



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1995 Volume I: Gender, Race, and Milieu in Detective Fiction

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

Guide for Curriculum Unit 95.01.01  
by Vanessa Clayton

This curriculum unit presents the literary genre of detective fiction to motivate and instruct sixth grade students. The emphasis of this unit is the development of critical thinking skills. Improving the thinking skills of students, in order that they may become better problem-solvers, has been a top priority of educators and government officials across the country. This unit presents a “whole-learning” approach which integrates Language Arts with Math, Science and Social Studies.

Literature is an excellent source of instruction in critical thinking skills because it encourages the verbal exchange of ideas which develops thought processes. Responding in writing to literature engages the students in processing the information and transferring the ideas to paper.

A good literature program in the middle school should expose students to a wide variety of genres, writing styles and themes. Mysteries allow children to become involved in the solutions of crimes through vivid character descriptions and clues. Using the skills of observation, creative thinking and imagination, students who become successful at solving these mysteries will come to enjoy this genre.

My choice of reading materials are four books from The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew mystery series.

(Recommended for Language Arts with multi-disciplinary integration of Science, Math and Social Studies, grade 6)

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