

Socratic Circle: Ronald Opus

1. While he was on the 80th floor of a skyscraper, Ronald Opus was pushed off of the balcony. Yet as he was falling passed the 9th floor, his life was interrupted by a shotgun blast through the window. The bullet from the shotgun struck him in the head, and he died instantly. Hence rather than dying from the fall, he died from a gunshot wound to his head.

(a) Who killed Ronald Opus? Explain.

(b) Was Ronald Opus murdered?

- If so, who murdered him?
- If not, why was his death not a murder?

2. Unbeknownst to the shooter, an unbreakable safety net had been erected at the 5th floor. So, if Mr. Opus hadn't been struck in the head by the bullet while he was falling passed the 9th floor, then he would have survived the fall, because the safety net would have caught him at the 5th floor.

(a) Who killed Ronald Opus? Explain.

(b) Was Ronald Opus murdered?

- If so, who murdered him?
- If not, why was his death not a murder?

3. The safety net was erected by the pusher.

(a) Who killed Ronald Opus? Explain.

(b) Was Ronald Opus murdered?

- If so, who murdered him?
- If not, why was his death not a murder?

4. The safety net was erected by Ronald Opus himself.

(a) Who killed Ronald Opus? Explain.

(b) Was Ronald Opus murdered?

- If so, who murdered him?
- If not, why was his death not a murder?

5. Ronald Opus and the pusher erected the safety net together, and Mr. Opus wanted to be pushed off of the balcony.

(a) Who killed Ronald Opus? Explain.

(b) Was Ronald Opus murdered?

- If so, who murdered him?
- If not, why was his death not a murder?

6. The bullet that killed Ronald Opus had come through the window of a 9th floor apartment that was home to an elderly couple. At the time when Ronald Opus died, the elderly couple were having a heated argument, and the husband was threatening his wife with a shotgun. Although he was trying to aim at her, he had become so upset that he could not hold the shotgun straight. Hence when he pulled the trigger, he completely missed his wife, and the bullet from his gun travelled out of the apartment window, where it struck Ronald Opus in the head.

(a) Who killed Ronald Opus? Explain.

(b) Was Ronald Opus murdered?

- If so, who murdered him?
- If not, why was his death not a murder?

7. Neither the husband nor the wife knew that the shotgun was loaded. It was the longtime habit of the husband to threaten his wife with an unloaded shotgun. He had no intent to murder her. In fact, he had no intention of killing anyone at all. The gun had been loaded by accident.

(a) Who killed Ronald Opus? Explain.

(b) Was Ronald Opus murdered?

- If so, who murdered him?
- If not, why was his death not a murder?

8. Six weeks prior to the fatal accident, the elderly couple had cut off their son's financial support. Knowing how his father tended to use the shotgun threateningly, the son loaded the gun with the expectation that the father would shoot his mother. That way, he would get back at his parents for cutting him off financially.

(a) Who killed Ronald Opus? Explain.

(b) Was Ronald Opus murdered?

- If so, who murdered him?
- If not, why was his death not a murder?

9. The elderly couple's son was none other than Ronald Opus himself.

(a) Who killed Ronald Opus? Explain.

(b) Was Ronald Opus murdered?

- If so, who murdered him?
- If not, why was his death not a murder?

10. For the next grading period, what are some topics you would like for us discuss in a Socratic Circle?