

LOSING YOUR LUNCH: Solution

In this meta-puzzle, solvers are tasked with determining what Deandra “Dee” Vower stole from the cafeteria. To figure it out, they must place each of the solutions from the other four Free Period classes in their appropriate menus. These have small riddles in Private Eye mode, while Gumshoes are told directly which food goes where.

Astute solvers will note that each answer—CHUCK TAYLOR, COLERIDGE, THE SOUND OF MUSIC, and AUTUMN RHYTHM—is the exact same length as the four items the students are willing to trade—CHAI FROGURT, BIG SUNNY D, A BAG OF SOUR CANDY, and FRIED POUTINE, respectively. They might be tempted to compare the two and pull the letters they share—but that will result in gibberish. Clearly, there is a second step to the puzzle that’s missing.

Once the items have been placed, they must be run through an alphabetic shifting cipher. This is hinted in the flavortext of Private Eye mode as “a salad beginning to rot”—that is, a ROT cipher; Gumshoes are told that it’s a CAESAR salad, suggesting a Caesar cipher. In Gumshoe mode, the shift is told outright by the price of the items; Private Eyes are given riddles to figure it out:

-Lincoln and a Washington: 6 (dollars)

-Five square: 25

-14 Greek: Xi, or, in Roman numerals, 11

-Famously mysterious number: 23 (the 23 enigma)

Doing so will result in nonsensical letter strings:

INAIQZGERUX

BNKDQHCFD

XRQRJKOEVQEJ

ESPDZFYQZQXFDTN

Comparing *these* to the items the students want to trade will result in exactly two letters that overlap. Extracting these letters and placing them in the blanks spells out BRAI and FOOD; add the “N” already provided to get BRAIN FOOD, this area’s meta-solution!