

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CLUE

BLACKMAIL, MISTRUST, AND
COMPROMISED COMMUNITIES

DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE GUESTS & THEIR SECRETS

	COLONEL MUSTARD ★ Has been visiting a sex worker.	
	MRS. WHITE Suspected of killing her husband.	
	MR. GREEN Is gay in a time when that's dangerous to reveal.	
	MRS. PEACOCK Accepts bribes through her senator husband.	
	PROFESSOR PLUM Has had inappropriate relationships with patients.	
	MISS SCARLET Runs a brothel on the side.	

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Blackmail thrives in cultures that shame more than they understand.
- ✓ Fear of exposure drives people to make choices they wouldn't otherwise make.
- ✓ Mistrust divides. Honesty—though risky—is the only path to real connection.
- ✓ Communities are strongest when built on trust, not on secrets.

THE SETUP

1954. Six guests are lured to a mansion. Each is hiding a secret. Each has been blackmailed. The blackmailer is in the room. Trust is the first victim.



“When everyone has something to hide, everyone suspects everyone else.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1



What does the fact that every guest has a secret tell us about the long reach of shame and the culture of 1954?

2



How does fear of exposure change the way people think, act, and relate to others?

3



What power does the blackmailer hold—not just in money, but in shaping the whole evening?

4



Can a community built on secrets and mistrust ever be healthy? Why or why not?

5



What “dirty-hands” choices have the characters made to survive—and how might you judge them?

6



If the blackmail ended, what would each guest need in order to live more authentically?



Look beyond the laughs: *Clue* is a comedy about serious psychological territory. It shows how fear and secrets can distort a group—and how trust must be rebuilt.

KEY THEMES



MISTRUST & PARANOIA
Everyone suspects everyone else. Fear of exposure poisons connection.



POWER & CONTROL
Blackmail gives power to the one who knows your secret.



DIRTY-HANDS DECISIONS
People make morally messy choices to protect themselves or others.



PERFORMING RESPECTABILITY
Appearances matter more than truth in a culture of surveillance.



FRAGILE COMMUNITY
A group built on secrets can hold together—or explode.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1

What does the movie say about a time when people were afraid to be who they are?



2

Have you ever kept a secret out of fear? How did it affect your choices?



3

How does suspicion in a group stop people from trusting and working together?



4

What choices in the movie are hardest to judge? Why?



5

What helps rebuild trust after a group has been hurt by secrets?



★
Trust is the antidote to blackmail.



DR. MICHAEL ZAKALIK, PSY.D.
Psychologist for Parenting | Z Psychology



Understanding minds.



Strengthening connections.

