



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
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## **I Love a Mystery**

Curriculum Unit 80.01.09  
by Phyllis Taylor

Do you like puzzles? Have you ever solved the crime before the detective? Do you shiver with delight at the name of Alfred Hitchcock? If you've ever been late because you had to know "Who done it?" Then this unit on mysteries is for you.

Ian Flemming's *From Russia with Love* was the first mystery I'd ever read. I was in college, barely adult, and completely captivated by James Bond-007-super spy. I read everything in paperback and waited avidly for the next story to appear. I talked about each story incessantly. When, finally, there were no more James Bond stories, I was extremely disappointed. One day a friend said, "Have you read Josephine Tey's work?" I was off and running again, and I haven't stopped yet.

However as a reader of mysteries I have changed. I now search for new authors and look for more than a swashbuckling hero. I enjoy tackling the puzzle, noting changes in a series' character and in the author's viewpoint across time. I examine plots, have become interested in characters and their motives, and have branched into other kinds of fictional and non-fictional reading for enjoyment.

Don't misunderstand. I did not grow from a non-reader into an English teacher. I did grow from a required-reading-only person into someone who enjoys reading as recreation.

As a teacher I'd like to see more students make this transition and begin to enjoy reading instead of swallowing it like bad tasting medicine. Mysteries and stories of suspense, because they are internally constructed to raise one's curiosity, are a natural media for involving students in reading. For this reason I have used the mystery as a basis for this literature unit.

I teach in an alternative high school. Because the staff is small this English course must appeal to students whose reading skills vary from sixth grade to adult, and whose writing skills vary equally. The challenge is to present a course which will not frighten students just out of the basic communication courses but will improve their reading and writing skills, and at the same time provide enjoyment and learning to students already proficient in basic skills.

This is an eight-week IA English block designed to:

1. Further interest and enjoyment in reading

2. Introduce longer works of fiction to students just out of basal reading programs
3. Impart some knowledge of skillful story technique
4. Introduce some basic elements of the novel
5. Increase vocabulary
6. Give some practice in writing creative stories

I have chosen the mystery as a vehicle because of my liking for it, its broad popularity and intrinsic interest, and its relatively tight structure whose understanding can later be expanded to fuller enjoyment of more complex works.

The classification “mystery” is today very broad, usually encompassing any work dealing with the solution of a crime or examination of some unexplained, bizarre phenomenon. However, mystery fiction was once much more limited in scope. In order to place the books students are about to read in perspective, I think it helpful to begin the course with a brief talk about the history of mystery fiction. An extremely brief historic survey follows. Teachers interested in more detail will find sources listed in the bibliography.

### ***Background of Detective Fiction***

It is generally agreed that the man who first defined the genre was Edgar Allen Poe whose “Murders in the Rue Morgue” featuring a private detective named C. Auguste Dupin appeared in the April 1841 issue of “Graham’s Magazine.” <sup>1</sup> Although several imitations appeared thereafter, the next milestone appeared in 1886 when Dr. Watson first met Sherlock Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. <sup>2</sup>

During the forty-five years between Dupin and Holmes several events, literary and social, occurred which established the mystery genre as popular reading. The nineteenth century and the industrial revolution marked the emergence of a middle class, wide spread public education, and for the first time, the growth of a large reading populace not derived from the rigorously educated upper classes. This tremendous surge of readership enabled the expansion of the novel itself but also called for a literature which would appeal to the relatively unsophisticated new readers as well as the traditionally educated wealthy. <sup>3</sup> The time was ripe for an exciting kind of story seemingly grounded in the logic of common sense.

Secondly, the art of criminal investigation began to grow into a science. In 1843/44 Sir James Graham, the British Home Secretary, added a new word to the English language. He selected several of his best police officers and made a special unit of them which he called “The Detective Police,” thus giving for the first time the title “detective” to the man whose job was to deduce the criminal from the clues left behind. <sup>4</sup>

At the same time the English were improving their ability to detect criminals, the French were the possessors of the first professional detective, Eugene Francois Vidocq. Monsieur Vidocq was a former convict and an extraordinary man who founded the Surete and served as its chief for twenty-eight years. He had a flair for publicity, and he was said to cry at the moment of capture, “I am Vicocq!” thus frightening the criminal into

submission.<sup>5</sup> His memoirs provided scandalously entertaining reading and a source of story material for many authors, among them Poe, Balzac, Hugo, and Dumas. Balzac patterned his famous Vautrin after this remarkable showman and later made King Louis XI of France into a detective in his *Maitre Cornelius*.

Thirdly, the police, always the source of extreme public hostility in the past, began to gain acceptance as a result of the popularity of figures like Vidocq and as a result of the expanding middle class who now viewed the police as protectors.

The first French novelist who presented a police officer favorably was Alexandre Dumas when he wrote *Les Mohicans de Paris* in 1854/55. This book introduced Police detective Monsieur Jackal, who was remarkable for his introduction into the language the phrase “Cherchez la femme!” Meanwhile, in England Wilkie Collins, a lawyer and novelist, wrote *The Woman in White* in 1860, and eight years later *The Moonstone* in which he introduced Sergeant Cuff. John Ball describes *The Moonstone* as “one of the best detective novels ever written.”<sup>6</sup> Gaven Lambert in his prologue to “The Dangerous Edge” describes Wilkie Collins as “the first to grasp its (the mystery novel’s) expressive possibilities.”<sup>7</sup> Interestingly enough Sergeant Cuff was drawn from a real detective, Inspector Whicher of Scotland Yard. Inspector Whicher was also used by Dickens as “Sergeant Wilchem” in “Three Detective Anecdotes.”<sup>8</sup> It is also important to note that Dickens created the famous “Inspector Bucket” in *Bleak House* as well as the unfinished “The Mystery of Edwin Drood.”

Then came Baker Street and Holmes which, as Dorothy Sayers states, “was flung like a bombshell into the field of detective fiction.”<sup>9</sup>

Many extraordinary mystery stories have since appeared, but the aforementioned works set the tone for several decades for what is referred to as detective fiction. Characteristic of these mysteries is a detective who solely through the use of logic and reason, and his superior intelligence, intuition, or imagination can and does solve a given crime before the police or indeed the reader himself can hope to solve it. However, mysteries today are often much more than a puzzle.

Today’s detective is more than a computer. He or she has a conscience, often a philosophy of life or justice, and sometimes that detective’s own psychological or emotional life clashes with what he or she must do.

Lawrence Sanders’s Captain Edward X. Delaney, nicknamed “Iron Balls” by his subordinates, exemplifies a modern policeman whose job is to catch the criminal, but who also is caught between the laws of criminal justice and his own conviction that the law works too slowly, and the innocent suffer too much. Combined with the complexities of his own problematic life and those of his subordinates, Delaney’s twists of mind produce both exciting reading and useful insights into why people behave as they do.

Lew Archer, Ross MacDonald’s detective hero, weighs and balances the tortures of the people he contacts against the fabric of his own often painful struggles. Ross Mac Donald describes his detective as the “mind of the novel” stating, “Some such refinement of the conception of the detective hero was needed to bring this kind of novel,”<sup>10</sup> closer to the purpose and range of the mainstream novel.

But just what is the difference between the mystery and mainstream novel? Several authors have analyzed the genre and voiced their opinions about the differences, among them John Ball, Dorothy Sayers, Aaron Marc Stein, and Hillary Waugh.<sup>11</sup>

In general the mystery story can be said to be more restricted in form than the mainstream novel.

Some of the restrictions, drawn from various sources, may be summarized as follows:

1. No cheating is allowed. The reader should know all clues the detective discovers.<sup>12</sup>
2. The crime and the perpetrator should be introduced as early as possible in the story.
3. The crime should have some importance. No one cares who stole the cookie from the jar unless the cookie contains a secret microdot.
4. Links should not be made through coincidence. The clues should be unravelled by means of reason.
5. The murderer should be among the field of suspects.
6. Justice must prevail. Right must triumph over wrong.

Additionally, Hillary Waugh distinguishes the mystery from the novel by stating. “The mystery novel does not contain the equipment to carry messages . . . The story (in a novel) is created to show off the characters rather than, as in the mystery, the characters being created to show off the story.”<sup>13</sup>

This I feel is only partially true. Ross MacDonald in his essay. “The Writer as Detective Hero” states that he uses his detective hero, Lew Archer, to showcase the other characters in his stories. John MacDonald’s hero Travis McGee, generally involves himself in detecting only because of the importance of the dignity of humankind. In *The Empty Copper Sea*, McGee searches for a criminal because he has effaced the dignity of a local seaman. In MacDonald’s latest, *The Green Ripper*, McGee and his cohort involve themselves partly because of murder, but also because of the dehumanizing philosophy of their antagonists. In these stories and others like them events are tightly bound to the personalities of the characters. To all the guidelines stated above I feel should be added the fact that the skillful writer can and often does make his own independent way and just ignores rules, which is, after all, part of the fun of reading mysteries. I’ve presented the above information to indicate that a teacher need not worry about limiting students with a unit about detective fiction, but can expand students’ sights with material students will enjoy reading.

### ***Types of Detective Fiction***

Although mysteries have been classified in several ways, I think a grouping according to the kind of detective story is simplest. These are:

hard boiled private eye—This is a paid professional whose job is supposedly to obtain the job his client has paid for, a result not always compatible with the law.

locked-room puzzle—Everything occurs in a locked room, ostensibly unattainable.

police procedural—The investigator is a police officer whose job is the protection of society and finding the correct criminal.

amateur detective—Sometimes these are innocent bystanders who must find the criminal to

protect themselves. There are also amateur professionals who wish to protect others, or who love to detect for the mere enjoyment of the chase.

spy—This investigator is hired as the agent for a particular government. His major priority is the protection of that government. Sometimes again that priority is at odds with the cause of justice.

justice system—Another variety of mystery common today is one which delivers a message or which brings into question the soundness of our system of justice.

variants—These are mysteries which combine several of the groups mentioned earlier or which can't be neatly classified. <sup>14</sup>

In selecting material for this course I've tried to present examples from as many of the above mentioned categories as possible. Additionally, since I view this course as transitional, I'd like to involve students not only with curious plots, but also with character.

For the adolescent a major concern is trying to discover where he/she belongs in the scheme of living. The questions, "Who am I? Why am I acting or thinking this way? Where am I going?" are important to us all, but particularly so to the maturing adolescent. I've therefore selected mystery novels in which at least one major character undergoes some change. He may be trying to place him or herself in the world, give meaning to his or her life, or he or she may discover that a strongly held belief is shaken.

Because most of the students in my classes are slower readers, the books for this course also have been selected to expand the reading skills while presenting no undue difficulties. However many other choices are available depending upon the abilities within a given class. I have included a bibliography of other mysteries I think interesting. Of course the teacher is encouraged to seek and find novels of his/her own choosing.

Since each block period in my school is three hours long, I feel it necessary to vary the activities as follows. Each day will include: (1) reading, viewing a filmstrip or film, or listening to a tape or record, (2) a discussion period, (3) a writing period. Each week will also include vocabulary from the books or stories being read. Additionally, because evaluation is a necessity of life in public education, time is also set aside for testing. Since most class periods are about forty-five minutes, these plans must be adapted for use.

Materials to be used in this course include the following:

#### *Books*

*The Great Detectives* , Otto Penzler, ed.

*Seven Great Detective Stories* , William H. Larson, ed.

*Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* , A. Conan Doyle

*A Study in Scarlet* . A. Conan Doyle

*Miss Pym Disposes* , Josephine Tey

*In the Heat of the Night* , Ball, John

*Spiderman #2* , Stan Lee and John Romita

### *Essays*

Dick Tracy, Chester Gould

Virgil Tibbs, John Ball

### *Audio-Visual Materials*

### *Films*

Orson Wells Mystery Series (ACES)

“Ice Storm”

“The Ingenious Reporter”

### *Filmstrips*

“The Short Story”, Scholastic Books

### *Records*

Scandal in Bohemia, Caedmon TC1220

The teacher is encouraged to take advantage of other films or materials which may be available on television or at a local university or movie or dramatic theater.

The rest of this unit includes a brief course overview, followed by a few sample lesson plans and a sample study guide for one of the novels to be taught.

“I Love A Mystery” course Overview

### *Week I*

Discuss the general purpose of the course and explain course requirements. Informally diagnose reading abilities and literary backgrounds of students. Introduce brief history of mystery novel. Define characterization. Complete exercises which enable students to better identify personality traits and motives of characters. Discuss students’ favorite detectives on T. V. or movies. Read and discuss the following short stories:

Murders in the Rue Morgue by E. A. Poe

“A Study In Scarlet” by A. Conan Doyle, introduction only

"The Red-Headed League" by A. Conan Doyle

"Silver Blaze" by A. Conan Doyle

"The Speckled Band" in play form by Arthur Conan Doyle

Discuss all stories. Make a list of characteristics of detectives and their sidekicks. Put a different ending to "Speckled Band." Compare written with play if time. Students design their own detective character. Assign final project. Students will design their own mysteries.

### *Weeks 2 and 3*

Begin first novel, *In the Heat of the Night*. Discuss racism and its effects on individual, society. Composition topic: What kind of difficulties would you expect to experience if you were placed in a society hostile to your race, religion, or other beliefs? How would you attempt to overcome these difficulties? Discuss the importance of setting. Experiment with establishing a mood through the use of settings. Visit British Mellon Museum. Compare the ways painters create a feeling for the subjects they paint by varying the setting. Emphasize that the various aspects of environment, the society we live in also represent part of the setting. Discuss the importance of setting in *In the Heat of the Night*. Students write setting for their own detective. Include clues or unusual situations they'd like in their stories. Identify the main characters. Who changes and why? Who doesn't change? What motivates change in a character? Read essay about Virgil Tibbs and the Pasadena Police. Discuss deriving fiction from the real. What's real what's not? View Scope filmstrip on setting. Quiz.

### *Weeks 4 and 5*

Introduce *Miss Pym Disposes* by Josephine Tey. Discuss how we make determinations about people. What kind of individual is Lucy Pym? How does she form judgments about others? In what way is she similar to Virgil Tibbs? In what ways different? List personality traits of Lucy Pym. Define point of view. Discuss author's point of view at different sections of novel, beginning, interview Innes, ending. In what way does Lucy's perception of other individuals in the novel foreshadow ending? Review *In the Heat of the Night* from the aspect of point of view. Complete exercises with pictures where students interpret point of view. View Scope filmstrip on character and values. Students determine a point of view for their story. Create auxiliary characters to surround detective. Quiz.

### *Week 6*

Read short story "The Blast Of The Book" by C.K. Chesterton. Discuss the influence of character of Professor Openshaw and his clerk on the plot of the story. Define plot. Understand plot as chronological order, but also become aware of why events take place and when there are improbabilities, or contrary to life situations.

Read short story "The Problem of Cell Block Thirteen" by Jacques Futrelle.<sup>14</sup> This story introduces the character of S.F. X. Van Dusen, The Thinking Machine and another locked-room puzzle. Students design their own plot line using previously designed characters. View film "Ice Storm" and try to predict ending, select the most important clues.

## Week 7

This is a look at detectives and the comics. Students complete a circle reading of Dick Tracy Comic Strips. Read essay by Chester Gould. Discuss differences between characters in comics and those in novels. Define conflict, and discuss interaction of plot, characters, and setting. Introduce comic origins of Spiderman. Read *Spiderman #2*. Why does “Spidey” behave as he does? In what way is he similar to other protagonists? In what way does he differ? Compare Tracy with Spidey. Work independently on stories.

## Week 8

Things can go wrong. Introduce idea of theme as controlling idea of novel. Review *In the Heat of the Night* and *Miss Pym Disposes* for theme. If time, read “Witness for the Prosecution” by Agatha Christie, and “The Nine Mile Walk” by Harry Kemelman. Discuss how reason can be wrong. Complete work on final papers.

If time for a novel finish with *And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie. Final Papers Due. Student evaluations due.

## Lesson Plans—Day One

### Objectives

1. To give overview of course, and set requirements.
2. Establish working relationship among students.
3. Obtain sample of students’ writing and information about reading habits.
4. Introduce history of mystery and Poe’s Dupin.

### Materials Paper, pens and pencils, magic markers

Poe short story, “Murders in the Rue Morgue”

### Time 3 hours

### Procedure

1. I like to introduce myself and explain requirements of the course in the beginning. Because HSC is an alternative school, students have the right to change courses during the first three days. Therefore, students should have as much information as possible in order to make their decisions early. Requirements for this course are:
  - (1) Regular attendance



- (2) Completing a reading or writing assignment daily
  - (3) Participation in class discussion and activities including one outside film or visit.
  - (4) A final project due on the last day of term.
  - (5) Completion of homework and quizzes
2. Ask students to make a list of movie and television detective shows. Discuss why they like these shows.

Take one show and cooperatively write distinguishing features on board as follows: <sup>15</sup>

*Example*

- |                         |   |        |
|-------------------------|---|--------|
| 1. Name of detective    | Columbo   |        |
| 2. Unusual features     | Shabby raincoat, smokes cigars, seems confused      |        |
| 3. Physical description | Medium height, dark hair, shabby appearance         |        |
| 4. Style of operation   | Lulls criminal into false sense of security forcing | errors |
| 5. Police participation | Complete-police procedural                          |        |
|                         | They know what they're doing.                       |        |
| 6. Specialty            | homicide  |        |
| 7. Common sayings       | "Yes sir, that's right."                            |        |

- 3. After discussion ask students to select their own favorite detective and make a similar list.
- 4. Have students share finished lists.
- 5. Ask students to add to list the titles of books they have read during the past year. Students who've read a great deal may confine list to mysteries read.
- 6. Briefly discuss beginnings of formalized detective fiction. Distribute "Murders in the Rue Morgue." Read orally, in turn, the first section of book. Finish silently. It's important to consider the temperament of the class. Don't force individuals to read aloud.
- 7. After reading, briefly discuss what students liked or didn't like about story, and its detective. An important question here is what made the story appealing enough to begin a new kind of literature.

## **After Break**

1. Put list of characteristics on board. Students are to make up their own character. Point out that their detective can be male or female, and of any race, color or creed. In one paragraph students are to describe their character physically and mentally. They may draw an illustration of their detective to fix him firmly in their minds.

### **Summary of “Murders in the Rue Morgue”**

In this story Dupin actually leaves his apartment to view the place where the mutilated body of a young woman has been found. The room where the murder occurred was locked and seemingly inaccessible at the time of the crime.

Dupin is able to provide an explanation for the crime by means of reason. What makes this story worthwhile is that it was the first, it introduces the character C. August Dupin, and to some students Poe, himself, and it is an example of a locked-room puzzle. Possible difficulties include the lengthy style, some difficult vocabulary, and a feeling that I always have that it is unfair to discover that the killer is a non-reasoning animal, in this case an orangutan. Alternative strategies for handling this story include reading part of it yourself, or selecting those sections which exhibit Dupin at his best. I don't linger over this story. My goal is just to allow students to see what the first one was like.

## **Lesson Plan—Day Two**

### **Objectives**

1. To introduce A. Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes
2. Briefly introduce the Baker Street Irregulars
3. Focus on character—impact of a sidekick, Dr. Watson.

### **Materials Pens and pencils, paper.**

Short novel, *A Study In Scarlet* by A. Conan Doyle Short story, “The League of Red-Haired Men” by A. Conan Doyle

### **Procedure**

1. Ask students who Sherlock Holmes is and what is his importance to detective fiction. Many students may well be aware of the importance of Mr. Holmes.
2. Begin *A Study in Scarlet* aloud. Read sections where Watson meets Holmes and sums him up. Allow students who wish to finish story to do so for homework and extra credit. The second part of the story is long and at times rather tedious reading.
3. Explain the Baker Street Irregulars. This group derived from the street children Holmes

employed for a shilling per day. Today they are an organization who hold meetings and publish "The Baker Street Journal." Members have researched just about every aspect of Holme's life. For example, one question the group researched was where was Watson really wounded in the war. Various stories place the wound in the arm and the leg. The answer, according to the Irregulars is his bottom! Victorian sensibilities being what they were, the buttocks could not be mentioned.

4. Read "The Red-Headed League." This story combines humor as well as Holme's famous methodology. In this story a red-headed pawnbroker tells Holmes that he is being cheated out of an income which was to come to him for being a red-head, and a member of the Red-Headed League. Holmes, upon investigation, discovers that the pawnbroker's assistant has evolved a plot to rob a nearby bank by tunneling from the pawnbroker's shop to the bank. Holmes with the help of the police outfoxes the villain and saves the day.

5. Before students reach the explanation, stop the story and see how many of them can put the clues together to tell how Holmes solved the problem. Have all students write out possible explanations on paper. It's unimportant whether or not students are right. It's only important that they try to distinguish the important information from the unimportant.

6. Complete the story. Let students share their endings with others.

7. Compare Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. What advantage is there to having the story told by means of a sidekick like Dr. Watson?

8. Compare Holmes with Dupin.

## **After break**

1. Design a sidekick for your detective. List his characteristics just as you did yesterday and finish up with a paragraph describing him mentally and physically.

Refine previous day's paragraph if time.

Study Guide— *In The Heat Of The Night* by John Ball

## **Summary**

As Sam Wood, patrolman, makes his rounds one miserably hot Carolina night in the city of Wells, he happens across the body of a dead man. The man is the local celebrity, Enrico Mantoli, who was to set up a local music festival. Because of the influence of the dead man, chief of police, Bill Gillespie, hired because of his compatible racist views and with virtually no experience in homicide, finds his job in jeopardy until Sam Woods arrests a black man at the railroad station.

That man turns out to be Virgil Tibbs, an erudite policeman from Pasadena, California whose speciality is murder. Tibbs finds himself boxed into a corner and forced to hunt the murderer while Bill Gillespie feels he has found a perfect fall guy. Tibbs does find the murderer despite the hostility of the community. The killer is a nineteen-year-old counterman at the local all-night drive-in who committed the crime in order to obtain money for an abortion he thought his girlfriend needed. In the process of locating the murderer, Tibbs influences an entire community and effects changes in the value system of the two policemen with whom he has worked.

### Notes on the Novel

*In the Heat of the Night* is a straightforward, chronological narrative which students will find easy to read and understand. It is told in the third person, largely through the eyes of the two white policemen who must work most closely with Virgil Tibbs. The reader views the novel through the person of Sam Wood, officer, ambitious, conscientious, and a racist, or through Bill Gillespie, police chief, politician, and a racist, who for the first time in his life feels himself threatened.

Virgil Tibbs moves throughout the novel like an actor in a silent motion picture, but on only two occasions are we told how he feels or what's in his mind. Once the reader catches a glimmer when he is embarrassed by the adoration of the black mechanic's son, and again at the very end of the novel when Virgil explains all.

Setting plays an important role in this novel. The oppressive heat affects the way people behave, and it interferes with the murder evidence itself. Additionally, the racial "heat" caused by the entrance of an authoritative, educated, and privileged black man interferes with the efficiency of the investigation. Ironically, Tibbs uses this same racial tension to capture his murderer.

And what of the enlightened white man in a racist society? He is often embarrassed, sometimes threatened, and treads very carefully. He is, in this novel, almost as much a captive as the black. Characters are mapped out clearly, and there is even a little romance thrown in. Students will have little difficulty empathizing with Virgil Tibbs or with any one of the major characters at some point in the story.

### Questions

The questions below are designed to serve as a guide. The teacher should select only those which he/she finds useful.

### Chapters 1-5

1. Describe the setting of the story. Tell where, when, and describe the weather and social situation.
2. (a) What is Sam Wood's position?
  - (b) What kind of policeman is he?
  - (c) How does Sam feel about Bill Gillespie?  
Give reasons.
  - (d) What are his attitudes towards blacks?  
Are they well informed opinions?
  - (e) What are your feelings toward Sam Wood as a man? Give reasons.
3. What is the cause of Sam's "red anger" at the end of chapter one?
4. (a) What is Bill Gillespie's position?

- (b) What kind of police chief is he?
- (c) What are his feelings toward blacks?
- (d) What kind of man is he?
- 5. What are Sam's first impressions of Virgil Tibbs? Which are objective observations? Which are subjective (colored by his attitudes)?
- 6. What causes the first change in Sam's attitude toward Tibbs?
- 7. (a) What events cause Gillespie to request Tibb's help?  
(b) How do Endicott and Shubert play a role in Gillespie's decision?
- 8. (a) What are Sam's feelings about Duena?  
Eric Kaufman? Why?  
(b) What are Duena's feelings toward Sam?

## **Chapters 6-9**

- 1. Why is Harvey Oberst arrested?
- 2. Why does Tibbs think him innocent?
- 3. On his nightly tour of duty Sam becomes suspicious of Eric Kaufman. Why?
- 4. Why is Gottschalk called in for questioning?
- 5. How does Virgil clear Mr. Gottschalk of murder?
- 6. How does Virgil locate the murder weapon?
- 7. On page 78, Sam asks Virgil, ". . . how come a colored man got all those advantages?"  
Virgil replies, ". . . there are places in this country where a colored man . . . is simply a

human being like everybody else.”

Do you think Sam understands what Virgil is trying to say? Why or why not?

8. What deviation in his nightly route did Sam make when Virgil was in the car? Why did he change his route?

9. In chapter nine, after Gillespie’s clash with the city council, Gillespie receives a threatening letter? What is the message? What is Gillespie’s reaction to the letter? What effect does Gillespie’s receipt of that letter have on Virgil Tibbs?

10. Upon what evidence does Gillespie arrest Sam Wood?

### ***Chapters 10-14***

1. Why have Purdy and his daughter Delores come to see Gillespie?

2. What information does Virgil learn about Mantoli?

3. What is Duena’s reaction when she learns of Sam’s arrest?

4. Why is Virgil attacked? How does he react toward his attackers? What is his reaction after the incident?

5. Why does Virgil believe Sam to be innocent?

6. How does Virgil force Delores and her father to declare Sam Wood innocent of molestation?

7. (a) How does Virgil catch the murderer?

(b) What was the motive?

(c) What effect does this have on Sam Wood’s life?

(d) How does this affect Bill Gillespie?

## **Vocabulary**

Listed below are words which may give students difficulty while reading *In the Heat of the Might* . It is a good idea to preview vocabulary before students begin to read. Teachers should select only those words which might cause difficulty to their students.

### **Chapters 1-5**

|               |               |               |             |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| inert         | repelled      | mutilated     | obstacles   |
| stagnant      | contemplated  | decapitation  | retorted    |
| stifling      | illusion      | decomposition | annoyance   |
| conscious     | occupied      | abundant      | barricade   |
| despised      | futile        | confidence    | criticism   |
| inadequately  | unyielding    | prickle       | riffling    |
| reassured     | tersely       | strident      | undisclosed |
| confounded    | composure     | inquiry       | references  |
| pronouncement | meddler       | intrude       |             |
| conspicuously | psychological |               |             |

### **Chapters 6-9**

|                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| arrogance       | antagonism            |
| mollify         | devoutly              |
| countermeasures | wincing               |
| concede         | framing (in his mind) |

conscience

### **Chapters 10-14**

|             |               |           |
|-------------|---------------|-----------|
| diplomacy   | occasionally  | thrashed  |
| docile      | plaguing      | phalanx   |
| laconically | vividly       | implicate |
| abortionist | conscientious | motive    |
| establish   | accentuated   |           |

## Topics for Essays and Compositions

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The following questions are intended for use as guides for composition assignments. They are designed to encourage students to view the novel as a whole.

1. What influence has the setting on the events and characters in *In the Heat of the Night* ? Could an almost identical story occur in another century and on another continent and still be believable? Why or why not?
2. Select two character traits of Virgil Tibbs and show how they are revealed: By the author's telling you? By his words? thoughts? actions? Do you know how any other character feels toward him? Who? How did the author show you this relationship?
3. How do the main characters relationships change from the beginning to the end of the novel? Do Virgil, Sam, and Bill seem like real persons? Suppose you met them in New York City today. How would they act?
4. Mention one important decision Virgil Tibbs made: What choices did he have? Why did he decide as he did? Is there evidence that he was pleased or that he regretted his decision? If so what is it?
5. Consider John Ball's use of language; Select several passages that seem especially effective and tell why you think they are.
6. Has this novel helped you understand some of the complexities of a person's response to the life around him? Give reasons and examples to explain your answer.
7. Has *In the Heat of the Night* affected your thinking more deeply in any way than other novels? If so, tell how and explain.

## Appendix

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### References

Three books that are paperback, inexpensive to obtain, and contain much information about the mystery as well as offering a wealth of other sources are:

*The Mystery Story* , John Ball, ed., Penguin Books, New York, 1976. This collection of essays looks at the mystery from many aspects. It contains lists of favorite mysteries, series detectives, and titles of other informational sources for reference. This is a good book to start with.



*The Great Detective* , Otto Penzler, ed., Penguin Books, New York, 1978. This book contains essays by many authors about the detectives they created. It is a good source of material for presenting the author's view. It also contains a bibliography of the books these men have written as well as a list of those titles of which films have been made.

*Detective Fiction* , Robin W. Winks, ed., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1980.

This is a scholarly book containing many essays, and an extensive bibliography of critical works as well as a list of favorite mysteries.

Two books which contain some information but a lot of just plain fun are *Murder Ink* and its companion, *Murderess Ink* , Workman Publishing Co., New York, by Dilys Winn. Mrs. Winn is also the founder of a famous bookstore in New York called Murder Ink which caters only to mysteries.

### *Mysteries*

The following is a list of a few authors whose books I have read and enjoyed. I have listed one or two books which I have enjoyed alongside the author's name. This is not a complete list of favorites, but the list is intended to offer other mysteries suitable for use in this course. Books are suitable for students of average or better reading ability except where otherwise noted.

Raymond Chandler— *The High Window*, *The Big Sleep*— Chandler's hero, Philip Marlowe, is middle aged, somewhat cynical, but a lover and protector of life. Marlowe set the tone for later detectives such as Lew Archer and Travis McGee.

Wilkie Collins— *The Moonstone* —Young love, a missing Oriental diamond, drugs, and Sergeant Cuff make this classic an unforgettable book for the better than average reader.

William Faulkner— *Intruder In the Dust*—A murder for which a black man has been arrested, Faulkner's Mississippi, and a white boy who searches for the real killer set the explosive atmosphere for this novel. This is a powerful, but extremely difficult book, and is for the most able and mature readers.

Ian Fleming— *Goldfinger* , *From Russia with Love*— Everyone's familiar with the English superspy James Bond-007. Exciting, and outrageous fun.

Dashiell Hammett— *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Glass Key* , *The Thin Man* —Hammett combines an excellent style with absorbing stories. Students may have seen movies of *The Thin Man* or *The Maltese Falcon* on television. Hammett's stories also read well aloud.

Harry Kemelman— *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late* , *Thursday the Rabbi Walked Out* —Kemelman's hero, Rabbi Small, a devout and kind man, uses Judaic law to help find the criminal. The plots are interesting and the novels are generally easy to read.

John Le Carre— *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* , *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*— What happens when a trained, detached espionage agent begins to care about others? Carre's heroes find that caring is a severe hindrance in their ruthless profession. This is fascinating, absorbing reading for better readers.

John MacDonald— *The Empty Copper Sea* , *The Green Ripper*— The later novels are well written and concerned about the human condition. T.V.'s Harry Orwell is a spin-off of Mac Donald's detective, Travis

McGee.

Ross MacDonald— *The Goodbye Look* , *The Way Some People Die* , *The Galton Case* —Cast against a panorama of California—These novels are well written, contemporary, and present a humane man, Lew Archer, as detective.

Sayers, Dorothy— *Gaudy Night* , *Five Red Herrings* , *The Nine Tailors* , Ingenious plots, English high life, and most unusual characters make Sayers works enjoyable. Educational television has filmed some of Lord Peter Wimsey's exploits during the past two years for Masterpiece Theatre. Sayers is not the easiest title to read however. *Gaudy Night* and *The Nine Tailors* is for more able, dedicated readers.

Georges Simenon— *Margret Goes Home* , *The Man Who Watched the Trains Go By* —The French policeman tracks killers. Terse style and the dark aura of the criminal underground make many of Simenon's books good reading for the hardy reader.

Rex Stout— *Too Many Cooks* , *Red Threads* —Nero Wolfe tops the scales at 300 pounds, is an expert on orchids, rarely leaves his home, has a sidekick, Archie. Eccentric. Enjoyable. There are other detectives too.

Josephine Tey *A Daughter of Time* , *the Franchise Affair*— Josephine Tey is an excellent writer who draws her plots carefully. *A Daughter of Time* explores the past and the supposed murder of the young heirs to the throne by Richard III. Enjoyable reading for above average readers.

## Notes

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1. John Ball, "Murder at Large," in *The Mystery Story* , John Ball, ed., p.1.
2. *Ibid* ., p.3.
3. William H. Marshall, *Wilkie Collins* , pp. 78-79.
4. Ball, *op. cit* ., p.8.
5. *Ibid* ., See also Gavin Lambert, "The Dangerous Edge," in *Detective Fiction*, Robin W. Winks, ed., p. 50.
6. Ball, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
7. Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
8. Ball, *op. cit* ., p. 11. See also Dorothy Sayers, "The Omnibus of Crime," in *Detective Fiction* , Robin W. Winks, ed. p. 68.
9. Sayers, *op. cit* ., p. 69.
10. Ross MacDonald, " The Writer as Detective Hero," in *Detective Fiction*, Robin Winks, ed., pp. 186-187.
11. Hillary Waugh, "The Mystery vs. The Novel," in *The Mystery Story* , John Ball, ed., pp. 66-78. See also Ball, Sayers *op. cit* .
12. It is important to note that, in fact, it is not uncommon for authors to cheat. See Sayers, *op. cit* ., pp. 73-74.
13. Waugh, *op . cit* ., pp. 71-80.
14. For detailed descriptions of mystery formulae and other popular forms, see John G. Cawelti.

*Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* .

15. Adapted from Charles L. Allen and Milton Velder “ Teaching Guide for ‘The Adventure of The Speckled Band, ’” in *Scope Play Series Teaching Guide 3* , Scholastic, pp. 105-109.

16. For a more complete description and analysis of this Poe mystery and others, see H Douglas Thompson, *Masters of Mystery* , pp. 75-91.

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