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

Wrapped in Mystery

Guide for Curriculum Unit 99.04.03
by Sandra L. Nash

"Wrapped in Mystery" is a curriculum unit designed to implement the mystery genre into a sixth grade reading program. It focuses on reading comprehension and strategies to improve student performance. It also has a third part which outlines literature circles to foster independent reading. The goal is to teach reading skills through a venue that students enjoy. Hopefully, students will look at other mysteries-be it mathematics, puzzles, or life situations, and apply problem-solving skills learned through this unit.

The materials selected vary. Two classic pieces of literature are used, "The Invisible Man" and "Murders in the Rue Morgue." My purpose is to introduce students to a classic piece and to appreciate its significance in this genre of literature. Two contemporary pieces were also used, "The Chicken-Coop Monster" and "The Case of the Stolen Ring." Some students may like the old, some the new, but either way they'll be wrapped in mystery.

(Recommended for Reading and Language Arts, grades 5-8.)

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