

“Mystery and Detective Literature Activities”
“That’s Elementary, My Dear Watson”

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Overview

Several school districts have core standards that incorporate a balanced literacy framework that includes reading, writing, listening and speaking. Classrooms that have a balanced literacy framework will showcase a demonstration of reading and writing to students, with students and by students. Reading is an essential component of the balanced literacy framework. Building reading skills and experiences will contribute to the ability of the student to communicate and demonstrate self-expression.

The curriculum unit will provide students exposure to various crime and detective stories. The unit will consist of activities that will allow students to demonstrate an understanding of the crime stories through various activities. Students will be able to witness detective characters that are African American, women or children and not the stereo typical Caucasian male or police officer. The students will be able to identify the character traits of the detective. Students will be able identify the problem to be solved in each story and explain how the detective solves the problem. The students will be able to identify the detective’s ability to decipher the criminal mind and relate it to real life experiences using critical thinking skills. The overall goal of the unit is to expose students to the detective/crime fiction genre and provide fun activities to accompany the crime story.

The curriculum unit is designed for grades four and five. This curriculum could be modified for other grades. The curriculum unit will provide various detective fiction book selections and activities appropriate for the fourth and fifth grades. The unit will consist of five activities that may accompany the reading selections chosen for the curriculum unit.

Rationale

The purpose of the curriculum unit is to provide teachers with reading activities and literature to expose students to the genre of detective fiction and crime stories. Students may benefit from exposure to crime fiction by possibly gaining a momentum that encourages reading for enjoyment. Many students watch detective drama on television. In film and literature, detectives may be male or female stemming from many different cultures and backgrounds. The unit will focus on the character traits of various traditional and nontraditional detective characters. The curriculum unit will expose students to detective fiction through literature and film chosen for the fourth and fifth grade level. The activities in this unit are designed to support various detective stories chosen by the teacher and/or student. The unit incorporates reading comprehension skills and strategies that support the common core standards for reading. The overall rationale for this unit is to familiarize students with detective fiction and to provide students with an opportunity to witness various origins and cultures of detectives. Students will be able to compare and contrast relationships and occurrences from the crime fiction in regards to their own environments in which they live.

Background

A detective is a person who investigates crimes by solving problems and obtaining evidence or information. A detective works to solve mysteries that occur in daily living. A detective is often a member of a police force. Many detectives work individually and are not members of a police force although they may have started as police officers. The title detective has taken on several other names over the years. The names include investigator, dick, gum shoe, hawk-shaw, plainclothesman, tracer, private detective, private eye, private investigator, PI, shamus, sherlock, operative, sleuth and sleuthhound. In literature and film, detectives can be male or female stemming from all cultures.

Detective fiction is also known as crime fiction which often features criminal wrong doing that reflects the dark and horrible occurrences in a society where evil is hard to imagine or comprehend. Detectives in detective fiction overcome the failure of imagination that plague people around them in order to piece together what happened as well as why and how. Detectives unravel the motivation of a crime or problem. Detectives know how to think like a criminal. Criminals have several attributes that define their behavior. Many attributes include trauma, lack of social mobility, emotional detachment and power/control driven tendencies. While the concept of good versus evil is apparent in detective fiction, they reflect the moralistic aspect of the folktale. Edgar Allan Poe is credited with originating detective fiction with the publication of his short story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue,".

The character of the detective has evolved and changed over time. Sherlock Holmes was an iconic detective fictional character that sparked popularity in the 1800s. The character of Sherlock Holmes was a well-dressed and smooth talking white male.

The character was basically cool-headed and willing to cross boundaries that others were not willing to cross. Detectives do not have sympathy for people that commit crimes. Detectives have empathy for the criminal. Mostly, a detective can recover from the failure of imagination and put together how a crime happened. Within crime fiction there is always the constant battle between good and evil as well as, sympathy and empathy.

The face of the modern day detective changed during the 1940s when Walter Mosley wrote, “Devil in a Blue Dress.” The main character Easy Rollins was a black man. The setting is the post WW11 period. Easy Rollins migrated from Houston’s fifth ward to Los Angeles. Easy Rollins’ character would cross borders and end up in places white detectives would not go at the time. Easy found his self mixed up in some dangerous situations trying to solve the problem through the investigation he was sent on. Easy Rollins wanted to create a life as a man and a father, but found difficulty achieving that with ease. Easy Rollins was definitely a different type of detective for these reasons that did not fit the norm for this genre. The book was later made into a movie during the mid 1990s.

The detective role has changed even more over the years. Women and children are now crime solvers. Literature, television shows and film currently feature detectives from all cultural backgrounds. The detectives may be male or female as well as, young or old. Encyclopedia Brown is a famous boy detective in children’s literature. Several television series feature women as detectives such as “Rizzoli and Isles.” From past to present, the faces of the detective has changed, but the overall task remains the same. Detectives unravel the motivation of the crime or wrong doing because the detective is capable of thinking like the criminal. Detectives can embody the attributes of a criminal in order to solve the crime.

Objectives

- Students will be able to identify, define and use various vocabulary words in sentences.
- Students will be able to identify and describe the character traits of detectives from a text or film.
- Students will be able identify the characters, setting, plot, problem and solution of a particular text in order to complete a written report.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast two detectives.
- Students will be able to identify the cause and effect for particular situations presented in an activity.

Strategies

The curriculum unit will include a variety of instructional strategies that are designed to expand and improve the reading comprehension skill of the students. The usage of the writing process will also be included in the curriculum unit. Reading detective fiction and watching excerpts from crime stories will be incorporated in the unit for students to demonstrate understanding of the text or film. Discussions will be a part of the direct

instructional portion to give students the opportunity to provide verbal input about detective fiction.

- **Direct Instruction** will be teacher lead. Direct instruction will be administered to the entire class. Small group instruction will be provided to differentiate instruction for those students that need additional support. Direct instruction will be used to facilitate lessons on vocabulary, reading comprehension skills and the writing process.
- **Accessing Prior Knowledge** will be used to assist students with making connections between the text, film and real life experiences.
- **Graphic Organizers** will be used to organize information the students will use to complete reading and writing activities.
- **The Writing Process** will be incorporated into the curriculum unit to assist students with organization in their writing.
- **Group Discussions** will be organized in order for students to collaborate and share feelings, opinions and information regarding the text and film about detective fiction.

Standards

PA Core Standards - CC.1: PA Core: English Language Arts

CC.1.1.4.E:

Read with accuracy and fluency to support comprehension:

- Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.
- Read on-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
- Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

CC.1.1.4.E:

Read with accuracy and fluency to support comprehension:

- Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.
- Read on-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
- Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

E04.B-K.1.1.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

E04.B-K.1.1.2: Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

E04.B-K.1.1.3: Explain events, procedures, ideas, steps, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

E04.B-C.2.1.1: Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe the differences in focus and the information provided.

E04.B-V.4.1.1: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 4 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. a. Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. b. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., telegraph, photograph, autograph). c. Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases used in a text.

E04.B-C.3.1.1: Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

E04.B-C.3.1.2: Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to demonstrate subject knowledge.

E04.B-C.3.1.3: Interpret text features (e.g., headings, graphics, charts, timelines, diagrams) and/or make connections between text and the content of text features.

E04.C.1.3.1: Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally to support the writer's purpose.

E04.C.1.3.2: Use narrative techniques such as dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or to show the responses of characters to situations.

E04.C.1.3.3: Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.

E04.C.1.3.4: Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

E04.C.1.3.5: Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

E04.E.1.1.1: Introduce text(s) for the intended audience, state an opinion and/or topic, establish a situation, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.

E04.E.1.1.2: Develop the analysis using a variety of evidence from text(s) to support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences.

E04.E.1.1.3: Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., another, for example, also, because).

E04.E.1.1.4: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic and/or convey the experience and events.

E04.E.1.1.5: Provide a concluding statement or section related to the analysis presented.

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1 *“What is a Detective?”*

Objective: The students will be able to list what they know about detectives in the “K” column of the KWL chart. The students will write questions they have about detectives in the “W” column of the KWL chart. The students will write sentences expressing what they have learned about detectives in the “L” column of the KWL chart. The students will be able to select a detective fiction book from a classroom library to read use to complete activities for this unit.

Materials: Excerpt from “Encyclopedia Brown, Boy Detective” (Appendix 1)
Graphic Organizer: KWL Chart (Appendix 2)
Detective Fiction Book (Appendix 3)

Procedure:

1. The teacher will introduce the curriculum by reading an excerpt from “Encyclopedia Brown” (Appendix 2). The teacher will lead a discussion about the excerpt describing what is happening in the excerpt.
2. The teacher will then explain to the class that they will be learning about detective fiction.
3. Distribute KWL chart to students.
4. Direct students to complete the “K” and “W” columns of the chart the first day of unit. Write every thing you know about detectives in the “K” column and write questions you may have about detectives in the “W” column.
5. Explain to students that they will write down what they have learned about detectives in the “L” section throughout the week.
6. Have a class discussion about student responses on the KWL chart.

Extension: Students will select a detective fiction book of choice to use with this curriculum unit from a classroom set of detective fiction books. (Appendix 3)

Lesson 2 *Detective Jargon!!!!!!*

Overview: This lesson is designed to introduce students to various vocabulary terms in regards to detective fiction and crime fiction. It is important for students to become familiar with these vocabulary terms in order for them to become prepared to think, speak and act like a detective. Students will have the opportunity to define the words and use the words in a sentence. Students will also be able to include an illustration for each vocabulary word.

Objective: The students will be able to identify, define and use the vocabulary word list in sentences. The students will be able to create vocabulary cards for each word that includes the word, definition, sentence and illustration. The students will be able to identify vocabulary words in a word search.

Materials: Vocabulary Word List (Appendix 4).
Word Search Activity Sheet (Appendix 5).
Large Index Cards
Crayons
Dictionaries/Internet Access

Procedure:

1. The teacher will read the vocabulary words aloud and have the students repeat the words aloud.
2. The teacher will explain the directions for the activity. The direction includes researching and writing a definition for each vocabulary word using the dictionary or the internet. The students will next write a sentence using the vocabulary term. The students will also draw an illustration using the vocabulary card. All work is to be completed on individual large index cards. The vocabulary word goes on the front of card. The definition, sentence and illustration go on the back of card.
3. When the students complete the cards, the students may work together in pairs or groups testing each other the words using the vocabulary cards.
4. The vocabulary list consists of 20 words. The vocabulary list can be divided up daily for students to make vocabulary cards and work with words at the teacher's discretion.

Extension: Students can discuss the words throughout the week and also include the vocabulary words in a written assignment at the end of the unit. Distribute word search with vocabulary words after all words have been completed on vocabulary cards.

Lesson 3 *“ Detective Traits”*

Overview: This lesson enables the students the opportunity to list and organize the character traits of the detective in the story.

Objective: The students will be able to identify and list the character traits of the detective in the detective fiction story. The students will be able to site and document evidence to support the character traits on the chart.

Materials: Character Trait Chart (Appendix 6)
Detective Fiction Book (Appendix 3)

Procedure:

1. The teacher will review with the class the definition of a character trait. The teacher will provide examples of character traits.
2. The teacher will distribute character trait charts.
3. The students will list the character traits and evidence from detective fiction book that supports character trait on the chart.

Extension: The teacher will allow time for students to draw an illustration of the detective character on the chart. The teacher will also provide time for students to share character traits through discussion. Teacher will display charts on a bulletin board display labeled, “Detective Traits.”

Lesson 4 *“Sleuth Comparisons”*

Overview: This activity will allow students to further analyze the character traits of the detective in the detective stories. The students will be able to have discussion about the different detectives in the various books. The students will work in pairs to complete a Venn Diagram describing the differences and the similarities of the two detectives.

Objective: The students will be able to analyze the character traits of two detectives. The students will be able to compare and contrast two detectives from the detective stories using a graphic organizer (Venn Diagram) and through discussion.

Materials: Graphic Organizer: Venn Diagram (Appendix 7)

Procedure:

1. The teacher will explain to the class that the students will be analyzing two detectives.
2. The teacher will divide class into pairs.
3. The teacher will distribute the Venn Diagrams to each pair of students to write down and organize the similarities and differences of the detectives they are reading about. The students will also be allowed time to discuss similarities and differences of the detectives.
4. When the students have completed the Venn Diagrams, the teacher will allow time for students to share the detective similarities and differences in a class discussion.

Extension: The teacher can work with the class to create a wall or bulletin board display in order for students to showcase their Venn Diagrams.

Lesson 5 *“Sleuth Reports”*

Overview: This activity is designed for students to identify specific story elements and organize the story elements in a written report in order to show understanding of the detective drama. The story elements include characters, setting, plot, problem, and solution. This activity will also allow students to express their opinions about the detective story they read.

Objective: The students will be able to complete a story map in order to organize various story elements. The students will be able to use the writing process in order to write a book report. The students will be able to share their written reports orally with the entire class.

Materials: Graphic Organizer: Story Map (Appendix 8)
Lined Writing Paper
Pencils
Crayons
Colored Construction Paper
Shoe Box, scissors, glue (optional) Use for extension activity.

Procedure:

1. The teacher will enthusiastically introduce the activity by telling students that they are going to be writing “sleuth reports.”
2. The teacher will review vocabulary from the unit. The teacher will instruct the students to use as many vocabulary words that they can in their reports.
3. The teacher will explain the different parts of the story map organizer with the class prior to passing out materials.
4. The teacher will pass out the story map organizer for the students to complete.
5. The teacher will monitor and conference with students while completing story map organizers.
6. Once the class has completed the story map organizers, the teacher will review the format for writing the written report. The teacher can use their own personal discretion to determine how many paragraphs are to be written according to the capability of the students. All reports will include title, author, opinion paragraph and paragraphs telling beginning, middle and end of story. All story elements from story map should be included in the paragraphs.
7. The teacher will allow time for the students to complete rough drafts of reports after lined paper has been distributed.
8. The teacher will check rough drafts and conference with students before completing the final draft. Teachers may allow students to use peer proofreading with students if the teacher has taught the students the peer proofreading process prior to using this unit.
9. Once rough drafts have been revised, the students will have time to write the final draft of the report.
10. The teacher will distribute construction paper and crayons to students to illustrate an attractive cover page.
11. Reports will be displayed on bulletin board after teacher has reviewed and graded reports.
12. Teacher will collect all detective fiction books from students.

Extension: A diorama using a shoebox can be made by the students to describe a scene from the detective drama. The students can showcase the diorama and share the contents of the diorama with the class.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Read aloud pages from: *“Encyclopedia Brown: Boy Detective”*
Pages: 1-6

Appendix 2

Graphic Organizer

KWL Chart

Topic: *“Detectives”*

K	W	L

Appendix 3

Suggested Library of Detective Fiction for Class

1. Nate the Great, by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat
2. Jack Russell: Dog Detective, by Darrel and Sally Odgers
3. The Great Cake Mystery: Precious Romotswes Very First Case, by Alexander McCall Smith
4. Encyclopedia Brown: Boy Detective, by Donald J. Sobol
5. Judy Moody: Girl Detective, by Megan McDonald
6. Gilda Joyce, Psychic Investigator, by Jennifer Allison
7. The Sherlock Files: 100 Year Old Secret, by Tracey Barrett
8. Enola Homes Mysteries: The Case of the Missing Marquess, by Nancy Springer
9. Sisters Grimm: The Fairy Tale Detectives, by Michael Buckley and Peter Ferguson
10. Young Sherlock Holmes: Death Cloud, by Andrew Lane

*** Many of these authors have a series of detective fiction books for young readers.

Appendix 4

Vocabulary List

1. Detective
2. Crime
3. Investigate
4. Alibi
5. Felony
6. Illegal
7. Accuse
8. Confess
9. Guilty
10. Innocent
11. Research
12. Fiction
13. Solve
14. Problem
15. Conviction
16. Detect
17. Sleuth
18. Investigator
19. Arrest
20. Evidence

Appendix 5

Word Search

www.superteacherworksheets.com

Use the Word Generator Section to create word search for vocabulary words. Any site can be used that has a word generator for word searches.

Appendix 6

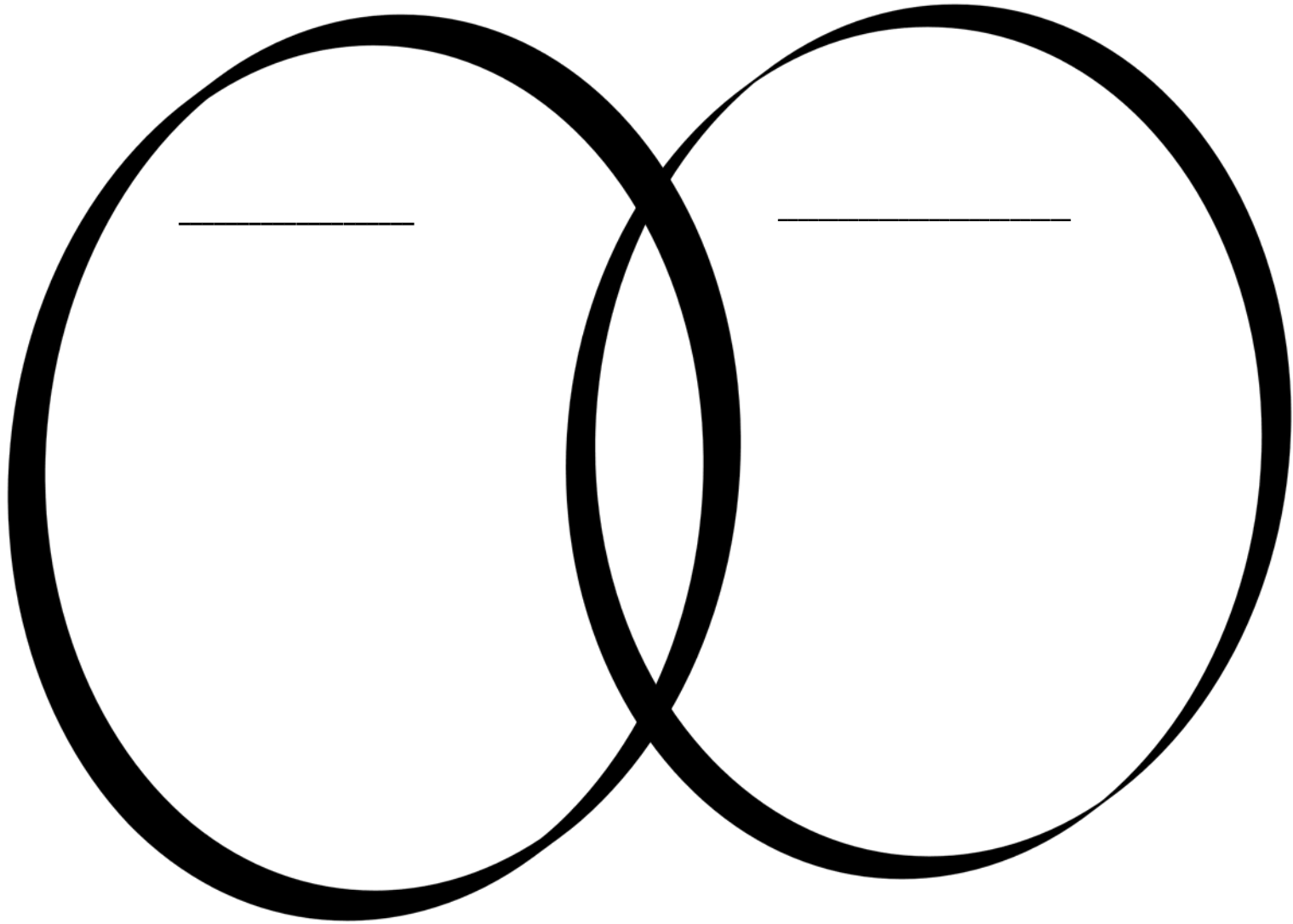
Character Trait Chart

<u>Character Name/Picture</u>	<u>Character Traits</u>

Appendix 7

Venn Diagram

Detective Comparisons



Appendix 8

Story Map

<u>Title of Detective Fiction</u>	<u>Author</u>
<u>Detective Name/ 4 Character Traits</u> Detective: _____ Character Traits 1. 2. 3. 4.	<u>Characters</u>
<u>Setting</u>	<u>Problem</u>
<u>Events</u>	<u>Solution</u>
<u>Your Opinion of Story</u> I thought this detective drama was.....because.....	<u>Conclusion of Story</u>

Bibliography

Schoolnet, <http://www.philasd.org>

Note: This website provides teachers with the core curriculum standards for grades K-12.

Sobol, Donald J. *Encyclopedia Brown: Boy Detective*, Puffin Books, 2007, ISBN: 9780142408889

Note: This book was selected to provide the excerpt for introduction to this curriculum unit.

Super Teacher Worksheets. <http://www.superteacherworksheets.com>

Note: This website provides teachers with graphic organizers and word search generator that can be used for this curriculum unit.