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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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## **Solving Mysteries in Stories and throughout the Curriculum**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 95.01.04  
by Roberta Mazzucco

Detective fiction and the whole concept of solving mysteries can be a powerful tool in getting elementary students interested in reading. This unit seeks to exploit children's love of puzzles and mysteries as a way of enlivening the curriculum. Most students love mystery stories, and there is a wide variety of books to satisfy all reading levels. Beyond suggesting that detective fiction can help interest children in reading, the unit suggests an integrated unit in which the whole class is engaged in solving problems or "mysteries" in science, geography, math, etc.

The classroom can become a detective agency with each child a card-carrying member of the group. Activities can range from group reading of trade books, to solving daily math problems, to science lessons on fingerprinting and making invisible ink. Students can dramatize portions of the stories they read, and they can try their hand at writing group stories. Detective stories are an interesting challenge since in most cases the writer begins with a solution and actually works backwards to construct a logical story. The unit offers a lesson plan on using the writing process to create a group story. There is also a useful bibliography and suggestions of commercial games that can be used during the unit.

(Recommended for Reading, grade level 3 to 6)

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