



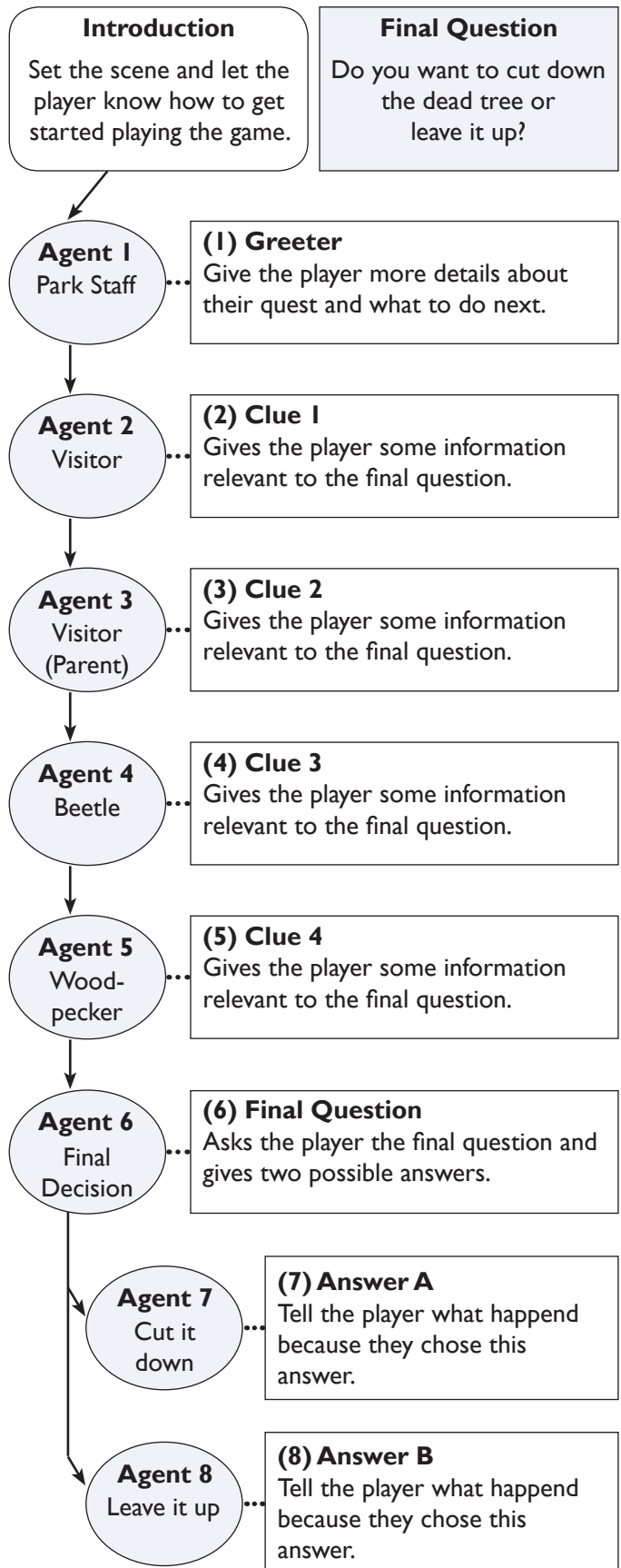
# Narrative Mystery Overview

## GAME OVERVIEW

*Scripting Difficulty: Beginner*

This template is highly versatile and would work well for most programs. The game explores one final question, to which players are given multiple clues or bits of information. Game designers have the opportunity to really dig deeply into a single topic or create a detailed and cohesive story. A weakness of games that follow this format, however, is that they are not as interactive as other templates can be. During most of the game, the player is receiving information, possibly making some observations in the real world, and (hopefully!) figuring out how all the information fits together. They are not, however, actively making decisions or changing the way the game plays out until the very end. Despite this weakness, the narrative mystery format can be a good starting point because the scripting is relatively simple and the narrative possibilities are bountiful.

The specifics of the template game involve the player searching for information about whether or not to cut down a dead tree trunk in a park. This format, however, can be used for any number of different narratives and learning goals. You could use it as a format for a more traditional mystery (whodunit, what's going on here?) or use the format to examine a complex question.



## GAME IDEAS

You and your game designers may well have many ideas for your own games, but TaleBlazer is an unfamiliar game platform, and it might be difficult to think of games that fit the template. We've designed the templates to be versatile and have listed some game ideas below to spark your thinking.

1. **Whodunit?** For example, the player needs to find out who has been dumping trash in the game area. Agents (they could be neighbors, resident animals, or objects) would give the player clues that would help them decide who the illegal dumper is. This basic setup can be used to examine any number of mysteries at your site (something is missing, something weird is going on, etc.).
2. **What's going on?** Similar to a whodunit, these games examine a mystery, but look for a broader cause (not just a guilty person). Environmental mysteries such as "What's wrong with this plant/animal?," "What is polluting the stream?," or "Who lives here?" are all good candidates for this format.
3. **Judgment call:** The final question doesn't have to have a correct answer—in fact, these kinds of questions can be the most interesting. What are the consequences of the players' choices? What information and values do they employ to make the decision? Management and site planning questions work well in this format ("Should we cut down this dead tree?, What would do the most to reduce runoff from our property?, Where should we locate a new prairie garden?). End agents in these scenarios simply tell the player the consequences of their decision rather than telling them they are correct or not.
4. **Other considerations:** Think about the history of the site—is there something interesting that emerges if the game were set in the past? What about the future? What is the content theme for your program? Are there related careers that could inspire the player's role? Are there elements of fantasy that could be incorporated? Ideally, the game will have some connection to the physical reality of the game area.