

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Carefully read the story below about "Arsenic Anna", the infamous German-born American serial killer. Then, answer the questions that follow using complete sentences.

The Story of Arsenic Anna

The first woman to die in Ohio's electric chair, Anna Hahn was a German native, born in 1906, who immigrated to Cincinnati at age 21. There, she married a young telephone operator, briefly managing a bakery in Cincinnati's German district before it failed during the Great Depression. Anna was in search of easy money, and life insurance seemed to be the answer. She twice tried to insure her husband for \$25,000, meeting resistance each time. Soon after rejecting her second demand, Philip Hahn fell suddenly ill, rushed to the hospital by his mother over Anna's objection. Physicians saved his life, but there was nothing they could do to save his marriage.

Despite a total lack of training or experience, Anna began to offer her services as a live-in "nurse" to elderly men in the German community. Her first client, 74-year-old Ernest Koch, seemed healthy despite his years, but that soon changed under Hahn's tender care. Koch died on May 6, 1932, leaving Anna a house in his will. Its ground floor was occupied by a doctor's office, and Hahn visited her new tenant frequently, stealing prescription blanks to keep herself supplied with "medicine" for her new "nursing" business.

Her next client, retired railroad man Albert Parker, died swiftly under Anna's care. This time, she avoided the embarrassment of a convenient will by "borrowing" Parker's money before he died, signing an I.O.U. that predictably vanished as soon as he died. Jacob Wagner was next, willing a lump sum of \$17,000 to his beloved "niece" Anna, and Hahn soon picked up another \$15,000 for tending George Gsellman in the months before his death.

George Heiss was a rare survivor, growing suspicious one day after Anna served him a mug of beer. A couple of house flies had sampled the brew, dropping dead on the spot, and when Anna refused to share the drink herself, Heiss sent her packing. He did not inform police of his suspicions, though, and so the lethal nurse was free to go in search of other "patients."

George Obendoerfer was the last to die, in 1937, lured to Colorado on a supposed visit to Hahn's nonexistent ranch. Obendoerfer died in his hotel room soon after arriving in Denver, and Anna took the opportunity to loot his bank account, pocketing \$5,000 for her efforts.

Police became suspicious when she balked at picking up the tab for George's funeral, demanding an autopsy after they turned up evidence of the unorthodox bank transfer. Arsenic was found in Obendoerfer's body, and detectives were waiting for Hahn when she reached Cincinnati, armed with arrest warrants and court orders demanding exhumation of her previous clients. Each had been slain with a different potion, and a search of Hahn's lodgings reportedly turned up "enough poison to kill half of Cincinnati."

Anna was put on trial in front of a jury of 11 women and 1 man. Ultimately convicted of multiple murders and sentenced to die, Hahn kept her nerve, maintaining her pose as an "angel of mercy." On June 20, 1938, she hosted a small party for local newsmen in her cell, lapsing into hysterics as she began her last walk to the death chamber. It took a prison chaplain to restore her calm, holding her hand as she was buckled into the chair. Facing the minister with a level gaze, Hahn warned him, "You might be killed, too, Father."

Source: Michael Newton, "Hunting Humans," *An Encyclopedia of Modern Serial Killers*

Questions

The Crime

1. By the time she was caught, Anna Marie Hahn had murdered five men. Using the text and your own inferences, what was most likely her motive?
2. All five of Anna's victims were murdered using the same method. What was Anna's modus operandi, or way of committing her crimes?

Law Enforcement

3. Several people caught on to Anna's murderous schemes and scams, but no one reported her. How was Anna finally caught?

The Trial Process

4. Anna was tried in front of a jury of 11 women and 1 man. Why do you think mostly women were chosen for this position? Cite two specific reasons.

Sentencing

5. Anna Marie Hahn was the first female to die in the electric chair in Ohio. In your opinion, did the punishment fit the crime? Be sure to explain your stance (reasoning).