



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

Who Done It? Sleuthing & Self-discovery for 7th & 8th Grade Creative Writing Students

Curriculum Unit 95.01.09
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“Who done it?, Sleuthing & Self-discovery” is designed for 7th and 8th grade creative writing students. Much of the information contained herein can also be applied to other disciplines as well, such as theatre, social studies, and English. The unit is comprised of various sections relating to the genre of crime fiction, and it offers topic-specific information in each section by way of storytelling, literature, and videos of movies and television shows.

Under Title II of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act—which acknowledged the arts as core subjects comparable in importance to traditional content areas—an arts program curriculum such as this one should be aligned to certain criteria as set forth in the document, “National Standards for Arts Education” (published in 1994). This document is a 142-page book composed by the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, and was funded by grants from the Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Cultivating the whole child, building many kinds of literacy, developing intuition, reasoning, and imagination, are some of the aims of this unit plan that align with the arts program standards, and many of the activities have been designed with these goals in mind.

The focus on the crime fiction genre in this unit is intended as a means to combine the linear and sequential learning inherent in the educational paradigm we have come to expect through such content areas as social studies, language, science and math, with the intuitive and oftentimes ingenious creativity we hope for from students in our arts program. Since crime fiction heroes tend to engender this type of multidimensional thinking, they should serve well as models for our students. From the fastidious sleuthing of Sherlock Holmes to the action-packed adventures of Mel Gibson and Danny Glover in the “Lethal Weapon” movies, students are offered a variety of personas and methodologies with regard to problem solving, logic, deductive reasoning, and issues of moral and social responsibility.

Crime fiction can also be easily integrated into various academic and arts disciplines, owing to its broad historical scope and flexibility in crossing over into other genres. The playing field for interdisciplinary study and activity is broad. Therefore, breaking through some traditional (educational) turf barriers is part of the objective of this curriculum unit. Overall, the unit employs the genre of crime fiction in order to focus on experiential learning for students through practical and aesthetic applications that directly affect them in a positive and productive way: They gain the values of self-esteem, integrity, teamwork; they have fun, and they find learning a living, breathing, “real world” experience. It is to this audience of middle school students

that I dedicate this curriculum unit in the hopes that it will entertain and excite them as well as aid them in their enormous task of “growing up,” which, at this point in their lives, seems to happen at the speed of light.

HOLISTIC LEARNING

Topics for each section of the plan are introduced in a variety of ways—through movies and television shows, storytelling, lectures, and literature. Discussion is promoted intermittently during topic presentations. Classes begin with brief journal writing (three minutes) as a warm-up, and occasionally end with a game. Viola Spolin’s book, “Theater Games for the Classroom, A Teacher’s Handbook,” is an excellent resource for games and activities.

After a topic has been presented and discussed, students will be engaged in writing activities. They will be given a word list and definition sheet to become familiar with key words related to the topic area. They will work with this list to find similar and dissimilar word pairs such as, “detective/sleuth,” and “criminal/legal.” They will then use the process for clustering (a stream-of-consciousness activity) as a creative way to approach thinking and writing. By clustering word pairs—comparing similarities and contrasting polarities—students will gain a visceral awareness that preconditions critical thinking.

The methods of clustering and writing vignettes will be presented to students as a way to engage right-brain creativity and lend an aesthetic quality to their writing. They don’t have to get stuck in thinking about how to be creative. They simply have to be themselves and let stream-of-consciousness find a direction and a focal point. In the activity of clustering, they are “sprouting ideas.” Music played in the background can aid them in the process by setting a serene tone or a more energetic one depending on the topic or concept to be developed in the cluster. Visual aids and lighting can also help to set the mood. The emphasis on the clustering process is to let yourself go and write down whatever pops into your mind—thoughts, objects, sounds, images, emotions, sensations.

Figure 1

(figure available in print form)

Figure 2

(figure available in print form)

In the process of clustering, a focal point will be discovered. When students arrive at that point, they can begin to expand upon it by further clustering from that focal point (although they may not need to). From their cluster work, they begin to form phrases and sentences into a vignette. After the vignette has taken shape, students will begin to revise it by listening to its rhythm and sound—how the words feel when they are read and heard. Pruning continues with revisions as they choose, and is completed with the help of the teacher’s corrections for spelling, punctuation, and grammar. A final presentation is rewritten or typed. The purpose of vignette work is to ease students into writing. They learn that longer pieces contain shorter pieces—essays contain paragraphs, poems contain stanzas, and so on. In this way students begin to feel less inhibited or overwhelmed about sustained writing.

As a requisite lesson for the unit, students will be introduced to various functions and characteristics attributed to the right brain and left hemispheres of the brain such as: Right brain—aesthetic, generative, global focus, qualitative patterning, imagistic, rhythmic, metaphorical, interpretive; Left brain—logical, aesthetic-analytical; local focus, literal, explanatory, precise. A chart will be displayed showing the right and

left brain, and their respective characteristics. Functions and comparisons will be discussed. The message to students is to “Use your brains, right and left.”

Students will also be involved in more sustained writing projects. There are three full lesson plans included in this unit, and there are lesson ideas included in the text as well. Evocative, original writing that begins to make the students’ individual writing voices recognizable is the main objective of the writing exercises. “Product” is the hopeful conclusion of any process, although process, in and of itself, can be an invaluable life and learning experience. I find that most students will respect their own work efforts to the degree that their work is respected. Therefore, their writing will be presented in poetry readings and storytelling events, displayed on bulletin boards, and included in a class anthology. Students will also be engaged in producing these kinds of presentations.

GOLDEN AGE CRIME FICTION—circa 1830s to 1950s

While some of us may be hard pressed to recall the nefarious schemes that have wound their way through the labyrinths of the crime fiction genre, most of us can recall some notable protagonists whose personas, for the most part, often seem infinitely more remarkable than the cases they crack. These detectives are an eclectic lot, but each in his or her own unique way seems to do basically the same set of things: observe (and reinterpret) the obvious; entrap the villain (solve the mystery); restore justice.

Superman, for example, albeit not a clean fit with the genre since he hails from Krypton but a crime fighter nonetheless, believes in “truth, justice, and the American way.” But then, he’s Superman, and like his present-day counterparts, including Power Rangers and X-Men, all of whom delight and inspire children, his preternatural gifts empower him to lead a pristine life and endeavor to create a pristine world. Unhampered by the mundane physical and emotional struggles of mere mortals, he’s pretty good at it. In fact, he is goodness personified. His more down-to-earth fictional colleagues, Auguste Dupin (Edgar Allan Poe) and Sherlock Holmes (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle), the front runners of fictional crime fighting, may not be so good. While they are exquisite sleuths, and in this regard are as competent in their pursuits of justice as Superman is in his, their intrinsic goodness is open to question.

A step or two higher on the food chain from their devoted sidekicks (Watson and Poe’s unnamed narrator), Dupin and Holmes would appear to possess some preternatural abilities of their own. But on close examination we find that they do not. Their savant-like powers of deduction are the result of keen observation which they make known to us in a kick-in-the-head/plain-as-the-nose-on-your-face sort of way. While their antagonists are usually too calculating, clever, and clandestine for most us, Dupin and Holmes seem quite at ease filtering out the insignificant white noise; the peripheral stimuli of such human emotion, reaction and expectation that we might feel about the dastardly deeds committed. They are never horrified about man’s inhumanity to man. They appear to be simply objective about it. Outward appearances might suggest that the mindset of these two could be described as a kind of “social” autism. They lead sequestered lives, each with a companion who acts as a buffer and biographer. Seemingly incapable of social intercourse, they imbibe or inject, and ignore the mores and concerns of the outside world save for the machinations of arch villains. While they are diligent, industrious, ingenious and often altruistic in their pursuit of these villains, the point system by which they measure success is not concerned with the ideals of justice so much as outwitting not only the villains whom they will undoubtedly catch, but the rest of us—fictional or otherwise—as well.

DUPIN, MYSTERY AND METAPHORS

“Murders in the Rue Morgue,” the 1932 film featuring Bela Lugosi, will introduce students to Edgar Allan Poe. Although Sir Arthur Conan Doyle created the definitive detective story technique through the characterization of Sherlock Holmes in 1886, Poe originated the formula for detective fiction by featuring Auguste Dupin, a master of deduction, in three stories fifty years earlier. There were other forerunners of Conan Doyle: Wilkie Collins, “The Moonstone” ; Charles Dickens, “The Mystery of Edwin Drood” (unfinished); Robert Louis Stevenson, “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” (a case that was cracked by Mr. G. J. Utterson, a quiet-mannered attorney).

The film noir version of Poe’s story, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, runs far afield from the original in its dramatization of events. Therefore, students will also be given a synopsis (with some quotations) of the original story in order to understand the contrast. Poe’s story features an orangutan as a key character. In the story, Poe alludes to the ape as man’s distant cousin, which perhaps was his way of making some surreptitious commentary on the righteous indignation, if not fear, provoked by Darwinian heresies. Like so much of Poe’s work, metaphor is the message, and what you read is only partly what you get. While Poe’s story subtly reveals the beast in man, Tom Reed and Dale Van Every’s screenplay exploits it. Poe’s metaphorical marriage of ideas uniting beastliness and human compassion are supplanted by the film’s bestiality (proposed, not consummated) between Reed and Every’s gorilla and girl. In the movie, Dr. Mirakle (Lugosi), a deranged scientist, searches Paris for a prospective bride for his pet gorilla, Erik, in the attempt to prove his theories of evolution. A few women meet their demise in Dr. Mirakle’s laboratory as he tries to inject them with gorilla blood to establish a viable mate. After their bodies are found and taken to the “Morgue,” a young, “cheerful” detective, “Pierre” Dupin—I suppose the playwrights thought “Auguste” wasn’t French enough—becomes interested in the case. Enter Mademoiselle L’Espanaye, none other than Pierre’s fiancé and the next damsel to be sacrificed in the name of unholy science! Dupin, of course, saves her—from a roof top, no less—where Erik, ^ la King Kong, has taken her.

The movie is fun to watch, and offers some intriguing symbols and shadow play in its lighting techniques. While there are few scenes that stay true to Poe’s original story, the metaphorical content will be the learning focus. Students will gain an understanding of how metaphors (and similes) can be used either subtly or overtly. They will also understand that “metaphor” is the means by which we learn. As young children we identify the things of life by comparing them to other things we know: “The sun is a big yellow ball.” We continue to learn by using metaphors throughout our lives, but as we mature, we gain an ability to differentiate between likeness and distinctive qualities. Metaphors are the poetry of life; differentiation is its sanity. And the ability to use both aspects are an integral part of critical thinking.

To introduce students to writing metaphors and similes, one can show them various pictures of abstract and impressionist paintings from art books, e.g., Magritte, M.C. Esher, Monet, Picasso, etc. As they observe the work, they begin clustering ideas that come to mind about the subjects (and what they are doing in the pictures). Once they’ve gained a focal point from their clusters, they continue on to vignette writing describing who the subjects are; what they’re doing or what their purpose is. The objective of this writing is to convey sensory and intuitive perceptions. This is not an interpretation process. Students are not supposed to “think” the paintings. They are to “feel” and “intuit,” and use the artwork to say it reminds them of something. Because the artwork is impressionistic or abstract, the writing will more than likely take on a mysterious quality. Some student work will be humorous, as is often the case. (Although unintentional, humor was certainly the result in the 1932 film, “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” which will hence lead to humorous writing.)

Humorous metaphors often appear in hard-boiled detective fiction. Although the hard-boiled detective will be mentioned in more detail later on in the unit plan, students will be offered the following metaphor from Raymond Chandler’s book, “Little Sister,” as an example of a humorous metaphor.

“I was dizzy as a dervish, as weak as a worn-out washer, as low as a badger’s belly, as timid as a titmouse, and as unlikely to succeed as a ballet dancer with a wooden leg.”

Much of the parodying of golden age detective fiction used in comic movies and television shows today, such as in “The Naked Gun” movies (which students are very familiar with), has to do with exaggerated metaphors. Parodying the sometimes excessive, hard-boiled detective style, students will create metaphors comparing emotions and physical sensations with objects, types of people, and in particular, animals.

Lastly, students will return to the man-as-beast theme of Poe’s story, and in the movie. They will cluster the word pair “beastliness/humanity,” and will write vignettes (prose or poetry) on this theme.

SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE FRONT RUNNER OF DETECTIVE FICTION

The science of deduction reaches perhaps even further back in time than ancient Greece and into biblical history which is certainly rife with murder, mayhem, and sundry forbidden fruits. Coming forward in time from Greek and Roman legends, The Arabian Nights shows evidence of crime fiction drama during the Middle Ages. And while Edgar Allan Poe created the formula for the detective story upon which other writers patterned their stories in the later part of the nineteenth century, the genre of crime fiction did not take hold until Sir Arthur Conan Doyle introduced the world to Sherlock Holmes.

In the easily readable “Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes—Adapted for young readers” by Catherine Edwards Sadler—students will be introduced to the time-honored sleuth as well as his esteemed creator. Prior to reading “A Study in Scarlet” (one of three novels offered in the book), students will view Basil Rathbone (as Holmes) and Nigel Bruce (as Watson) in a few clips from “The Hound of the Baskervilles.” Both Rathbone’s and Bruce’s performances paint a physically, as well as emotionally, accurate picture of Conan Doyle’s characters, and should give students insight into the personas of the characters prior to reading the story.

“A Study in Scarlet” will be read orally in the classroom, and students (as well as the teacher) will take turns reading. Oral reading can be a most effective way to motivate student interest in a topic, especially if the teacher acts as a participant as well as a coach. I have often found that students with poor reading skills—although apprehensive at first—respond favorably to understated and polite corrections. Reminding students who are anxious “to breathe; take it slower; don’t worry about the words you don’t know, I’ll help you,” puts them at ease and redefines the word, “mistake” to mean “building block”—an essential part of the learning process.

The learning focus in this section is on deductive reasoning, and how mystery is created in a story by tricking the reader almost metaphorically—something “seems” to be a certain way for a certain reason, but “really” isn’t. We will interrupt our reading from time to time, to explore not only the methods by which Sherlock draws his conclusions about clues, but also how the clues are presented in the story. In “A Study in Scarlet,” for example, the partial word, “rache” appears written in blood on a wall. Inspector Lestrade determines that it

must mean “Rachel” because a woman appears to be implicated in the case. Holmes, of course, sets him straight in short order by explaining that “rache” is the German word for “revenge.”

After the story has been completed, students will be instructed to read the “Introduction” of the book which tells about the author, and Joseph Bell, a particularly inspiring professor for Conan Doyle at Edinburgh Medical College where he attended school in 1876. Students will then work on clusters for the following name pairs: “Sir Arthur Conan Doyle/Dr. John H. Watson,” “Dr. Joseph Bell/Sherlock Holmes,” and “Inspector Lestrade/Police Officer.” Students will write vignettes to characterize Holmes, Watson, and Lestrade.

Later on in the curriculum, students will be given reading assignments as part of their homework. Students who have difficulty reading will be advised to read orally at home, and if possible, tape record themselves. In this way they can read the assignment again while they listen to their own voices on their tapes. Difficult areas can be replayed as necessary.

DETECTIVES & DEVICES

Throughout its history, the crime fiction genre expanded as technology advanced. Circa 1800s, the Bertrillon system (named after the inventor, Alphonse Bertrillon, a French anthropologist) that kept records of photographs, physical measurements and peculiarities of known criminals was augmented by fingerprinting. Later, scientists involved in crime detection evolved from general practitioners to forensic specialists. Today, forensic technology is capable of some extraordinary feats. At this writing, the real-life drama of the O. J. Simpson trial has engaged almost a year’s worth of energy debating the credibility and integrity of DNA and other forensic evidence presented. Modern crime fiction authors have their work cut out for them if they are going to make their stories believable. Some contemporary authors have found a way to circumvent technological advances by taking the story backwards in time. In Umberto Eco’s novel, “In The Name of the Rose,” William of Baskerville, a medieval monastic detective with a penchant for heretical fact-finding and almost impious inventiveness winds up not only solving mysterious murders, but discovering the lost library of Alexandria.

As the industrial revolution enlarged the scope of existence for the ordinary person, the world seemed to have contracted—telegraphs replaced the pony express; steam replaced sails; rails replaced horses—producing accelerated modes of communication and travel that abolished the frontiers. As machines grew factories, and factories grew cities, more jobs were created for people. With more jobs came more money; more money, more time, and a better educated and affluent middle class. Service industries sprang up to support the needs of an increased population in these great industrial centers—grocers, doctors, teachers, police—and one particular service group (detective fiction novelists) began supporting a niche market of people with more time on their hands to read.

Up until this time, detective stories had catered to an uppercrust leisure class who expected cads and ne’er-do-wells, or the occasional hardened malefactor to be brought to justice usually at the hands of distinguished and scholarly gentlemen. Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler broke the spell of class distinction and dished out some gritty prose about hard-boiled knights in tarnished armor slaying fat cash-dragons; regular guys who were not too proud to whistle at a good lookin’ skirt. A British segue in this class-specific detective fiction—from affluent/distinguished to hoi polloi—was the introduction of the picaresque detective. E. W. Hornung’s (Conan Doyle’s nephew-in-law) A. J. Raffles is an example of the picaresque model. Part-time thief

and part-time good guy, he is known as “the gentleman burglar.” This “set-a-thief-to-catch-a-thief” model had a real-life counterpart in the early 1800s. Vidocq, an officer in the French army—who turned criminal and escaped imprisonment by turning spy—became the head of the first detective squad in police history, and went on to found another first, the private detective agency. Vidocq is mentioned in “The Rogues’ Gallery,” edited by Walter Gibson (page 33).

Another creative outcome of crime fiction as a result of an expanding middle class during the industrial age was the police procedural. As mentioned earlier, the police were a burgeoning service industry. As cities grew, so did crime, and a larger population demanded more protection and service. Also, stories involving police were, and are, a kind of reality check. Like Inspector Lestrade in the Sherlock Holmes stories, they are perhaps the most true-to-life characters in crime fiction. Nowadays, shock video shows (catching criminals on camera) as featured in the television show “Cops” are very popular. 7th and 8th grade students seem to spend a lot of time watching the afternoon talk shows, which also often address criminal activities or behavior. Such shows have been criticised for purveying a coliseum mentality, but talk show hosts and producers argue “demand and supply” and that they are giving the people what they want. Similarly to the police procedural, perhaps it is the real-life aspect of such shows that make them appealing.

In this curriculum section, four short stories will be introduced. All four stories are taken from “The Rogues’ Gallery,” edited by Walter Gibson. Students will use clue sheets, in order to aid them in their reader-detecting. The stories will be read in two parts. The first part (usually two-thirds of the story) will be started as oral reading in the classroom. By the time there are enough clues given in the story to solve the crime, the reading is stopped. Students will be asked to take their best (calculated) guesses, and write the “whodunit” information: villain, motive, method, opportunity, and weapon. This activity will probably take the full class period (approximately 50 minutes). Students will turn in their sheets, and will be instructed to complete the reading at home. This cliff-hanger approach should make the homework less of a chore, but a more desirable activity. When the next class convenes, students will discuss the story. They will review their clue sheet deductions to see where they were right, or where they may have gone wrong. This activity is designed to introduce students to the genre’s formulaic style, as well as some of its devices and protagonist types.

Figure 3

(figure available in print form)

ROGUES’ GALLERY STORIES:

“The Missing Necklace” by Jacques Futrelle (pp. 15-31) introduces his hero, one Augustus S.F.X. Van Dusen, Ph.D., LL.D., F.R.S., M.D., M.D.S., a college professor residing in Boston, Massachusetts, at the turn of the century. Having fine-tuned the art of detection to a near mathematical science, Van Dusen had been nicknamed “The Thinking Machine” by his buddy, the champion chess player, Tschalkowsky. Not so ironically, since Futrelle had been a writer for the Boston American, Van Dusen’s confidant and sidekick, Hutchinson Hatch, is also a reporter for the same paper. But the irony intensifies in the real life peripeteia of Futrelle’s life. In the story of “The Missing Necklace,” Scotland Yard and an oceanliner named the Romanic are featured. Four years after this story was written, Futrelle met personal disaster after his visit to Scotland Yard when he headed for home on board the Titanic.

“The Greek” by W. Somerset Maugham (pp. 67-100), features Ashenden, a World War I agent for British Intelligence, perhaps an imitation of Maugham, himself, as he served in the Intelligence Service for Great

Britain (undercover “posing” as writer no less) at the outbreak of the the war. Conversely, life imitated art when Ashenden’s adventures (fictitious, even if based on Maugham’s actual experiences) became required reading for British Intelligence recruits for many years.

“At the Stroke of Twelve”* by Agatha Christie—the author who changed the face of the whodunit in 1926 with “The Murder of Roger Ackroyd”—(pp. 103-117), once again features Hercule Poirot diligently dedicating gray matter to grim malefactors. Threats abound to kidnap Little Johnny Waverley, heir apparent to the Waverly fortune, until the dastardly deed is done—and in a sealed room!

“The Footprint in the Sky” by Carter Dixon—or John Dickson Carr, his real name, under which he writes as well (pp. 331-348)—expands upon the sealed-room device in putting forth a murder mystery. Highly improbable circumstances, nonetheless leading to crime, replace the sealed room and impossible cases are cracked through analysis and deduction.

LESSON PLAN

Topic: COURTROOM SCENES

Objective:

Students will work out a courtroom scene concerning the abduction of three-year-old, Johnny Waverly, from his home (featured in the Agatha Christie’s short story, “At the Stroke of Twelve.”)

Method:

After reading the first part of the Christie story, students will be informed that they will be creating a courtroom scene—like a mock trial, but with more emphasis on drama. The proposed defendant will be Miss Collins (Mrs. Waverly’s companion and secretary) who has been working for the Waverlys for one year, and has been accused of kidnapping Johnny Waverly. The boy and the ransom, \$75,000, have not been found yet. Since the students have not completed the story, they will not know whether Miss Collins is actually guilty or innocent.

To prepare students for the scene work, a data sheet listing courtroom roles and basic judicial procedures will be distributed and reviewed. The class will initially be divided into a defense team and a prosecution team. Each team will be given an outline of the events that have occurred in the Christie story thus far. They will also be given a confidential information sheet as well (each team respectively). The confidential information will include selected parts from the second part of the story which, if used wisely, could win the case for either side. The prosecution will be advised, however, that although they are supposed to disclose their information to the defense, they have the dramatic option to use some surprise tactics if they wish. Using the information provided them, along with their individual clue sheets (that they used for reading the first portion of the story), teams will map out their cases.

Roles will be decided among the students—attorneys, defendant (a student from the defense team), baliff, court stenographer, judge, and jury—and students will begin developing the courtroom scene.

Presentation:

Students will be told that courtroom drama is also a part of crime fiction. There will be some discussion about

court shows on television, such as “Matlock” and “Law and Order,” as well as real-life court TV such as the O.J. Simpson trial. Students will then be introduced to the scenework activity mentioned above. Teams will be set up, and information sheets will be distributed and reviewed.

Application:

Students will work in their teams, mapping out the scene sequentially on index cards from a defense and prosecution perspective, respectively. They will decide upon roles and begin exploring character motivations.

Once each team is fairly set on the direction it wishes to take, the teams will join together in setting up the scene. This is a trial and error process in which they will experiment with blocking, characterization, and dialogue. The activities thus far will take at least one class session (in addition to the reading that had been done in the class session prior to this activity). By the end of this session, both teams’ index cards should be combined, and ordered sequentially and numbered.

Before the next class convenes, the teacher will have typed a synopsis based on the index card information. Students will have an opportunity to review, correct, and revise the synopsis. These changes should only be recorded on one master copy, and the student with the role of court stenographer will be responsible for this task. Students will run through the scene a couple of times and make any final changes necessary. This should take one class session also. By the next class, students will be given final skeleton scripts (synopses) which will include stage directions as well as some dialogue notations to serve as a guide for speaking parts. Minor props and costuming will be made available. Students will rehearse the scene two or three times before recording it on video tape.

Evaluation:

The video tape will be reviewed and critiqued. If students are comfortable with their work, they will also produce a mini-premier of the tape, and will invite other students in the school to a private showing. Lastly—they get to finish reading the story and find out “who” really “done it.”

Notes:

This plan will most likely take four to five class sessions. Technical production is minimal. Large cardboard sheets or dark cloth can be used to transform a teacher’s desk into the judge’s bench, and student desks into council tables. Costuming mainly involves some appropriate (Sunday best) attire, as well as a black robe for the judge, and one prop, her/his gavel. While video taping is preferable, the scene can also be audio taped, or presented live.

In Brigitte Peucker’s lecture, “Film and the Rival Arts,” presented on March 28th as part of this year’s Teachers Institute, she referred to the turn of the century perception of human beings on film as “soulless.” It is interesting that even today some people refuse to be photographed or filmed because they fear they will lose their souls. I’m not sure where this superstition or belief comes from, but perhaps it is not so far fetched as we might think. Watch the nightly news sometime: terrorist bombings, rapes, murders, hurricanes, earthquakes—all filmed live or dead whatever the case may be—and we watch this parade of natural and unnatural disasters with an occasional grimace. The victims we see on the news must be soulless or else we’d never stop throwing up. Now and then we see a “Rodney King” or an “Oklahoma Bombing” and the nation really tunes in. But for the most part, it’s fifteen minutes to a half an hour’s worth of down time—sit back, relax, see what’s happening in the world, then watch a movie, read a book, or go to bed and forget about it—everything considered, a fairly soulless activity keeping abreast of current events. Violence in life, and exploited by the media, begins to have a dehumanizing affect when the law seems powerless to stop it. And judicial integrity becomes questionable when criminals slip through legal loopholes. In the section that follows,

students will see the integrity of the law challenged with some surprising results, and a defeated judge win back his soul.

JUSTICE NOW

The teacher tells a story:

There have been a series of murders. Five elderly women have been killed; their pocketbooks and welfare checks stolen. Two undercover cops notice a shady-looking guy walking down the street. When the cops begin to follow him, the guy takes off running. During the chase the guy drops something into a garbage can, and runs into a house. The cops stop at the garbage can because they are certain that the guy threw a gun in it. But they also know that they can't look in the can because they don't have a warrant. If the guy ran into his own house, then the garbage is his "private property" and he has a right to it. The cops also know that a warrant is going to take time. A judge has to agree that there is reasonable cause to search the guy's garbage can and/or his house. The cops know they don't have time because while they're waiting for a warrant, the guy might get away. Just then a garbage truck pulls up to the garbage can. Things are looking up for the cops. Once the garbage is in the truck, it's "public property," and they are well within their rights to search it which they do. They find the gun. As it turns out, it's the right gun. There's a ballistics match which means that the bullets found in the victims match up with the gun that they were fired from. With reasonable cause, warrants are issued and the guy's house is searched which uncovers lots of evidence—pocketbooks and jewelry belonging to the victims. When the guy is confronted with that evidence, he confesses to having committed the murders. All sewn up nice and neat, right?

After students are presented with this scenario, they are asked to predict what will happen when the perpetrator is brought to court. Given the facts, as well as the conscientiousness of the detectives, it is presumed that most students will figure on a conviction. However, the movie from which this scenario is drawn (whose title shall be revealed later on) will show just the opposite. The courtroom scene is then shown to the students wherein the prosecution presents all the evidence of the case. Then the defense attorney begins to question the officer on the witness stand by asking, "What kind of garbage truck was it?"

As it turns out, it was a truck with a scoop in the back and the garbage that the officers looked through to find the gun was the garbage thrown in the scoop from the defendant's can. Since it hadn't been mixed in with the other garbage in the main body of the truck, it was still his, the defendant's, private property. Without a search warrant, the officers violated the defendant's constitutional rights, and any subsequent evidence they turned up, including the defendant's confession, then became inadmissible in a court of law. Since the prosecution could not be allowed to use any of the evidence, they no longer had a case, and upon the defense attorney's request for dismissal, the case was dismissed.

The teacher tells another story:

There is another series of murders. This time it's boys—eight murders in all. The police know that the boys were taken away from the murder scene and their bodies were dropped elsewhere. In the last case, one of the boy's sneakers was missing from the scene. One night two patrol officers spot a raggedy-looking van. It looks as if it's going to stop at a liquor store, but when the driver notices the police car, he takes off rather quickly. The cops follow the van and call in to headquarters to check its license plate. Headquarters reports back that the van has

outstanding traffic warrants (unpaid tickets). The cops signal the van, and the driver pulls over. Upon questioning the driver, the officer smells marijuana, and tells the driver to open up the back of the van. When the driver does, the other cop uses his flashlight to look inside and is shocked to find a bloody sneaker. The two men in the van are arrested for the serial murders of the eight boys and later brought to trial.

From their experience with the first case students have become aware of legal loopholes and will probably suspect that this case will be thrown out of court as well. They will be told that their suspicions are correct. The case does, in fact, get thrown out, but they will also be asked to suggest the reasons why. Based on the first case, they will more than likely challenge the search and seizure procedure of the patrol officers which appeared somewhat negligent. However, the clip of the courtroom scene that they will see regarding this case will show the prosecutor offering a legal precedent that justifies the officers' behavior. The defense attorney acknowledges the precedent, but argues that the initial traffic warrants that had prompted the police to pull the van over had, in fact, been paid. Therefore, there were no outstanding warrants, and any subsequent actions taken by the police were in violation of the defendants' rights. The judge is once again forced to deny the prosecution use of the evidence. The prosecuting attorney argues that the police were unaware that the warrants had been paid and that they acted in good faith. She pleads to the judge to allow her to use the evidence or else she doesn't have a case; how can he let two murderers go free because of a clerical error? The judge reprimands her for sloppy case work, and justifies his decision by stating that he will not rule in favor of the evidence just to have a conviction overturned in the appellate court. Once again the case is dismissed.

The video tape is stopped at this point and students are asked to put themselves in the position of the judge: "What would you do?" By now students have seen murder let go unpunished by the judicial system—the murder of old ladies and young boys. How can this be fair? When defense attorneys get smart enough to manipulate the law, is there any hope for justice?

"But you're a judge," they are told, "Your job is to uphold the integrity of the law. What else can you do but what this judge did?"

The obvious answer is to stop being a judge; to take the law into one's own hands and set things right. Because of the dramatic tension created by good's unrequited triumph over evil in these cases, students are motivated (if not manipulated) in the direction of righteous outrage. In my experience, children have a very clear sense of right and wrong, and are not too pleased with the conflict that sometimes does exist between statutory and interpersonal justice. The tape is continued and the next few scenes offered should appease any outraged students regarding the judge and his decisions because he follows their advice by taking matters into his own hands.

The movie is called "The Star Chamber," and features Michael Douglas as judge Steve Hardin, Hal Holbrook as a supreme court judge and Hardin's old law professor, and Yaphet Koto as the chief detective in charge of the serial murders. While the message in the first half of the movie could be stated as "justice above all," a surprising plot twist ingeniously turns righteous indignation on its head and validates the rationale of due process and "justice for all." This last part of the film (in which the parties presumed guilty are shown to be innocent after all) will be shown to the students after the earlier episodes have been discussed.

"The Star Chamber" is rated R due to language and some violent scenes, but the movie has also been edited for prime-time television. The clips to be shown to students will be taken from the TV version, and the story will be presented in narratives as well as clips (scenes) from the video tape.

The Star Chamber, the 14th century English court after which the movie is titled, will also be explained to students after the tape is completed. This court was composed of royal councilors who sat without a jury and were guided by the king. It was given its name because of the stars depicted on the ceiling of the main meeting room in the king's palace of Westminster where the members met. From its inception (in the reign of Edward III), it was one of the king's council's regular meeting places, and although various courts of common law arose from the 12th century onward, the king did not surrender his power of supreme jurisdiction over the courts. This was an inquisitorial and criminal court that the king administered mostly through his council. It eventually became noted for its arbitrary methods and severe punishments (especially involving ecclesiastical matters), and was abolished in 1641. In modern times, the term "The Star Chamber" has come to denote any tribunal, committee, or group that proceeds by arbitrary or unfair methods.

As an exercise, students can improvise scenes—convening their own tribunal, The Peer Pressure Chamber—to conduct mock trials. The character of the tribunal members should resemble modernized star chamber councilors, such as those people who belong to gangs or are part of cliques that exclude and/or harass others. The objective of the scene work is to demonstrate (seriously or humorously) the ill effects and injustice of such groups.

In order to more clearly demonstrate the process and purpose of the law today, and why it needs to be upheld even in the teeth of common sense and human decency (as appeared to be the case in the first half of the movie), a criminal defense lawyer and her assistant, a real-life private eye (two friends of mine), will visit our class. The Constitution and The Bill of Rights will be addressed, and the legal focus will be directed to some interpretations of the law concerning Miranda rights, and search and seizure procedures that are related to the movie. The nuts and bolts of criminal law will be presented as our attorney tells us how she prepares for a case, and our private eye gives us a few tips on sleuthing.

JUSTICE THEN

As in the previous section, the teacher tells a story. This time it is the story of Oedipus, and it is introduced as—"one of the first murder mysteries ever written, by a fellow named Sophocles over two thousand years ago." The story will be relayed in a colloquial manner such as that of The Star Chamber scenario. Students will be provided with the text to read along as the teacher reads aloud. The text I have developed is largely based on Edith Hamilton's rendition, which appears in her book, "Mythology, Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes," and which she took almost entirely from Sophocles' play, amplifying the role of the Sphinx.

Students will be apprised of basic storytelling techniques as described by Aristotle with regard to plot as well as thematic content as they listen to the story. Greek mythology will be addressed by reviewing some of the gods and goddesses and their epithets, and how the myth, in part, was a way to explain nature. Seeing sticks of jagged white light that cracked the sky open, hearing a monstrous boom overhead, followed by a downpour of water to nurture the fields or a blast of fire to destroy them—meant power to early man. If he was to survive this great and terrible force, he would have to understand it. Having no words or technology at hand for the experiences he was witnessing around him, he personified the forces of nature. Thunder became Zeus; lightning, his instrument. Man paid homage to his gods for their power could be beneficent or fierce. And while Greek mythology was man's early religion, it was also his early science.

In the story of Oedipus another kind of force is represented by a god—Apollo, the God of Truth. Not only did

early man have to survive the forces of nature, he was also driven to comprehend the meaning of life—the inner life of thought and emotion. Today we know the loud noise is called “thunder,” and the sticks of jagged white light are called “lightning.” But most of us are still searching for truth and the meaning of life. Truth, represented in the story of Oedipus, is the divine province of Apollo. In “The Star Chamber,” however, truth is less tangible because it has become the province of the judicial system which is man-made. Because man, unlike the gods, is not infallible, justice cannot be rendered absolute.

In reviewing the plot lines of both stories, students will be shown various contrasts and similarities that occur. There are several objectives in doing this: 1) to define structure in storytelling, i.e., exposition, complication, peripeteia, dénouement; 2) to explore the similarities in both protagonists’ motivations as they search for truth and justice; 3) to show the contrast of power and impotence concerning the forces represented in both stories—the law in “The Star Chamber,” and the gods in the story of Oedipus.

At the beginning of the film, “The Star Chamber,” the murderers are known and the law is powerless to do anything about them. Oedipus, on the other hand, is the unknown murderer, but the gods have absolute power, and Oedipus dedicates himself to their command and proclaims that the murderer of Laius (his true father, unbeknownst to him) be brought to justice. Both stories put the ethical paradigms of their respective eras to task as their protagonists run the risk of selling their souls by taking matters into their own hands. Judge Hardin winds up joining a clandestine group of judges who, like himself, have become disenchanted with legal loopholing defense tactics in their courtrooms; Oedipus flees from Apollo’s prophesy (that he would kill his father and marry his mother) by leaving his home in Corinth. Therefore, in “The Star Chamber” scenario, the seemingly impotent law is empowered, while in the story of Oedipus, the powerful gods are seemingly made impotent.

Both protagonists, however, are standing on shaky ground ethically and emotionally. Hardin, after participating as judge and juror with the maverick group of justices he has joined (the star chamber), gets to present one of his own cases—the series of murders involving boys—the case that sent him over the edge. The “murderers” are found guilty, and a hitman is hired to execute the sentence, quite literally. Although Hardin believes that justice will now finally be served, his nights are sleepless, and his days are wrought with worry. Similarly, Oedipus’ resolve begins to waver when Jocasta (his wife, and unbeknownst to him, his mother) tells him how Laius was murdered. She offers this story to show that the gods are fallible. They had prophesied her husband’s death at the hand of his son, but Laius had had the boy killed; Laius had died at the hands of robbers on the way to Delphi shortly before Oedipus arrived in Thebes. Oedipus, recalling his journey to Thebes (and the man and four attendants he killed when he was forced from his path), wonders if the man who tried to hit him with a stick—the one who provoked his rage—was, in fact, Laius. As Jocasta tries to assure him that it was not her husband that he killed, a messenger from Corinth arrives to tell Oedipus that his father, Polybus, has died. There is momentary relief for Oedipus (who is unaware that Polybus is his adoptive father), as once again it would appear that the gods were fallible; his father did not die at his hand.

The peripeteia in both stories presents another contrast between the two plots: The chief detective (on the case of the serial murders) discovers that the accused are, in fact, innocent. The real killers had stolen their van for a couple of hours and had returned it without their knowledge. When Hardin finds out that the defendants were innocent all along, he tries in vain to get the group to call off the hitman. They claim they can’t do it and warn him not to interfere—mistakes happen, and the defendants, though not guilty of this particular crime, are probably guilty of many others. But Hardin knows—the “murderers” are innocent. Conversely, when the truth is revealed to Oedipus, he knows—the “innocent” is a murderer. The messenger from Corinth reveals to Oedipus that Polybus was his adoptive father. When the surviving member of Laius’

party arrives, the messenger recognizes him as the shepherd who gave him the orphaned child. The man is reluctant to acknowledge the messenger, but under much duress, admits that he disobeyed Laius and Jocasta's orders to abandon the child on a mountain. The revelations for both Hardin and Oedipus have enormous impact.

The destruction of integrity is illustrated in both plots as we follow the characters' descent through righteousness, denial, shock, recognition, shame and despair. The climaxes are similar in that both characters seek redemption. Hardin tries to save the falsely accused at risk to his own life, but is unsuccessful. Oedipus, although innocent of any intentional wrong doing, cannot endure the moral stigma of his actions, and blinds himself.

In the end, Hardin, unwilling to compromise his integrity any further, turns in his star chamber associates and justice prevails. Oedipus becomes a willing outcast, and thus is humbled by the gods. In both stories, good men had compromised their integrity by denying what was intrinsically true for them: the law for Hardin; Apollo (the God of Truth) for Oedipus. Hardin could only reclaim the truth by admitting his own guilt and putting himself in the hands of justice. Perhaps Oedipus' act of blinding himself was also an attempt to seek his inner truth, and put himself in the hands of the gods.

LESSON PLAN

Topic: INTEGRITY AND JUSTICE

Objective:

Students will explore thematic concepts of integrity and justice as they were presented in the movie, "The Star Chamber," and the story of Oedipus. They will design collage poems and write vignettes (prose or poetry) on these concepts.

Method:

Thematic concepts are introduced by narratives that are told by the teacher. In the case of the first story, "The Star Chamber," clips will be played (on VCR) and intermittently interrupted for discussion concerning the courtroom scenes that appear in the film.

Students will create a poetic collage that will be constructed from various words and concepts used in, or relating to "The Star Chamber," and the Oedipus story. This is an imaging exercise that will enable them to give some visual impact to the work they have seen, read, and discussed.

Students will do stream-of-consciousness writing to cluster ideas and write vignettes on the thematic concepts. Background music will be played during the writing activities.

Presentation:

Students are told that they will be exploring the concepts of integrity and justice through writing. They are given cardstock sheets with selected words taken from the stories and discussions included in this section. The words will appear in various typefaces and point sizes, and will be photocopied in a variety of colors.

Application:

Students are instructed to cut the words out and organize them into a poem. They should try to use as many words as they can. The poem does not have to rhyme, and they should not be too concerned with forming perfect phrases. The poem just has to convey an idea, and that idea can be placed anyway they like—side to side, up and down, criss-cross, in a circle, etc. Once they are satisfied with their arrangements, they paste the words onto an 11" by 17" sheet of white paper. They may augment the collage with designs and illustrations as they like.

Students are then instructed to look over their poem collages, and write (on a blank sheet of white paper) word pairs that are similar such as: reality/truth; reason/sanity; righteousness/virtue. They repeat this process for dissimilar words.

The clustering and vignette writing method is reviewed, and students are instructed that they will be writing two vignettes. First students work out a cluster for the words, "due process." They may cluster the words separately or together and may use words from their word pairs (similar and dissimilar). From their clusters, they are to construct vignettes (either in sentences or phrases). They prune their vignettes (revision and correction), and rewrite or type the piece. The process is repeated for the word pair "conscience/integrity." Their final presentations may take the form of prose or poetry.

Evaluation: After students have completed their activities, a poetry reading is presented in class. Students share their work, which is then critiqued by their peers. Complimentary and constructive comments are supported by the teacher. A strongly negative or insulting comment by a peer is treated as a mistake, and the student is coached in constructive criticism. Since creative writing requires that we share our individual voices, finding young voices involves creating a nurturing environment that fosters sharing. Students are applauded for genuine effort, and mistakes are treated as opportunities to learn more. I have found that by participating in some of the exercises personally (and sharing my work with students) adds to the creative freedom of the class as they get the opportunity to teach and instruct me. When students can teach the teacher, you know that they've learned.

Notes:

A bulletin board display will be posted showing the cluster/vignette process, samples of student clusters and vignettes, collage poems, and the titles and supporting graphics for "The Star Chamber" and the Oedipus stories (pictures of justice scales, a courtroom scene, Apollo, Sphinx, etc.). All student work will also be kept on file for the class anthology which will be published during the last marking period of the school year.

VIEWER SLEUTHING

The television is once again employed to present students with a variety of contemporary detective personalities, milieu and stories. Four TV shows that have been video taped will be presented, and each show should run about forty minutes (cutting out commercials and closing credits). Students will use clue sheets in this section much the way they did in the "Detectives & Devices" section toward the beginning of this curriculum plan. Each show will be interrupted before the climax, and students will record their whodunit information. After the show is completed, they will discuss their results. Since most of the class time will be absorbed in watching the shows, students will be given homework assignments to write a synopsis for each show. These synopses will later be used in a Bertrillonesque Rogues' Gallery project (see Lesson Plan 3 on the next page). The shows that will be presented are as follows:

“Murder She Wrote” features Angela Lansbury in the role of Jessica Fletcher, a senior citizen-ish, highly acclaimed author of detection fiction, who invariably gets pulled into ‘real life’ (albeit fictional) cases—which she solves often to the chagrin of whatever police chief’s domain she’s happened to set foot in. She’s an updated counterpart to Agatha Christie’s Miss Marple. Feminism and dogged determinism notwithstanding, Jessica is a mature woman (probably in her mid to late fifties) with enough life experience to have endowed her with a generous, caring, and compassionate heart.

“Kung Fu, The Legend Continues” features David Carradene as Kwai Chang Caine, a Sholin monk skilled in the martial art of Kung Fu, and living in modern-day California. Caine’s son, Peter, is a detective for the police department. With considerable reluctance, Peter has little choice but to allow his father to do-do, that voodoo he does so well, blending Eastern mysticism with just a touch of hard-boiled forensics. “Kung Fu, The Legend Continues” presents the viewer with a kind of Yin/Yang polarity—a father/son thing; an aesthetic/pragmatic thing; a spiritual/logical thing—often an absurd thing. But to the younger viewer, these polarities can create dramatic tensions that excite and intrigue, and perhaps are not so dissimilar to the paradox presented to children as they are told to act their age when that’s what they think they’ve been doing all along—imaginative freedom versus logical responsibility. The netherworld of teenage existence where one is somehow expected to be a child and a grown-up all at once is frustrating at best. By examining the polar content of the show, students can stimulate creative thought in the attempt to keep the polarities in balance. After all, what’s a yin and yang for anyway?

“Star Trek, The Next Generation,” although a sci-fi TV show about space travel in the 24th century (for anyone out there who might not be a Trekkie), is capable of some artificial time travel via a futuristic contraption called the “holodeck.” Jean Luc Picard (played by Patrick Stewart), captain of the U.S.S. Enterprise, although usually embroiled in mediating turf battles between the antmen of Gamma IV and the catpeople on Beta II—or some such nonsense—occasionally takes a hiatus and visits the holodeck where just about any fantasy is possible. In Picard’s case, it’s detective fiction. His detective of choice: Dixon Hill, a 1940s-style, hard-boiled gum shoe, modeled very closely after Dixon Steele, the character Humphrey Bogart played in “The Maltese Falcon” (based on the book under the same name by Dashiell Hammett.) The episode to be shown is entitled: “The Big Goodbye,” and along with the high-tech special effects to be expected in a Star Trek show, there are some film noir touches revealed in two of the mobster characters that appear to closely resemble Sydney Greenstreet and Peter Lorre.

“Columbo” will take a little longer to watch, and will therefore require two sessions: forty minutes in the first session; approximately twenty minutes of viewing in the second. Peter Falk, in the title role, does a wonderful job of playing the fool—the sloppy, coffee-stained, ash-dropping, seemingly bubble-headed homicide detective, lieutenant Columbo, who surreptitiously (and calculatingly) undermines the confidence of the murderer; tricking him into showing his hand. (Of course, it could be her confidence and hand as well.) But the learning focus for this particular show is not the detective, nor milieu. It is the construction of the story itself. Columbo episodes always begin with the murderer in the act of murdering. The viewer knows from the very beginning the murderer, the victim, the method used, and the opportunity taken. Columbo usually knows, or rather, strongly suspects these things shortly after the viewer has seen them. While there is much satisfaction in trying to determine how Columbo will discover the pieces of evidence and put the murder puzzle together, the challenge to both Columbo and the viewer is to figure out the motive, the missing piece, the “why” of the case.

LESSON PLAN

Topic: BERTRILLONESQUE ROGUES' GALLERY

Objective:

Students will create a rogues' gallery in the tradition of the Bertrillon system. Alphonse Bertrillon (French anthropologist) designed this system for keeping records of photographs, physical measurements and peculiarities of known criminals. (There is mention of the Bertrillon system in the "Detectives & Devices" section of this unit plan which appears earlier on.)

Method:

Students will select villainous characters from any one of the stories that have been presented in class. They may also invent villains if they wish. They will use the clustering method and their clue sheets to work out various aspects of their characters. They will also list the sequence of events involved with the caper or crime the character was responsible for. For each event on their list, they will cluster for more detailed ideas. They will use their cluster work to begin writing vignettes. Part of the pruning process will be involved in finding a common thread to string the vignettes together. From their vignette work, they will write sensational news stories.

Students will also work with some signature costume pieces, props, and makeup, and will do themselves up as their characters might appear. A photo session will take place, and mug shots as well as action shots, will be taken. From their preparatory work, they will design a newspaper and bulletin board display.

Presentation:

Storytelling techniques are reviewed for the students, and the Bertrillonesque Rogue's Gallery project is introduced.

Application:

Students select or invent a character, and begin the clustering and vignette work for characterizations and plots. Before they write their news stories, they will fill out a rogues' gallery description sheet that will include information about their character—physical measurements and peculiarities. They will continue to write their stories, and upon completion, they will work with the teacher to edit them. These activities should take one or two class sessions.

Students will bring in costume pieces from home (a scarf, a tie, a hat, costume jewelry, etc.), and will also be offered costume pieces in class. After they have decided upon their costumes, they will begin to work with stage makeup, and will be offered instruction in this area as well. Once in makeup and costumes, students will prepare themselves for the photo session by practicing facial expressions in front of a mirror. They will be coached to stay in character, and look as ferocious or as sly as the character would. Mug shots are then photographed. Next students will work out tableaus for action shots. For each mug shot that is taken, students will write the character's name and an epithet; for each action shot that is taken, captions will be written. (These activities should take one or two sessions also).

After all the preparation work has been completed, students will be given their stories back (typed in columns and including headlines). Their action shots and captions will also be returned. The class will then work together on laying out a newspaper. Since probably no more than two stories will fit on an 8-1/2" x 11" page,

students will initially work in pairs. Later the class will work together to sort out the details. After the layout work is completed, students can either paste up the articles and pictures, or the teacher (or perhaps a student) can make revisions, and put the paper together on a desk-top publishing program (photos can be either scanned or pasted on to the finished layout). These activities should take one or two sessions.

By the last session, students will receive copies of their newspaper. The newspaper will also have also been enlarged on a copier so that each 8-1/2" x 11" page will be blown up to fit an 11" x 17" sheet (approximately 130% enlargement setting; a "photo" setting should be used on the copier in order to get clearer copies.) In addition, students will be given back their rogues' gallery description sheets (typed and printed on color cardstock) and their mug shots. (Epithets will be included on the cardstock sheets.) Their final task is to decorate the bulletin board using the enlarged newspaper sheets, mug shots and description cards. They may add other decorative features as they wish.

Evaluation

he final products of the activities above will be reviewed and critiqued by the class. Students who experience difficulty with any of the activities, will be given extra attention to get them back on task. Copies of the newspaper will also be given to teachers and administrators for their critique and comments.

Notes:

Various equipment and materials are needed for the activities: a typewriter, word processor, or computer with desk-top publishing capabilities; photocopying equipment (with enlarging and photograph copying features); a camera (black and white film); costume pieces, stage makeup, and props.

The detectives who have appeared in this curriculum unit hail from many places around the world. Most of the golden age detectives have come from Europe—Sherlock Holmes (British), Dupin and Poirot (French), and, of course, Oedipus (albeit, another golden age), Greek. A modern-day African-American detective has been shown in "The Star Chamber" movie at the beginning of the unit. Caine, the Sholin priest in "Kung Fu, The Legend Continues," is Eurasian, Columbo is Italian, and there have been some virtual reality-type villains presented in "Star Trek, The Next Generation," who were subdued with the help of an extraterrestrial, Worf, from Klingon.

Culture has made an impact on crime fiction throughout the last century. The cultural influences due to the industrial age (previously mentioned in "Detectives & Devices") created various types of detectives. Economic and political awareness in the last few decades have cleared the path for an even more diverse group of sleuths to include people of various races, more women, and physically challenged folks. Also, as technology continued to shrink the world, a global consciousness emerged, putting the responsibility on industrialized nations to better understand their struggling neighbors as well as themselves. Detective fiction depicts this consciousness by painting political landscapes as backgrounds in its storytelling such as in Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins (post World War II African-American veteran turned detective) mysteries, Tony Hillerman's Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee (Navajo detectives) stories, and James McClure's South African detectives, Tromp Kramer (Afrikaner) and Mickey Zondi (Bantu) mysteries.

Students will be introduced to this diversity in detective fiction through character studies, film, and reading (books, synopses, and excerpted material). They will also explore the various facets of race and culture—what factors (inherited and anthropological) determine race; what factors make up a culture (environment, technology, beliefs). In exploring contemporary crime fiction, certain societal issues will arise such as the issues of street violence and teenage pregnancy as they are presented in Robert B. Parker's book, "Double Deuce," which students will read excerpts from.

It is not unheard of for a middle school child to attend a funeral of a sibling or close friend about his or her age. Cause of death: murder. It is also not unheard of and is becoming less uncommon for middle school children to be exposed to an increasingly pervasive drug subculture. Presently the Aids epidemic is taking its toll largely on the adolescent population, and while contracting a disease is not considered a crime, promiscuity among teens and preteens resulting in this deadly illness bodes poorly for societal and familial values. This does not appear to be the user-friendly world many of us dreamed about our children inheriting.

In Paul Fry's introductory talk on the "Gender, Race, and Region in Detective Fiction" seminar series he discussed the difference between crime fiction and the judicial system. Where in the detective novel one can expect a sense of fair play and that justice will be served, real-life justice doesn't necessarily make the same guarantees. In what could be considered today's defense law model, the defense attorney's mission can include obfuscating the conventions of logic by challenging appearances—what seems to be simply isn't, e.g., Claus Von Bülow—and adulterating the purity of deductive reasoning with social issues—what seems to be is, but. . . , e.g., Lorena Bobbit. In crime fiction we usually find out "who done it," and the villain pays retribution of some sort. In real-life, we have our doubts, reasonable or not, and the maxim "crime doesn't pay" becomes questionable.

I find that today's middle school students are far more grown up than I had expected, and there appears to be an unspoken demand for relevance that I believe is expressed in their behavior: To the degree that the subject is relevant to their lives, they listen; to the degree that it's not, they either tune out or act out. Therefore, what may seem like a disruptive classroom can also be a show of integrity. Students are quite aware of real-life crime—from white-collar hackers bootlegging software to inner-city gang wetwork—which has led me to wonder if I, as a teacher, can be so presumptuous as to promote the ideals of moral responsibility and problem solving inherent in the crime fiction genre to students who are trying to survive the real thing either directly or indirectly on a daily basis. But presumptuousness notwithstanding, the genre is eminently relevant to the world students perceive around themselves, and can be instrumental in defining and redefining value systems based on logic, reason, and responsibility that will ultimately serve to empower them.

Detective stories, both ancient and new, employ basic Aristolian principles in their telling. Since its golden age, crime fiction devices have not changed very much. The characters are more diverse, the sealed room has gotten a little trickier, murder weapons more sophisticated, motives perhaps more abstract and intricate, but the formula still holds true. The innocent raise suspicions, the guilty appear innocent, the protagonist has a strong moral base and usually an endearing foible or two (even rogues have their redeeming qualities), the villain is brought to justice, and overall, there is a sense of fair play. The texture of these stories—the sensory awareness of their milieu—creates for the reader a cultural subtext. As more cultures become represented in detective fiction—a genre whose final outcome is justice—the reader can enjoy this medium, not only for its mysterious content, but for the intimate connections it makes with the world, its peoples, their triumphs and defeats, their values and hopes.

MATERIALS

* 18" x 24" chart showing the right and left hemispheres of the brain and their respective characteristics. (The brain can be drawn or copied from Gray's Anatomy and enlarged.)

-Right Hemisphere: aesthetic, generative, global focus, qualitative patterning, imagistic, rhythmic, metaphorical, interpretive

-Left Hemisphere: logical, aesthetic-analytical; local focus, literal, explanatory, precise

- * Large sheets of corrugated cardboard for simple set designs
- * Simple costume pieces: hats, ties, strips of fabric, costume jewelry
- * Simple props: gavel, and fake weapons
- * Gift wrapping supplies (for bulletin board displays)
- * Color cardstock (8-1/2" X 11" sheets)
- * Stage makeup
- * Color marking pens

EQUIPMENT

- * Television and VCR equipment
- * Photocopier (with enlarging and photograph copying features).
- * Camera (and black and white film).
- * Computer (with desk-top publishing capabilities), or a word processor or typewriter.

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Spolin, Viola. "Theater Games for the Classroom." Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1986. This book also includes a great deal of information about Storytheatre, a unique style of theatrical presentation invented by her son, Paul Sills, at Yale University in the early 70s.

Rico, Gabriele Lusser. "Writing the Natural Way." Los Angeles, CA: J.P. Tarcher, Inc., 1983. This is an excellent resource for writing methodology employing right-brain techniques.

The Consortium of National Arts Education Association, ed. "National Standards for Arts Education." Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference, 1994.

DETECTIVE FICTION (May also be suitable for mature students with good reading skills.)

Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur. "The Original Illustrated Sherlock Holmes." Secaucus, NJ: Castle, a division of Book Sales, Inc. This anthology includes Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories that published in "The Strand." It also includes Sidney Paget's classic illustration: "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," published between 1891 and 1892; "The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes," published from 1892 to 1893; "The Hound of the Baskervilles," published between 1901 and 1902; and "The Return of Sherlock Holmes" published between 1903 and 1905.

Hillerman, Tony. "A Thief of Time." New York: Harper Paperbacks: A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1988.

McClure, James. "Song Dog: A Kramer and Zondi Mystery." New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1991.

Mosley, Walter. "Devil in a Blue Dress: An Easy Rawlins Mystery." New York: Pocket Books: a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1990.

Paretsky, Sara. "Burn Marks: A V.I. Warshawski Mystery." New York: Dell Publishing: a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1990.

Parker, Robert B. "Double Deuce: A Spenser and Hawk story." New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 1992.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "Complete Stories and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe." Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966.

Sayers, Dorothy L. "Gaudy Night: A Lord Peter Wimsey with Harriet Vane Mystery." New York: Harper Paperbacks: A Division of

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STUDENT READING

Ball, John. "In The Heat of The Night." New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1965. Virgil Tibbs shows some good ole' boys what police work is all about—in the Deep South, at the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement.

Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur. "The Hound of the Baskervilles." London: The Penguin Group, 1982. This version has been revised for younger readers.

Gibson, Walter, ed. "Rogues' Gallery: A Variety of Mystery Stories," Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969. Features many golden age detective fiction authors—Christie, Chandler, Maugham, Ellery Queen, and others.

James, P.D. "An Unsuitable Job for a Woman." New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1972. Cordelia Gray is not exactly an assertive feminist, but an adventurous young woman, and a pretty good detective all the same.

Kimball, Gwen. "The Puzzle of the Lost Dauphin." New York, NY: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1964. Features Bonnie Hartford, a bright girl, and a history bug, who has a penchant for getting involved with mysteries.

Marowitz, Charles. "Potboilers, Three Black Comedies." New York: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1986. Three dark comedies are presented in this book, including "Sherlock's Last Case."

Murray, John. "Fifteen Plays for Today's Teen-agers." Boston, MA: Plays, Inc., 1923. This is a revised edition of a collection of one-act, royalty-free comedies and mysteries.

Richards, Stanley, ed. "Twenty One-Act Plays: An Anthology for Amateur Performing Groups." Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1978. "The Patient" by Agatha Christie is included in this anthology. Some other authors featured are, No'l Coward, Tennessee Williams, Neil Simon, Bernard Shaw, and Eugene O'Neill.

Rubins, Diane Teitel. "Scholastic's A+ Guide to Good Writing." New York, NY: Scholastic Inc., 1980.

Sadler, Catherine Edward. "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: Books One, Two, Three, Four." New York: Avon Books: a division of The Hearst Corporation, 1981. Book one includes: "A Study in Scarlet," "The Red-headed League," and "The Man with the Twisted Lip." Book two: "The Sign of the Four," "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," and "The Adventure of The Speckled Band." Book three: "The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb," "The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet," "The Adventure of the Silver Blaze," and "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual." Book four: "The Adventure of the Reigate Puzzle," "The Adventure of the Crooked Man," "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter," and "The Adventure of the Naval Treaty."

"Scope English Program Reading Anthology." New Orleans, LO: Scholastic Inc., 1979. "The Rumbold 500" by Maxence Van Der Meersch, p. 135; "Wine on the Desert" by Max Brand, p. 142; and "The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connell, p. 149.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." New York, NY: Baronet Books, MCMXC. The story has been adapted by Mitsu Yamamoto, and also features a short bio on Stevenson.

MOVIES

Reed, Tom and Van Every, Dale, screenplay. "Murders in the Rue Morgue." Universal City: MCA Home Video, Inc., 1932.

Roderick Taylor, screenplay. "The Star Chamber." Twentieth Century Fox-Film Corporation, 1983.

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