



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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## Teaching Detective Fiction Through A Cross Curriculum Unit

Curriculum Unit 95.01.10  
by Angelo J. Pompano

This unit has three purposes. The first is to establish that detective fiction proves a legitimate subject matter for the seventh grade. The second is to propose cross curriculum teaching as an effective method of instruction for this subject. The third is to give examples of cross curriculum lessons as applied to the Agatha Christie short story "Miss Marple Tells A Story," and to suggest that it is possible to apply similar techniques to a variety of narratives.

Detective fiction is an effective and relevant unit to teach in the middle school. (1) The study of this genre teaches students that things are not always as they appear to be. Because the genre requires that all of the evidence be presented to the reader for inspection in an untampered form, the student will learn to eliminate false leads and irrelevant material in the quest for clues as they distinguish what happened from what seems to have happened. Not accepting appearances in the pursuit of truth is a skill which is invaluable to the students of today, whose complicated lives revolve around a multiplicity of interrelated elements. With these skills, the students can avoid many of the pitfalls that await them in the world outside the classroom door.

The detective novel, in spite of its violence (off stage for the most part), is a constructive form of literature for students of this age because it demonstrates justice served. The students will come to understand also that there are many kinds of justice and they will have to come to grips with the fact that in the detective novel, as in life, the justice served may not derive from the same value system as that of the reader. They will see that the detective in most cases, while not perfect in his or her personal or social habits, is omnipotent and all-judging, and that the criminal in many instances undergoes a punishment that is not meted out by the law. In any event, the punishment is always fitting.

The detective, in spite of whatever faults he or she possesses, is intelligent. In the end it is intelligence that wins over evil. The genre reinforces again and again the fact that intelligence is stronger than violence. Therefore, detective fiction sets a good example for the student who may be leaning toward the tendency of many young people today to "dumb down."

Another aspect of detective fiction that makes it relevant to the modern student is its concern with social change. Social tension has been evident since the beginning of the genre. In Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter," Dupin, the first fictional detective, must retrieve a letter which is a symbol of stolen power. Social tension is still evident today, as in Sara Paretsky's "Burn Marks," in which V. I. Warshawski deals with the issue of the role of women in society. Students deal with social change every day in matters that range from

racial issues to values that are different from those of their parents. The study of detective fiction will show them that violence is not the answer to these problems. There is a sense of security in the detective novel because in the end it avenges the misdeed and overcomes evil, while restoring the status quo, which has become ever so slightly more future-oriented and flexible than it was before the crime.

Additionally, fast-paced detective fiction is a good stimulus for the reluctant reader; it is usually concise and therefore suited to the student with a short attention span. Furthermore, most aficionados have a tendency to become hooked on a favorite detective in serialized novels, and students may take the bait as well. Often the author mentions other cases in the series, which further stimulates the desire to read additional adventures of the detective. Many people might argue that detective fiction is not great literature, but its typically undemanding style is the very thing which will make the reluctant reader less disinclined to pick up a book. The plot will stimulate them to read on an independent level without becoming bogged down with comprehension and decoding problems. This gives the student a chance to develop important critical and analytical skills.

By reading detective fiction the students will learn the art of analytical thinking. They will see that analysis and intuition work together and that analysis is at the bottom of intuition. Agatha Christie's Miss Marple may claim to use sympathetic identification (that is, she associates the actions of the criminal with those of someone she has known in her home town of Saint Mary Mead) but in the end she clearly really uses the analytic techniques of the scientific method. Eventually the students will come to see that inference alone is unreliable. Because the detectives in these works use both the left brain and the right brain to solve crimes with a blend of intuition and scientific analysis, the teacher should be able to challenge the students to become cross curriculum thinkers. They will realize that when we learn we base what we discover on what we already know. Therefore, it is appropriate that we teach detective fiction as a cross curriculum unit that incorporates both the arts and sciences.

As stated, the student's daily life is a complex interweaving of skills. Consider a simple task such as buying a gallon of milk. We first locate the milk aisle in the store (in itself often an exercise in detection). We use reading skills as we analyze the nutrition facts on the label. Do we want whole milk, two percent, one percent, or skim? Already, home economic and science skills come into play. You consider that your friend of a different religion is coming over for lunch. You recall learning in social studies that they might have a certain dairy restriction. The checkout person gives you the wrong change. It is a good thing you paid attention in math. Every task we undertake involves a combination of skills. Why should we teach English, math, science, and the arts in isolation when the students will use those skills simultaneously? Cross curriculum teaching is an effective way to adapt the literal, interpretive, and critical thinking skills developed during the study of detective fiction to the other content areas.

"Cross curriculum teaching" for our purpose is a term that is interchangeable with "integrated units." For too long the middle school teacher in most cases has taught his or her content area totally oblivious to what the other teachers in the building are doing. At best this leads to redundant teaching of skills, at worst it fosters the isolated teaching of soon-forgotten skills because the student cannot relate or apply the newly acquired knowledge to anything but the classroom assignment.

How many times have the students complained that all of their tests fall on the same day or all of their projects are due at once? Often times the only defense the teacher can offer is that the English teacher did not know what the social studies and math teacher had assigned. Further, how often do students ask, "What are we doing this for?" or "Why do we have to learn this?" Often the only answer is, "Because it is in the

curriculum guide.”

What might surprise many teachers is that the curriculum guides of several different subjects might exact the same skills. How much better it would be for those skills to be coordinated and taught at the same time of year. Better still, if one ties together the lessons from each content area, those skills will have a better chance to stay with the student because he or she will have more than one reference point when recalling a particular skill. Students retain 10% of what they read. On the other hand they retain 90% of what they learn when they do something. It is one thing to read a detective story with the class and talk about the skills the detective used. It is quite another thing to have the student actually use those skills. The aim, then, should be to make reading as much like doing something as possible.

Agatha Christie’s short story, “Miss Marple Tells A Story,” is the basis for this unit. It will last two weeks and will include every seventh grade teacher in my school as well as the librarian. The intention of this project is to give an example of a cross curriculum unit. The same teaching methods can apply to any short story or novel of detective fiction.

This unit will develop in the student the ability to question, find information that relates to that question, and then know how to use that information intelligently. In this unit the detective story is a springboard to teach a variety of subjects. The result will be a total immersion of the student in the unit. As students read Agatha Christie’s “Miss Marple Tells A Story,” their challenge is to develop a trial for Miss Carruthers, the accused murderess. The students will read and discuss the story in the reading class. When the student moves on to another class the skills in that content area focus on acquiring information needed to prepare for the “trial.” In math, for example, the detective theme continues and the student applies the problem solving techniques of the detective. Throughout the day, as the student moves from one class to another, the detective story theme continues as the students prepare for the “trial.” By seeing the integration of all of the curriculum areas applied to one task, the student will come to realize that their studies eventually will have a useful purpose when applied to their own lives.

There are three distinct roles that make a cross curriculum unit in detective fiction (or any other subject for that matter) successful. Those roles are that of the team, the individual teacher, and the student. Each constituent must understand their role and be willing to work toward its fulfillment.

The role of the team is critical, because this unit will not be successful without a great deal of preparation. It will require mutual planning time for the teachers, librarian, staff developer, and administrators to set goals and objectives, map out the unit, plan lessons and activities, and evaluate student growth and application. This will necessitate on the part of the administrators a willingness to accommodate the grade level teachers with common planning time. Admittedly it is a scheduling nightmare to provide necessary coverage for those in meetings. However, with the creative use of staff, it is not impossible.

Because the unit takes a great deal of time to coordinate the effort, a planning team comprised of people who work well together is essential. They must be willing to make a commitment to the unit, and be willing to take time to discuss the students and issues before they plan. They must also be willing to put in extra time after school for planning meetings. It is beneficial to team morale and creativity to hold at least some of these planning sessions away from the school building. The relaxed atmosphere of a local restaurant usually proves propitious.

The teachers involved in the unit must be willing to take risks. One of the biggest problems that will confront the team is that some members may have to make philosophical changes. At first it may seem for some that

the classroom is not as structured as the teacher may normally expect. Most likely there will be times during the preparation of the trial when some students will be at computers looking for information about England and English customs. Some may be writing “biographies” for the characters in the story on the word processors. Others may be working in the library preparing a “case.” Still others may be in the art room making scenery or props. In the end, when it all comes together the teacher will be pleasantly surprised as to how structured the unit actually is, and how much the students benefited.

The team will have to decide what skills they wish to develop. Then they will have to become familiar with, and compile a list of, the resources that are available for the students to use. These resources will include CD ROM, The Internet, books, magazines, the encyclopedia, and personal interviews of persons with first hand knowledge of law enforcement, court procedure, or English customs.

On the part of the grade level teachers, this unit on detective fiction requires a collaboration that demands the putting aside of ego and self interest in favor of compromise in order to develop a unit which will benefit the student. In regard to the student, at times the teacher will take on the role of facilitator, at other times task master. The teacher’s job is to suggest necessary tasks. It is then up to the teacher to see to it that the student accomplishes the task.

At first, it is best to let the student decide what resources he or she may use. As the teacher sees the student needs more information the teacher will make suggestions. At first, the students may feel that they have an overwhelming task before them. (The teacher may feel this way also.) However the students will rise to the level of expectations of the teacher. As they see each component falling in place they become more confident and eager to take on the next task.

The cross curriculum unit on detective fiction will also require some obligations on the part of the student. While all students are not self motivated, with encouragement most will respond to the sense of independence which the unit fosters. With guidance from the teacher, the students will form groups. They will have to decide if they want to be on the defense team or the prosecuting team. Next they will have to decide what role they want to take on: judge, lawyer for the prosecution, lawyer for the defense, defendant, witness, or juror. The next step is to know the character they will portray, so they must make up a biography for the character. The student must honor some details from the story, and make up other details to fill in the character’s life. The students must do independent research (with the guidance of the teacher) to fill in such background as place of birth. In preparation for the trial the students must brainstorm for possible solutions to problems they encounter.

After the students compile their research they then must polish it and prepare the case. When both sides finish preparations they will present their “case” to the court. In the end they will do a self evaluation of the unit.

## **The Cross Curriculum Unit on Mystery Fiction Developing Agatha Christie’s “Miss Marple Tells A Story As a Role Playing Exercise**

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### **Create a “Trial” for Miss Carruthers. (This will take several days.)**

In this, the main part of the unit, the cooperation of all of the subject area teachers will be needed. The idea is

that even though Miss Carruthers has been identified by Miss Marple as the murderer of Mrs. Rhodes, and even though she confessed, she will be put on trial by the students. Students will play the parts of Miss Marple, Miss Carruthers, the defense and prosecution lawyers as well as the judge.

### **General Objectives for the Unit**

1. To integrate the teaching of several content areas such as language arts, social studies, science, math, and fine arts into the unit.
2. To adapt the literal, interpretive, and critical thinking skills of reading to the other content areas.
3. To coordinate teaching to make more efficient use of teaching time.
4. To develop in the student the ability to question and then find the answer to that question.
5. To help the student relate and apply newly acquired knowledge to everyday life.
6. To the forge the seventh grade teaching staff into a collaborative team.
7. To foster risk taking in both the teachers and students.
8. To realize that what we learn we base on what we already know.
9. To stimulate the reluctant reader to read on an independent level.
10. Integrate the use of technology into the unit .

## **Background for “Miss Marple Tells A Story”**

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### **Who Is Agatha Christie?**

Agatha Christie first introduced the world to Miss Jane Marple, one of the world’s most affable fictional detectives, with “Murder at the Vicarage” which was published in 1930. Her other famous detective, Hercule Poirot, had appeared ten years earlier in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* , which was her first manuscript.

She was born Agatha Miller on September 15, 1890, in Devon, England, where she was educated by her mother. During World War I she worked as a volunteer nurse. In 1914 she married Col. Archibald Christie. They divorced in 1928 but, as she already had a huge following as the result of the publication of “The Murder of Roger Ackroyd” in 1926, she kept his name. In 1930 she married archaeologist Sir Max Mallowan. The influence of her frequent expeditions with him to the Middle East can be seen in such works as “Death on the

Nile” which was published in 1937.

Her stories are marked by inventive plotting which has made her one of the most popular of all modern detective novelists. She wrote more than 75 successful novels and many short stories. The performance of Agatha Christie’s play, “The Mousetrap” (1952), set a world record for the longest continuous run at one theater. Many of her works, especially stories featuring Margaret Rutherford as Miss Marple were adapted for film. Agatha Christie died at Wallingford in Oxfordshire, England on January 12, 1976.

### **Who Is Miss Marple?**

Miss Jane Marple was created by Agatha Christie. She is a Victorian lady and a gossip who knows everything that goes on in her hometown of St. Mary Mead. She usually solves her cases by drawing analogies between the behavior of the criminal and the behavior of some person whom she has known from the village. She is supported by her nephew, Raymond West, a best-selling novelist. It is Raymond, and her niece Joyce, a painter, to whom she is telling the story of the murder of Mrs. Rhodes in “Miss Marple Tells a Story.” Miss Marple likes to give the impression that she is a ditherer and tries to hide her intelligence and keen insight into human nature.

### **“Miss Marple Tells A Story”**

*Author: Agatha Christie*

Agatha Christie’s “Miss Marple Tells A Story,” from the Golden Age of Detective fiction, will be the basis of this unit. It will meet New Haven’s current educational requirement of responding to literature through writing response journals. In addition, it will adapt well as an integrated unit and lend itself to the development of technology skills. The students will adapt the literal, interpretive, and critical thinking skills developed during the study of this detective story and apply these problem solving techniques to their own lives. This story demonstrates that a detective may be of either gender.

### **Plot summary of “Miss Marple Tells a Story”**

In “Miss Marple Tells a Story,” Miss Marple relates the story of the murder of Mrs. Rhodes to her nephew Raymond and niece Joyce. One evening she is visited by Mr. Petherick, her solicitor, and a young man named Mr. Rhodes. Mr. Rhodes’s wife had been stabbed in a hotel in nearby Barnchester and he is under suspicion of having murdered her. They retained Sir Malcolm Olde, K.C. to defend Mr. Rhodes but are not satisfied with his intended line of defense (suicide) so they came to Miss Marple for another opinion. They give her the following facts of what occurred on the night of March 8th. Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes had been staying at the Crown Hotel and occupied adjoining rooms with a connecting door. She retired to bed in her room after dinner, and he was working on a book in the adjoining room. When he checked on his wife he found her lying in bed stabbed through the heart with a stiletto dagger on which there were no fingerprints. She had been dead for an hour or more. The other door in Mrs. Rhodes’s room leads to the corridor through a little hallway with a bathroom, but was locked and bolted on the inside. The only window was closed and latched. Mr. Rhodes said nobody had passed through his room except a chambermaid bringing hot water bottles to his wife.

No one but Mr. Rhodes and the chambermaid, Mary Hill, had entered Mrs. Rhodes’s room. The chambermaid, who is half-witted, brought Mrs. Rhodes the hot water bottle and left. She had no reason to assault the guest.

At the head of the staircase is a lounge where four witnesses having coffee could see down a passage that goes off to the right. The last door (door A) leads to Mr. Rhodes’s room. They said only Mr. Rhodes and the

chambermaid used the door. The passage turns to the right again and the first door (door B) around the corner is the door to Mrs. Rhodes's room. An electrician was working there and he said only the chambermaid entered or left the door.

At the inquest Mr. Rhodes unconvincingly told the story of a woman who had written threatening letters to his wife. As his wife tended to exaggerate, he himself did not believe his wife's story of a woman who vowed vengeance because Mrs. Rhodes had injured her child in a motor accident before they were married. His wife had received threatening letters which he thought she had composed herself.

Miss Marple asks if there were any women staying at the hotel by themselves and found there were two—Mrs. Granby, an Anglo-Indian widow, and Miss Carruthers, a spinster of about forty who dropped her g's. There is nothing to connect either of them to the crime.

There are four possibilities. Either Mrs. Rhodes committed suicide, or she was killed either by her husband, the chambermaid, or an outsider whom nobody saw enter or leave.

Miss Marple concludes that the latter and least likely situation is true. She says that the chambermaid came in through door A to Mr. Rhode's room and passed into his wife's room with the hot water bottle and went out through the hallway into passage B. The murderess then came by door B into the little hallway and concealed herself in the bathroom and waited until the chambermaid left. She then entered Mrs. Rhodes's room and killed her and wiped the handle of the stiletto. She then locked and bolted the door by which she entered and left through Mr. Rhodes's room. Mr. Rhodes was busy and saw only a chambermaid in a uniform and apron and didn't pay attention to her. It was the same dress but not the same woman. Likewise the people having coffee and the electrician saw the chambermaid but not the woman herself.

Miss Marple decides that the murderer is Miss Carruthers because she dropped her g's and that is something that no one under sixty does. Therefore Miss Marple knew she was playing a part and overdoing it. Later Miss Carruthers, who was using a false name, confessed to the murder. Mrs. Rhodes had run over her daughter and the woman had gone insane. Thus Miss Marple proves that things are not always what they appear to be.

## **Lesson One: Reading "Miss Marple Tells a Story"**

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### **Objectives for Lesson One**

1. To use the writing response journal to record the students first impressions.
2. To identify the characteristics of a detective story
3. To develop vocabulary.
4. To use context clues.
5. To instill the pursuit of truth and justice as a positive goal
6. To see that crime doesn't pay.

7. To see that inference alone is unreliable.
8. To establish that intelligence is stronger than violence.
9. To apply literal, interpretative and critical thinking skills to a mystery story.
10. To learn about deductive reasoning.
11. To identify climax
12. To classify characters as main or minor characters
13. To understand irony
14. To recognize conflict
15. To analyze the events in a plot.

Tell the students that the genre of detective fiction can be a great deal of fun because you can play detective and try to solve the mystery yourself. Be sure that they know clearly what a mystery is. One week before the class actually reads Agatha Christie's "Miss Marple Tells A Story," assign the students to watch at least one TV mystery. Suggest such programs as "Mystery!," "Diagnosis Murder", "Burke's Law", or "Murder, She Wrote".

### **Pre-Reading Writing Response Journal Assignment**

In your journal respond to the following:

1. Name a movie or TV mystery show that you enjoyed.
2. As the mystery unfolded, were you able to solve it along with the detective?
3. Were there any clues which gave you a false lead?
4. Were there any clues you overlooked?
5. Were you surprised when the detective solved the mystery? Why?
6. Write about a real life mystery, no matter how small, which you have solved.

Explain to the students that while it is fun to watch a mystery movie or TV show, reading detective fiction can be even more enjoyable because you can work on the mystery at your own pace. You have the luxury, when reading, to stop at any point and go back to reread for clues you may have missed or not understood. You can also take time to reflect on your own experiences and apply the knowledge you already possess to the clues at hand. Tell the students that that is exactly what Agatha Christie's Miss Marple does. She relates the clues she uncovers and the reactions of the suspects to how people she has known in her town of Saint Mary Mead have reacted in similar situations in the past.



At this point the teacher should give the students time to read “Miss Marple Tells A Story.”

1. Have students stop reading at the point where Miss Marple says, “In that case, the whole thing seems to me remarkably simple.” Have them make predictions as to who they think Miss Marple will say committed the murder. Write their predictions on the board. When they finish reading “Miss Marple Tells A Story” have them compare their predictions to what actually happened in the story.
2. The students should write down unfamiliar words in their journal as they come to them. Have them use context clues to understand unfamiliar words. When they finish reading they can look up the words to see if they were correct in their “detective” work.
3. Discuss the story with the class. Try to elicit responses that show that Miss Marple’s pursuit of truth and justice is a positive goal. The students should see that in the end crime doesn’t pay and that intelligence is stronger than violence.
4. Discuss deductive reasoning with the class. Explain that it begins with a general statement such as “All dogs are animals.” You then apply this general statement to a specific and draw a conclusion. For example, “All golden retrievers are dogs; therefore you may infer that all golden retrievers are animals.” At this point the teacher should discuss with the class the possibility that inference alone can be unreliable and it should be used in conjunction with scientific method. Have the students try to determine whether Miss Marple used deduction alone or if she incorporated scientific method.
5. “Miss Marple Tells A Story” can be recorded on audio tape by the better students. Slower students can listen while reading along before attempting to read the story on their own.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Div. \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Miss Marple Tells A Story**

Vocabulary—Part I Complete each sentence with the correct vocabulary word.

Victorian solicitor consultation acumen chambermaid verdict  
inquest pince-nez vieux jeu coroner drawing room stiletto

1. Mr. Petherick is Miss Marple’s \_\_\_\_\_, or lawyer.
2. Mr. Petherick said kind things about Miss Marple’s \_\_\_\_\_ because she had a quick and sharp mind.
3. Miss Marple received her visitors in the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Miss Marple described her old fashioned ideas as being hopelessly \_\_\_\_\_.
5. At the \_\_\_\_\_ the coroner investigated the murder to determine the cause of death.
6. The French phrase \_\_\_\_\_ means “old game” and is used by Miss Marple to describe Mr. Leighton.

7. Miss Carruthers wore a \_\_\_\_\_ which are glasses that are held on the bridge of the nose by a clip.
8. Mr. Petherick met with Miss Marple for a \_\_\_\_\_ in which they discussed the crime.
9. The official in charge of investigating the cause of a death not clearly due to natural causes is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The jury brought in a \_\_\_\_\_ of murder because it decided that someone had killed Mrs. Rhodes.
11. A small dagger with a slender blade is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
12. A \_\_\_\_\_ takes care of bedrooms in a hotel.

## Lesson Two: Writing Exercises

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### Objectives for Lesson Two

1. To analyze a character in writing.
2. To develop skills in prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.
3. To demonstrate the use of a word processor as a tool for writing.
4. To share writing with the class in order to get feedback which will aid in improvement.
5. To gain experience in reviewing and critiquing.

### Assignment: Write A News Report

1. Have several examples of news stories (preferably about crimes that have been solved) to show on the overhead projector.
2. Discuss how a news story is assembled. Pick out the who, what, where, when, and why of each story.
3. Have the students recall the details from “Miss Marple Tells A Story” which they read in the reading class.
4. List all of the details on the board.
5. Have the students arrange the details in time or space order.
6. Have the students write a newspaper story about the case discussed in “Miss Marple Tells A Story.” They should write an opening sentence telling the main idea of a the news story and support it with evidence.
7. Have the students exchange news stories for editing.
8. The students will rewrite the news reports on the word processor and print them.
9. Video tape the news reports they wrote.

### **Assignment: Write A Second Ending For The Story**

Have the students write a second ending for “Miss Marple Tells A Story.” What if Miss Carruthers had not confessed? Write an ending in which Miss Marple concludes that one of the other suspects committed the murder.

### **Assignment: Analyzing Character**

Pick one of the characters from “Miss Marple Tells A Story” and in a paragraph in the writing response journal explain what motivated him or her. Tell what he or she had to hide. Did this make him or her act in a particular way

## **Lesson Three: Social Studies Assignment**

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### **Objectives**

1. To provide experiences for the students to connect to his or her academic life.
2. To apply literal, interpretive, and critical thinking skills to a short story.
3. To recognize conflict.

4. To help students build on their own experiences.
5. To help students get a better understanding of motive.
6. To help students understand that crime does not pay.
7. To practice using deductive reasoning.
8. To identify and explain errors in reasoning.

Divide the students into two groups. One group will be the defense team. The other will be the prosecution team. Each team will have a copies of Agatha Christie's "Miss Marple Tells A Story." The students will brainstorm ideas for their team. They will consider clues from the story showing the guilt or innocence of Miss Carruthers.

### **Exercises before starting the trial**

1. To give the students an idea of what to expect, view the film of "A Witness For the Prosecution" to see how another Agatha Christie "Trial" goes.
2. The students will take a field trip to see a real court and talk to an attorney and a judge.
3. Writing response journal before the courtroom visit: Tell what you know about trials. Have you ever seen a trial on television? What do you think happens in a courtroom?
4. Writing response journal after the courtroom visit: Tell how the court you saw compared to the courts you have seen on television. How were they alike? How were they different?

## **Lesson Four: Library Skills and Technology Assignment**

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### **Objectives for Lesson Four**

1. To use the computer ROM Encyclopedia and access web-sites on the Internet to locate information about English law and customs.
2. To use e-mail via Internet for communication with other students to learn about England.

3. To use the Writing Processor to draft and complete assignments and projects.
4. To use distance learning via live TV and computer (for example, to watch a trial.)

**Assignment: Write a profile for the character you are going to play.**

The trial will be a role playing exercise. The students will take on the parts of various characters from the story, including Miss Marple and Miss Carruthers. Of course the story gives limited background information on most of the characters. Yet in order for the student to get a true hold on the character he or she is to play they should know all of the character's background such as where and when the character was born, family background, education, and what he or she does for a living. Whenever possible this information should be drawn from the story. In most cases, however, the student will have to use imagination to fill in the gaps in the character's background. Still, the information made up should be plausible. The students will use books, magazines, the CD ROM encyclopedia, and the Internet to find names of cities and towns in England, the names of English schools, English customs and everyday life, and the workings of the English justice system, as well as the history of Miss Marple.

## **Lesson Five: Social Development Assignment**

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### **Objectives for Lesson Five**

1. To tie in the Social Development component of the unit.
2. To show the harm that prejudice can do.

To develop critical thinking have the students understand what a fallacy is. Ask the students for several statements in which the conclusion is not supported by evidence . Ex. "He is poor so he must have stolen the money." Discuss prejudice with the class.

### **Writing Response Journal**

Mrs. Granby is an Anglo-Indian and dresses in the colorful silks of India. What was your reaction when you first read this fact? Did you suspect Mrs. Granby because she looked different? After Miss Marple pointed out that the murderer most likely was either Mrs. Granby or Miss Carruthers, which do you think the police might have suspected first? Why?

## Lesson Six: Math Assignment

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### Objectives for Lesson Six

1. To tie in the math component of the unit on “Miss Marple Tells a Story.”
2. To show that there is a practical use for math lessons.
3. To learn to draw to scale.

Using the following information from the story, draw a diagram to be used in the trial showing the layout of the staircase, lounge, corridor, Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes’s rooms, hallway, bathroom and doors A and B. On the diagram show where the witnesses were located. The story does not give any indication as to distances so the students will have to decide on a scale to work with.

Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes stayed at the Crown Hotel and occupied adjoining rooms with a connecting door. The other door in Mrs. Rhodes’s room leads to the corridor through a little hallway with a bathroom, but was locked and bolted on the inside. The only window was closed and latched. At the head of the staircase is a lounge where four witnesses having coffee could see down a passage that goes off to the right. The last door (door A) leads to Mr. Rhodes’s room. The passage turns to the right again and the first door (door B) around the corner is the door to Mrs. Rhodes’s room. An electrician was working there.

## Lesson Seven: Art Assignment

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### Objectives for Lesson Seven

1. To tie in the Art component of the unit on “Miss Marple Tells a Story.”
2. To show that there is a practical use for art.

In art the students will design and create the clues and props needed for the trial.

1. Have the students cut letters from magazines to make threatening letters to Mrs. Rhodes.
2. In Industrial Arts a student can make a “stiletto.”
3. The students can design a courtroom set with the judge’s bench, witness stand, backdrop, etc.
4. In Home Economics the students can design costumes for Miss Marple, the chambermaid, electrician, judge, and attorneys.

## Lesson Eight: Drama Assignment

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### Objectives for Lesson Eight

1. To tie in the Drama component of the unit on “Miss Marple Tells a Story.”
2. To see that role playing gives an understanding of people and their motivations by putting us in their shoes.

Hold a trial for Miss Carruthers. Bring together the components from all of the disciplines which made up the unit. One team will defend Miss Carruthers and the other will prosecute. Some students will play witnesses and attorneys. The remainder of the students will be the jury. Video tape the trial and show it to students in a lower grade.

## Lesson Nine: Independent Reading Assignment

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### Objectives for Lesson Nine

1. To encourage independent reading.
2. To have the students apply the skills learned in this unit on an independent level.

The students might read other Miss Marple stories, many of which have been made into movies. They might compare the stories and the movies. They can also exchange detective books they might own, and recommend their favorite detectives. The students can compare Sherlock Holmes, Charlie Chan, or another detective to Miss Marple and tell how they are alike or different in personality and detective methods.

## Lesson Ten: Self Evaluation

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### Objectives for Lesson Ten

In the writing response journal the students will answer the following questions.

1. What did you learn from this unit on detective fiction and the trial of Miss Carruthers?
2. Do you think justice was served?
3. Did you enjoy working on this unit? Why or why not?

#### 4. What changes would you make in the unit?

## Notes

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1. The ideas in this section on why detective fiction is an appropriate subject to teach in grade seven have been applied to basic conceptions on the genre which have been discussed in seminars on “Gender, Race, and Region in Detective Fiction” by Professor Paul H. Fry of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Spring 1995.

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