



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1999 Volume IV: Detective Fiction: Its Use as Literature and as History

Learning English Through Detective Fiction

Guide for Curriculum Unit 99.04.01
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This curriculum unit is designed for high school students who are English language learners or students who take English to Speakers of other Language (ESOL) classes and whose proficiency in English is in the intermediate level (levels indicate Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced). The class will read their first detective novel during the fourth and last marking period of the school year as a culminating project after reading the different types of literature in their required textbook. The students will read Carolina Garcia-Aguilera's novel *Bloody Shame* her second 0published book (she has published three so far). This book is an investigation of a murder that involved the death of her childhood best friend. Garcia-Aguilera is a Cuban-American private investigator for ten years living in Miami, Florida. The characters in her novel reflect her first hand experiences as a detective. She created Lupe Solano, a twenty-six years old Cuban born private eye who is Miami smart, considered one of the best in her profession, charming and sexy. Aguilera writes directly and clearly which makes her book accessible to students who are English language learners. Her sentences and paragraphs are usually short and straightforward and her vocabulary is simple and easy to understand.

Before the students will start reading the book they will learn some terms used in detective stories. They will make their own dictionary of words in a separate notebook, find the meanings in their native language using their bilingual dictionaries; write similar words if they find any and then use the words in complete sentences. They will continue to write new words in their dictionary as they progress in their reading. They will also recognize some literary terms that appear in the novel such as point of view, imagery, characterization to name a few. The students and teacher will keep an interactive journal concerning their thoughts and reactions to the passages in the novel. The students will learn some grammatical points and do grammar exercises using sentences and paragraphs from the book. They will develop their writing skills effectively and try to eliminate the anxiety whenever a writing activity is involved by learning different pre-writing techniques like brainstorming, listing, clustering and webbing. Likewise, the students will engage in the different stages of the writing process closely monitored by the teacher. Finally they will watch detective/spy films at the beginning and at the end of the unit to make the detective novel a reality and to understand better the genre.

(Recommended for English as a Second Language, grades 9-12.)

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