



## **Detective Fiction: Focus On Critical Thinking**

Curriculum Unit 95.01.01  
by Vanessa Clayton

The objectives of this curriculum unit are:

- To motivate students and fully engage them in reading the crime fiction genre;
- To develop and refine critical thinking skills in order to make the most out of the information and experiences that surround students in their daily lives;
- To introduce the problem solving strategies inherent in investigating and solving a crime; and
- To address issues of moral responsibility, race, gender, and the global community.

### **Introduction**

---

Reading is a basic tool of learning, preparing students for life outside of school. If an individual can read adequately and develop a life-long love of reading, he/she will not only develop good language and communication skills, but also learn to solve problems effectively in everyday life. It is reading that promotes the essential cognitive development skills one must possess in order to succeed in adult life.

Comprehension is the focal point of the reading process. Learning to comprehend involves relating vocabulary to experience; understanding ideas, concepts, and processes; recognizing relationships; making comparisons; drawing inferences; reflecting and interpreting; and reading between the lines. As these skills are mastered, comprehension occurs and leads to one being able to critically evaluate ideas, which is what is important in modern life. Also, as result of a better understanding of and the ability to decode what has been read, the student should begin to enjoy reading, no longer considering it just another difficult school subject, but something to do for pleasure, opening up new worlds, ideas and information that were once locked inside someone else's imagination.

In 1994 the U.S. Congress adopted eight national goals which set high expectations to improve this country's performance in educating our children. Goal three states that, "By the year 2000, . . . every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation's modern economy." <sup>1</sup> These goals compel educators to develop creative curricula which will lead to their achievement.

This curriculum unit will present the literary genre of detective fiction to entice, motivate, and instruct sixth grade students. It will present a "whole-learning" approach, focusing on improving the critical thinking skills of students through the use of the mystery novel.

## Critical Thinking Skills

---

According to teacher education programs, workshops, seminars, and professional journals, improving the thinking skills of students has been a top priority of school districts across the country for at least the last twenty years. Teachers and school officials are well aware that in addition to acquiring the basic skills, students need to become better problem-solvers. Only then can we expect to increase the number of students who will develop into the responsible, caring adults mandated by the national goals. It is by directing more attention to mastering the critical thinking skills that will make the difference.

There have been differences of opinion over the years as to how these skills should be taught. Course offerings at the college level and some high school curriculums have taught critical thinking separately from the content areas. Debate ensued, with educators at both extremes, as to whether or not the subject might be better taught as part of the regular curriculum. In 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education stated the following in their widely publicized report entitled *A Nation At Risk*: ". . . formal instruction in critical-thinking skills [must] be mainstreamed across the curriculum at all levels. Such curricular integration is especially important in middle schools . . . because students there are beginning the significant transition from concrete to formal cognitive operations." <sup>2</sup>

This indeed makes sense as it seems unrealistic to attempt to fill students with facts without showing them how to think about the facts—that is, to fully comprehend, and be able to compare and evaluate ideas and information.

One avenue, then, in which critical thinking can easily be introduced is through literature. "Research Says Literature CAN Teach Critical Thinking" is an article in the November 1993 issue of *The Education Digest*. Robert Burroughs states that, ". . . the study of literature can promote the kind of critical thinking and skilled intelligence called for in the push toward new national standards. . . . We've [The National Research Center on Literature Teaching] found the best way to promote critical thinking . . . is to involve students in class discussions in which they have the opportunity to raise issues, clarify their thoughts, and test their ideas against their classmates'. . . . Students need to be able to think critically. Literature can show them the way." <sup>3</sup>

Most content area textbooks emphasize the need to merely recall data and information. "Interpreting literature, on the other hand, is at the heart of what Center Co-Director Judith Langer calls literary understanding, which differs from understanding in science or history. Her work has led to a change in the framework the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) uses for evaluating reading

comprehension on its assessments (often used as a national barometer of student achievement). NAEP exams now ask different questions of literary and nonliterary texts, acknowledging the different stances readers take toward different kinds of texts.” 4

The article further points out that Langer’s work shows how teachers can support and encourage such critical thinking through literature. It remains to show, then, that not just literature but one specific genre of detective literature can be used in this way.

## Detective Fiction

---

Although any literary genre can lend itself to teaching critical thinking skills, the detective novel, as I’ve discovered, will be an excellent curriculum source in that it encourages discussion topics, such as problem-solving; issues of moral responsibility; and issues of gender, race, and milieu. Therefore, an integrated unit on detective fiction which encompasses not only the Language Arts, but also, Math, Science, and Social Studies is possible.

A positive learning environment must invite curiosity and launch the student into a spirit of adventure. Students have long been turned off by the traditional approach to teaching and learning wherein they merely serve as an audience, expected to sit, listen, and absorb information, both oral and written. The use of manipulatives and hands-on materials, I have discovered, furthermore, are not enough to make the full connection to understanding. Maintaining a good attitude in the classroom means supporting the students’ curiosity about their world and guiding the excitement of learning into a manageable course of study. My stories provide a means of escape from our own reality while we are immersed in enjoyable reading, through exciting plots and suspense.

Developing readers must be encouraged to make predictions and use their imaginations as they try to make sense of print. In the detective story, since the reader does not know the truth, these skills are at work throughout, as he follows the detective who systematically uncovers the clues until, finally, the truth is discovered.

It is characteristic of human nature to become comfortable with what is familiar to us. As one finds satisfaction in reading the detective novel and is led to recognize that a basic formula exists, an eagerness to read more of this genre should follow. There are five basic elements in the detective story: the milieu, the victim, the criminal, the suspects, and the detective(s). The plot centers around the question of “who done it,” which keeps the readers’ attention, building excitement from the elimination of several suspects to the surprise ending -the key to a good detective story. The actual criminal is finally caught and brought to justice. As the student reads the novel, following the detective’s lead, his/her own logic and reasoning skills are sharpened.

## Across the Curriculum

---

### Language Arts

A good literature program in the middle school should expose students to a wide variety of genres, writing styles, and themes. If students are to improve their ability to make valid judgements about literature, they must experience good books, investigating and discussing what it is about books that make them memorable. Mysteries allow children to become involved in the solutions of devious crimes through vivid character descriptions and clues. Using the skills of observation, creative thinking, and imagination, students who become successful at solving these mysteries along with the clever detective, will come to enjoy this genre.

Reading is just one of the Language Arts. Writing, speaking, and listening are integral components of an effective program. Literature encourages the oral exchange of ideas and the development of the thought processes. Speaking and listening allow students to react verbally and respond to different aspects of what is read. Responding to literature in writing engages students in processing the information read and transferring the ideas in his mind to paper.

Margaret Hunsberger comments in the *Journal of Reading* that, "If reading gives us ideas and provides food for thought, then writing facilitates the development of that thought: indeed it makes possible a kind of thinking that cannot be achieved otherwise. A closely reasoned philosophic or scientific argument must be developed through writing. The original idea may be entirely in the mind, but its full development can evolve only as the thinking is done through writing." <sup>5</sup> Strong evidence of the need to combine reading, thinking, and writing is also available in the results of "The National Assessment of Educational Progress in Reading and Literature" (1979-80). This report suggests that students be taught a "variety of problem-solving strategies. Instruction in such skills should be systematic, rather than accidental." <sup>6</sup> The report also suggests that students be given opportunities to write extensively in response to what they read. This integrated teaching of reading comprehension and writing necessarily leads to teaching higher thought processes.

The detective, through the use of logic and reason, and his/her superior intelligence, intuition, or imagination, can and does solve a given crime before the police, or indeed the reader himself can solve it. When the student can be directed to relate his/her feelings and experiences to those of the victim, do a character analysis of the suspects, list and classify the physical evidence, note irregular details in the setting, anticipate the strategies of the detective, and express these findings both orally and in writing, comprehension is achieved and the critical thinking skills are fully engaged.

### Science

We are reminded so often that good science education fosters, within the student, an attitude of curiosity and a desire for understanding. This is evident in a teacher's interactions with students in tackling scientific issues. Likewise, the detective story satisfies our natural curiosities by helping to solve a mystery.

I have discovered many remarkable analogies between the detective and the scientist. Scientific thinking involves the skills a person uses to approach problems. Scientists depend on several variables that may either be explicit or somewhat hidden. This manner of thinking moves forward gradually, beginning with the skill of observation followed by the other skills used in modeling the scientific method. The detective also uses these skills and methods in his work. Scientific thinking is akin to puzzle solving; those who are the most successful at it show an independence of thought, a concentrated effort, attention to detail, and a willingness to take

risks. The detective, they will find, takes a similar approach in solving a case. Hence, a merging of the scientific method and detective science seem desirable.

Science begins when you ask a question. Applied science is used to solve everyday problems. Students need to feel free to ask questions about their universe, their world and their own lives, and grope for answers. We must teach students how to use the scientific method and apply these science skills to answer the questions about life and the global community.

In 1843 Sir James Graham, the British Home Secretary, added a new word to the English language. He selected several of his best police officers and made a special unit of them which he called “The Detective Police,”<sup>7</sup> thus giving for the first time the title “detective” to the man whose job was to deduce the criminal from the clues left behind. In taking this step, Graham seemed to recognize a special skill that had been hitherto ignored. The skills used by these individuals are the same skills used by the scientist.

Both the scientist and the detective use reasoning skills—both inductive and deductive. In that reasoning means solving a problem by thinking about it, the student is directed to investigate science problems by first putting together ideas and facts that have been learned in the past. In education theory, prior knowledge is considered key to not only generating interest but making the most of the information and experiences that surround the students. The scientific method links prior knowledge to new information to help students build an increasing sense of how it relates to their experiences. The detective, when embarking upon a case, looks at the initial evidence and analyzes it based upon what he already knows about human behavior and physical evidence. Students will study the behavior of the detective and relate it to that of the scientist—becoming “Science Detectives.”

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) is the leading general scientific society in the world<sup>8</sup>. “Project 206129 is a long-term initiative of the AAAS to reform K-12 education in natural and social science, mathematics, and technology. The Project promotes literacy in these areas in order to help people live interesting, responsible, and productive lives. “Science literacy requires understandings and habits of mind that enable citizens to grasp what those enterprises are up to, to make some sense of how . . . the world works, to think critically and independently, to recognize and weigh alternative explanations of events and design trade-offs, and to deal sensibly with problems that involve evidence, numbers, patterns, logical arguments, and uncertainties.”<sup>9</sup>

Among the specific recommendations of this group is that all students leave high school with an awareness of what the scientific endeavor is and how it relates to their culture and their lives. Other AAAS guidelines for learning state that students should know that:

- scientific knowledge is subject to modification as new information challenges prevailing theories and as a new theory leads to looking at old observations in a new way.
- scientific investigations usually involve the collection of relevant evidence, the use of logical reasoning, and the application of imagination in devising hypotheses and explanations to make sense of the collected evidence.
- new ideas in science sometimes spring from unexpected findings and usually lead to new investigations.<sup>10</sup>

The detective novel can be a unique tool to use to parallel the scientific method. As the detective investigates the case, new clues lead to different avenues of investigation. Using the methods of observing, classifying, organizing, inferring, predicting, using variables, hypothesizing, analyzing, interpreting data, and drawing conclusions, the detective thinks like a scientist.

## **Math**

The basic steps in solving word problems are: (1) Understand the situation; (2) Analyze the data; (3) Plan the solution; (4) Estimate the answer; (5) Solve the problem; and (6) Examine the answer. The methods used by the detective to solve a crime can readily be compared to these steps. The solution of problems that are real requires systematic organized thinking.

According to Richard Copeland, “Teachers of 11-12 year-olds need to be conscious of the fact that it is propositional-type thinking that they should foster as the child moves to the stage of abstraction involved in forkful logic. Just telling a child to think does not give him the tools of conjunction, disjunction, negation, or implication that will help to process his thoughts. There is a structure to the logic process.”<sup>11</sup>

Once a student has learned some basic principles, he can use them for many purposes in dealing with and controlling his environment. He should now, also, be able to do something else—think. Basically this means he should be able to combine the principles he has already learned into the higher-order principles, such as used by the detective. He may do this by the stimulation he receives from learning new things and by relating this to various forms of stimulation he may now “keys into from his environment. By means of the process of combining old principles into new ones, he solves problems that are new to him, and acquires still a greater store of new capabilities.

Copeland further confirms my analysis when he states, “Fundamentally important is that much of our knowledge comes not from without but from within by the forces of our own logic. Knowledge is not a copy of reality but a reconstruction of it. It is reason or logic that allows the child to overcome sensory impressions. Since much of our knowledge does come from within, this means it does not come directly from the teacher. One basic responsibility of a teacher is to provide physical experiences and ask questions that may provoke the process of equilibration or logical operations within the mind of the child as a way of learning. In so doing it is hoped that there will be little telling or explaining.”<sup>12</sup> It is my hope that a medium such as the detective novel will be a catalyst for the attainment of such higher-order thinking skills.

Problem solving, by which is meant thinking out a new principle that combines previously learned principles, is a process that is very much familiar to productive adults. This, again, is a goal which we are responsible for leading our students toward achieving. Having children see that there is nothing very unusual about such events, since they are likely to occur frequently in the life of the adults around him, should lessen the anxiety associated with math problems. When a driver maps out her route through traffic she is solving a problem. When an executive replans her luncheon schedule as a result of a new appointment she is solving a problem. When a shopper decides to make purchases selectively in order to get the best buy, he is solving a problem. These everyday examples bear a close resemblance to the problems that are solved by students in writing reports, debating an issue, performing a science experiment, or solving a mystery.

## **Social Studies**

As a child grows older, various outside influences begin to act on higher, shaping his/her picture of the future. Television and other media sources as well as the individuals who make up one’s family and extended

community serve as powerful influences on the developing student. Juvenile literature should be given greater priority as a vehicle for the presentation of societal values to the young mind. Just as the well-informed parent tries to monitor the types of programs a child watches and questions the associations one has with the peers and adults around him, we must direct our children toward good literature that will guide and shape these values.

Children must be taught to critically evaluate what they view and read for obsolete information about society. Literature plays a strong role in helping us understand and value our cultural heritage. Developing positive attitudes toward our own culture and the cultures of others is necessary for both social and personal development. Children should read books set in many locations and times because if children read books that reflect their own views only, they miss the interesting diversity of the world. Social development includes becoming aware of and understanding issues of moral responsibility as well as the different social roles people play. One of the greatest contributions made by literature is the realization that both boys and girls of all racial and ethnic backgrounds can succeed in a wide range of roles. Books that emphasize nonstereotyped roles and achievement are excellent models that can stimulate discussion. Detective fiction can address these social and environmental issues.

## Student Texts

---

My choice of student reading materials is *The Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew* mystery series. Although these books contain little ethnic diversity, some contemporary titles are set in urban America. Students must have the opportunity to read many books by a variety of authors in various settings. It is my goal that *New Haven* students will eagerly follow these young characters as they solve problems and make discoveries about the world around them.

Bay City, New York, the home of the Hardy's, is probably not unlike the New Haven of 1940 or so. Students can be led to discover the New Haven of old and appreciate its historical significance.

On the issue of moral responsibility, Frank and Joe Hardy and Nancy Drew provide ideal examples for the middle school student. Although these characters are teenagers, they epitomize the models youth: mature, responsible, intelligent, serious, courageous, polite and goal-oriented. With a job to do, they are never distracted by the lures of peer pressure and frivolous behavior.

Nancy Drew has long been considered the most popular girl detective in the world. “[She] manages the impossible feat of being wholesomely feminine—glamorous, gracious, stylish, tactful while also proving herself strong, resourceful, and bold, the most independent of girl sleuths.”<sup>13</sup>

Bobbie Ann Mason writes, “Not only is Nancy perfect, but she possesses the ideal qualities of each age and sex: child, girl, teenager, boy, and adult. She has made a daring stride into adulthood, and she also trespasses into male territory without giving up female advantages. Nancy’s adolescent readers may not know whether to shave legs and giggle to attract the boys they are discovering, or to join the boys games and emulate them to win their approval, but Nancy does both; Although, being pure, she gives no thought at all to romance—or, [blush], sex.”<sup>14</sup>

Today’s adolescent needs vivid examples of appropriate moral behavior. They need to see that you can work



hard and still have fun, be successful yet remain popular. The fact that Nancy is being raised by a single parent (father) can also serve as a point of positive identification for our youth.

Crime, indeed, does not pay, as is evidenced clearly in most detective novels, especially these series. There is a clear distinction between the good and bad guys. The good guys are the role models while the bad guys are evil and ugly; and they are always caught and brought to justice. Glamour is not given to the criminal or the crime, but to the amateur detectives who always “get their man.”

These stories are exciting yet grounded in the logic of common sense. Children must learn to rely on their basic instincts and use intuition to deal with the problems they face daily. When you know right from wrong you can make the proper choices in life, and decide upon which path you dare tread.

I suggest the use of four books in these series, beginning with an early classic in each series and ending with a contemporary title in each. This unit will progress throughout the school year, one book per marking period.

## Classroom Activities

---

### Lesson Plan One—Overview of the Genre

#### **Objectives:**

Students will be able to describe the five basic elements of detective fiction; define the related vocabulary; and name some of the great fictional detectives of the past and present.

#### **Activities:**

1. Through class discussion the students will relate their prior knowledge of the genre by:
  - a. Defining the term “detective”, describing the different types (private vs. one who works for a police agency), and discussing synonyms (e.g. inspector and investigator).
  - b. Naming all the detectives they can think of from literature, television, and motion pictures.
2. The teacher will present an overview of the genre, including the five basic elements -milieu, victim, criminal, suspects, and detective; and key vocabulary—crime, mystery, suspense, suspicious, witness, clue, red herring, opportunity, motive, confession, and justice.
3. For homework, assign the students to watch an episode of a TV Detective series, such as, *Murder She Wrote*. Send a note to parents to inform them and seek their support. Give the following writing assignment as a family activity using a prepared worksheet:
  - a. Describe the crime and the victim(s).
  - b. Prepare a witness report (beginning with the one who discovered the crime) which includes: name, relationship to the victim, occupation, where the witness was at the time of the crime, and what the witness knows about the crime.
  - c. Prepare a suspect file which includes: name, occupation, physical description, and reasons for suspicion.
  - d. Outline the plot highlighting the steps the detective took to solve the crime.  
(As an alternative show a video in class with the students working in groups.)
4. The teacher will lead a class discussion of the results of the above assignment.



## Lesson Plan Two—Directed Reading of Student Texts

### **Objectives:**

Students will read four novels; increase their vocabulary; be able to recognize relationships between clues and characters; make inferences; and apply the skills of logic and reasoning in making predictions and solving mysteries.

### **Activities:**

1. The teacher will introduce *The Hardy Boy s* and *Nancy Drew* mystery series, and discuss the history of them.
2. The following books will be assigned (one each marking period):
  - a. *The Hardy Boys* (#6), “ E e Shore Road Mystery”
  - b. *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* (#21), “The Secret in the Old Attic”
  - c. *The Hardy Boys* (#118), “Danger in the Fourth Dimension”
  - d. *Nancy Drew* (#108), “ The Secret of the Tibetan Treasurers”
3. Class time will be allocated for silent reading. A series of graphic organizers will be developed for students to record the following information during reading:
  - a. description of the crime and victim;
  - b. milieu, including any unusual details in the crime scene;
  - c. detailed witness report;
  - d. clues—objects and statements of characters, including fired herrings, if any, purposely designed to lead the reader off the trail;
  - e. detailed suspect files;
  - f. outline of the plot, focusing on the steps and methods of the detective.
4. Each student will also maintain a vocabulary list of words they come across during reading with which they are unfamiliar. They will first be directed to use “context clues” to determine the meanings. If necessary, however, they will use the dictionary to write the meaning that fits the context.
5. Each student will maintain a folder to keep all notes and materials related to each book. As an art project, students will design creative covers for their folders, illustrating the symbols and terminology related to detective fiction and the theme of the book.
6. Most chapter books, like these series, end each chapter with a “cliff-hanger”. Students will be directed to pause at the end of each chapter to analyze the data and make a prediction based on the evidence.
7. Students will be assigned to read two chapters during a period. After reading and analyzing the second chapter, students will work in their assigned groups to compare data, discuss their predictions, and attempt to reach consensus.
8. On the following day, before reading the next two chapters, a spokesperson from each group will present their findings to the class. Each teacher will focus the discussion on the facts and evidence and summarize each groups’ positions.
9. After finishing the book a final discussion will be held where the students will retrace the steps of the detective, and deal with other issues, such as the theme, crime and justice, moral behavior, gender, etc.

## Lesson Plan Three—Detective Science

### Objectives:

Students will compare the scientific method to the methods used by the detective to solve a crime.

### Activities:

1. Students will select one of the short stories from the Hardy Boys Detective Handbook, paying close attention to the techniques utilized in the science of criminal investigation illustrated in these true stories taken from police files.
2. On a prepared worksheet the methods used by a scientist to solve problems will be listed. The students will cite examples from the story read which match these methods.

### (Sample Worksheet)

---

Scientific Method	é	Detective Science
1. observing—using your senses;	é	
	paying close attention to everything	é
	that happens.	é
2. classifying—grouping things	é	
	based upon how they are alike.	é
3. organizing—putting your	é	
	information in order.	é
4. inferring—forming a conclusion	é	
	upon what you think explains	é
	an observation.	é
5. predicting—stating ahead of	é	
	time what will happen based upon	é
	what you already know.	é
6. using variables—manipulating	é	
	a control; using if/then statements.	é
7. hypothesizing—suggesting an	é	
	idea or answer to a problem.	é
8. analyzing—studying information	é	
	carefully.	é
9. interpreting data—identifying	é	
	relevant data and trends in data.	é
10. drawing conclusions—summarizing	é	
	the data to answer the question	é

## Lesson Plan Four—Write a Detective Story

### **Objectives:**

Students will use the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing) to create their own detective story using their knowledge of the basic elements of detective fiction.

### **Activities:**

- I. Prewriting: Students will organize their thoughts by completing a series of worksheets.
  - a. The Crime
    - What is the crime?
    - Who is the victim?
    - Who discovered the crime?
    - What is this person's relationship to the victim?
  - b. The Milieu
    - Location of the story
    - Where and when the crime was committed
    - Unusual details about the crime scene
  - c. The Detective
    - Name
    - Description
    - Background information
  - d. The Witnesses
    - Develop at least four characters who saw or heard something suspicious but did not see the crime being committed. Begin with the one who discovered the crime. Complete a witness report on each:
      - Name
      - Relationship to victim
      - Occupation
      - Where witness was at the time of the crime
      - What witness knows about the crime
  - e. The Clues
    - List at least four important clues and one "red herring" to throw the detective off track:
      - Objects found in unusual places
      - Missing objects
      - Statements made by witnesses
      - "Red herring"
  - f. The Suspects—Create at least four characters whom the detective suspects based on interviewing the witnesses, connecting them to the crime in some way. Cut out pictures of people from newspapers or magazines to create mug shots. At least one of the witnesses should become a suspect. Fill out a report on each:
    - Name
    - Age
    - occupation

-Description

-Reasons for suspicion, including motive and opportunity.

g. The Plot—Plan the events that center around the detective and the steps he/she goes through to solve the crime. Summarize the information already developed. Only include the main ideas of the story. Use only as many of the clues, witnesses, and suspects needed to keep the story suspenseful. Use your imagination and try to select the most interesting and unusual features for the story.

-What crime occurred?

-Who is the victim?

-How does the criminal get away?

-What does the detective do first?

-What are the most relevant and unusual clues?

-Who are the most important witnesses and what did they see or hear?

-Whom does the detective suspect?

-How does the detective figure out the mystery?

-How is the criminal captured?

2. Drafting: Use the information you have developed and follow your general plot outline and the suggestions below to write your first draft:

a. Write a descriptive title.

b. Create a beginning that sets the scene. The opening sentences should introduce the time and place, provide a description of the crime and who discovered it. Remember that the crime has already been committed before the story begins. The story opens when someone discovers it.

c. Use the middle of the story to describe your detective and his/ her methods of obtaining information about the crime. Include your witnesses, clues, and suspects.

d. The end of your story should tell the surprise outcome of the detective's investigation. Describe how the detective scientifically figures out the mystery, what the criminal has to say, and how justice prevails.

3. Revising: Good writing is the art of saying what one means in the clearest and most simple words possible. This is the stage in which you review what you have written to improve the flow of language and check that you have followed the logical order of events in your plot. Check your writing against the checklist:

-Are the sentences and paragraphs in a logical order?

-Did I follow the order of events I set up in my plot outline?

-Do each of the suspects have a clear motive for committing the crime?

-Is there a beginning, middle and end to the story?

-Have I included any unnecessary information other than red herrings?

4. Editing: Students will edit their second draft for errors in spelling and grammar. Also, have a classmate read and edit your story.

5. Sharing the Final Copy: A book of the class's detective stories will be published and displayed. Some students may wish to read their stories aloud and the teacher will select some stories to read aloud.

(Note: Throughout this process the teacher will be modeling various stages for the class and working with students individually.)

## Notes

---

- 1 National Education Goals Panel, "Data for the National Education Goals Reports," 1994.
- 2 Kerry S. Walters, "How Critical Is Critical Thinking," *The Clearing House* , September/October, 1990, p. 57.
- 3 Robert Burroughs, "Research Says Literature CAN Teach Critical Thinking," *The Education Digest* , November, 1993, p. 53.
- 4 Ibid., p. 52
- 5 Margaret Hunsberger, "Commentary," *Journal of Reading*, 25:7, p. 629.
- 6 Denver: National Educational Commission of the States, "National Assessment of Educational Progresses Reading," *Thinking, and Writing: Results from the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature* , p. 4.
- 7 John Ball, "Murder at Large," in *The Mystery Story* , p. 8.
- 8 ALAS Project 2061, "Science For All Americans: Summary."
- 9 AAAS Project 2061, "Benchmarks for Science Literacy," p. 3.
- 10 Ibid., p. 7.
- 11 Richard W. Copeland, *How Children Learn Mathematics, Teaching Implications of Piaget's Research* , p. 207.
- 12 Ibid., p. 208.
- 13 Bobbie Ann Mason, *The Girl Sleuth* , p. 49.
- 14 Ibid., p. 53.

## Bibliography

---

AAAS Project 2061, "Benchmarks for Scientific Literacy," New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. ARAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) consists of more than 140,000 individual members and nearly 300 affiliated scientific, engineering, and mathematics societies.

AAAS Project 2061, "Science For All Americans: Summary," New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. This report outlines what all students should know (regarding math, science, and technology) and be able to do by the time they leave high school.

Aulls, Mark W., *Teaching Reading With the Other Language Arts*, edited by Ulrick H. Hardt, Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1983. This book includes a chapter, *Relating Reading and other Language Arts: A Need for Reasoned Decisions.*"

Ball, John, ed., *The Mystery Story*, The Regents of the University of California, San Diego; in cooperation with Publisher's Del Mar, CA, 1976. This book lists all of the great detectives of the past and their creators, beginning with Poe. John Ball launched his career with the novel, *In the Heat of the Night*, which launched his series detective, Virgil Tibbs.

Burroughs, Robert, "Research Says Literature CAN Teach Critical Thinking," *The Education Digest*, November, 1993, pp. 51-53. Condensed from *The Executive Editor*, July, 1993, pp. 27-29.

Copeland, Richard W., *How Children Learn Mathematics, Teaching Implications of Piaget's Research*, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1990.

Denver: National Education Commission of the States, "National Assessment of Educational Progress," *Reading, Thinking, and Writing: Results from the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature*.

Haycraft, Howard, ed., *The Art of the Mystery Story, A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1946, 1974. Index Copyright, 1974. Introduction Copyright, 1992 by Robin W. Winks. A representative selection of essays about the modern mystery-crime-detective story from Poe to the present. It includes a chapter, "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories".

Hunsberger, Margaret, "Commentary," *Journal of Reading*, 25:7.

Mason, Bobbie Ann, *The Girl Sleuth*, The Feminist Press, 1975.

National Education Goals Panel, "Data for the National Education Goals Report," 1994. A three-volume report.

Norton, Donna E., *Through the Eyes of a Child: An Introduction To Children's Literature*, Third Edition, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1991. This text is intended for any adult who is interested in evaluating and sharing children's literature.

"Reports & Comments: Note—Starting Over—The Same Old Stories," *The Atlantic*, June, 1991, pp. 19-20. An editorial review of the revised editions of the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew series.

Van Dover, J.K., *You Know My Method: The Science of the Detective*, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994. It includes a chapter, "The Detective As Hero of Methodical Winking," and an in depth expose of the science employed by several of the great detectives.

Vivelo, Jackie, "The Mystery of Nancy Drew," *Ms. Magazine*, November/ December 1992, pp. 76-77. A comparison of the original Nancy Drew character with the new image.

Walters, Kerry S., "How Critical Is Critical Thinking," *The Clearing House*, September/October, 1990, pp. 57-59.

Winks, Robin W., ed., *Detective Fiction, A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980. Among the essays considered are, “ “The Guilty Vicarage” by W.H. Auden; and “The Study of Literary Formulas,” by John Cawelti.

## Student Reading List

---

*The Hardy Boys* (#6), “The Shore Road Mystery,” by Franklin Dixon, New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1992, 1928.

*Nancy Drew Mystery Series* (#21), “The Secret in the Old Attic,” by Carolyn Keene, New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1970, 1944.

*The Hardy Boys* (#118), “Danger in the Fourth Dimension,” by Franklin W. Dixon, New York: Pocket Books, a division of Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1993.

*Nancy Drew* (#108), “The Secret of the Tibetan Treasure,” by Carolyn Keene, New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1992.

*The Hardy Boys Detective Handbook*, by Franklin W. Dixon, in consultation with Special Agent William F. Flynn, FBI, Retired, New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1972.

---

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>