



## Teaching Deductive Reasoning and Problem Solving Skills with Detective Fiction in the Urban Classroom

Guide for Curriculum Unit 95.01.06

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As a teacher of Chapter I students in an urban middle school setting, I have found that many times the art of deductive thinking is taught, but the concept is skated over quickly and it is a difficult one for students on this level to comprehend. The method offered for use is a one-page worksheet of questions to be answered. It was acceptable to me for a while, until I realized what kind of a disservice I was doing my students. I joined this seminar to do a little inductive work of my own, to create a unit that is fresh, new, and which offers the students what I feel is a much more valid approach to the art of deductive reasoning and problem solving. I tried to take into account all of the varied talents in my classroom over the past years and incorporate the theory of Multiple Intelligences as proposed by Thomas Armstrong.

In this curriculum unit I have provided the teacher with a historical overview of detective fiction and its origins before Sir Arthur Conan Doyle introduced Sherlock Holmes. To most readers, the name Sherlock Holmes is synonymous with detective fiction, but much to their detriment, there are few other detectives with whom they are familiar. Probably like myself, many are not familiar with detectives from other cultures. In this unit I have attempted to broaden the list of alternatives to which the user can refer for classroom reading on the middle level in urban classrooms. I have included a resource list for teachers of grade-appropriate novels and sample activities.

The unit is labor-intensive but it offers a lot of fun activities geared toward attaining the skills required to do deductive reasoning and problem solving. The students won't really think about the amount of work they are doing because it is so varied. I think most middle school teachers, who like me were once reluctant readers, will enjoy reading and incorporating this unit into their classrooms as much as I have enjoyed writing it for and using it with my students.

(Recommended for Literature and Reading, grades 5-8)

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