Analyze The Opening Lead

Dealer: South
Vul: None
Lead: ♣5

North
♠4 3
♥5 4
♦K 6 5 4
♣A Q 8 7 6

West
♠J 7 6 5
♥A 10 9 8
♦7
♣J 9 5 4

East
♠K 10 9 8
♥Q J 7 6
♦Q J 10 9 8
♣ ------

South
♠A Q 2
♥K 3 2
♦A 3 2
♣K 10 3 2

Bidding:	West	North	East	South
				1NT
	Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Result: +400 for N-S

The bidding is short and sweet. North's response of 3NT is based on his holding 9 HCP plus 1 point for the 5th club. He shouldn't be worried about the two worthless doubletons. That's his partner's responsibility to take care of!

South counts winners in a notrump contract. She has 2 spades (with the spade lead into her tenace); 2 diamonds and 3 clubs. She needs two more tricks. They both can come from the clubs if the four outstanding clubs break no worse than 3-1. Even if they break 4-0 she can still finesse against the opponent's jack and nine if she could figure out which opponent held them.

If West holds the 4 clubs, as he does in the deal above, South must lead the ♣A. Getting the bad news from East's discard, she next leads a low club. The dummy will cover whatever West plays.   Then she will come back to her hand and lead the ♣10. If it is covered, she takes the ♣A; if not she lets the ♣10 ride.

If East holds the 4 clubs, South must take the ♣A first and then finesse against the East's ♣J and ♣10 in a similar fashion.

Of course, if both East and West follow on the first club, South simply plays the top clubs.

South must take the first spade trick. She doesn't want East to win and lead a heart through her vulnerable ♥K. But how does she figure out which opponent can possibly hold 4 clubs?

The title of this piece should offer the clue. Look at the opening lead. The ♠5 is the lowest outstanding spade. Assuming West is using standard leads, he must hold **exactly four** spades. If he didn't have any clubs and they were all in East's hand, West must have another 5-card suit since he must hold 9 cards in hearts and diamonds. If he had a 5-card suit, wouldn't he start with that suit rather than the spades? Therefore, East cannot hold 4 clubs. **South, using her deductive powers must play West for the 4 clubs!**