



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

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## **Curtain Call: A Dramatic Approach to Detective Fiction**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 89.04.07  
by Kelley O’rourke

This unit has been created for use in the 7th/8th grade Drama-Dance Electives Program. This unit is designed to teach middle school students the rudiments of theater through the study of mystery and suspense plays. The students will read three plays: “The Final Curtain” by John Murray, “Sherlock Holmes” by William Gillette, and “The Mousetrap” by Agatha Christie. Students will study a new aspect of theater while reading each play. “The Final Curtain” will introduce the students to technical theater and back stage life. The students will learn about such stage skills as make-up, scenery, costumes, props, and lighting. While reading “Sherlock Holmes” the students will begin to deal with the concept of characterization and they will begin acting classes that emphasize theater games and improvisation. “The Mousetrap” will ask students to look at the plot and the puzzles found in plays of mystery and suspense. They will learn about such literary devices as theme, plot, conflict, climax, and denouement. Though this curriculum unit was designed for use in the 7th/8th grade Drama-Dance Electives Program of the Comprehensive Arts Program of the New Haven Public Schools, it may be easily adapted for use in an English academic classroom. My experience has taught me that adolescents love to read detective fiction. This unit builds on that student interest and will prove to be an exciting learning experience for both the teacher and the students.

(Recommended for Drama and Literature classes, grades 7-12)

### **Key Words**

*Mystery Literature Drama Fiction Detective Thrillers American*

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