



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 Passive Students

Guide for Curriculum Unit 89.04.02
by Lorna Dils

This unit uses two popular mystery series written for children to promote active and creative thinking by developing higher level thinking skills and problem solving skills. Using the “Encyclopedia Brown” and “Tintin” series, teachers can provide students with the opportunity to read for detail, and to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from the stories to solve each mystery.

The activities in this unit provide the students with the opportunity to learn a specific procedure for problem solving while allowing for creative thinking, a necessary part of any problem solving strategy. The activities include individual, small group, and large group experiences and require students to organize information in chart form or in well developed paragraphs. Emphasis is placed on decision making and choice making. The ultimate goal of this unit is for students to carry over the skills they learn in this unit to all of their other academic subjects as well as their lives outside of school.

(Recommended for Talented and Gifted Program, Grades 4-7; and English classes, Grades 5-7)

Key Words

Literature Detective Fiction Problem Solving Reading Instruction Critical Thinking

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