



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1982 Volume I: Society and the Detective Novel

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## **History/Mystery: Regionalism and Ethnicity in the American Detective Novel**

Curriculum Unit 82.01.03  
by Elizabeth S. Celotto

“I am a Navajo,” Chee said. “. . . Some Navajos are good at tracking. Some aren’t. You learn it by studying it. Like law.”<sup>1</sup>

These words of Jim Chee, a Navajo tribal policeman, pertain to the two main themes of this unit, the elements of mystery and ethnicity. The use of the word “tracking” is an explicit reference to a method used in solving a mystery; there is an implicit reference that we assume characteristics about certain ethnic groups and fall into the error of stereotyping them. This unit will combine the disciplines of an English and a social science course by teaching about the modern American mystery novel and about some special types of people involved in specific novels.

Profiles of many of our high school students show that they have dropped out or been withdrawn for poor attendance or lack of interest and success in school; some others manage to hang on for a few years but repeatedly fail mandatory subjects such as English and Social Studies. Some of these failing students do lack the skills necessary for academic progress, but others are just not impelled to perform at the skill level that they possess. For these students alternatives to the boredom and low self-esteem might be street crime, pregnancy, and eventually dropping out of school.

Often the 9th grade student is the most vulnerable, alienated by the strange, large school; lacking confidence and academic skills; bored and unable to see the relevance of the mandatory 9th grade courses. Before poor academic habits and social problems worsen, and before school failure becomes concrete, an observant teacher may intervene and stimulate these young students to a greater interest in their curriculum.

Personal contact with many of these students shows them to be victims of an enforced parochialism caused by a lack of access to social groups and neighborhoods beyond the inner city, resulting in prejudicial and stereotypical judgements among both groups. These same students often have a dim or faulty knowledge of our nation’s geography, history, peoples and regions. The information they do possess often comes from the superficial or distorted features they read in super market tabloids or see in the soap operas and other products of commercial television.

Can the study of the mystery novel be the spur to enable these students to become interested and succeed in these courses? More specifically, can a knowledge of the structure of the modern American mystery novel

combined with an awareness of the richness of the American ethnic mix, the strong influence of our climates and geography, and the varied social overtones of regionalism help the students to achieve more academically and in their personal lives? Most assuredly, for a teacher can utilize this genre to illustrate parallels between large scale events and movements in our national life and personal dramas resulting from these events. When a segment of 500 years of history is telescoped from the general to the more specific, a man's dilemma, the student can more readily remember causes and results. When the literature is presented in the provocative form of the mystery novel, the suspense, puzzlement and deduction involved can lead to a greater understanding and aesthetic enjoyment than might be found by reading straight historical references or conventional "historical" fiction.

Accordingly, this unit is designed primarily as an English course and could be suitable for teaching in grades 7-12, but as presented herein is perhaps best suited for 9th grade students who have read some standard novels and have taken social studies courses that touched on colonialism, slavery, civil rights movements, the westward movement, and current social and urban problems. The unit would cover four weeks.

### **What is a mystery?**

The first objective of the unit is to introduce the mystery novel as a legitimate literary genre, one with specific characteristics, conventions, formulae, and subsets or sub-genres. This would also necessitate an investigation into what constitutes a novel and what is meant or implied by the term "mystery". A brief overview of the American mystery novel will be presented, primarily from an historical viewpoint. Students' contributions will be valued, especially as they relate to other forms of the mystery novel as seen or heard on radio, television or film. Although the American mystery novel is the primary form to be considered, British, French, and other works may be alluded to, especially as there may be similarities in theme, characters, or sub-genre.

### **What is history?**

The second objective would be to have the students discover relationships between the elements, historical, anthropological, sociological, and psychological, touched on in the social science courses they have already taken and the social or ethnic groups, social movements, customs, and regionalism alluded to in the assigned mystery novels. This would necessitate a brief review of American history, but caution must be advised lest historical overkill be committed and enthusiasm for reading the novels dies.

Works should be selected that illustrate an author's subtle skills of synthesizing and integrating sociological themes into a well-crafted mystery novel. The social background must be valid, recognizable, and intrinsic to the meaning of this particular novel, differentiating it from another novel with a similar plot, say the hunt for a missing person. If a Chinese detective is featured, he should not be considered for his detective skills alone, but his background as determined by his ethnicity should be important to all elements of the novel. Conversely, the ethnic or regional element should not be so dominant or pervasive that the student is unable to relate his own life experiences to the exotic convolutions presented. Authors must be selected who have successfully balanced the two elements of mystery and history, and who have done so in a clear, well-written manner.

### **I love a mystery: What is the reader's choice?**

The third objective of the unit is to encourage and enable students to become knowledgeable and critical, enthusiastic, habituated readers of this genre. Guiding them through increasingly complex, satisfying mystery novels, the teacher can help them develop a taste for choosing to read more of them, incidentally developing

an inexpensive, wholesome avocation. This will increase the students' world knowledge and reading skills (cognitive results), and should enrich and stimulate their imaginations and involve them in genuine atmospheres of mystery (affective). A free reading assignment should be proposed, allowing the students to select, analyze and review at least one novel selected from a list compiled and/or collected by the teacher and class members.

### *Performance Objectives*

1. Students will compare the elements of the traditional and the mystery novel; relate these elements to the four novels read in the unit and to mysteries encountered in news media, entertainment, and life. The sequence of causes and effects will be examined.
2. Students will isolate the major historical events in American history effecting contemporary life, correlating historical causes to sociological effects. Slavery, segregation, civil rights, immigration, assimilation, geography, topography, and climate will be considered. As a result, students will be able to recognize stereotypical treatment of ethnic persons, relating this to the novels read and to other authors also.
3. Having studied and compared book reviews, students will prepare written reviews on mystery novels of their choosing. They will be inspired to continue reading in the genre.

### *Evaluation Methods.*

1. Students will maintain notebooks on the terms and elements of the mystery novel, keeping notes on mysteries encountered in other media and noting personal experiences touching on the subject. They will take a quiz on the conventions of the mystery novel and on the four read for the unit. Extra credit will be given for writing a short mystery story.
2. In notebooks, students will record historical events, ethnic groups, and natural phenomena that pertain to or have effected themselves, their families, and the nation. After class discussion, a test, including multiple choice and essay questions, will be given on the influence of setting and ethnicity in the novels read.
3. After comparing various book reviews and after completing a mystery novel of choice, each student will prepare a well-written three page book review on this novel, noting examples of the conventions and elements of the genre, and any historical, ethnic, or regional significance. Students will share results and compile them in a booklet to order to promote class effort and morale.

### *Strategies*

It might be appropriate for the teacher to divide the class into four groups for purposes of book-sharing, study,

writing and discussion at certain times. The teacher should also provide the students with simplified copies of the unit's objectives and assignments. These should be incorporated in their notebooks or folders and should also be posted in the classroom. If any students are without this material, it can be manufactured as a simple class project. As the unit progresses, other lists on terms, suggested readings, etc., may be distributed for inclusion in the notebooks.

This unit should cover four weeks of classes, but the teacher will have to allow for a period to precede the actual unit when the students can begin reading the assigned novels. This can be done when they are attacking other elements of the English I course, such as spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and composition. Care should be taken not to burden the students with too much other homework that might interfere with reading the mystery novels. The skills emphasized in the daily class during this preliminary reading period can be used to good advantage in later writings on the mystery novels.

Texts should be made available to the students in paperback form. The first one should be fairly simple to read and be a straightforward, conventional mystery. If *In the Heat of the Night* is selected, as is suggested in this sample unit, it is probably available in sets within the school system. If another suitable, and perhaps more difficult, novel can be ordered for the entire class or is available within the system, then the unit need cover only two novels. If this is not possible, then three other sets (7-8 each) must be secured. These four selections would be read one-at-a-time by the four study groups and switched until all have been covered by each group in the preliminary reading period. Some discussion within the group would be permitted at that time.

This sample unit suggests using novels by four different authors, relating to four different ethnic groups and regions. The novels treated herein are.:

1. *In the Heat of the Night* (Ball), South, black detective.
2. *Last Seen Wearing* or *The Missing Man* (Waugh), New England, white policeman.
3. *Angle of Attack* (Burns), Denver, Chicano detective.
4. *The Dark Wind* or *Listening Woman* (Hillerman), in Arizona and New Mexico, Navajo tribal policemen.

During the reading period, the novels may be read for plot and general understanding only. As the actual unit progresses, the students will be able to apply the criteria of the mystery genre to the works and to select the elements of ethnicity and regionalism that make each selection unique. The teacher can assist the students by providing them with fact sheets of terms, conventions, etc..

While the stories selected may have backgrounds and peoples in them that are familiar to the students or not, all should be straightforward mystery stories written in a manner understandable to inner-city ninth grade students.

In addition, there should be reference materials available in the English classroom or in the students' social science classes. Teachers can direct the students to outside sources such as school and public libraries. An

English anthology, an American atlas and/or a set of maps, history books or surveys, and criticism written on the mystery genre should be available.

Respect for the backgrounds and sensibilities of all the students should be observed. Considerations must be given for differences in social awareness or development. There must be sensitivity as to the issues, customs and mores, taboos, sex and violence in these stories.

It might be feasible to employ a co-operative teaching plan in this unit. Since all the students would also be concurrently studying a ninth grade social science course such as Urban Studies, the other teacher involved might be interested in reviewing some of the major movements in American history that affect us all today as well as highlighting the various ethnic groups and regional settings that provide the marked diversity in the United States. If this is not possible, that teacher might be able to lend a set of review books on American history that the English class could use for reference.

If the ninth grade student is also a poor reader, unaccustomed to reading novels, often unable to see the relevance of the content of his courses to practical life, and lacking motivation, he often becomes cynical or depressed, fulfilling the prophecy of high school failure. The teacher must intervene in this pattern by being a model of a satisfied, enthusiastic reader. Although a certain amount of formality must be observed by the mentor and pupils as to objectives, assignments, and lesson plans, it should not intrude into what can become an enjoyable exercise in discovering that the mystery novel can tell us a great deal about our neighbors and ourselves.

The key to the vitality and charm of many of the mysteries, including those discussed herein, is the striking reality and immediacy of the characters and the plots. The teacher must stress this as an encouragement toward starting and maintaining a steady pace in reading four assigned novels. At the outset the teacher must point out that although the average urban teenager does not have exact parallels in life that mirror those of the characters in the novels, all can find familiar elements, such as:

*Last Seen Wearing* , Hillary Waugh, 1952. The murder of a college freshman at an Ivy League women's college in the 1950's doesn't appear relevant at first, but the following familiar elements soon appear: New England college town, uneven town-gown relationships, effects of seasonal weather changes on events, teen-age sexuality and pregnancy, student-teacher relationships, and police-court procedures. These items may be given in a précis that will serve to make the student an observant reader as he proceeds.

*In the Heat of the Night* , John Ball, 1957. A black detective finds himself in a unique place and situation when he is temporarily stranded in a Southern town during a hot spell, before the time of the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation. At first this may appear removed from life in the 1980's, but many minority students in the class can probably recall hearing about similar happenings in the South and elsewhere from family members, and many have personally experienced the atmosphere of a hot Southern town. Recent experiences with extreme changes in weather conditions have shown how destructive this can be to property and to human lives and relationships. In the 60's and 70's many towns and cities were torn by extreme racial tensions, especially in May and the Summer, and even now the news media have been reporting the possibility of summer unrest because of the scarcity of work for many urban youths.

*Angle of Attack*, Rex Burns, 1979. Does the story of a Chicano detective in the Western city of Denver who solves the killing of a minority teenager have a commonality with the youth of other cities? The struggle of Frankie Covino to finish high school, continue in college, and climb out of the morass of the urban ethnic enclaves is a familiar goal to many of our local Hispanic and other minority students. Many of them have

experienced the housing crises resulting from city redevelopment, they are aware of tensions within their own racial groups and among the various ethnic elements in the city, and many are familiar with the operations of the police and judicial systems.

*The Dark Wind*, Tony Hillerman, 1982. Death, drugs, theft, and skullduggery in the desert, as well as tension between rival Indian tribes, seem remote from the Eastern urban scene. Not so to many of the students who are proud of the various types of Indian heritage in their families. This story points out both common and peculiar Indian characteristics and should impel these readers to research their own antecedents. The co-involvement of drugs and crime is often found on the local scene, and it has not been uncommon to read that some local crimes involve cover-ups for larger crimes. The primitive need for rain is also common to the farms in other areas as it is for the grazing and farm lands of the Southwest.

With these guidelines or clues given as the students begin the reading period, they can be motivated to question themselves, to recognize all these and other personal parallels, and to allow their imaginations to wander deeper into the atmosphere of each novel.

The students will have gained additional insight and confidence from their review of the major movements in American history, stressing events, climate, geography, and peoples that have influenced us on a national and on a local level. Strategic use of the table of contents, section headings, and index in a comprehensive history text, such as *The National Experience*, should assist the students in their search. Although other topics may be included, the following should be stressed: exploration and colonization; witchcraft and religion; seafaring, farming and trade; rebellion, civil war; slavery and the black experience; immigration and assimilation; industrialization and urbanization; political parties; corruption, crime, mobs and the underworld; the judicial system and justice; the westward movement; the Indian experience and A.I.M.; women's or feminist movements; youth culture and student rebellion; drug and alcohol use; education, arts, cultural and news media. Because of the content of the four novels being read, special emphasis must be placed on the settling of New England, the legacy of slavery, the opening of the West, and the re-settlement or immigration of Mexicans, American Indians, and other ethnic groups.

Having accomplished the historical review, some class time should now be spent on the background of the literature. The foundation can begin by using a suitable anthology that should be in the school's bookroom, such as *Insights Into Literature*, in order to acquaint all students with the essentials of fiction, beginning with the short story.

Several short stories, such as "The Monkey's Paw" by W.W. Jacobs, and "The Cask of Amontillado" by Poe, and "The Three Students" by Conan Doyle, have elements of mystery in them; they are short enough to read during class, and the students can quickly begin to judge the differences between them and the mystery novels they are beginning outside class. The short story must reveal its truth quickly and convincingly, often surprisingly. Van Doren states that the author implies more than he states, and much of the background remains invisible to be explored in our imagination. <sup>2</sup> Some students may agree with Barzun <sup>3</sup> that the short story is the best form for the mystery tale, but many others will feel cheated by the artificiality and haste of the contrivances and the lack of a more studied pace for detection and deduction. "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" by Crane is a short but very fine tale of confrontation and has an amusing denouement, all set at the close of the Western frontier. While there are similarities, these short stories do not seem to give the full satisfaction of the novels being read.

What makes the novel different? Like the short story it stresses character, plot, point of view, setting, climax,



and theme, but these elements are transformed and more fully developed in the novel. Both are fictional prose narratives, relating certain events in a detailed, organized manner, but the novel's greater length may tell us more about the characters, may contain both plot and subplots, may have different settings, may employ several flashbacks, points of view, and themes. <sup>4</sup> Van Doren notes that a good novel leaves us absorbed in a whole world, complete in itself, in which settings, characters, actions and themes are fully developed. <sup>5</sup>

To complete the cycle of the background of the mystery novel, the teacher must now help the students to learn the styles and conventions of the genre, and to identify these elements in their novels. The steady buildup will prove the literary legitimacy of the mystery genre. In order to encourage and not bewilder these fledgling mystery buffs, simple guidelines will be offered. Cawelti declares that the formula of the mystery novel usually, but not always, begins with (1) the formula situation, an unsolved crime, and proceeds to (2) pattern of action or investigation, introduction to detective and characters, detection and follow-up of clues, (3) development of characters and setting, (4) announcement of a solution, (5) explanation of same, and (6) denouement. Some endings may be ambiguous and open to the reader's point of view. The characters usually include the victim(s), the criminal, the sleuth, and other related characters. The setting is usually rather self-contained, isolated, or controlled. <sup>6</sup> There is a crime, or the appearance of one, but not necessarily a killing in mysteries.

Lastly, the students should learn the most common subsets of the genre, some of which are familiar to them from T.V. These should include the puzzle (and possibly the English Country House theme), the hero-spy or chase novel, the hard-boiled private eye story, the police procedural novel, the horror story, or any combination of the aforementioned. Many novels include the crime at or near the beginning (the effect) and backtrack to the clues and the criminal (the causes). Some follow the more common pattern of real life where a series of obvious events lead to an inevitable conclusion.

With their notes and the teacher's handouts on the topic tucked in their notebooks or journals for guidance, the students should now be able to read and discuss the four novels enjoyably.

The students will be required to discuss the series first in a special order; the progression will be geographical, from cold New England, to the steaming South, to an urban center in the area of the Rockies, ending in the parched land of the Southwest; the order of publication is chronological, 1952, 1957, 1979, and 1982.

They will be required to be very heedful of the effects of the natural settings and the regions, and they must be especially aware of the different ethnic groups involved, WASPs, blacks, Southern whites, Chicanos, Italian-Americans, Indians of the Southwest. A strong sense of place pervades all four stories and is so intrinsic that the plots would be meaningless in any other settings.

The novels appear to progress in like manner, from those more simply written and developed to the more complex. As the reader grows more astute, he is asked to join the nameless narrator and be a "watcher in the shadows," one who might even be able to solve the mystery before the writer reveals it.

The class must be alerted to the fact they will be expected to read and report on a novel of their own choosing. Although it is preferable that they choose mysteries, they may want to read one that has a setting or characters similar to one of the four read in the unit but is not strictly a mystery novel; example: *Ethan Frome* or *The Scarlet Letter* / *Last Seen Wearing* , *Intruder in the Dust* / *In the Heat of the Night* , *The Godfather* / *Angle of Attack* , *The Deerslayer* / *The Dark Wind* . A number of appropriate mystery novels are suggested in

the Student Bibliography that follows. Some other novels, because of their difficulty or questionable subject matter or treatment, should only be read on the recommendation of the teacher, based on her knowledge of certain students. For the more adventurous student who is intrigued enough to want to read and report on the genre in general, he would do well to read the very complete treatments in *Modus Operandi* or *Murder Ink* , both readable and informative. For one interested in ethnic detectives, John Ball has an excellent chapter on that subject in the book he edited, *The Mystery Story* .

For students who are interested in knowing almost everything about Indians, Jamake Highwater, a young Navajo, has written the amazing *Fodor's Indian America* . It is much more than a travel guide, for it covers Indian history, customs, regulations, ceremonies, celebrations, etc.

As the discussions on each of the novels proceed in turn, and later in general, several class activities should be on-going and should be developed by both the teacher and the students. Vocabulary building, inventing of puzzles or detection/clue exercises, sharing of records of ethnic music (Indian, Negro, Hispanic, etc.) should be encouraged. Samples of pertinent art or photography may be displayed. There should be daily sharing of news items pertaining to the mystery genre, and discussions of those mysteries seen on T.V. or in films should be held.

Whenever possible, news items that relate to the content of one of the four novels or to other mysteries should be featured on a special bulletin board. Observant readers will soon cause the board to be filled. Local news items, such as those following, taken from a local newspaper, <sup>7,8,9</sup> easily relate to *Last Seen Wearing* , or other stories. These items may inspire a student to write a short mystery story for extra credit.

State offers reward in Criscuolo murder

*(figure available in print form)*

Woman reports sighting UFOs

*(figure available in print form)*

Once-regal 'bag lady' rescued

*(figure available in print form)*

The teacher, and eventually the students, should provide book reviews from weekly or monthly publications. Since the same book is often reviewed by different authors, they can be compared as to opinions and styles. In addition to the local papers, *Time* , *Newsweek* , *National Observer* , and *Saturday Review* are good sources.

In order to facilitate discussions of the works, build and maintain class interest, test the students' understanding in practical ways, and to encourage them in being imaginative, some sample activities are suggested.

### **Sample Activity #1—Police Report**

In addition to administering tests or quizzes, the teacher can evaluate each student's knowledge of the genre and recall of the details of the story in a simple way that will permit individuality of expression. Since all of the novels are of the police procedural subset, this exercise could be in the form of a "Police Blotter Report."

#### **Objectives :**

1. To test student's grasp of the conventions observed in this novel.





Suggested types of criminal behavior:

*Crimes of profit* : robbery, embezzlement, hi-jacking, kidnapping, industrial espionage, greed (Von Bulow?).

*Crimes of passion* : domestic disturbances, jealousy or sexual motivation (Jean Harris).

*Victimless crimes* : prostitution, drug & alcohol abuse.

*Crimes against society* : unjust war, espionage, social prejudice, government or political (Watergate).

*Crimes against the person* : assault, rape, assassination, killing.

*Crimes against our neighbor* : gossip, lying, anger.

### **Sample Activity #3—Three Hour Field Trip to Superior Court**

Seldom does the mystery novel involve the reader in the realistic results of criminal activity, namely, court or penal procedures or other forms of punishment and justice. T.V. has pre-empted this treatment from Erle Stanley Gardner, et. al.. To increase the students' awareness of the connections between crime and punishment, the teacher can arrange a field trip to court, or if that is not possible, invite a police detective to address the class.

#### **Objectives :**

1. To enable the class to see the connection between some criminal activity and legal justice.
2. To expose the class to judicial procedures.

#### **Methods :**

1. Contact State Attorney's Office to arrange for visit; secure permission from school and parents.  
Set up schedule with Assistant State Attorney to include these possible activities:
  - preliminary discussion with available court assistant.
  - Short visit to G.A. (Geographic District) Court to observe processing of lesser crimes.
  - Observe Judicial District Courts, both Civil and Criminal sides.
  - Spend some time observing the process of jury selection.

*Evaluation :*

For homework have the students write up their valid impressions and new insights.

**Sample Activity #4—Stereotypes Work Sheet**

The four novels suggested for this class all involve definitive ethnic or racial types, sometimes recognized or labeled as Chicano, WASP, Southern Red Neck, Mafioso, Black, Indian. While these labels are merely terms, they may call to mind negative or positive images, they may produce tensions, embarrassment, or even tragedy for persons so labeled. The class should examine which commonly known terms are valid, stereotypical, or injurious to persons.

**Objective :**

1. To have class examine attitudes toward labels, stereotypical terms.
2. To have class consider the power of words, verbal terms.

**Methods :**

1. Have class fill out work sheet.
2. Discuss answers and ideas in class, guiding students in parameters of behavior.

**Sample :**

**The Power of a Word**

The terms or words listed below may mean something to you or not. If you think the meaning is favorable, good, or positive, mark *P* next to it. If you feel it refers to something in a poor, ugly, or negative way, mark *N*. If you're not familiar with it, put a question mark, *?*. If you do not feel positive or negative about it, put a zero, *0*.

There is space to jot down some other terms to share with the class.

*P—N—?—0*

Polack	Honky	Celtic	Hunky	___
Polish joke	Ofay	Gaelic	Russky	___
Solidarity	Redneck	Kraut	Commie	___
Guinea	White trash	Nazi	Bircher	___
Wop	Kallikak	Hun	KKK	___
Dago	WASP	Teutonic	Leftist	___
Mafia	Swede	ACLU	Reactionary	___

Roman	Scandinavian	NAACP	Libber	___
Jew	Semitic	Urban League	Gay	___
Hebrew	Anti-Semitic	Anti-Defamation	Fag	___
Kike	Chicano	League	Redskin	___
Colored	Ricans	Gooks	Injun	___
Black	Hispanic	Chinks	Indian	___
Nigger	Spic	Japs	Half-Breed	___
Mulatto	Harp	Oriental	Squaw	___
Creole	Paddy	Nipponese	Squaw Man	___
	I.R.A.	Sino	Apache	___
		Slavic		

### **Sample Activity #5—Mini-Seminars on Subjects Related to Novels**

Another method of discussion can foster better peer relationships. By working in small groups, all members have a better opportunity to contribute.

#### **Objective :**

1. To correlate material in novels to real-life relationships.
2. To promote group process.

#### **Methods :**

1. Divide the class into 4 or 5 groups; allow them to select discussion topics.
2. After 20 minutes of discussion, have group secretaries share conclusions with class.

#### **Sample Topics :**

Do racial restrictions prevail now or might they in the near future?

Attitudes toward teen-age pregnancy in the 1950's and now.

Breaking of taboos, religious customs, etc.

Friendship and respect among team workers or peers. Effects of urban renewal on citizens.

Does our penal system work?

Is there mystery in our lives? (What are my roots? ancestor's photo, neighbor's howling dog, strange phone call, etc.?)

Miranda Law, modern laws on search and seizure.

The teacher can also engage the students in other activities related to mystery reading, such as puzzle-making, developing detection games, role playing and acting in 10 minute mystery skits, vocabulary building, and working on syllogisms to illustrate the processes of logical reasoning. The unit could conclude with an assignment requiring each student to produce a concise, well-written report on a novel of his choice, written in the style of a magazine or newspaper book review.

## Notes

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1. Tony Hillerman, *The Dark Wind* (New York, 1982), p. 52.
2. Mark Van Doren, et. al. *Insights into Literature* (New York, NY, 1965), p. 5.
3. Jacques Barzun, "Detection and the Literary Art," in *Detective Fiction* , Robin W. Winks, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1980), p. 146.
4. Van Doren, pp. 589-590.
5. *Ibid* ., p. 591.
6. John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago, 1976), p. 77.
7. Reprinted with the permission of the Jackson Newspapers (New Haven, 1982), June 14, 1982, p. 21.
8. *Ibid* ., July 21, 1982, p. 17.
9. *Ibid* ., June 14, 1982, p. 3.

## STUDENT BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The following list includes texts for the unit, suggestions for free reading, related literature, and material from other media, all suitable for this age and grade level.

### *Novels*

Auchincloss, Louis, ed. *The Edith Wharton Reader* . New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965. *Ethan Frome* (1911).

New England setting, the air of suspense, and the romance of a girl and an older man make this a good companion piece to *Last Seen Wearing* .

Ball, John. *In the Heat of the Night* . New York: Bantam Books, 1965. Straightforward police procedural novel stressing racial tensions. Sense of place and growth of human relationships makes it worth the reading.

Buchan, John. *39 Steps* . New York: Fawcett Popular Library, 1915.

The classic spy-chase novel; very readable and enjoyable in spite of somewhat dated attitudes.

Buckley, William F. *Marco Polo, if You Can* . Garden City, Doubleday, 1982.

Excellent combining of historical and fictional characters in order to detail the workings of American security networks. Some significant human relationships portrayed.

Burns, Rex. *Angle of Attack* . New York: Harper and Row, Pub., 1979.

A Chicano detective employs his own brand of justice in solving the killing of a teenager. Ethnic rivalries, a city in transition, and gangland activity stress the urban scene.

Clark, Walter Van Tilburg. *The Ox-Bow Incident* . New York: The New American Library, 1940.

Not a mystery, but the western setting, the suspense, the problem of mob justice make this a good companion piece to some of the required novels.

Cross, Amanda. *Poetic Justice* . New York: Avon Books, 1979.

Easier reading than Sayers or P.D. James for the student who is interested in female sleuths. Interesting themes of university politics and student unrest.

Faulkner, William. *Intruder in the Dust* . New York: Random House, 1948.

A difficult but excellent novel for the student interested in learning more about justice and race relations before desegregation.

Hall, Adam. *Tango Briefing* . Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1973.

Quiller searches for a plane in the North African desert in a spy thriller that depicts the dangers of plane gliding in mysterious locales.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter* . New York: Pocket Books, 1952.

Out-of-wedlock pregnancy in another time and in another part of the Massachusetts Colony make this a companion piece to *Last Seen Wearing* . Harder reading.

Hillerman, Tony. *The Dark Wind* . New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1982.

———. *Listening Woman* . 1968.

Two Navaho tribal detectives solving crimes resulting from the clash of cultures. The first of the novels involves seemingly related crimes, tribal rivalries, and rituals; the second involves the more complex themes

of patricide, fratricide, religion, and ethnic preservation. Strongest sense of place and people.

Household, Geoffrey. *Rogue Male* . New York: Penguin Books, 1939.

In the style of *39 Steps* , a lone male stalks a dangerous world leader. The hunt and the hiding both depend on Man becoming one with his environment.

Household, Geoffrey. *Dance of the Dwarfs* . New York: Penguin Books, 1968.

The hunter becomes the hunted in this thrilling horror story that brings new dimensions to the genre. Superb sense of place. Careful reading advised. Some diary form used.

James, P.D. *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* . New York: Fawcett Popular Library, 1972.

An attractive, credible, confident young woman solves the mystery of the death of a young man. The Cambridge University setting and the classes of the people make this a unique story.

Kelly, Mary. *Spoilt Kill* . New York: Harper and Row, 1961.

A private detective becomes personally involved as he solves the murder in a pottery town in Northern England. Excellent depiction of the influence of the fiery furnaces on the livelihoods and the mentality of the people and on the landscape.

Kienzle, William X. *The Rosary Murders* . Kansas City: Andrews and McNeel, Inc., 1979.

A Roman Catholic priest solves the murders of several clerics. The coincidences strain credulity but the details of the religious and ethnic elements in the urban sprawl of Detroit make it worth reading. The author, a former priest, writes penetratingly, humanely, with humor.

O'Donnell, Lillian. *The Children's Zoo* . New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1981.

Not the best series about a female detective, but it is very readable, and the theme of juvenile gang crime and the authenticity of the New York setting make it suitable for students. Emphasizes the difficulty of operating on the levels of woman, wife, and detective.

Stout, Rex. *The Doorbell Rang* . New York: The Viking Press, 1965.

For those who like the flavor of Manhattan, food, and exotic hobbies. The sense of regionalism is very strong, and the team of Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin untangle the murder and cover-up in their usual clever manner.

Upfield, Arthur W. *Death of a Swagman* . New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945.

One in a series featuring a part-aborigine Australian detective, Napoleon Bonaparte. Written in a rather quaint or dated fashion, but the superb ethnic element and sense of place are beautifully presented.

Waugh, Hillary. *Last Seen Wearing* . New York: Harper & Row, 1952.

A well-written, straightforward police procedural novel set in a New England college town, involving the search for the killer of a female student. There is an excellent portrayal of a police partnership, court processes, use



of a diary; authentic picture of town and gown, the change of the seasons, the feeling of New England.

Waugh, Hillary. *The Missing Man* . Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964.

The police chief and his sergeant in a small Connecticut shore town search for the killer of a girl found washed up on the beach. Again, a logically and satisfyingly written novel for anyone interested in the local scene.

### *The Short Detective Story*

Hubin, Allen J., ed. *Best of the Best Short Stories, 1946-1971* . New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1971.

For those readers who are satisfied with samples from a variety of authors of mixed talent or fame.

### *Reference Books*

Blum, John M., et al . *The National Experience, Parts 1 & 11* . 5th Ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981.

Concise coverage of major movements and events throughout American history. Excellent titling and indexing to aid class in reviewing material pertinent to the literature.

Highwater, Jamake. *Fodor's Indian America* . New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1975.

An amazing work by a young Navajo that is much more than a travel guide. In a sensitive, honest, and informative treatment, he details the history, religions, arts and culture, customs, political currents, and homelands of the Indian nations across the continent. A very good companion to the Hillerman novels, especially the sections on Navajo migration, tribal police and legal systems, and on tribal celebrations.

———. *Rand McNally Road Atlas: United States/Canada/Mexico* . Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1982.

Well-detailed for visualizing settings of novels.

Van Doren, Mark, et al . *Insights Into Literature* . Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965.

Contains essential material on the short story and the novel, including some of the mystery genre. Another similar anthology would also serve.

### *Brain Teasers*

Razzi, Jim & Mary. *The Sherlock Bones Mystery Detective, Book 1* . New York: Bantam Books, 1981.

Students can test younger siblings' deductive skills with this.

Sobol, Donald J. *Two-Minutes Mysteries* . New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1967.

Capsule mysteries with answer sections. For intermediate readers.

Treat Lawrence. *Crime and Puzzlement* . Boston: David R. Godine, 1981.

More advanced picture mysteries, each accompanied by a quiz.

Includes suggestions for careful reading. Warning: do not search for too arcane meanings.

Winn, Dilys. *Murder Ink: The Mystery Reader's Companion* . New York: Workman Pub. Co., Inc., 1977.

An excellent collection of essays written by authors and fans about other mystery writers and their creations. Informative and witty.

### *Other Media*

Rossi, Nick. *The American Indian* . New Haven: Keyboard Pub., 1971. A kit containing written material and a film strip with sound, presenting indian folkways through song, dance sounds, and narrative. Pertinent sections include the Navajo Squaw Dance, and painting-healing rituals, and the Silversmith's Song.

Newspapers, magazines (news, commentary, literary), film and T.V. (news, documentaries, dramas).

Students should be encouraged to read or view these media for elements that lend themselves to the mystery genre. They may analyze the structure, separate fact from fiction, deduce the truth, find outstanding ethnic or regional influences, and detect parallels in their own life experiences. In the written media, students can also enjoy, and even compare, a variety of reviews of mystery novels or films.

### *General*

Further study of Indians could include these resources: Adair, John, *The Navajo and Pueblo Silversmiths* ; Dockstader, Frederick, *Indian Art in America* ; Hassrick, Royal, *North American Indians* ; Hillerman, Tony, *The Spell of New Mexico* ; Horgan, Paul, *The Rio Grande* ; Kluckhohn, Clyde, *Indian Witchcraft & The Navajo* ; Trumbull, James, *Indian Names in Connecticut* ; Waters, Frank, *Book of the Hopi* ; Whipple, Chandler, *The Indian and the White Man in Connecticut* ; Wissler, Clark, *Indians of the United States* .

Many excellent paintings and early photographs included.

## **TEACHERS BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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### *Reference Books—Commentary and Criticism.*

Ball, John, ed. *The Mystery Story* . New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

A good collection of essays based on classifications within the genre. "The Mystery Versus the Novel" by Waugh and the "Ethnic Detective" by Ball are most applicable for this unit.

Cawelti, John G. *Adventure, Mystery and Romance* . Chicago: University of Chicago. Press, 1976.

An excellent analysis of writing techniques, the anatomy of the mystery novel, a review of the formulae.

Cawelti, John G. *The Six-Gun Mystique* . Bowling Green Ohio: Bowling Green University, 1970.

Interesting implications for those fans of both the mystery genre and westerns; this work shows the clear

overlap.

Lambert, Gavin. *The Dangerous Edge* . New York; Grossman Pub. 1976.

Very good analysis of the motivations that enabled certain famous mystery writers to produce classic books and films. Thorough biographical data.

Nevins, Francia M. Jr., ed. *The Mystery Writers Art* . Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University, Popular press, 1970.

Analyses of popular writers and their works, and of detective heroes. "The Detective Story as an Historical Source" by Aydelotte is of interest because he attempts to present a case against the realism, challenge and worth of detective fiction.

Winks, Robin W. ed. *Detective Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays* . Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980.

Excellent essays on the mystery genre presenting negative as well as favorable views by outstanding writers, including authors of mystery novels. Essential background reading for this unit. Valuable bibliography.

Winks, Robin W., ed. *The Historian as Detective: Essays on Evidence* . New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1968.

An excellent collection of essays showing that similar enthusiasms, interests, and techniques are shared by both history scholars and mystery writers, even though the forms may differ. In one essay, Erik H. Erikson cleverly matched the techniques of detection to a recorded event in the life of Martin Luther in "The Case of the Fit in the Choir: The Application of Psychoanalysis."

Winks, Robin W. *Modus Operandi: An Excursion Into Detective Fiction* . Boston: David R. Godine, Pub., 1982.

A wonderful support for those teachers who need more background on the current state of mystery writing, and a strong justification for appreciation of the genre. Unusually informative while still allowing the reader the freedom to disagree or modify conclusions.

#### *Additional Novels Recommended for Student Reading.*

The following books, are suggested because of themes pertinent to the novels assigned or because they stress a sense of place or ethnicity. All are recommended with reservations to only certain students because of content inappropriate to this age group. They may be used in part or as a whole depending on the situation.

Adams, Ian. *S, Portrait of a Spy* . New Haven: Ticknor & Fields, 1982.

Any student eager to learn more about spy networks should doggedly read through this cynical, realistic portrait of high level double and triple espionage. Clever use of the author as part of the plot.

Constantine, K.C. *The Man Who Loved Slow Tomatoes* . Boston: David R. Godine, Pub., 1982.

The latest in a series of mysteries portraying an Italo-Serbian Police Chief in a dying Pennsylvania mining town, here solving a murder resulting from tragic domestic relationships. An intense sense of place and ethnic identity are present, but the strong language and explicit details of the problems call for selectivity in teacher's recommendations.

Hansen, Joseph. *Gravedigger* . New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972. For the teacher only. One in a series featuring a detective involved in a homosexual milieu in California. Unattractive treatment of some characters, but this novel is worthwhile in reference to local color and also on subject of youth and cults.

Littell, Robert. *The Debriefing* . New York: Dell Pub. Co. Inc., 1979. Nothing turns out to be as it seems, the hero-spy discovers; his own country and his mind play tricks on him. Difficult reading but interesting depiction of an American spy finding Russian roots as the tables turn. For selected readers.

McClure, James. *The Steam Pig* . New York: Pantheon Books, 1971. Kramer, the Afrikaner, and Zondi, the Bantu, form a classic and classy detective team which in spite of apartheid, maintains an enviable working relationship. Several unpleasant themes make the novel inappropriate for class reading; sections can be chosen to illustrate parallels to other teams.

Parker, Robert B. *Mortal Stakes* . Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1975. A hard-boiled private eye in Boston delivers his own brand of justice in a situation involving the Boston Red Sox. Excellent sense of place and topical themes, but questions involving moral values and overly-violent episodes make this a questionable choice for all but the more mature students.

Sayers, Dorothy. *Gaudy Night* . New York: Avon Books, 1936. Perhaps the most complex of the novels involving woman detectives dealing with woman's problems, although it becomes less a mystery than a feminist view of the uneasy state of women at Oxford in the 1930's. Excellent sense of place. For selected students.

Sjřwall, Maj and Per Wahlřř. *Roseanna* . New York: Pantheon Books. 1965.

Valuable novel for students interested in encountering the workings of a detective team in an unfamiliar setting, this time with Martin Beck and his cohorts in Sweden. Realistic portraits of police procedure, human relationships and the problems of a model Socialist state. Certain details of plot preclude recommendation for general readership.

#### *Additional Suggestions:*

Regionalism— *New England* : Novels by Doris Miles Disney, George Higgins Harry Kemelman; books on witchcraft, Lizzie Borden.

*South* —John J. MacDonald, William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers.

*Midwest* —Winfred Van Atta, *Hatchet Man* ; Travers, *Anatomy of a Murder* .

*West*— Donald Zochert, *Another Weeping Woman* ; Elizabeth Linington, *Date With Death* .

*California* —any by Joseph Wambaugh, Ross Macdonald, John G. Dunne.

#### *Social Issues*

*Woman Sleuths, Feminism* —any by Margaret Millar, Elizabeth Linington, Ernest Larsen.

*Big Business* —any by Emma Lathen.

*Post-Civil War* —James Sherburne, *Death's Grey Angel* .

*Crime* —Mario Puzo— *The Godfather* ; Ernest Hemingway, *The Killers* .

*Sub Genre* —

*Classics* —E.A. Poe, Arthur Conan-Doyle, Agatha Christie, Ellery Queen. *Police Procedure* —Ed McBain.

*Hard-Boiled* —Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett.

*Spy* —John Le Carré, Graham Greene.

*Gothic Horror* —Shirley Jackson.

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