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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2007 Volume II: Across the Curriculum with Detective Fiction for Young People and Adults

Crime Fiction Investigation: "Socially Correct or Not, Let Me Tell You Who Did It"

Guide for Curriculum Unit 07.02.06, published September 2007

by Bonnee Breese

This curriculum unit investigates the detective novel series of three African-American writers, Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins series, Barbara Neely's Blanche series, and finally Chester Himes' Coffin Ed and Grave Digger series. The focus of the unit takes students through a curriculum study in giving them familiarity with African-American writers who have contributed exceptional mystery writing to the literary canon. This unit, more specifically, is intended to have students explore issues of race, economic status, community, social structure, good versus evil, and gender in the creation of a story that uses the principles of the crime fiction genre. Furthermore, this unit will be evidence for students to understand how close the connections are between literature and history. The unit allows students to read and write about their own societal issues in a way that is accessible and entertaining. This curriculum unit is intended for use in the high school English Language Arts classroom.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grades 9 and 12; recommended for English Language Arts, African American History, and African American Literature, grades 9-12)

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