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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1989 Volume IV: Detective Fiction: Its Use as Literature and History

The Mystery of the Undiscovered Values

Guide for Curriculum Unit 89.04.01
by William Coden

This unit will capitalize on fifth-grade students' interest in mysteries: the puzzle; the triumph of good over evil; the insistence on fairness. In doing so, students will improve their reading and reasoning skills, develop an appreciation of the genre, and begin to identify values and beliefs important to them. The underlying hope is that students will become active readers, thinkers, and doers. This last goal will be achieved by employing a questioning technique closely allied to values clarification activities. A brief discussion of dime novels will illustrate the history and changing nature of detective fiction. Because the class meets just once a week, the literature read will be short stories; reading and related activities can be completed each time.

(Recommended for problem-solving Literature classes, grades 5-7)

Key Words

Mystery Doyle Sir Arthur Education Values Detective Fiction Mystery Thrillers Short Story Literature Reading Instruction Critical Thinking

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