.1, PS 8.1

MEDIA COMPONENTS

Video: *Club Write Series 103*

Web Site: <http://www.froguts.com>

At this site students will dissect a virtual frog by using the mouse to access the dissection instruments and control them.

MATERIALS

Materials needed:

- Television
- VCR
- Video: *Club Write Series: #103*
- Computer (Programs: Kidspiration or Inspiration)
- Head, arms and legs appendages for each pickle (Use a plastic milk jug to cut out the appendages. You can also use heads from other toys to stick into the pickle. (Oriental Trading Company sometimes has stick-on heads- very inexpensive.)
- An item of your choosing to hide inside each pickle. (Bean seed, screw, tack, rubber band, paper clip, penny, bead, pebble, etc.)
- Per group: 1 large dill pickle, 1 paper plate, plastic knife, 2 toothpicks, 1 ruler, 1 piece of dental floss, 1 darning needle, 1 magnifying glass, Autopsy of a Pickle worksheet and instructions, scissors, tweezers, goggles, gloves

PREPARATION FOR TEACHERS

- ✓ Prior to teaching the unit, bookmark the Web site.
- ✓ Cue your videotape for the correct starting point.
- ✓ Photocopy all student handouts for distribution as needed during the lesson.
- ✓ Make sure you go through the instructions from the student materials handouts to make certain that you understand and are familiar with the lesson format and what the students need to do or understand for the lesson.
- ✓ Cut out all heads, arms, feet, etc.
- ✓ Cut a small vertical opening in the pickle somewhere and insert an object for the students to discover during the autopsy. Drop the pickle back in the brine and the opening will go undetected by the students.
- ✓ When using media, always provide the students with a **Focus for Media Interaction**, which is a specific task to complete during or after viewing video segments, web sites, or other media material.
- ✓ Prior to this lesson, students should know the components of a simple autobiography.
- ✓ Depending on the age of students, you should define the following words and refer to them as needed throughout the lesson: epitaph, autobiography, autopsy, dissection, pathologist.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY: SETTING THE STAGE

Web Site Instructions

The teacher will assist the students as they work their way through the interactive web site.

1. Provide students with a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, “Students, today you are going to go the computer lab and perform a virtual dissection of a frog.”
2. Have students use the bookmark to access Froguts.com.
3. Click on frog.
4. Click on start.
5. Click on screen to begin. Say, “You will see a frog, dissection instruments, and some instructions. Follow the instructions until you have completed the dissection.”
6. When students have completed this activity say, “This week in class you will be performing an autopsy of a different sort and writing an epitaph for the deceased.”

Note: (This activity can be done in a classroom with a single computer. The image can be played on the TV screen or projected with an LCD. Students can then take turns performing the steps.)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES (video)

1. **Provide a Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, “Students, I’m going to show a segment of a video that models how to write an epitaph. After watching this first clip, I want you to give me a definition of the term *epitaph*”. **Start Club Write #103** where you hear the words “Mrs. Scott had her reason though.” You will see Mrs. Scott standing alone in front of the class. **Pause** after Mrs. Scott says “... It’s a brief summary of a person’s life.” **Ask**, “What is the definition of the term *epitaph*?” (An epitaph is a shortened version of an autobiography. It’s a brief summary of a person’s life.)
2. **Focus for Media Interaction:** Say, “After viewing this next segment, I want you to be able tell me how long an epitaph is and why it is that length.” **Resume** the video and **Pause** when Mrs. Scott says, “... stone cutter can chisel the words onto the tombstone.” **Ask**, “How long is an epitaph and why?” (Some are very long but most are brief so the stone cutter can chisel the words onto the tombstone.)
3. **Focus for Media Interaction:** Say, “In this segment the boy gives a more precise definition for an epitaph. Be able to tell me what that is.” **Resume** the video and **Pause** when you hear “...and how much they were loved by the people they knew.” **Ask**, “What definition was given?” (An epitaph is a poem or other writing on a tombstone describing the person who died. It gives clues about the person’s life, whether they were good or bad, what they accomplished, and how much they were loved by the people they knew.)
4. **Focus for Media Interaction:** Say, “During this next segment, I want you to be able to tell me what ideas the boy has about his own epitaph?” **Fast Forward** the video to where Mrs. Scott is handing the two girls some tickets. You will see Mrs. Scott and her students standing together in the cemetery. **Resume** the video and **Pause** when the boy says “... grand prize at the film festival.” **Ask**, “What ideas does the boy have about his own epitaph? (He wants to mention his family, friends, books, theater, outdoors, what he had accomplished in his life, and that he was a poet and patriot.)
5. **Focus for Media Interaction:** Say, “In this next segment I want you to tell me what the boy thinks is the most difficult part of writing an epitaph? **Resume** and **Pause** when you hear “...in just a few sentences.” **Ask**, “What is the most difficult part of writing an epitaph?” (Keeping it short. Summing up an entire life in just a few sentences.)
6. **Focus for Media Interaction:** Say, “In this next clip I want you watch for some examples of epitaphs.” **Fast Forward** where the boy says “I wonder how everybody else is doing with their epitaph?” You will see a boy writing at a table wearing a black shirt. **Resume** and **Pause** when you see the epitaph of George Washington and a girl says “George Washington.” **Ask**, “What are some examples of epitaphs?” (Greg: three words “I made it”; Emily Dickenson “Called Back”; William Bonny “Truth in History, 21 men, The Boy Bandit King, He died as he lived”; Robin Hood “Here underneath this little stone lives Robert Earls of Huntington. Never archer were as he so good, and people called him Robin Hood. Such outlaws as he and his men, will England never see again.”; George Washington “Looking into the portals of eternity teaches that the brotherhood of men is inspired by God’s word, then all prejudices of race vanishes away.”)
7. **Focus for Media Interaction:** Say, "In this last segment I want you to tell me what the boy is doing at the computer?" **Fast Forward** to where you will see a boy typing at a computer and he has just said, “Mr. Wills promised he’d come back with us again and tell us some more stories.” **Resume** and **Stop** when you see the word “Final” appear on the screen. **Ask**, “What is the boy doing at the computer?” (He is revising his epitaph.)

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

1. The students will perform an autopsy of a pickle. (see attached instructions and worksheet)
2. The students will write an autopsy report for the pickle using Kidspiration or Inspiration. (Use the attached template if these programs are not available at your school.)
3. The students will write an epitaph for the pickle.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Art:

Chisel or etch a tombstone out of a soft material (Styrofoam)

Social Studies:

Look up epitaphs of famous figures in history. Visit a cemetery and do rubbings of tombstones of local residents.

Science:

Anatomy of Frogs

Health:

Life Spans of mankind over the past six thousand years

Math:

Statistics of deaths each year: gunshots, car accidents, drownings, etc.

ASSESSMENT

1. Students will produce an outline of autopsy findings.
2. Students will make an epitaph out of a wide variety of materials of their choosing.
3. Students will work cooperatively in a lab group to complete steps 1 & 2.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

- Obituary writer
- Medical Examiner
- Local Historian

AUTOPSY REPORT FORM

Name of Institution _____ Date: _____

Conducted by _____

1. Name of deceased _____

2. Address: _____

3. Age (Approx): _____ yrs; Sex: Male/Female

4. Date & Time of Death: _____

5. Height _____ cms. (Weight _____ gs.

6. Physique: (circle one) lean medium obese

7. Well built/average built/poor built/emaciated

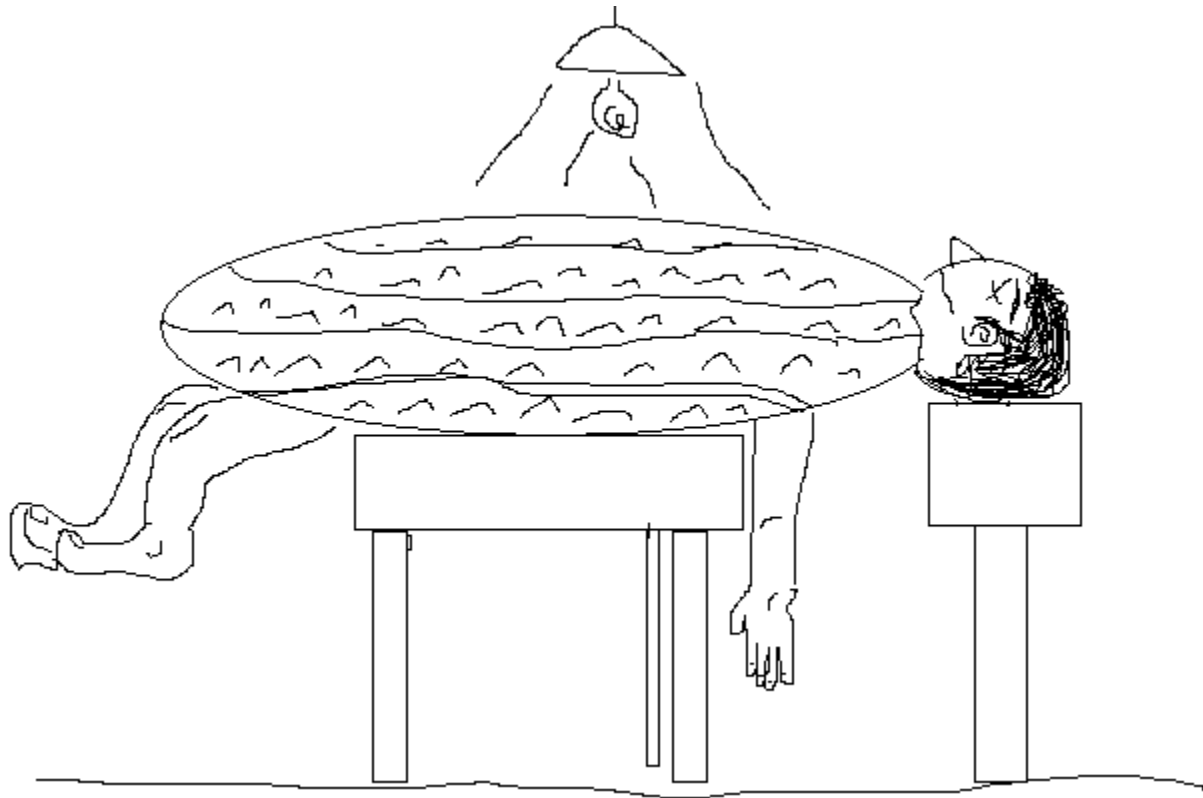
8. Describe external appearance and injuries: _____

9. Internal appearance and injuries: _____

10. Brief history of what caused the death of the deceased. _____

11. Background History: (Continue on back of form) _____

Autopsy of a Pickle



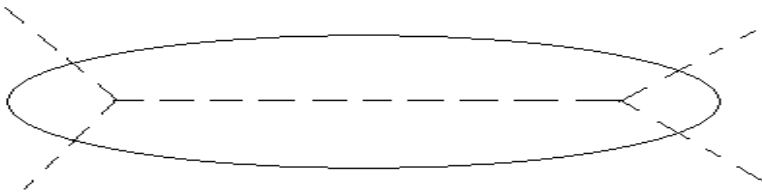
Problem: A body was found dead. You will assist in the autopsy to determine the cause of death. As part of your job responsibilities you will also be required to write an epitaph that will be chiseled onto the deceased's tombstone.

You and your partners will need the following materials:

- 1 body (large dill pickle)
- Two toothpicks (use as probes)
- 1 paper plate
- 1 ruler
- 1 piece of dental floss – 18 inches long
- Suture needle (darning needle)
- Magnifying glass
- 1 plastic knife
- Autopsy Report Form
- Tweezers, scissors

Procedure

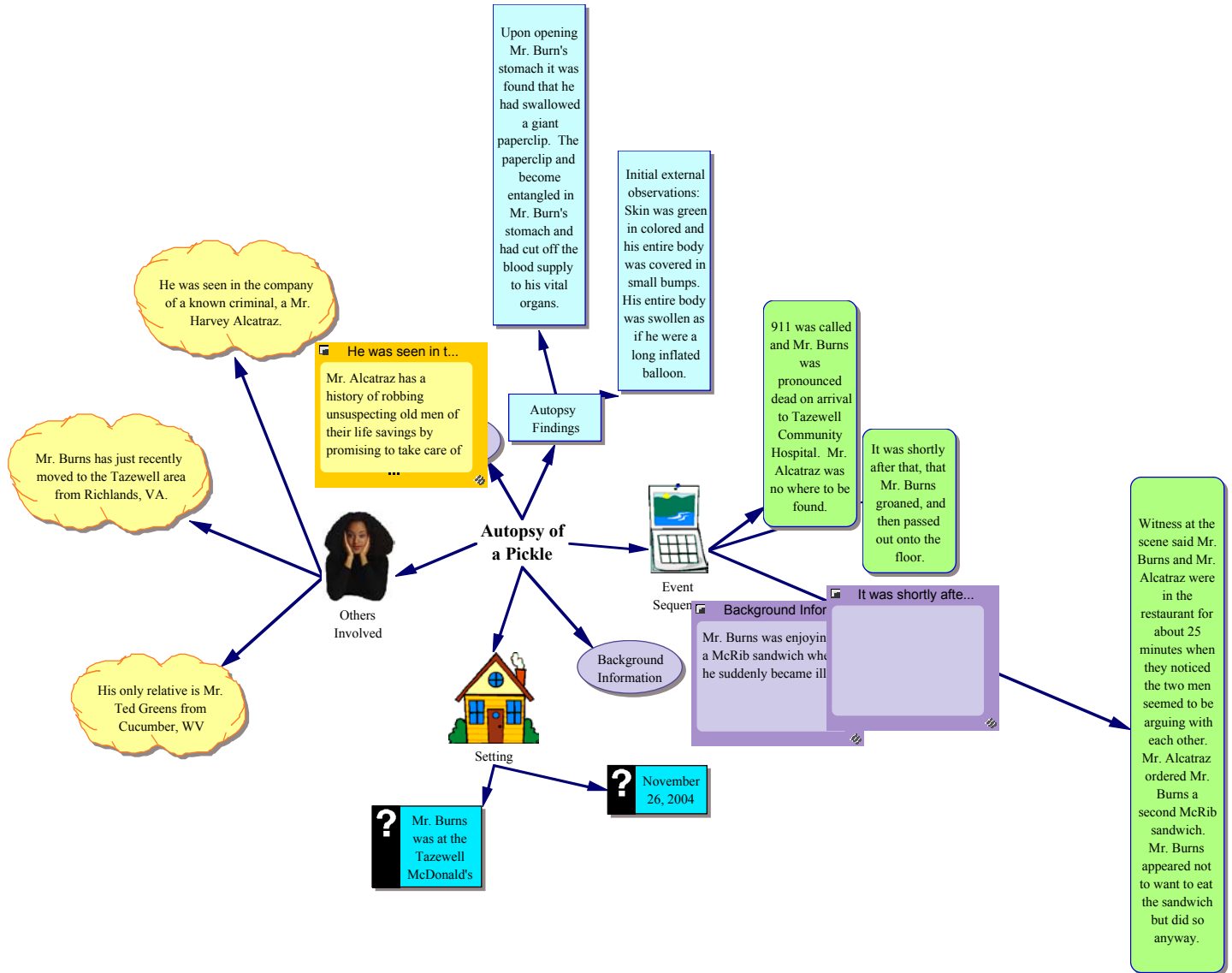
1. Assign one job to each person. The jobs are listed below:
 - Forensic pathologist: performs the autopsy (dissection) of the patient.
 - Recorder: records all the results of the autopsy.
 - Nurse: hands the instruments to the pathologist and the closer.
 - Closer: closes the incision made by the pathologist (sutures the incision)
2. The nurse will collect the body and the dissection instruments. (Place the body on the paper plate.)
3. The group was told that the body had not been identified. However, as the body is placed before the group, all members recognize the body from some past encounter. (Each person in the group must fabricate some details about the deceased in order to complete the *Autopsy Report Form*.)
4. Look closely at the body and do an external examination. Use the magnifying glass. Describe the different surfaces of the body and record your observations on the *Autopsy Report Form*.
5. The pathologist is to make an incision as indicated below:



Make incisions along dotted lines.
Open and examine internal structures.
Look for abnormal structures.
Describe internal area.

6. Open the body and examine the internal structure (use toothpicks as probes. Look for any abnormal structures. Record your observations of the internal area of the body on the *Autopsy Report Form*.)
7. After you have made and recorded your observations, the *closer* should suture the body closed using the darning needle and dental floss.
8. Prepare the final report of the autopsy. What did you discover in the autopsy that would explain the death. One person in the group should be prepared to present this report orally.
9. Using the Kidspiration, Inspiration or the *Autopsy Report Form*, list as much information as possible concerning the deceased.

Note: This page is an example of a layout if using *Kidspiration*. The layout will also help you to guide the students in the direction you want them to go. You can make up your own key words at this point.



Autopsy of a Pickle

I. Health History

- Mr. Burns had his appendix removed when he was seven years old.
- He suffered from a broken nose when he was 11 when hit by a baseball in gym class.

II. Background Information

- Mr. Burns was enjoying a McRib sandwich when he suddenly became ill.

III. Setting

- Mr. Burns was at the Tazewell McDonald's
- November 26, 2004

IV. Others Involved

- A. He was seen in the company of a known criminal, a Mr. Harvey Alcatraz.
- B. Mr. Alcatraz has a history of robbing unsuspecting old men of their life savings by promising to take care of their birds should anything happen to them for a large sum of money
- C. Mr. Burns has just recently moved to the Tazewell area from Richlands, VA.
- D. His only relative is Mr. Ted Greens from Cucumber, WV

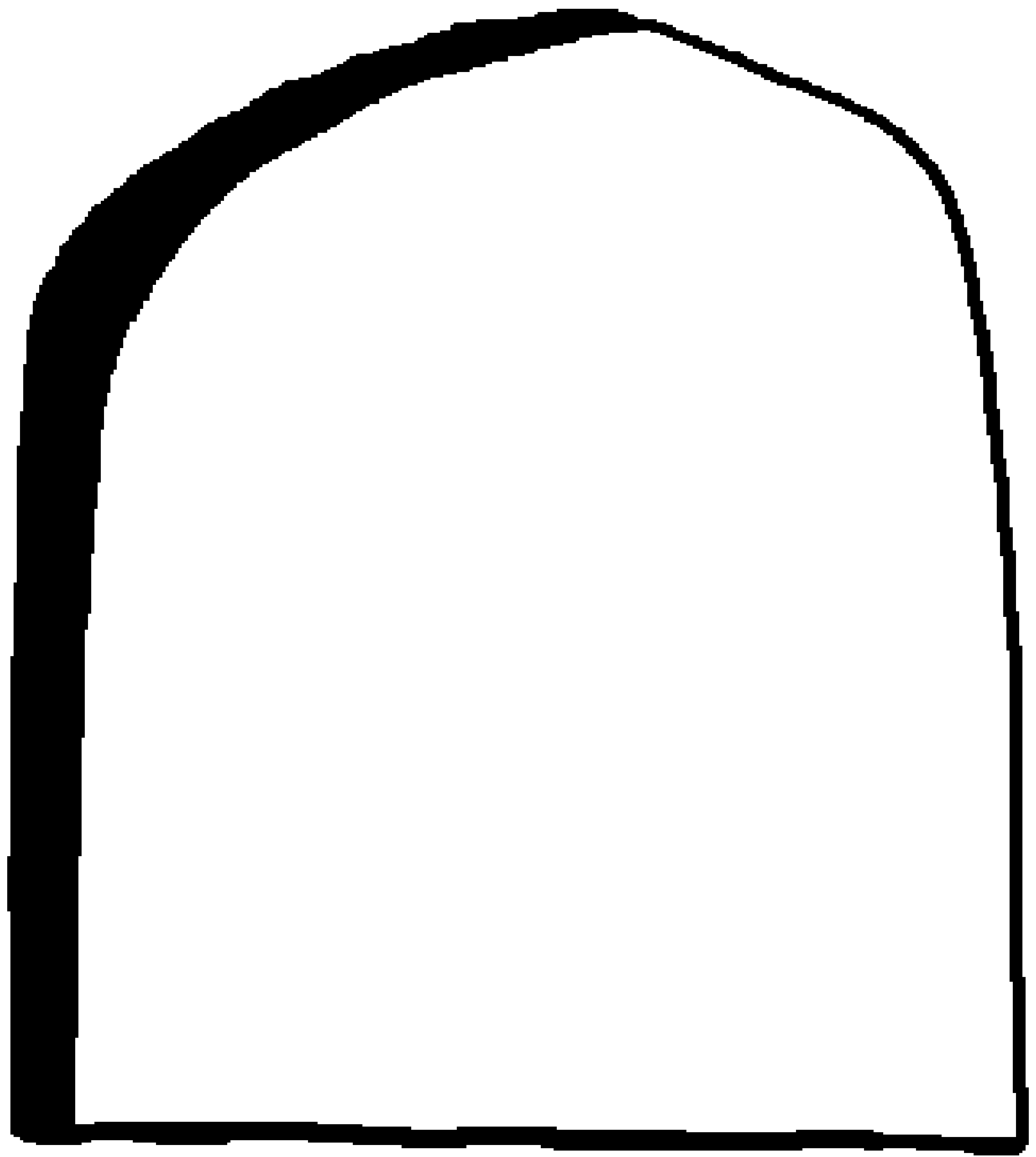
V. Event Sequence

- A. Witness at the scene said Mr. Burns and Mr. Alcatraz were in the restaurant for about 25 minutes when they noticed the two men seemed to be arguing with each other.
- B. Mr. Alcatraz ordered Mr. Burns a second McRib sandwich.
- C. Mr. Burns appeared not to want to eat the sandwich but did so anyway.
- D. It was shortly after that, that Mr. Burns groaned, and then passed out onto the floor.
- E. 911 was called and Mr. Burns was pronounced dead on arrival to Tazewell Community Hospital. Mr. Alcatraz was no where to be found.

VI. Autopsy Findings

- A. Initial external observations: Skin was green in colored and his entire body was covered in small bumps. His entire body was swollen as if he were a long inflated balloon.
- B. Upon opening Mr. Burn's stomach it was found that he had swallowed a giant paperclip. The paperclip and become entangled in Mr. Burn's stomach and had cut off the blood supply to his vital organs.

Students may write and design the pickle's epitaph free-handed or by using Microsofft Paint. Following is an example in paint.



Jr. Gherkins Burns

Born: Dec. 12, 1929

Died: Aug. 23, 1930

Here lies Jr. Gherkins Burns,
A noted tasty pickle,
Who once grew in the garden,
But was cut down by a sickle.

All the other veggies thought
That he would soon be fine,
But now lies poor Junior here,
A cucumber soaked with brine...