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ABSTRACT

Students will combine reading in the detective fiction genre with expository writing. Embedded in this unit are reading and writing skills, such as defining, editing, explaining, illustrating, justifying, revising, supporting, and validating. During fifteen 40-minute lessons, grade 6-8 students will: recognize a form of literature according to its characteristics; indicate personal preference by self-selecting a novel in the detective fiction subgenre of mystery; practice predicting, deducing, and analyzing through oral and written discussion; write in expository mode, as well as in descriptive and persuasive modes to a lesser degree; develop and use an extended vocabulary by incorporating terms used by those involved in crime solving; progress through all aspects of the writing process from prewriting to publishing; use self-monitoring and feedback from peers and teachers to evaluate reading, writing, listening, viewing, studying, and research skills; and evaluate what they have learned from the novel and the writing project. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A detective's handbook; a flick sheet; the detective's handbook rubric; a peer editing/revision worksheet for expository entries; a self-monitoring worksheet; and a list of detective novels for grades six through eight are attached. (PM)

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Expository Escapade—Detective’s Handbook

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Grade Band

6-8

Estimated Lesson Time

Fifteen 40-Minute Sessions

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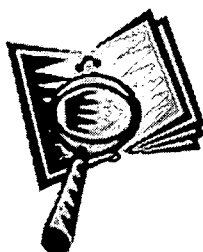
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Overview



This lesson combines the reading of detective fiction, a subgenre of mystery, with written expository analysis. It also provides students with a scaffold for analyzing the elements that comprise detective fiction while strengthening students’ critical thinking skills through the practices of predicting, deducing, and analyzing in written expression.

From Theory to Practice

Mysteries are an effective resource in the classroom, especially with reluctant readers. Students bored with other readings and their textbooks can become involved in the intrigue of a detective mystery in ways that more traditional reading fail to engage them. The "intrigue, characters, and gradually revealed storyline" in mysteries get students involved, asking them to use critical thinking, deductive reasoning, and logic to explore and guess the events in the story as it unfolds.

- Knowledge: Students arrange characters and events in the mystery.
- Comprehension: Students classify events, describe characters, and explain precisely what has occurred.
- Application: Students apply existing knowledge to the mystery by illustrating, dramatizing, and writing their interpretations.
- Analysis: Students analyze, categorize, and differentiate characters and events.
- Synthesis: Students collect and organize facts to form hypotheses.
- Evaluation: Students appraise, argue, assess, and evaluate their opinions in the process of solving the mystery.

Mysteries are exciting reading for students; however, this assignment goes further, combining reading and writing in the classroom to improve both achievement and instructional efficiency (Vacca 260-261). Students who experience the integration of writing and reading are likely to learn more content, to understand it better, and to remember it longer. This is the case because writing, before or after reading, promotes thinking, but in different ways (Vacca 262).

Further Reading

Learning with Mysteries: Why Mysteries? <http://www.mysterynet.com/learn/>

McClure, Amy and Janice Cristo, Eds. 2002. *Adventuring with Books: A Booklist for Pre-K-Grade 6*. 13th Ed. Urbana, National Council of Teachers of English.

ED 480 326

Vacca, Richard T. and Jo Anne L. Vacca. (1999). *Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning Across the Curriculum*, Longman.

Wiggins, Grant and Jay McTighe. "Relearning by Design." *Understanding by Design Summer Academy*, Birmingham, AL, Summer 2000.

Student Objectives

Students will

- recognize a form of literature according to its characteristics.
- indicate personal preference by self-selecting a novel in the detective fiction subgenre of mystery.
- practice predicting, deducing, and analyzing through oral and written discussion.
- write in expository mode, as well as in descriptive and persuasive modes to a lesser degree.
- develop and use an extended vocabulary by incorporating terms used by those involved in crime solving.
- progress through all aspects of the writing process from prewriting to publishing.
- use self-monitoring and feedback from peers and teachers to evaluate reading, writing, listening, viewing, studying, and research skills.
- evaluate what they've learned from the novel and the writing project.

Resources

- [Detective's Handbook Project Handout](#)
- ["Murder She Purred" Flick Sheet](#)
- [Detective's Handbook Grading Rubric](#)
- [Peer Editing Handout](#)
- [Self-Monitoring Handout](#)
- [Expository Writing Cake Handout](#)
- [Detective Fiction Booklist, Grades 6-8](#)
- [Detective's Handbook Powerpoint Presentation](#)
- [MysteryNet's Kids Mysteries Web Site](#)
- *Murder She Purred: A Mrs. Murphy Mystery Movie*

Instructional Plan

Resources

- DeLuna, Tony. (1992). *Literature and Writing: Investigating Mysteries*. Scholastic, Inc.
- *Murder She Purred: A Mrs. Murphy Mystery*. (1998). Disney Studios. Approximately 95 minutes.
- Sukach, James. (1997). *Challenging Whodunit Puzzles: Dr. Quicksolve's Mini-Mysteries..* Sterling.

Instructions and Activities

1. Students select and begin reading a detective fiction novel. (For students requiring a modified

curriculum, this is a good place to begin—guide students towards a text at their reading ability level. Due to the amount of writing involved, use discretion when guiding students towards texts that may be above their reading ability level.)

2. Copy all handouts, distribute, and discuss. Reviewing the end result before beginning allows students to reach their goal by seeing the "big picture."
 - a. [Flick Sheet for *Murder She Purred*](#)
 - b. [Detective's Handbook Project Information Sheet](#)
 - c. [Expository Writing Cake Handout](#)
 - d. [Peer Editing/Revision Worksheet](#)
 - e. [Self-Monitoring Worksheet](#)
 - f. [Grading Rubric](#)
3. View *Murder She Purred* so that all students are working from a common knowledge base. During the viewing, have students complete the ["Flick Sheet."](#) After the viewing, separate students into small groups and require them to compile their information. They should organize the clues in the order in which they led to the solution of the mystery. Then have them examine clues that were "red herrings" and explain, either orally or in writing, how they were used to throw the detective—and the audience—off-track. This prewriting activity will prepare students for Detective's Handbook entries #9 and #10.
4. Show interactive [Detective's Handbook Powerpoint Presentation](#), broken up into seven different lessons. Each explains one entry that will go into the Detective's Handbook, using *Murder She Purred* as a concrete example. It also includes an expository writing review. Allow students a few days between sections to reflect, review, and revisit the new information they are absorbing, as well as to write the first draft of the corresponding entry. Load the PowerPoint on a computer which the students can access so that they can open and review it when necessary.
5. Begin the writing process for each entry at the rate of approximately one every two days. Model each entry by writing it with the students, based on the movie *Murder She Purred*. (Be prepared! You will have first drafts, second drafts, self-revision, peer editing, and conferencing to contend with at the same time.) Conference with each student to make sure that no one is falling behind or struggling with a specific entry. Use the [Self-Monitoring Worksheet](#) to assist you both. For special education students, students with limited English proficiency, or students reading well below grade level, modify the number of entries required in the final Handbook. For example, do not require entries two, three, and eight.
6. When analysis is complete, have students write the expository foreword (see the [Project Handout](#) for details).
7. Finalize and publish Detective's Handbooks.
8. Set up a time with the school (or local public) librarian in which the students can make a videotape of their presentations. (OPTION: audiotape can be made in the classroom.)
9. Host "Detective's Deposition" at which students record (either on video or audio) an overview of their self-selected novel, and evaluate how its characteristics, and the style in which it is written show that it belongs in the detective fiction subgenre of mystery.
10. Each student will peer-review two peers' presentations.
11. Tapes are to be labeled and kept in the library so that other students, who are looking for a detective fiction book to select, can view or listen to them.

Extensions

Provide students with different "mystery shorts." Allow them time to practice predicting, deducing, analyzing, and solving each mystery. After modeling the first few, to show students how the process works, set up "stations." One station includes a computer with Internet access and directs students to [MysteryNet's Kids Mysteries](#)"; one contains the book *Dr. Quicksolve's Mini-Mysteries* by James Sukach; one contains the sourcebook *Scholastic's Investigating Mysteries*. These stations can be used for students who are finishing their written entries ahead of schedule. They can return to them as necessary.

Web Resource

MysteryNet's Kids Mysteries

<http://kids.mysterynet.com/>

This Web site hosts a number of short mysteries for students to solve.

Student Assessment/Reflections

Students will share, on video or audiotape, their reflections about the project by providing an overview of their self-selected novel and evaluating, through the Detective's Handbook, how its characteristics label it a member of the detective fiction subgenre of mystery. In addition, each student will share, with the class, the part of the foreword that details the connection the student has made between this expository writing project and the novel. After all handbooks have been shared, they are displayed in the library for others to enjoy.

NCTE/IRA Standards

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

5 - Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

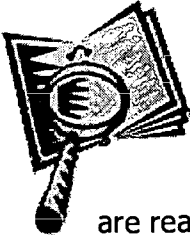
6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

read^o write^o think^o
International Reading Association **NCTE** marcopolo

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DETECTIVE'S HANDBOOK (Mystery Unit/Expository Writing Project)

The Detective's Handbook is the book extension for the mystery you are reading. Not only will you read a self-selected book, but you will also read short mysteries in class and watch some mystery vignettes so that you can go through all of the steps in the handbook as a class before you are required to do them on your own. The book extension is worth _____ points, but additional points will be awarded along the way for related assignments. GET ALL OF YOUR DRAFTS IN ON TIME OR YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF OVERWHELMED WITH WORK TOWARDS THE END OF THE PROJECT, AS WELL AS WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE TEACHER OR PEER EDITORS.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Handbook Cover

- Your name, title of book, author of book
- Illustrate or decorate cover *using specific symbols* from the mystery you are reading.

2. Foreword

Your foreword must show that you have a comprehensive understanding about the plot of the self-selected mystery you read. The first paragraph summarizes the mystery without giving away its solution. In the second paragraph you will dedicate your handbook to a particular person, explain why you have chosen that person, and discuss what you have learned, enjoyed, or not enjoyed about expository writing in the context of detective fiction and the Detective's Handbook.

3. Table of Contents

4. Handbook Entry #1 (Expository)

How do your sleuth's character traits contribute to his/her strengths and weaknesses as a detective?

5. Handbook Entry #2 (Expository)

What kind of mystery is your sleuth trying to solve? How does your sleuth get involved?

6. Handbook Entry #3 (Descriptive)

Describe the crime scene. Action verbs, in the present tense, drive this mode of writing in order to "show," not "tell." Include sensory detail – what does the sleuth taste, smell, touch, see, and hear? DO NOT use any personal pronouns in order to increase descriptive quality. Also, do not simply string adjectives together to form description. Put the reader at the scene of the crime by writing as if you are the detective on-site surveying the scene.

7. Handbook Entry #4 (Expository)

Write a character sketch about the sidekick(s) in your story, either person(s), or animal(s). How does the sidekick contribute to detection during the mystery?

8. "Wanted" Poster of Villain – Handbook Entry #5

Create a poster that includes the following: illustration of villain, description of character traits, physical appearance, strengths, and weaknesses. Be sure to answer these questions: What was the crime? Where was it committed? Where was the villain last seen? What does the villain value most and why? Of what should the public be aware? Reward?

9. Handbook Entry #8 (Detective's Log)

Create a detective's log that follows your sleuth through the most exciting of his or her 18-24 hours on the case.

10. Handbook Entry #9 (Expository)

This is a "how to" paragraph that takes the reader step-by-step through the process by which the sleuth solved the mystery.

11. Handbook Entry #10 (Persuasive)

This is a persuasive letter to the local Chief of Police convincing him/her who should be arrested and why.

General Regulations

- ◆ Use detective fiction vocabulary words to enhance your writing.
- ◆ All entries into your Detective's Handbook must have been through the writing process. That is: prewrite, write, edit, revise, rewrite. We will do a lot of peer editing in class. Paragraph and sentence structure, as well as spelling, grammar, mechanics, and punctuation count!
- ◆ All rough drafts are due the day the handbook is turned in, but **do not** bind the rough drafts into the final handbook. Instead, use a binder clip to hold them all together, and file them in your writing portfolio.

Happy Sleuthing!

**HANDBOOK DUE
DATE: TBA**

TAPING DATE: TBA

Name _____

FLICK SHEET
Murder She Purred

Answer the following on this sheet of paper:

Who _____

What _____

When _____

Where _____

Why _____

How _____

-
1. What are Harry's pets' names?
 2. What is the mystery, puzzle, situation, or problem in the movie?
 3. List Harry's strengths (physical, mental, or moral):
 4. List Harry's weaknesses (physical, mental, or moral):
 5. List the names of the possible suspects—the people who might have committed the crime.
 6. At whom does all of the circumstantial evidence point?
 7. What purposes do the cat and dog serve in the storyline?
 8. Who was the real criminal? What was his/her crime?
 9. List the MAJOR clues that lead to the solution of the mystery, in the order in which they are discovered. (Use the reverse of this handout.)

DETECTIVE'S HANDBOOK RUBRIC

	8 – Find Another Career	10 – Apply for a sidekick's position	12 – Partner required	15 – Master Sleuth
Required Elements	Some required elements, but directions not followed	Some required elements completed, but directions not followed consistently	All required elements completed according to directions	All required elements completed according to directions, and presented in a cohesive manner
Writing Process	No rough or revised drafts	Some rough and revised drafts	Rough and revised drafts for all entries	Rough and significantly revised drafts for each entry
"Foreword"	No foreword	Foreword covers some of the required elements	Foreword covers all of the required elements	Foreword covers all of the required elements in a creative manner
Entries	3 or fewer of the required entries	5 or fewer of the required entries	7 or fewer of the required entries	All 11 required entries in proper order
Descriptive Entry	Includes none of the required elements for the mode	Includes some sensory detail, and action verbs in the present tense, but either no figurative language, or figurative language used inappropriately. Indicates comprehension of the assignment and subject matter	Includes adequate sensory detail, present tense action verbs, and figurative language. Indicates comprehension of the assignment and subject matter	Includes exemplary sensory detail, mastery of present tense action verbs, command of use of figurative language, and indicates comprehension and synthesis of the assignment and subject matter
Expository Entries	Includes none of the required elements for the mode	Uses "cake" method of expository writing, but do not indicate comprehension of the assignment and subject matter	Uses "cake" method of expository writing and indicates comprehension of the assignment and subject matter	Uses "cake" method of expository writing and indicates comprehension and synthesis of the assignment and subject matter
Detective's Log and Wanted Poster	Neither one nor both of the entries include some of the required elements	Both entries include some of the required elements	Both entries include all of the required elements	Both entries include all of the required elements presented in a creative manner
Persuasive Letter	Includes none of the required elements for either formal letter writing or for the persuasive mode	Includes some of the required elements for formal letter writing and for the persuasive mode	Includes all of the required elements for formal letter writing and for the persuasive mode	Includes all of the required elements for formal letter writing and for the persuasive mode and indicates synthesis of the assignment
Videotaped Presentation	No presentation	Presentation shows adequate understanding of unit	Presentations shows satisfactory understanding of unit	Presentation shows mastery of unit and additional understanding of the concept as a whole
•Visual Aids	No Handbook or visual aids	Handbook with superfluous visual aids	Handbook and visual aids exhibit evidence of comprehension	Handbook and visual aids show evidence of comprehension, synthesis, and analysis
•Poise	Presenter reads from the Handbook and is unfamiliar with content	Presenter reads from the Handbook the majority of the time.	Presenter "is" sleuth and is able to verbalize content of Handbook, using it only as a reference	Presenter "is" sleuth and is able to verbalize content of Handbook in a manner that indicates comprehension and synthesis
•Articulation	Presenter does not articulate clearly and is difficult to understand	Presenter speaks clearly but softly and cannot be heard very well. Is not comfortable with material.	Presenter speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard anywhere in the room and is comfortable with the material	Presenter speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard anywhere in the room, is comfortable with the material, and makes audience believe that sleuth is present

TOTAL: _____/180

Reviewer's Name _____ Writer's Name _____

**PEER EDITING/REVISION WORKSHEET FOR DETECTIVE'S HANDBOOK
EXPOSITORY ENTRIES**

Entry Number _____ Entry Title _____

EDITOR'S COMMENTS:

1. Statement explains the topic that the writer is going to discuss. YES NO

Write the topic here. _____

2. Reason explains why the topic is important. YES NO

3. Example #1 shows why the statement and reason are correct. YES NO

4. Explanation #1 ties example #1 back to the statement and reason. YES NO

How? _____

5. Example #2 shows why the statement and reason are correct. YES NO

6. Explanation #2 ties example #2 back to the statement and reason. YES NO

How? _____

7. "What Difference Does it Make?" wraps up the entire entry by providing a "big picture" view of why what writer said is important. YES NO

8. Writer uses vocabulary relevant to detective fiction. YES NO

9. I circled punctuation, mechanical, and structural errors. YES NO

10. I conferenced with the writer about his/her entry. YES NO

Return this form to the writer so that s/he can attach it to his/her rough drafts.

WRITER'S COMMENTS:

1. The editor's comments were helpful to me. YES NO

2. I understood what the editor wanted me to do. YES NO

3. I feel confident that I can make the necessary revisions. YES NO

4. At my next conference with the teacher, I need to discuss or ask about the following:

Name _____

Date _____

SELF-MONITORING WORKSHEET FOR DETECTIVE'S HANDBOOK

ENTRY

WHERE I AM*

One – sleuth’s character traits	RD	Rev	RD2	Edit	FD	Published
Two – type of mystery	RD	Rev	RD2	Edit	FD	Published
Three – crime scene description	RD	Rev	RD2	Edit	FD	Published
Four – sidekick character sketch	RD	Rev	RD2	Edit	FD	Published
Six – detective’s log	RD	Rev	RD2	Edit	FD	Published
Seven – how crime was solved	RD	Rev	RD2	Edit	FD	Published
Eight – persuasive letter	RD	Rev	RD2	Edit	FD	Published

OTHER

COMPLETE?

Cover	YES	NO
Foreword	YES	NO
Table of Contents	YES	NO
“Wanted” Poster	YES	NO

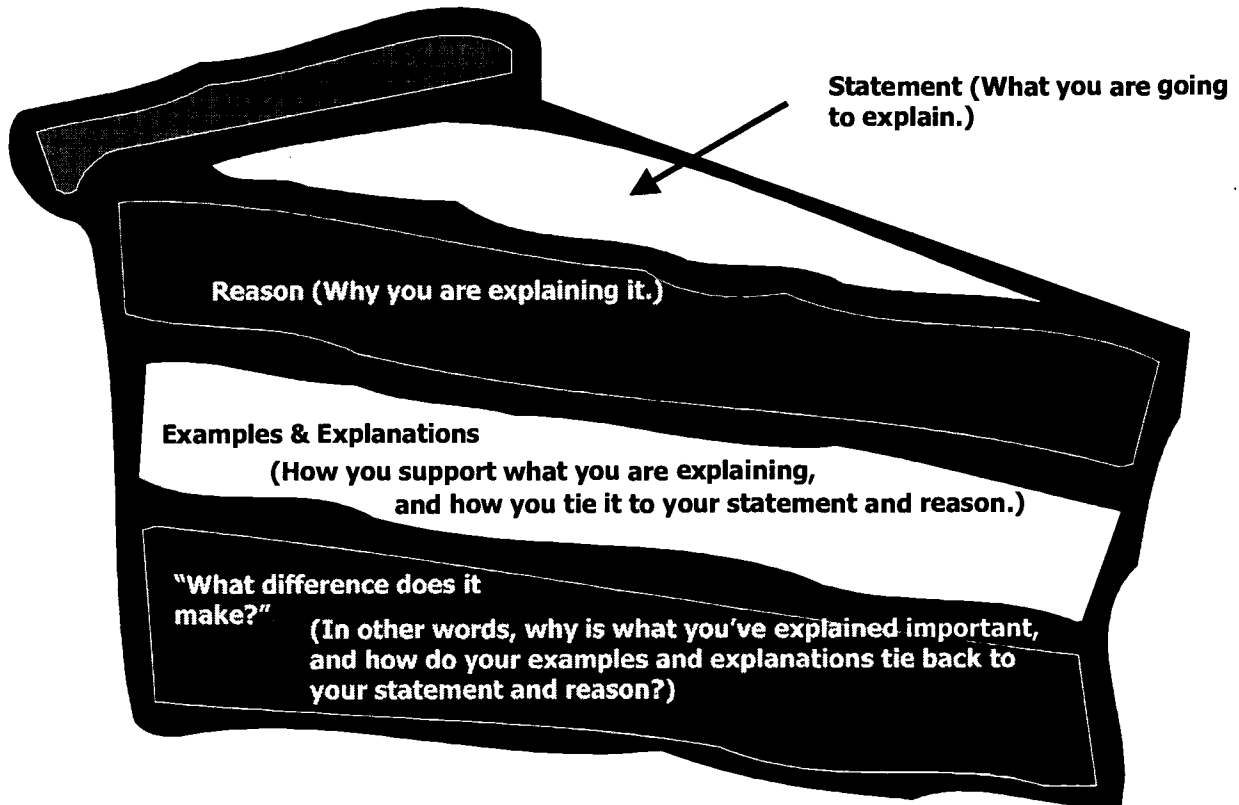
Conference Date:

Conference Notes:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

* RD = rough draft, Rev = revision, RD2 = second draft, Edit = editing, FD = final draft

EXPOSITORY WRITING CAKE



EXAMPLE:

TOPIC: Explain to next year's sixth graders what they can expect in seventh grade.

STATEMENT: Sixth graders need to prepare for seventh grade by learning how to plan for long-term assignments.

REASON: Because seventh grade teachers expect their students to be more independent, the long-term planning skill is one that will ensure a successful seventh grade year.

EXAMPLE: For example, some seventh grade teachers will assign a project and not check your progress until the day it is due.

EXPLANATION: If students do not organize their project into steps, they get overwhelmed and end up in a last minute rush to complete it. This situation usually results in a poor grade.

EXAMPLE #2: In addition, seventh graders take quarterly tests that cover everything learned in an entire nine-week period.

EXPLANATION: If students do not plan for the long-term and study a little bit each week, they might forget what they learned at the beginning of the quarter and have to cram right before the test. Cramming usually results in a poor grade.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE: In sum, sixth graders who learn to get organized through the skill of long-term planning will have a better grade point average in seventh grade.

HERE'S WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE, ALL PUT TOGETHER:

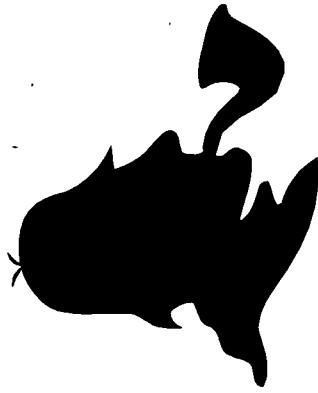
Sixth graders need to prepare for seventh grade by learning how to plan for long-term assignments. Because seventh grade teachers expect their students to be more independent, the long-term planning skill is one that will ensure a successful seventh grade year. For example, some seventh grade teachers will assign a project and not check your progress until the day it is due. If students do not organize their project into steps, they get overwhelmed and end up in a last minute rush to complete it. This situation usually results in a poor grade. In addition, seventh graders take quarterly tests that cover everything learned in an entire nine-week period. : If students do not plan for the long-term and study a little bit each week, they might forget what they learned at the beginning of the quarter and have to cram right before the test. Cramming usually results in a poor grade. In sum, sixth graders who learn to get organized through the skill of long-term planning will have a better grade point average in seventh grade.

[Taken from a piece by Rick Shelton, educational consultant, Ft. Worth, Texas]

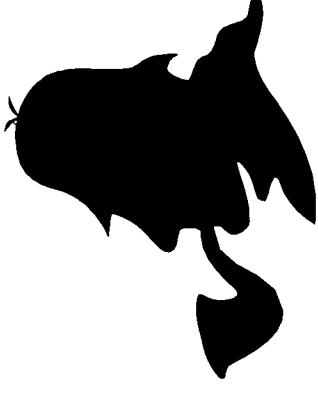


Detective Novels, Grade 6-8

- Alphin, Elaine Marie. *Counterfeit Son*.
Avi. *The Man Who Was Poe*.
Avi. *Wolf Rider*.
Bellairs, John. *The Chessmen of Doom*.
Bennett, Jay. *The Skeleton Man*.
Bloor, Edward. *Crusader*.
Bloor, Edward. *Tangerine*.
Coles, William. *Another Kind of Monday*.
Cooney, Caroline B. *The Face on the Milk Carton*.
Cooney, Caroline B. *The Terrorist*.
Cormier, Robert. *I Am the Cheese*.
Cormier, Robert. *In the Middle of the Night*.
Cross, Gillian. *Tightrope*.
Doyle, Arthur Conan. *Hound of the Baskervilles*.
Duncan, Lois. *Don't Look Behind You*.
Duncan, Lois. *I Know What You Did Last Summer*.
Duncan, Lois. *The Third Eye*.
Ehrlich, Amy. *Where It Stops, Nobody Knows*.
Glenn, Mel. *Foreign Exchange: A Mystery in Poems*.
Haddix, Margaret Peterson. *Running Out of Time*.
Hahn, Mary Downing. *Dead Man in Indian Creek*.
Hayes, Daniel. *The Trouble with Lemons*.
Haynes, Betsy. *Deadly Deception*.
Heisel, Sharon E. *Eyes of A Stranger*.
Hoh, Diane. *Blindfold*.
Konigsburg, E. L. *Silent to the Bone*.
Levitin, Sonia. *Incident at Loring Groves*.
Miklowitz, Gloria D. *Desperate Pursuit*.
Patneau, David. *Someone Was Watching*.
Peck, Richard. *Voices After Midnight*.
Plum-Ucci, Carol. *The Body of Christopher Creed*.
Pullman, Philip. *The Ruby in the Smoke*.
Qualey, Marsha. *Close to a Killer*.
Qualey, Marsha. *Thin Ice*.
Roberts, Willo Davis. *The View from the Cherry Tree*.
Roberts, Willo Davis. *Twisted Summer*.
Ryan, Mary Elizabeth. *Alias*.
Sebestyen, Ouida. *The Girl in the Box*.
Sykes, Shelley. *For Mike*.
Van Draanen, Wendelin. *Sammy Keyes And The Curse Of Moustache Mary*.
Van Draanen, Wendelin. *Sammy Keyes and the Hotel Thief*.
Vande Velde, Vivian. *Never Trust A Dead Man*.
Voigt, Cynthia. *The Vandemark Mummy*.
Werlin, Nancy. *The Killer's Cousin*.



DETECTIVE FICTION



Lesson #1

Detective fiction is one of the most popular types of the mystery genre among both children and adults. Detective Fiction is a puzzle that must be solved like a mathematical equation, a musical score, or a scientific experiment. According to P.D. James, a contemporary mystery writer, the classic detective story usually involves a mysterious death. There is a closed circle of suspects, and each suspect must have a credible motive as well as a reasonable opportunity for committing the crime. In addition, the central character is a detective who eventually solves the mystery by logical deduction from facts fairly presented to the reader (*Mysteries* 6). This classic structure has been the springboard for hundreds of variations on the form. By placing the clues into the mathematical equation, playing them like a musical score, and moving through them methodically, like a scientist would do, you too can play detective while reading a detective fiction novel.

Project Due at the End of the Unit:

Let's jump ahead so that you know where we're headed. (Don't panic, we'll return to Square 1.) The culminating project of this unit will be a "Detective's Handbook" based on the mystery novel you've chosen. You have received a handout and rubric, so let's review them now.

1. Cover
2. Foreword
3. Table of Contents
4. Expository entry about sleuth's character traits
5. Expository entry about nature of mystery
6. Descriptive entry about the crime scene
7. Expository character sketch about sleuth's sidekick
8. "Wanted" poster of prime suspect
9. Detective's Log
10. Expository entry about clues that lead to the solution of the mystery
11. Persuasive Letter to the Chief of Police proving the suspect's motive, means, and opportunity

Quick Quiz #1

Either by yourself, or in a group of no more than 3 students, answer the following on a sheet of paper. (You have 3 minutes—the person/group with the most correctly defined synonyms wins a ticket.)



1. What does the word sleuth mean?
2. List as many synonyms for "sleuth" as you can think of.

Definitions to Learn and to Use in Your Writing

People

1. Sleuth: "private eye"/private investigator/detective investigating the case
2. Sidekick: "helper," person/animal who helps detective investigate the crime
3. Victim: person to whom the crime happened
4. Snitch: person who tells on someone else
5. Suspect: a person who may be involved in the crime
6. Witness: someone who saw what happened
7. Culprit: person who committed or assists in the crime
8. Fugitive: person running from the law
9. Secondary Source: witness who has information s/he heard from someone else

Definitions to Learn and to Use in Your Writing (cont.)

Technical Terms

10. Crime: illegal act that is committed
11. Clues: pieces of the puzzle that help solve the mystery
12. Lead: information or clues concerning the case
13. Interrogate: to ask questions related to the crime
14. Alibi: proof that a suspect was nowhere near the crime
15. Evidence: something that helps prove who the criminal is
16. Deduction: using the facts to infer a conclusion

One more:

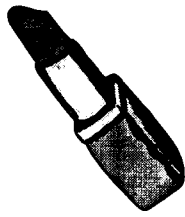
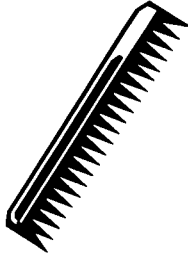
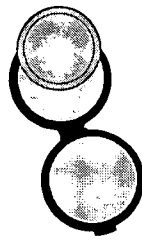
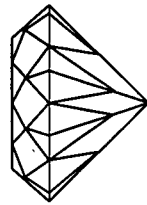
Quick Quiz #2

17. Red Herring

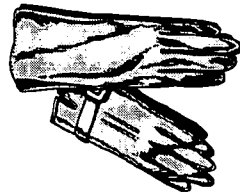
A red herring is a false clue or lead. The phrase means "camouflage" and comes from the process of curing a herring (type of fish). When a herring is salted and smoked slowly over a wood fire, it turns a dark reddish brown color and gains a strong flavor and scent. The smell is so strong that it overwhelms other scents. According to some old tales, red herrings were pulled across the trail of hounds to confuse and throw them off the trail. Sometimes writers of detective fiction deliberately "fake-out" readers by planting misleading clues—known as red herrings.

Elements of a Mystery

- A crime



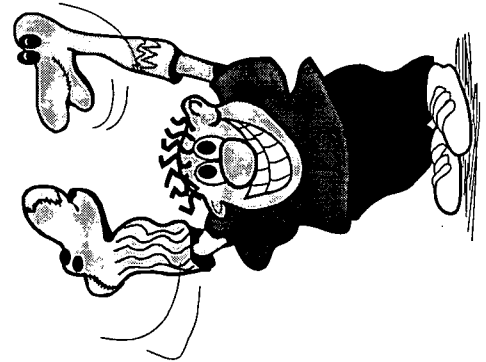
- Variety of characters



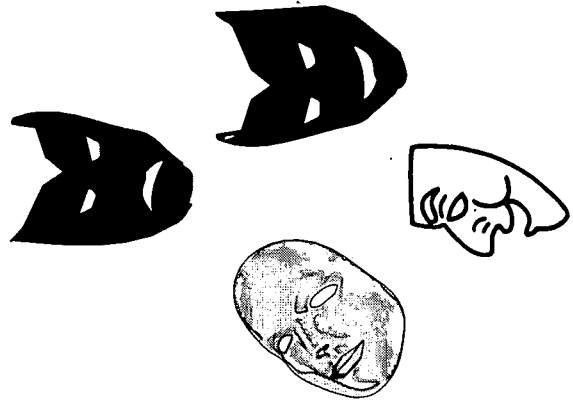
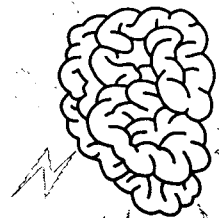
- Clues



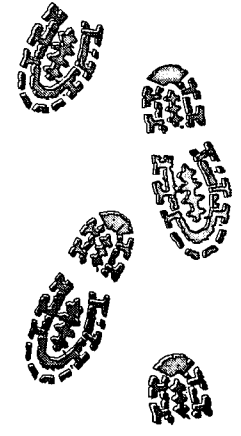
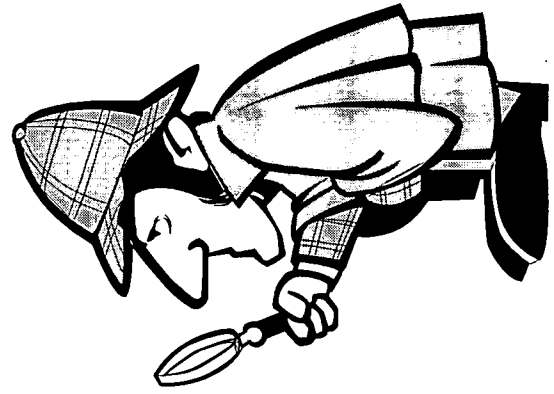
- Suspense and tension



- Solution



End of Lesson #1



Lesson #2

Appearances Can Be Deceiving

A detective's appearance can have a major affect on his/her effectiveness on the job. For example, Ironsides, a detective your grandparents will remember from television, was in a wheelchair. Suspects did not think he was a threat because he was physically challenged. Similarly, Agatha Christie's Miss Marple is an elderly woman. Again, suspects do not find her threatening and tell her things they might not tell the police.



So, Don't Judge a Book by its Cover!

While appearances can work both for and against detectives who are solving mysteries, character traits can do the same. Thinking about sleuth Harry Harristeen from the movie, *Murder, She Purred*, let's answer the following questions.

1. What are Harry's physical traits?
2. List some of Harry's positive character traits.
3. How do these strengths enable Harry to be a good detective?

4. List some of Harry's negative character traits.
5. How do these weaknesses hurt Harry's detecting capabilities?
6. Which of Harry's character traits can be either strengths or weaknesses depending on the situation?
7. How do these strengths and/or weaknesses contribute to the successes and failures Harry encounters while trying to solve the mystery?

Let's practice writing together first! (We're going to use Rick Shelton's method of expository writing cake learned in class.)

Statement: Tell what it is you are going to explain. This is what you used to call a topic sentence.

Reason: Explain why your topic is important.

Example #1: Give an example, from the movie, that shows your topic sentence to be true.

Explanation #1: Tie example #1 back to your reason to show why the reason is valid.

Example #2: Give another example, from the movie, that shows your topic sentence to be true.

Explanation #2: Tie example #2 back to your reason to show why the reason is valid.

WDDIM?: "What difference does it make?" or "Who cares?"
Explain the big picture in a way that ties your entire paragraph together.

In what way do your sleuth's character traits contribute to his/her strengths/weaknesses as a crime-solver?

Statement:

Harry Harristeen is a fictional character with traits that contribute to her crime-solving abilities.

Reason:

It is the very human combination of weakness and strength that make her the perfect detective for this movie.

Example #1:

For example, Harry is distrustful of men since her painful divorce from her ex-husband, Fair.

Explanation #1:

It is this distrust that makes her suspect that her new neighbor, Blair, is the murderer. This character weakness, based on life experience, adds to the mystery by adding another suspect to Harry's list.

Example #2:

On the other hand, Harry's perseverance forces her to continue searching for the murderer, despite the obvious attempts by the killer to stop her.

Explanation #2:

Perseverance, a positive character trait, allows the viewer to accept Harry's weaknesses by forcing them to admire her as a person. As the detective, Harry must have the audience's support in order for the story to be well-received.

WDDIM?:

In conclusion, Harry Harristeen is a successful crime solver because her strengths and weaknesses allows us to consider her a "friend." We understand her weaknesses and admire her strengths.

Here is what your completed entry will look like when it's all put together:

Harry Harristeen is a fictional character with traits that contribute to her crime-solving abilities. It is the very human combination of weakness and strength that make her the perfect detective for this movie. For example, Harry is distrustful of men since her painful divorce from her ex-husband, Fair. It is this distrust that makes her suspect that her new neighbor, Blair, is the murderer. This character weakness, based on life experience, adds to the mystery by adding another suspect to Harry's list. On the other hand, Harry's perseverance forces her to continue searching for the murderer, despite the obvious attempts by the killer to stop her. Perseverance, a positive character trait, allows the viewer to accept Harry's weaknesses by forcing them to admire her as a person. As the detective, Harry must have the audience's support in order for the story to be well-received. In conclusion, Harry Harristeen is a successful crime solver because her strengths and weaknesses allows us to consider her a "friend." We understand her weaknesses and admire her strengths.

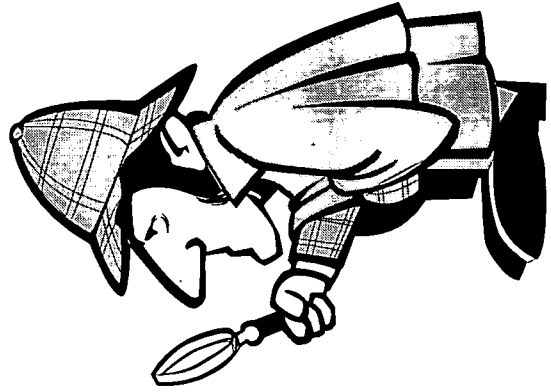
Now it's your turn! Remember the object of this exercise is to write Detective's Handbook Entry #1 based on the following:

In what way do your sleuth's character traits contribute to his/her strengths/weaknesses as a crime-solver?

Notes:

- You do not have to be very far into your book to write this entry. Initial impressions are fine.
- Your rough draft and prewriting tool are due tomorrow.

End of Lesson #2



Lesson #3

Some sleuths receive assistance from sidekicks who are either paid helpers or friends who help. These sidekicks serve as "sounding boards" for the sleuth to explain how certain bits of detection are done. If the sleuth is not, in some way, connected to law enforcement, one of these characters usually is. The sidekick is sometimes a pet or an animal.

Quick Quiz #3

On a separate piece of paper, list as many sleuths who have sidekicks you can think of. The person with the most pairs or groups, wins a ticket.

Scooby Doo, Where Are You?

Sometimes sleuths work in pairs or in groups. For example, Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes has a partner in Dr. Watson. Similarly, the Scooby Doo gang has five very different personalities to solve mysteries. As in *Murder She Purred*, the Scooby Doo gang of detectives has a *personified* animal in their midst. Scooby, the dog, is the sidekick who aids in the solving of the mysteries for "the gang," just like Mrs. Murphy & Tee Tucker aid Harry in solving mysteries.

You are the company you keep!

We will now begin work on expository Handbook Entry #4. In this entry, you must complete a character sketch about the human or animal sidekick(s) in your mystery novel. To get started, answer the following questions; then complete the graphic organizer character sketch.

1. Who are the sidekicks in *Murder, She Purred*?
2. How does each one help Harry solve the crime?
3. Not only do the sidekicks help Harry, but they also serve a purpose for the audience. What is it?
4. Explain the answers to 1-3 in expository entry #4.

Let's write together first!

Statement:

Reason:

Example #1:

Explanation #1:

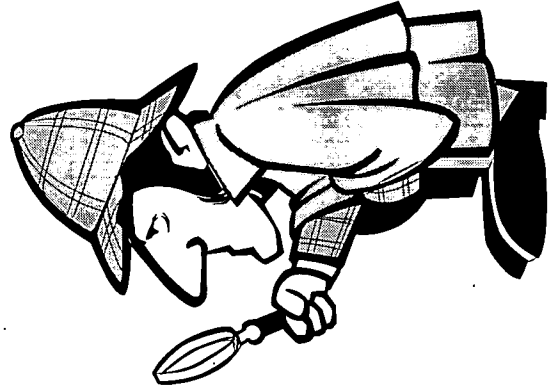
Example #2:

Explanation #2:

WDDIM?:

Rough draft due tomorrow!

End of Lesson #3



Lesson #4

Villains

Quick Quiz #4

Sleuths may face the same opponent many times or a different one each time. Take, for example, the villain in *Murder, She Purred*. Working with a partner, or by yourself, complete the following. The most complete—and correct—answer wins a ticket.

1. Character traits—what makes this villain a personality or character?
2. List the character traits that contribute to this villain's strengths.
3. List the character traits that contribute to this villain's weaknesses.
4. What does the villain value most? Why?

Mission: Possible

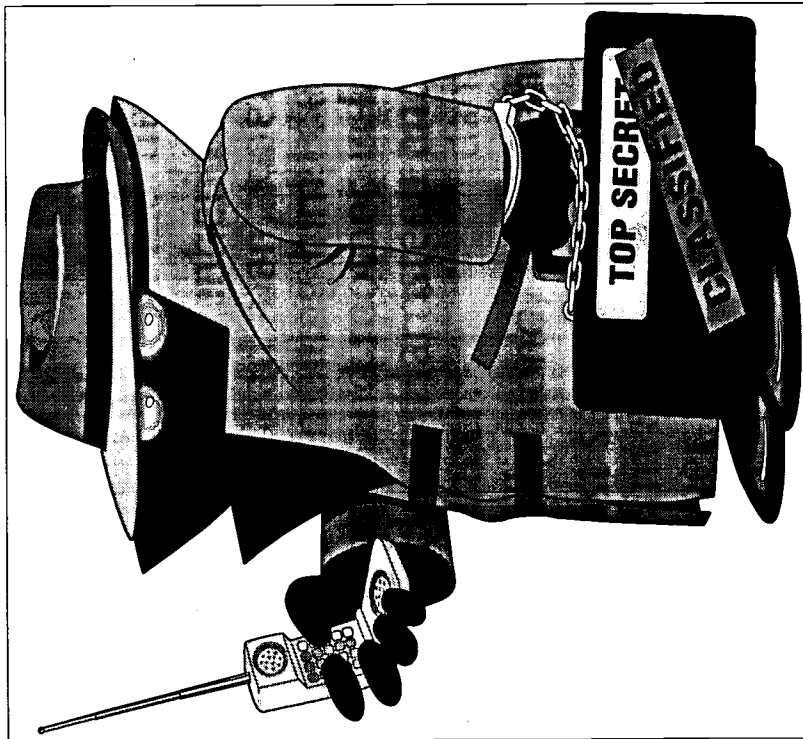
Your mission—and you must accept it—is to create a “Wanted” poster for the villain in your novel.

Include the following:

- a picture/illustration of the suspect (large enough to be seen from a distance)
- suspect’s name and alias, if applicable
- physical description of the suspect
- the offense of which the villain is accused
- the trouble the offense has caused
- where the suspect was last seen
- warnings the public should be aware of
- whom to call with information
- a reward consistent with the nature of the crime

(Examples from last year are posted around the room.)

WANTED!



- For stealing the identities of the dead, blackmail, attempted murder, and murder
- Has falsely inherited the money of a dead man, killed Ben after blackmailing him, deceived his wife and mother-in-law, and put Harry Harristeen and her pets in danger.
- Tall, blond, handsome
- Last seen in the company of Mim & Little Mim at Susan's diner.
- Suspect is to be considered armed and dangerous
- If you have any information, please call the FBI in Crozet, WV at (724) 555-1234

Fitz Fitzsimmons

\$100,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of "Mr. Little Mim."

Lesson #5

TODAY'S DATE

Detective's Log

8:00am -- Got to work and began sorting mail. Mim arrived for hers and let us know that Rick and Cynthia had gotten a picture of the man whose fingerprints were found on the wheel of Ben Siefert's car. This is the man who has also been dead for 20 years. Grabbed Miranda Hoggendobber's yummy apple-thingsies and headed for P.D.

9:30 -- Bribed Rick and Cynthia to go off their diets by waving Miranda's apple-thingsies under their noses. While the two pigs were eating, (no pun intended), excused myself to go to the bathroom.

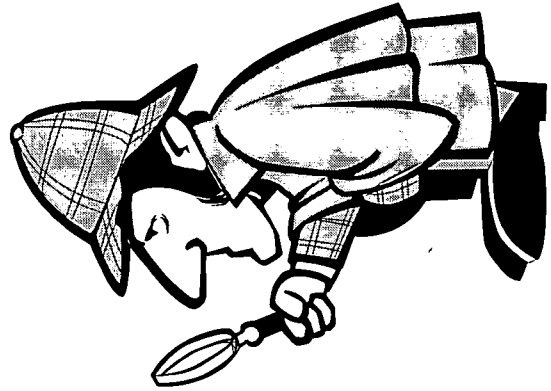
9:45 -- On my way to the "bathroom," borrowed dead man's picture from wall and faxed it to Post Office.

9:50 -- Grabbed Miranda's apple-thingsies and beat a hasty retreat back to the post office after hanging the dead man's picture back on the police department wall.

10:05 -- Retrieved fax once back at post office, and posted it on the wall to gauge the reaction of patrons as they came in to pick up their mail. Fed Murphy & Tucker.

Now you create a detective's log for your sleuth.

End Lessons #48



Lesson #6

Solving the Mystery

- Fact Something that cannot be disputed
 Ben Siefert is dead.
- Assumption A guess
 Ben Siefert was murdered.
- Inference A guess based on the facts
 Whoever murdered Ben Siefert has
 something to hide.
- Deduction An educated guess
 Ben Siefert must have threatened
 to tell the killer's secret.

Three Rules of Crime Solving

Motive

The prime suspect must have had a *reason* to commit the crime.

Means

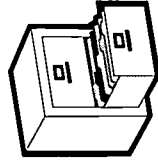
The prime suspect must have had a *way* to commit the crime.

Opportunity

The prime suspect must have had the *chance* to commit the crime.

Clues

- Fingerprints (dead man's on steering wheel)
- Suspicious items (matchbook at deserted farm)
- Blood/Hair/Fabric
- Body Parts (prosthetic arm found with bullet in it)
- Personal items (earring found near crime scene)
- Financial records
- Lifestyle changes (Little Mim & Fitz building new house)
- Telephone calls
- What people say about themselves/others (Fitz hides past because it's "painful" to talk about.)
- Connections between and among people (Fitz came from "nowhere," but had lots of money and married Little Mim.)



Your turn!

Write an expository entry which details the clues your sleuth followed to the solution to the mystery. This piece is based on cause and effect. Complete the Cause/Effect graphic organizer, and write your entry from there.

Let's do it together first!

Cause

- 1) Harry saw light at the deserted farmhouse next door.
- 2) New neighbor with suspicious past moves into Foxden. He's a Yankee with no idea of Southern ways.
- 3) Ben Siefert's dead body found in his car in Mim's pond.

Effect

- 1) Harry found footprints & matchbooks when she went to investigate. Also, a fire had been recently lit in the fireplace. Why?
- 2) Harry snoops around and finds out that he is a retired psychiatrist who dabbled in serial killers. His girlfriend was murdered. By whom?
- 3) Harry is doubtful that Ben was drunk and drove his car into the pond. Suspicious fingerprints on the steering wheel get her more deeply involved in the investigation. Whose are they?

Now let's write the expository entry that follows the clues of the mystery through its end.

Statement:

Reason:

Cause #1:

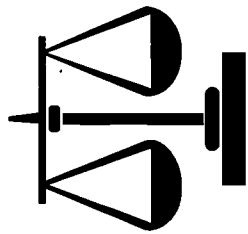
Effect #1:

Cause #2:

Effect #2:

WDDIM?:

Lesson #7



Arrest that Man!

You, (as the sleuth in your novel) must write a persuasive letter to the local chief of police. Your thesis statement will read something like this: "Due to the proof against him, you should arrest Fitz Fitzsimmons immediately!"

Quick Quiz #4

In addition, you must have three main supports: motive, means, and opportunity. Explain how each can be proved by using textual proof from the book, and make sure you cite the page number, on which the proof is found, within the letter. Use both citation methods—direct quotation and paraphrasing. Part of your textual proof should include the clues found as well as your inferences and logical deductions.

Example

Ms. Harry Harristeen
1111 Post Office Way
Crozet, WV 29304
(670) 555-0878 [work]

← Header

October 31, 2001 ← Date

Officer Rick Cooper
Crozet Police Department
1108 Catchum' Street
Crozet, WV 29304

← Recipient's Address

RE: Ben Siefert's Murder ← "Heads Up"

Dear Officer Cooper: ← Salutation

Introduction

After careful consideration of the events that occurred in Crozet this past month, I have come to the logical conclusion that your prime suspect in the case is Mr. Fitz Fitzsimmons of Crozet, WV. The clues that were not red herrings led directly to Fitz and contribute to proof of motive, means, and opportunity. Based on the evidence, you should arrest Fitz at once!

Three supports

Thesis

Support #1

Motive is the backbone behind any crime, and Fitz had to protect his secret in order to protect his cushy life with Little Mim, as well as his own personal fortune. When Ben Siefert uncovered Fitz's true identity, Fitz was content to simply blackmail him at first, but when Ben could not longer pay the hush money, Fitz got scared and murdered him. Initially, Fitz caught Ben burning important papers at the deserted Foxden Farm, and tried to kill him there by shooting him. Unfortunately for Fitz, Ben's prosthetic arm protected him from the bullet and Fitz had to find another way to kill him. So Fitz pretended he wanted to build Little Mim a new house and took Ben to a deserted plot of land under the guise of needing a banker's opinion. Unsuspecting Ben was then knocked unconscious and put in his car which Fitz pushed in Mim's lake. Too bad for Fitz he didn't realize the water wouldn't wash away his fingerprints on the wheel. Thus the clues prove that Fitz's fingerprints belong to the man who supposedly died 20 years ago, and it's obvious that he was trying to hide his real identity.

D e t a i l # 1

D e t a i l # 2

Logical Conclusion

Support #2—means

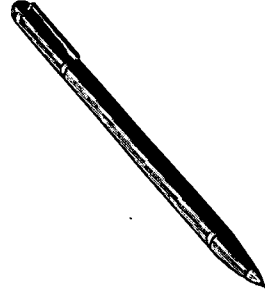
Support #3—opportunity

Conclusion

- Restatement of thesis
- Restatement of three supports with personal conclusions drawn in between

Sincerely,

Sign Here



Harry Harristeen
Postmistress of Crozet, WV

End The





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