Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Semi-Private Eyes

Curriculum Unit 82.01.05
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Benny sits in the cafeteria, opens his carton of milk, and prepares to devour his government-subsidized fried chicken. Within moments several other boys join him with their lunch trays at the table. A few minutes later there are no less than six other boys and several girls jockeying for position at the now crowded table. Benny is captain of the basketball team, good-looking, well-mannered, and adequately intelligent. His popularity is well-deserved. He is adored by students and well-liked by his teachers. Benny will say very little at the table today. The conversation concerns the school's basketball game of the previous afternoon. Should he agree with the jabbering analysis, it will be looked upon as formal certification of all that transpires. If he should disagree with the minutest detail concerning the game, the conversation will immediately take a different turn. Benny uses his foils well.

Tricia is an extremely attractive co-ed at the same school as Benny. Tricia has attained academic honors throughout the year. Each morning a crowd of students surrounds Tricia's desk as she brushes her hair and freshens her makeup. Throughout the day Tricia is never unaccompanied to class. Her usual companions are a bevy of other girls who do not approach Tricia's appearance or intelligence. These same girls usually sit near Tricia in her classes and are attentive to every word she says. The scenario in the cafeteria is much like the one with Benny. Tricia uses her foils well.

An important characteristic in some detective stories is the implementation of a character used as a foil to the major character, detective, of the work. This foil, often appearing much less intelligent than the super sleuth with whom he associates, performs a necessary function for the author. In turn, the reader benefits from the inclusion of such a character.

Most detectives either do not convey thoughts directly to the reader, or they merely talk to themselves. This almost selfish, although effective trait seems more prevalent in American detective fiction. When a foil is used in detective fiction, the reader need not peer over the detective's shoulder or try to psychoanalyze that perplexing character; we merely listen in to the conversations taking place between the detective and the foil. The results are most beneficial since the plot of the story is usually furthered more information is given to us, and the pleasure of reading the story becomes heightened because of the banter between the two compatriots. Where would Joe Friday have been if not for Frank Smith?

A number of foil types are used in detective fiction. Some foils fit the popular notion of a dimwitted, slowthinking, idiot who bumbles aimlessly throughout the story and creates more problems for the detective-

hero to solve. This foil is especially noteworthy in stories where the detective must cooperate with or at least acknowledge the local police department. Foils of this type often tend to create an image of the detective as being larger than life-such detectives reside somewhere on Mount Olympus. Television viewers need only be reminded of Jim Rockford of *The Rockford Files* who, more often than not, must rescue his cantankerous father from some peril while constantly trying to convince some local police lieutenant of the nobility of his cause.

A second type of foil in detective fiction exists when the star investigator is an employee of the local police department and (as luck would have it) works with a partner. Often the detective-foil relationship in stories where they are both police detectives becomes more subtle although no less entertaining. The action of the drama unfolds very smoothly, the exchange of the information is tumultuous, and the banter can become downright hilarious. Viewers of detective stories delighted in the Friday;Smith and Dirty Harry-Anybody relationships. Readers have been similarly treated by James McClure's tandem of Kramer and Zondi and Hillary Waugh's memorable, although short-lived, duo of Frank Ford and Burt Cameron.

A third type of foil exists in detective stories, and this is the one with which I am most concerned. Sometimes (rather infrequently) a writer will develop a foil with a living, breathing, somewhat dynamic personality of his own. Generally a series character, this personality is similar to his counterparts in other stories as he is much less capable in his powers of deduction than the detective. He does not, however insistent the detective may be, reach the realm of idiocy. In fact, this foil's presence in the story, his belonging to an acceptable social class, and his acute kinship to the detective all tend to heighten our awareness of the detective's supreme powers. In short, these foils are the best press agents their detectives could have.

This type of foil remains an honest, acceptable character who does an enormous amount of work for the detective, the author, and the reader. The foil usually serves as a sounding board for the detective's theories. The foil generally tells the story for the author-an artistic convention which usually offers the foil his only defense against an irate and momentarily befuddled detective. The foil invariably becomes our best friend as he usually asks the questions we would ask (and some we would not) and expounds upon the theories we would offer (and some we dare not) would we have been participants. In one respect the foil proves our powers of deduction; conversely, the foil shows us how little we do know. In the former case we are allowed to revel at our powers of perception; in the latter we at least have an ally with whom to commiserate. Generally, we as readers remain somewhere between the foil and the detective in the realm of perceptual awareness and deductive reasoning. In truth, we are oftentimes closer to the foil on this spectrum.

Three noteworthy detective-foil relationships of this type are the focus of this unit. Each is treated differently by its creator. Each is noteworthy since the three foils are synonymous with the mere mention of his detective. Each appears in more than one work. Each detective is a master of deduction. Each foil remains our friend. Each relationship is a generally common bond of mutual respect and admiration. The three tandems include: Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and Captain Arthur Hastings, and Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin.

Why study detective fiction? In particular, of what benefit is a study of foils? The seventh, eighth, and ninth graders for whom this unit is written may be infinitely more able to answer these questions, but, as is the nature of the process, I will attempt to address these concerns here. First, there has been a multitude of good detective fiction written. As a relatively new proponent of the genre, I can attest that detective fiction is overwhelmingly entertaining, suspenseful, superbly characterized, and set in very detailed scenes. Moreover, the reader becomes involved when reading a detective story. One does not read detective fiction without being at least remotely involved in the plot or concerned with the inevitable climax. Along the way the reader

can experience the highest level of astonishment as well as experience the frustration of well-planned deception. If motivation is a key element in getting eighth graders to read, detective fictions fills the role rather nicely.

A study of foils in detective fiction is, on the surface, more puzzling. Why not concentrate on Holmes, Poirot, and Wolfe—three superstars of detective fiction—instead of their less brilliant counterparts? Most students at this level may have an occasional moment in the limelight, may approach superstardom; however, these moments at the pinnacle of popularity are dwarfed by the amount of times they are members of a group—foils to their friends. No group of students is more peer conscious than the group from grades seven to nine. Although physical changes are occurring and they are assuming an identity, there is no car in the parking lot and no regular job with which to assert their uniqueness. It is true that students will strive toward (or be pressured to it) the superstar level—the level of a Benny or Tricia; very few will ever remain there for long. The group comes first and with it the relationships akin to the detective-foil relationship. Reflect upon the athletically inclined youth who invariably takes a back seat to others academically. Watch groups of girls in the hallways or at lunch, and notice how the group is dominated by one co-ed who is more strikingly attractive than the others. Every central character from the ages of twelve to fifteen has an abundance of foils, and, oftentimes, that character is called upon numerous times to be someone's foil before the day is out. Indeed, when a student acts out in the school setting, could it not be to impress someone? When Benny makes a joke in the classroom is it not to become Tricia's foil? The center attraction is central for a variety of reasons; it takes a bit of class to be a foil and retain an identity.

Each of our foils—Watson, Hastings, and Goodwin—has an identity well-established through the efforts of the authors in creating a series character, but there are other motives for their selection as the focus of this unit. One reason includes the forms of literature to be read. Doyle was an effective short story writer; Christie was a superb novelist; Stout also was a superb novelist, but quite frequently he preferred the novella as his artistic vehicle. By reading these authors students will gain a better understanding of the different forms literature may take.

A further advantage to studying our foils is that they are reporters, journal writers. Each relates the adventure firsthand. Each is generally our first friend we encounter within the tale and remains with us throughout.

This style of telling the story through the eyes of the foil will lend itself to a discussion of point of view. Also, since the story generally proceeds through the conversations between the detective and his foil, the art of incorporating effective dialogue in stories will be easily examined.

It is not necessary to outline the relationship provided by the tandem of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson here. Their involvement is so well known through the efforts of Doyle and the visualizations by screen writers that any discussion of their character would be undertaken needlessly. Holmes remains the crafty master of inductive reasoning, and Watson is really the model for all foils to come. Watson is cast so expertly by Doyle that it is commonplace to refer to all subsequent foils in detective fiction as "Watson's."

The characters of Hercule Poirot and Captain Arthur Hastings possibly do need some treatment here. Many readers of Christie are only familiar with her very famous character Miss Jane Marple who is an interesting, lovable, and intelligent detective in her own right. Occasionally these readers will meet a foil, but there remains no series foil in the Jane Marple mysteries. It is also possible that readers of Christie may be familiar with Poirot, the short, little Belgian detective with the intricate moustache, jet black hair, punctual habits, and the knack of butchering an English idiom, though not with Hastings who does not appear in every Hercule Poirot mystery. Captain Arthur Hastings is a debonair gentleman with a fondness for women with auburn hair

(he married one but was subsequently widowed), shared an apartment with Poirot a short time after they met, owns a farm in Argentina that is tended to by his family, and occasionally teams up with Poirot when he returns to Europe on business ventures.

The Nero Wolfe relationship with Archie Goodwin is unparalleled in the annals of detective fiction. Wolfe is a large, but not grotesque, man whose weight hovers around three hundred pounds. He is an accomplished gourmet who employs a full time chef, Fritz Brenner, at a very respectable thousand dollars per month. Wolfe also has an affinity for orchids and boasts plant rooms on the top floor of his West Thirty-Fifth Street brownstone which contain as many as ten thousand plants. Although he employs Theo Horstmann as a full time gardener to care for these orchids, Wolfe will spend four hours each day (in two two-hour stints) tending to his obsession. In keeping with his obsessive character Wolfe also has three other passions; he drinks a great deal of beer, he is an avid reader, and he is partial to the color yellow.

Archie Goodwin serves as Wolfe's secretary, bookkeeper, errand boy, and confidante. While Archie fancies himself a ladies' man, he will rarely get involved with a woman. He is partial to Lily Rowan. Archie shares the brownstone with Wolfe, Fritz, and Theo. He enjoys the gourmet diet but will often settle for a sandwich at a diner while doing leg work for Wolfe. Above all Archie prefers milk as his liquid refreshment—a fact that rounds out his all-American, athletic image.

We can readily assess the personalities of our respective foils from three vantage points: the author's treatment, the detective's viewpoint, and the foil's own revelations. The authors have seen fit to establish somewhat noteworthy professions for these men. Watson is a doctor;, Hastings was a captain; Goodwin once attained the rank of major although the majority of his tenure was at home in his service to Wolfe, who was in G2. All three professions command a sense of dignity, and all have superior powers of observation inherent in their titles. The three are also educated and bright, which only tends to heighten our estimation of the detectives who seem to know infinitely more. The detectives at once seem larger than life when paired with these seemingly capable foils.

It is significant to note that both Watson and Hastings are older gentlemen who associate with a detective because they love a good mystery or puzzle. Frankly, I feel they often need to escape the impending uselessness which seems to accompany one's golden years. Here Goodwin differs. Archie is much younger and is a salaried employee of his detective, Nero Wolfe. This gives Archie an added dimension. Where Holmes or Poirot will ask Watson or Hastings to perform a task or to accompany them on a journey that inevitably leads to a solution of the mystery, Wolfe will merely order Goodwin throughout New York's five boroughs. Wolfe rarely leaves the brownstone, and Goodwin must be his legs, his information-gatherer.

Holmes and Poirot are fairly gracious and gentle in their dealings with Watson and Hastings. Each realizes the foil is doing him a favor. Each tries very hard to shield the foil from any extreme danger. Aside from age, the reading public will not allow a doctor to be subjected to physical danger. With Poirot and Hastings there is an added consequence: an English reading public would never allow Christie's little Belgian detective to make a fool of an Englishman. Where Holmes urges Watson to use his powers of observation and inductive reasoning, sometimes driving the latter to humility, Poirot merely pleads with Hastings to use his little gray cells.

The Nero Wolfe—Archie Goodwin relationship goes beyond the subtle banterings of the other duos. Goodwin, as a paid employee, often becomes irreverent in his opinion of Wolfe. The results are hilarious. Archie usually delivers several comments remarking upon his employer's waistline. While Archie runs gathering information from suspects and principals in the mystery, Wolfe either remains in the kitchen assisting Fritz, or in the plant rooms discussing the orchids with Theo. Wolfe may caution Goodwin to be careful from time to time but the

fact remains it is Archie's job to investigate and Wolfe's job to solve the mystery, usually from behind his desk and after he has downed several beers. Such are the disadvantages of employment.

The foils' opinions of themselves are similarly interesting. Watson is the archetypal foil. He often laments his supposed inadequacies in detection:

> I trust that I am not more dense than my neighbors, but I was always oppressed with a sense of my own stupidity in my dealings with Sherlock Holmes. Here I had heard what he had heard, I had seen what he had seen, and yet from his words it was evident that he saw clearly not only what had happened but what was about to happen, while to me the whole business was confused and grotesque.
>
> ("The Red-headed League")

Hastings fares much better. He admittedly is slow compared to Poirot, but he does make every effort to use his little gray cells. With Poirot and Hastings the relationship becomes more of a game. Once again it must be remembered Christie cannot have a Belgian making a total fool of an English foil.

At the other end of the spectrum, Rex Stout allows Goodwin to run wild throughout his stories. Aside from the irreverent remarks about his boss, Archie tries the patience of the local police. For all the hilarity that Archie and the reader share in the stories, he usually falls short at their conclusion when he resigns himself to playing second fiddle to Wolfe. Archie does all the work but Wolfe solves all the cases. Thus, Wolfe keeps Archie in check.

Our study of foils from detective stories gives us an opportunity to discuss a number of other considerations of prime benefit to young readers. An examination of the three authors could very easily provide enough material for a course in detective fiction. Doyle, Christie, and Stout were not only prolific writers who excelled in their craft but also interesting characters themselves. All have not only withstood the passage of time through their creative efforts but also have been studied for their own personal triumphs, tragedies, and controversies.

Students studying this unit will also be exposed to a bit of history. Works read will reflect stories which occur from the 1880's to the 1960's. Both Doyle and Christie will lead students on a nickel tour through England while Stout will escort them through the playground of New York City. Maps will be readily available to chart the travels of our heroes throughout the English countryside as well as the length of Lexington Avenue. Ever present within these panoramic views will be each author's uncanny ability to set a scene with a highly polished writing style.

If our authors are superbly capable in the art of describing places, they are equally capable of painting portraits of their characters. Students need not read volumes of each author to learn of our detectives and foils. These characters and countless others are clearly portrayed in each work. Through a careful analysis of both the settings and characters of each work read, students should receive valuable insights into the writer's craft of descriptive writing.

Another valuable aspect of reading detective stories is the view of society and societal customs which are offered us. Our three authors treat us no differently in this respect. Doyle and Christie show us English country life from the pleasant indulgence of tea and cakes to the appalling and shocking crime of murder. Stout gives us society in New York which is sometimes a world unto itself. All three also offer the rationale that stands as

the basis for the existence of their detective heroes—a view of the local police authorities. Although the treatment of these constables and inspectors is hardly flattering, the reader does gain somewhat of an understanding of the drudgery of official police work. Holmes and Watson, and Poirot and Hastings, cooperate with the authorities whenever necessary and dutifully receive thanks once the mystery is solved. Wolfe and Goodwin are no less respected, but their abrasive attitudes generally unseat the authorities a number of times before the latter are cordially invited to make the arrest. Of course, New York can do that to people.

There probably have never been three greater detectives than Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, and Nero Wolfe. All three are masters of detection. In this we have another beneficial aspect of detective fiction for our students. Holmes relies on his great powers of observation and inductive reasoning in order to solve his cases. Poirot, with the help of his little gray cells, deals with facts rather than opinions in deducing who committed the crime. Wolfe relies on logic and the ability of Archie Goodwin to tell him exactly what happened since Wolfe rarely leaves the house. An excursion through observation, inductive reasoning, fact va. opinion, logic, and listening skills throughout the unit will enhance students' abilities to forego snap judgments and only make decisions based upon concrete evidence after all alternatives have been examined.

We can learn much from reading detective fiction. The work of Doyle, Christie, and Stout, as well as others, enables us to enjoy literature that is more than pure entertainment. We, as well as our students, can learn to appreciate good descriptive writing, to understand societal concerns, and to make careful decisions. By studying detective-foil relationships we can also study basic human relationships and the value of self esteem. Through the expert journal writing of our foils—Watson, Hastings, and Goodwin—we can share in the drama of the mystery and the exultation of the solution by looking just over the shoulder of Holmes, Poirot, and Wolfe—our semi-private eyes.

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The total accumulation of works by Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, and Rex Stout concerning our detectives and foils would be sufficient material to encompass an entire collegiate career. Clearly, our seventh, eighth, and ninth graders should only be exposed to these writings. Even if we were to concentrate on all the works of only one author, we would be hard-pressed to cover all the material. Any suggestions which I offer below reflect my preferences for what I have enjoyed. My personal list of works is subject to change, and I therefore will not offer any definitive reading plan since I cannot know another teacher's preferences. My advice is to read as much as possible and choose selections based on pleasure. To this end I have added a comprehensive listing at the close of the unit which includes the various titles that deal with our three tandems of detectives and foils and their dates of first publication. The list works to two advantages. First, since none of our three authors is with us any longer, the list remains up-to-date. Secondly, since none of the authors wrote what one might label material objectionable for seventh through ninth graders (an occurrence that can easily arise in detective fiction), the list can be a handy tool to check availability with little chance of suffering reproach from any board of concerned citizens.

The timespan of the unit is open-ended. Materials may be difficult to secure and therefore will slow the reading process. If one were to follow my personal plan for implementing the unit, I doubt whether it would be well-served in a period of less than eight weeks. The unit would not be taught on a daily basis unless, of course, all the reading had been done beforehand. The scope of the unit could easily be increased to a times pan of twenty weeks or even a full year on a part time basis should the class or several members of the class be eager to continue. Conversely, the unit could easily be incorporated as a filler for anyone using the other units in this volume. In this case selected activities may be warranted which could consume a block of time

anywhere from one day to one or two weeks.

My own designs for the use of the unit require a semichronological approach. I plan to start with Arthur Conan Doyle and his duo of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. My immediate suggestion is to use only two short stories from Doyle: “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” and “The Red-Headed League”. There are two reasons for these choices. Doyle, himself, preferred these two immensely entertaining stories (see *The People’s Almanac* #2, 1978). Also, both stories are popular insertions in many anthologies used in our schools and therefore would be readily available and attainable.

I had originally intended to introduce my students to the father of detective fiction—Edgar Allan Poe—and use his work which highlights the exploits of his detective, C. Auguste Dupin, as the introduction to this unit. I ultimately decided to forego this approach since the foil to Dupin is never really mentioned although he is, in fact, the authorial voice. I mention this here because if I or anyone using this unit do so with an extremely intelligent group of students, the inclusion of Poe might be a worthwhile undertaking. Poe used Dupin and narrator in three of his stories: “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, “The Mystery of Marie Roget”, and “The Purloined Letter.” All three are readily available in junior high school texts and libraries and the use of one or all of them would be appropriate.

It may be necessary after Doyle’s “Speckled Band” and “Red-Headed League” have been read (or Poe and Doyle) to interweave the Agatha Christie and Rex Stout selections. Although many of their titles are readily in print, it is often difficult to send a class of students out to procure materials from the library or purchase them at the bookstore. Christie and Stout were more or less contemporaries but most of the former’s writing was completed prior to the last writings of Stout. If materials are available, I prefer to remain in England and read Christie first; if only several copies of titles can be obtained, there can be no harm in reading Stout beforehand.

The Agatha Christie novels I prefer are *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* , her first novel and the first one in which Poirot and Hastings team up; *Peril at End House* ; *The A.B.C. Murders* ; and *Curtain* which completes the Poirot and Hastings saga and especially highlights the efforts of Hastings. Either *Styles* or *Peril* could easily be skipped or any combination of the above could be used. One inherent danger exists in that Poirot dies in *Curtain* ; it would be extremely awkward to read this novel before other Poirot mysteries are read. For those students who particularly enjoy Christie and take delight in the detective-foil relationship, I strongly recommend *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* , which offers a strange twist to the effective use of a foil. This story is so superbly written that its inclusion as required reading may definitely benefit the instruction of the unit.

Rex Stout has seen to it that any Nero Wolfe novel or novella is an Archie Goodwin novel or novella. Each work showcases Archie as the teller of the tale, and in each tale Archie plays his role as foil to the hilt. Novels that I highly recommend are *Too Many Cooks* , *Some Buried Caesar* , *And Be a Villain* ,Plot it Yourself *Too Many Clients* , and *The Doorbell Rang* . Collections of novellas which may prove entertaining and useful either in full or part are *Black Orchids* , *Trouble in Triplicate* , and *Three for the Chair* . As I mentioned earlier these are only my preferences at the present time. I would hope to use at least two novels and possibly three novellas with my students during the course of the unit. Literally, any of the Wolfe-Goodwin from the list below will suffice our purposes.

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Rather than offer the usual fare of breakfast, lunch, and dinner type lesson plans from soup to nuts, I prefer to depart from tradition and offer a smorgasbord of lesson strategies complete with comments. Let the readers

of this unit use any or all of these and write in some of their own. We all have our own styles in the classroom and given an idea we would probably all approach it and institute it differently. I will number the list because all good foils should set down their views with some degree of clarity.

1. The journal.

Throughout the course of the unit students should be encouraged to keep a journal. All our foils are expert journal writers. The journal will be different from the typical diary-type that students generally write. Students must only include their day-to-day dealings with their best friend (or a relative). The emphasis will be placed on the actions of their counterpart and their personal feelings and reactions to them.

2. Dialogue.

The story lines of our selections depend upon the dialogue between the detective and his foil. There is nothing that frustrates more than students who try to incorporate dialogue into their writing and do it ineffectively. What better way to teach the proper use of quotation marks than to illustrate them in literature? Several key passages can be focused upon to this end.

3. A discussion of point of view.

All our stories are written in the first person. Students should discuss the effectiveness of this convention as it relates to the stories. Does the reader develop a kinship with the narrator? Can we really become close to the detective or are we merely the friend of a friend? Students should practice writing first person narratives.

4. Going places.

This activity is rather simple but effective. It will work especially well with most of Christie and all of Stout. The only materials needed are a map of England and a street map of New York City. As the events of the story move from each locale students can trace the travels of their heroes on the map. The novel thus becomes more real and the map reading skills of the class should improve.

5. Describe a scene.

Our authors are extremely adept at describing places—especially rooms. Such descriptions can easily be read aloud in class and the various details discussed. Students can then try writing clear, detailed descriptions of their own rooms at home. Artistically inclined students may wish to sketch rooms they have read about including Nero Wolfe’s office. A group of students interested in photography may decide to create a pictorial essay depicting Wolfe’s brownstone both from the outside and inside. The possibilities are endless.

6. Learning about other people.

There are many different social customs mentioned in Doyle and Christie that may be new to our students. An examination of several of these, including afternoon tea, club life, and holidays will necessarily broaden students’ understanding of English country and city life.

7. Describe a character.

This is very similar to the previous activity except that our focus is upon a person rather than a place. Word descriptions of our detectives and foils as well as portraits and sketches are possibilities. Students will be asked to accurately describe a friend or even themselves. A costume party where students recreate the appearance of any of our detectives and foils will prove to be a fun activity as well as an educational experience. Have a camera handy.

8. Know your policeman.

Oftentimes Scotland Yard and the N.Y.P.D. become involved in our stories. Sometimes

their presence is crucial and sometimes they hinder the progress of our heroes. Class discussions of these law enforcement officers should help students understand the role of police work and some of the problems they face when a super sleuth becomes involved in the case. An optional report on the local police department is suggested as is a discussion of the fictional policemen as foils.

9. The nature of the crime.

In every one of the readings a crime is committed. Students will be asked to discuss this criminal act and any others which follow as a result. The newspaper can be used quite effectively here. A comparison between the crimes read about and those committed in our own society should lead to several stimulating discussions of the nature of society.

10. The criminal.

Our detective tandems must match wits with the perpetrators of the crimes. The road to victory is not always an easy one, and the identification of the criminal often comes as a surprise to the reader. Students should be encouraged to discuss their initial suspects and any changes in their thinking they experienced while reading. Were they effective sleuths? Sometimes the solution to the mystery and the identification of the criminal remain very subtle as the true criminal uses other characters as agents to commit the crime. Christie's *The A.B.C. Murders* and *Curtain* are prime examples. Who commits a crime and the notion of motive are prime considerations. Here, the newspaper can be an effective tool for discussion.

11. Clues.

Clues are a detective's best friend (next to a foil, that is). Many of the clues that help our heroes solve a mystery are apparent, but oftentimes the reader misses many crucial ones and can not solve the puzzle as quickly as the detective. A discussion of these devices and the author's effective use of them can lead to a greater appreciation of the writer's craft.

12. Observation.

Role playing is the key to this activity. The teacher, with the help of a student or two students, can stage an impromptu performance in front of the class. The more spontaneous and abrupt the action, the more effective the results will be. Observers will then be instructed to write their descriptions of the event immediately. A repetition of this exercise using different performances should enhance students' abilities to effectively catalogue their observations in terms of sequence and interpretation. Details are an important element. Comparisons of students' observations should be used as an immediate followup.

13. Listening.

This activity is very much akin to the previous one. The teacher or a student can deliver a message without the action of the observation exercise. Students must then accurately repeat or transcribe the information given. Verbal direction is one important possibility for use in this activity. This type of exercise should be repeated frequently throughout the course of the unit.

l4. Fact vs. opinion.

Hercule Poirot constantly warns Captain Hastings not to heed the testimony of a character that can not be checked and substantiated. Students will be taught the difference between fact and opinion. The teacher may want to start this exercise by making a number of random statements to the class who must then decide whether the information can be verified or not. Examples from the reading should also be discussed.

15. The author.

Several good biographies are available concerning Doyle, Christie, and Stout. Also, Christie has published her own autobiography—indeed, two of them. As an extension of the unit

students could research any one of the authors, gather information, and report to the class.

16. A comparison of the short story, novel and novella.

This can only be done after students have read a sampling of our three authors. Emphasis should be placed on development of plot at the expense of development of character and setting. The numbers of lesser characters and suspects could also be discussed in relation to the length of the work.

17. Write a detective story.

Capable students will be required to write their own fictional detective mysteries. These stories will be written in the first person with the student assuming the role of a “Watson.” A fictional detective, a crime, and a criminal are all necessities. The length of this piece, the development of character and setting, and the effective use of dialogue should vary according to the capability of the student. Less able students could very easily do an adaptation of this exercise by writing one to three paragraphs entitled “The Case of _____

18.

19.

20.

Detective-Foil Reading List

(All dates indicate original publication.)

Arthur Conan Doyle: Sherlock Holmes—Dr. Watson

A Study in Scarlet , 1888.
The Sign of Four , 1890.
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes , 1892.
The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes , 1894.
The Hound of the Baskervilles , 1902.
The Return of Sherlock Holmes , 1905.
The Valley of Fear , 1914.
His Last Bow: Some Reminiscences of Sherlock Holmes , 1917.
The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes , 1927.

Agatha Christie: Hercule Poirot—Captain Hastings
Captain Arthur Hastings appeared with Hercule

Poirot in the following Christie novels and in a number of short stories. An asterisk (*) denotes a collection of short stories, some of which include Captain Hastings. I include these collections as an additional resource. Teachers may wish to explore Christie's craft as a short story writer and even compare her stories to those of Doyle. Several short stories highlighting the team of Poirot and Hastings may be more appropriate for some classes than the novels.

The Mysterious Affair at Styles , 1920.
Murder on the Links , 1923.
Poirot Investigates , 1924.*
The Big Four , 1927.
Peril at End House , 1932.
Lord Edgware Dies , 1933.
The A.B.C. Murders (also *The Alphabet Murders*), 1936.
Dumb Witness (also *Poirot Loses a Client*), 1937.
The Regatta Mystery , 1939.*
The Under Dog , 1951.*

Double Sin , 1961.*
Poirot's Early Cases , 1974.*
Curtain , 1975.

Rex Stout: Nero Wolfe—Archie Goodwin

Fer-de-Lance , 1935.
The League of Frightened Men , 1935.
The Rubber Band also *To Kill Again*), 1936.
The Red Box , 1937.
Too Many Cooks , 1938.
Some Buried Caesar , 1939.
Over My Dead Body , 1940.
Where There's a Will , 1940.
Black Orchids , 1942. (Also includes "Cordially Invited to Meet Death")
Not Quite Dead Enough , 1944. (Also includes "Booby Trap") *The Silent Speaker* , 1946.
Too Many Women , 1947.
And Be a Villain (also *More Deaths Than One*), 1948. *The Second Confession* , 1949.
Trouble in Triplicate , 1949. (Includes "Help Wanted, Male", Instead of Evidence', 'Before I Die')
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