

Forensic Identification: Putting a Name and Face on Death (Exceptional Science Titles for Upper Grades)

elizabeth A. Murray



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A small plane crashes into a cornfield and bursts into flames. The three men aboard and their pilot are killed in the inferno. The bodies are burned beyond recognition. Can they be identified? A park ranger uncovers a human torso along a walking path in a nature preserve. The next day, a sanitation worker spots two human legs jutting out of a dumpster. That same afternoon, a man finds the severed head of a young woman along the side of the road. Are these body parts linked? If so, who is the victim? About 4,000 unidentified deceased persons are discovered in the United States every year. But forensic experts are successful in identifying about 3,000 of those bodies within a year. In Human Identification: Putting a Name and Face on Death , forensic anthropologist Dr. Elizabeth A. Murray takes readers into the morgues and forensic labs where experts use advanced technology to determine the identities of dead bodies whose names are not known because the bodies are mutilated, decomposed beyond recognition, or cut into pieces. She also explores what happens to the cadavers and remains that belong to people who have been missing for so long that law enforcement and forensic files are no longer active. Through a wide range of fascinating scientific methods—including DNA testing, facial reconstruction, dental records, blood analysis, fingerprinting, and x rays--forensic specialists work to piece together the stories that will give names back to the unknown dead and missing. Come along to watch the experts do their amazing work.

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