YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE
to strengthen teaching in public schools®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2007 Volume II: Across the Curriculum with Detective Fiction for Young People and Adults

More Than Just Whodunit - Using a Mystery Story to Motivate Tenth-Grade Students to Read

Curriculum Unit 07.02.08, published September 2007
by William S. Lewis

Overview

Jonathan Kozol makes this assertion in *On Being a Teacher*: "Conscientious teachers who have studied the origins of public education are faced with a difficult and painful choice: If they are honest with themselves and with each other, they cannot help but look upon the public school today as an archaic and dehumanizing institution. This is true not only for the students, but for their teachers also" (3). A harsh indictment indeed! Teachers can assess the validity of this statement as it applies to their circumstances. Too many times the public school system is autocratic and hidebound, devoted to its own agenda which does not include input from teachers, parents, and students. A bit further in the book he lambastes the school curriculum teacher's guide as ". . . taking away the satisfaction of all independent and creative labor in the preparation of the daily work. The guidebook seems to be the teacher's friend. Insidiously, it also robs the teacher of the only intellectual dignity which our profession still allows us: the individual, passionate or whimsical exhilaration of *invention*" (49). The following curriculum unit is an attempt to offer a viable alternative to the comfortable, staid requirements of the school curriculum. It is an attempt to stretch the confines of the school curriculum in a way that will make learning and teaching more fun and effective for students and teachers than many of the regimented offerings in the curriculum.

My students are well-acquainted with crime. They live in Philadelphia, Pa., and most come from backgrounds where working class (or lower) poverty is common. They witness the experiences associated with living in poverty in an urban setting - street crime, gangs, drugs, etc. They live by a code which declares "snitching" almost as bad as the crime itself. Our school itself has not escaped its share of crime, with eight laptop computers and a digital camera having been stolen during the year, bullets found in the pockets of one of our students, and so on. The last thing on the minds of too many of our students is learning the 3 Rs. Our school is criteria-based, so we can select our students, but withal, the skills of our general student population are way below grade level. Student apathy is rife. Teachers are astounded by and then depressed by the breadth and depth of this apathy. So a teacher's focus then becomes: how do I arouse students out of this apathy and how do I stimulate them to become avid, eager learners? How do I do it? Detective fiction! What is a detective story? There is a great body of literature analyzing the kinds, permutations, aspects, and characteristics of a detective story. George N. Dove has whittled down all this analysis into a template with four main qualities: "First the main character is a detective. . . male or female, professional or amateur, public or private, single or

multiple. . .. Second, the main plot of the story is the account of the investigation and resolution [no matter what other sub-plots]. . .. Third the mystery is. . . a complex secret that appears impossible of solution. Finally, the mystery is solved" (10). Once the play frame of "detective story" is set up, then we can expect that Dove's qualities will be there. This idea of "play" and "frame" lets us see how murder and mayhem of the most barbaric kind is tolerable in a mystery story, in the famous example of Gregory Bateson's dog whose ". . .**playful** (my emphasis)" nip denotes the bite, but does not denote that which would be denoted by the bite" (Bateson 183). The playful dog manages to communicate not only that the nip is not a bite, but also that this nip is meant to express an urge for a friendly interaction. So too in the frame of a detective story, gory details are given as essential parts of the play frame so that the reader and writer can play this mystery game together. This reader-writer relationship seems to me to be a muted adversarial one. So my student-readers, once the characteristics of the frame are known to them, can know what to expect and what is expected of them. Mystery reading becomes not scholastic chore, but a pleasure.

Rationale

My school is located in Southwest Philadelphia. It is 92% African American, 3% white, 2% Asian, and 1% Latino, and as I said above, it does not escape the problems which beset most city schools around the nation. My students are tenth-graders - "wise fools" who know it all and delight in displaying their cleverness by "getting over" on the teacher (as the nearest authority figure target) and who do so by trying the same tiresome tricks their predecessors tried. My trick will be to focus all that self-proclaimed cleverness on the solving of a crime along with Walt Longmire and his partner, Henry Standing Bear, who are protagonists in a mystery entitled *Kindness Goes Unpunished* by Craig Johnson.

Puzzle-solving is a very satisfying activity. It challenges us to use our thinking skills to find a solution. Detective fiction is a puzzle in prose. ". . . as Wright proposes, the detective story is not fiction in the normal sense, but is rather a complicated and extended puzzle. . .. Both the crossword puzzle and the detective novel are free of stress, each offers the reader a task or set of related tasks, both are shaped by convention, and neither has any goal beyond itself" (Dove 3). I think my students will not be able to resist the opportunity to pit their problem-solving skills against those of our protagonists, especially when the problem (crime) occurs on their own home turf of Philadelphia. So my problem with student apathy is solved, and I can devote more energy to teaching literary elements and higher -level thinking.

"Why a Duck?"

Sue Grafton says, ". . .mystery writers are the magicians of fiction. We're the illusionists, working with sleight of hand in the performance of our art. . .. Keep in mind that the mystery is the one form in which the reader and the writer are pitted against each other" (3). Just as an illusionist must at all costs keep and (mis-) direct the attention of the audience, so the mystery writer tries with might and main to control and arrest the attention of the reader. It is intrinsic to the successful mystery that the writer do this. He cannot assume the automatic goodwill of the reader; he cannot assume the reader will sustain "the willing suspension of

disbelief" just because literary convention says she must. The *sine qua non* of a good mystery is the stringing along of the reader till the last 'i' is dotted and the last 't' is crossed and order is restored. Not only must the writer "string the reader along," but he must, in a sense, consider the reader an adversary whom he has to mislead and deceive, because as the writer's protagonist follows the clues to the solution of the crime, the reader likewise reads the same trail of evidence and tries to find the solution before the protagonist does (and before the writer discloses it). That's one aspect of the fun of reading detective fiction. Mystery writers are "Conjurers and painters of the *trompe l'oeil* [who] school concentrate on acquiring a virtuosity whose only reward is reached after the viewer detects that he has been deceived and is forced to smile or marvel at the skill of the deceiver" (Bateson 182).

God -in the Judeo-Christian tradition - was depicted as the first detective, wasn't She? - when, according to the Book of Genesis in the Bible, She solved the mystery of how Adam and Eve acquired the knowledge of the tree of good and evil: "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And the man said, The woman thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman What (is) this (that) thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me and I did eat" (Genesis 3: 11-13). God got to the bottom of the crime and meted out his justice (banishment from Eden). God also solved the mystery of the murder of Abel by Cain: "And Cain talked with his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said I know not; Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Genesis 4:8-10). Cain acted like a guilty person in denying he knew where Abel was, just as Adam did when he passed the blame to Eve. Why does the writer of Genesis have God interrogating Adam and then Cain? Doesn't God already know the answer? I think the writer does this in the interests of a good story because **everyone likes a good mysterystory**. In a mystery, remember, the protagonist assumes a god-like role because it is his job to pinpoint how the normal order has been disturbed (the crime), to determine who has transgressed against the moral order (the criminal), and to restore law and order and to bring the transgressor to justice.

Right from the very beginning of studying a mystery, important ethical principles present themselves to be examined. Research on the adolescent brain SEEMS to show that many of the behaviors stereotypical of teens, such as lack of impulse control and risk-taking behavior, are due to the fact that the teen brain has not matured organically, and so in a sense teens cannot do otherwise. But the cerebellum ". . .is not genetically controlled and is thus susceptible to the environment. . . [is]not essential for any activity. . .but it makes any activity better. Anything we can think of as higher thought, mathematics, music, philosophy, decision-making, social skill, draws upon the cerebellum. . ..To navigate the complicated social life of the teen and to get through these things instead of lurching seems to be a function of the cerebellum" (Giedd). So at a very fundamental level, a mystery provides healthful food for thought for a developing brain. "The protagonist must have a code that is adhered to no matter what the costs or consequences. He must protect this code like a mother protecting a child. In his code is his character. The detective cannot state his code to the reader" (Grafton, 61). The protagonist serves as a model of directed behavior for impulse- buffeted tenth graders. So, one of the objectives of reading a mystery becomes clear: to discover the personal code by which the protagonist lives. Robin Winks adds another important lesson to be gleaned from detective fiction. "Detective fiction - all of it - tells us at least one simple message, though a message complex enough that most very young children and some adults do not grasp it: actions have consequences. . .. Inaction. . .is no less significant" (Winks19). Sara Paretsky's V.I Warshawski,for example, must do something or run the risk of losing at least her livelihood, if not her good name, not to mention her freedom even her life in *Hard Time*.

A detective story limns all the elements of a literary work in **bold face**. So it becomes much easier to discern and recognize the literary elements that comprise any novel. The learning of all these elements is an important goal of the school curriculum. This unit seeks to achieve all of the goals as outlined in the curriculum guide. I hope that my students will gain a firm grasp on all of the elements of a novel and, as well, that they will acquire facility in the exercising of higher orders of thinking as Bloom has described them (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) (Bloom).

Author's Purpose

One of the important aims of the writer in a mystery story is obvious. It is to write a story in which a crime takes place and to lead the reader along as the protagonist struggles to unravel the mystery of who committed the crime. From the beginning the reader watches the protagonist follow the clues till he finds the solution. The reader not only observes, but engages his wits as well to try to solve the crime. The author's job is to play fair so that the reader has access to the same information as the protagonist, but not so that the reader can solve the crime before the climax of the story. "The classic detective story involves first the planting and then the concealing of clues" (Wheat 123). The writer creates "red herrings" which are meant to take the reader away from the real culprit. Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot mentions that many characters can seem guilty because they are all guilty of something: "*Each of you has something to hide.* [Christie's emphasis] Come now, am I right?" (Christie 122) The author's purpose is to create and maintain suspense so that the reader is a happy victim of the writer's literary legerdemain.

Plot

"The first rule of mystery writing can be stated simply: The plot is everything. All other aspects of the book must be slaves to the story line. A solid reason behind this rule is that most readers come to a mystery because the genre promises an actual story, a characteristic that many find lacking in so-called mainstream fiction. . ..There are also requirements peculiar to the genre: clues, red herrings, the tying up of loose ends

(Grafton 7, 2). To follow and outline the plot and its elements therefore becomes an easy task for the student reader: exposition, rising action, climax, *denouement* and resolution. There may be sub-plots which give a full dimension to the mystery as occurring to real people in real time while this mysterious occurrence has intruded on their lives which must continue to be lived even as the mystery envelopes them. But still the plot of a mystery story demands that the crime be solved no matter what else happens during the pursuit of the solution. *Kindness Goes Unpunished* involves Walt Longmire in trying to find out first who hurt his daughter and then in finding out who is responsible for the killing of Devon Conliffe. There are delightful sub-plots in the story, but bringing the murderer to justice is the main plot.

Characterization

The characters in a mystery novel are usually vivid. Students will have little difficulty in relating to them and in deciphering their apparent motivation. The protagonist is very human; the reader can easily identify with him because of his humanness: maybe he drinks too much, maybe her personal life is in shambles, maybe her family is less than ideal. Michael Connelly gives this advice to mystery writers, "Character is defined by quality not quantity. . .. Most of the time, less is more. . .. I call these the 'telling' details of character. They are the nuances that create an empathic strike between your character and reader. . .. One telling detail will take you further than a page of description. . .. Character is conflict. . .. The writer's task is to deliver a set of full-blooded characters to the reader. In particular, the protagonist. As discussed above, you do that with actions, personal nuances, and the telling details of his world" (Connelly 58-59, 62). A writer who lives up to this advice

will present, for student readers, characters that are readily understandable through their actions and words, or through the words and actions of other characters. The protagonist in this story is Walt Longmire. "Walt. . . appeals to the reader. . .in his jaunty humor. He is a nice fellow, take it any way around, and so deserves to outwit whoever is trying to kill him" (Dunne 170). Walt and his sidekick, Henry Standing Bear, set the humorous tone of this novel. Because Walt is from the West and is now in the big city (Philadelphia), he is portrayed as in unfamiliar territory - almost a bungler - who "comments tellingly on both ordinary and criminally extraordinary behavior. . .. Always strangely childlike because of his eccentricities, he is also deeply cynical. . .. He is, perhaps, a distant cousin to the wise clowns of Shakespeare's dramas, enabling us. . . to laugh" (Bakerman 125). Henry Standing Bear deserves mention too. He is a riff on the character, Tonto, in the Lone Ranger series. Whereas Tonto was essentially characterless - "Ugh, Kemo Sabe, me think you right." Henry is a humorous, self-sufficient guy who acts at times like Walt's conscience, whose personality is interesting, independent and lively. "Native Americans . . .increasingly occupy a special place in our hearts and minds, not with soft-brained condescension but with the dignity that they and we deserve. This recognition has been a long time developing" (Browne 12-13).

Conflict

Conflict is yet another ingredient in literature and in detective fiction. Conflict includes the "big" conflict between the good guys and the bad guys which forms the substratum of a mystery. Conflict within the protagonist is common; conflict between the protagonist and his allies such as the police occurs as well Because the literary elements are WRIT LARGE in most detective fiction, students can easily identify them and need never mumble to themselves "'Tis a puzzlement."

Tone

"A mystery is more than a novel. . .. The mystery is a way of examining the dark side of human nature, a means by which we can explore, vicariously, the perplexing questions of crime, guilt and innocence, violence and justice. The mystery not only re-creates the original conditions from which violence springs, tracking the chaos that murder unleashes, but then attempts to divine the truth through the process of rational investigation and eventually restores an order to the universe" (Grafton 2). The subject matter is gruesome (usually murder), but because we experience these events "vicariously", how the crime gets told is up to the writer: in a cool, no-nonsense way by Dashiell Hammet, primly, properly, and fastidiously by Agatha Christie or Dorothy Sayers, brashly (with a dash of humor) by Barbara Neely, with a certain melancholy by Henning Mankell. All of these descriptors of course refer to the tone of the mystery; the protagonist's temperament and method of operating usually determine this tone, and at a still deeper level - beneath the rush and waves of the protagonist's behavior, lies the tone of suspenseful urgency - the sense that something as bad or worse will happen unless the protagonist gets a move on and solves the crime (Cavin 211). Humor is a quality that many mysteries have. How humor and murder can co-exist is explicable by the Batesonian idea of a play-frame. Once the frame is built then murder, mayhem, and chaos become acceptable scaffolding holding the frame together, and so lose their horrific immediacy. "To me, humor is anything that makes somebody laugh, somewhere, sometime," says Howard Haycraft (241).

Setting

"your setting must be rich and vivid and colorful if your mystery is to be first-rate. . .. Yes, put weather in. But don't just say it's raining. Make us feel the sodden weight of a wall of water driven by winds gusting at sixty miles an hour" (Smith 48-49). This is Julie Smith's advice to mystery writers. Setting is extraordinarily important, especially if, like me, you enjoy reading mysteries which take place in places you've visited. The

setting is not quite another character, but it does indeed individualize the story so that it could only happen in that time and place. Julie Smith advises the mystery writer that the goal of setting is "to scoop up the reader on a magic carpet and take him to the world of your book" (Smith 54). The setting for *Kindness Goes Unpunished* becomes almost a character because Craig Johnson uses Philadelphia as an intrinsic backdrop for the story, so much so that the statuary in the city assumes an essential importance to the plot line.

The clarity with which all of these literary elements stand out in a mystery means that a student can easily perceive, understand, and analyze how they serve the author's ultimate purpose. Because the literary elements common to novels can be delineated so easily in a mystery story, my students can see and identify them and delve more deeply into other aspects of the mystery. So, in sum, the objectives of this unit are to give my students - in as undiluted form as possible - a clear idea of what each of the literary elements is and how each functions to serve the author's purpose. And, as well, I want to make the methods of the author transparent to my students. Why, for example, does the mystery we'll read begin with the protagonist, Walt Longmire, reading "Brier Rose" and "Sleeping Beauty" to a group of pre-schoolers? Using the traditional Socratic method of questioning, I would point out that Cady, as a child, loved to hear her father read these stories to her; so we can see the loving relationship that must exist between Cady and her father. The two stories - don't forget - are about a sleeping princess, saved from death, but cast under a spell of having to sleep for a long time. These stories flash forward to Cady's actual comatose state for most of the mystery. All part of the writer's craft.

Kindness Goes Unpunished

But why *Kindness Goes Unpunished*? I chose this mystery for many reasons. Henry Standing Bear, one of the main characters in this story, is a Cheyenne Indian. This fact will give my students an opportunity to delve into another culture, one which has some recognition factor as one of the horseback-riding Plains Indian tribes in the 19th century. The setting for this mystery is Philadelphia, Pa., the hometown of my students. Its appeal-factor thereby rises because the action takes place on familiar ground. My students will be able to trace the development of the plot across the city. In addition, the relationship between Walt Longmire and Henry Standing Bear is an entertaining one, laced with friendly banter and much humor.

Walt Longmire and his partner and friend, Cheyenne Indian Henry Standing Bear are traveling to Philadelphia to visit Walt's daughter, while Henry Standing Bear installs an exhibit of photographs at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts. Walt's daughter, Cady, wants him to meet her boyfriend, Devon Conliffe. While Walt is waiting for Cady to finish work as a lawyer in a big city law firm, word comes to him that Cady has been taken to the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in a coma. Her boyfriend is suspected of having done this to Cady. Walt and Henry Standing Bear, who is busy arranging his exhibit of photographs, become caught up in a concatenation of events involving Devon Conliffe (who dies after being thrown off the Benjamin Franklin Bridge), drug dealers, police, a mysterious ally named William White Eyes, the Moretti family whose daughter is Walt's deputy in Absaroka County, Wyoming and has come East to console and support Walt. She becomes Walt's love interest. As the story unfolds and Walt pursues the criminals, a mysterious person leaves cryptic messages where Walt can find them. These messages direct him to go to sculptures throughout the city for further information. The mysterious person comes out of the shadows and Walt realizes this person needs saving in order for justice to be served. The climax occurs on horseback (intentionally ironic on the writer's

part: Walt is, after all, from the Wild West) in Wissahickon Park (on a gravel road called Forbidden Drive - because cars are forbidden to drive on it), where order is restored. Cady comes out of her coma with the help of Henry Standing Bear, who heads for home in Lola - his Thunderbird (also the name of an important Plains Indian mythological figure) - and Walt will take Cady back home to Wyoming where she can heal. This truncated version of the novel of course is like a dinner from which all the taste and flavor has been removed, but the gist is still there.

Strategies

How do I plan to achieve the goals outlined above? My students will receive a reading schedule for reading *Kindness Goes Unpunished*. The unit should take about five weeks to read. The reading will be done at home. In my experience, ordinarily too many students would not do the reading homework. But I hope that the interest in following the vivid characters and the challenge in trying to solve the crime will keep virtually everyone on track. Frequent pop quizzes will be an added stimulus for still-recalcitrant readers. Students will have received a packet at the beginning of the unit containing guide questions (Appendix A), research topics (Appendix B), mystery morphology template (Appendix C), and character analysis sheets (Appendix D),

The guide questions will serve to keep students focused on the content of the novel, as well as reveal the writer's craft to them. Why, for example, do you think the author had Cady tell her father to bring his gun so that she, her boyfriend Devon Conliffe, and her father can go together to a shooting range? Students will hopefully see that this request will make it seem reasonable to the reader for Walt to bring his gun, when otherwise he might normally be expected to leave his weapon at home while on vacation. The guide questions will be due according to the timing listed on the reading schedule.

Students will use the map to plot the action as it goes around our town. Students will hone their spatial-directional skills as the class follows the plot around the city. It should be exhilarating to read about various locations throughout the city: "Hey! I know where that place is!" Or, "You can't see the city skyline from there." The class will also take virtual field trips to city landmarks to help students get more involved in the setting of the story. The class will, as well, Google earth and zero in on neighborhoods where the story takes us. And finally there will be a large class map by which the whole class can see at a glance the settings for the events in the story.

The packet will also contain graphic organizers. There will be a plot diagram, created to be used especially with mystery stories (Fry) (Appendix C). By using this template students will learn what is the usual progression in a mystery story, and will be able to more easily organize in their own minds the plot of *Kindness Goes Unpunished* as the story develops. There will also be a character analysis chart (Appendix D) whereby the student can describe the characters - but not only describe the characters, but be able to tell (with page number) whence the information comes. He will be able to answer such questions as: What does the character look like? What is his personality? Whence comes this information? From the narrator? From another character? From the character's actions? From the reactions of other characters? All of these questions can be answered on the organizer so that the student has a clear image of each character and a grasp of how the writer gets these bits of information to the reader. As part of the packet, I'll include a blank sheet of paper on which I'll ask students to write down at least five situations that they found humorous and

tell why they thought they were funny.

An exercise parallel to the reading and discussion of the novel will be the giving of regular reports to the class by students. These reports will be on many different subjects alluded to in the mystery. They will enrich the reading of the novel for everyone. Students will be assigned to give the reports more or less in sync with the mystery, so that the report will coincide with its being mentioned in the mystery. See Appendix E for a more complete list of topics. Here is just a sampling: the Basques, Wyoming, "Brier Rose", "Sleeping Beauty", Cheyenne Indians, the Thunderbird, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Old City, Elfreth's Alley, the Painted Bride, the Italian Market, the Phillies, the Eagles the Lenape Indians, and so on. Students will gain expertise in writing and presenting reports and the experience of reading the mystery will be richer for everyone. The assignment for "Brier Rose" and "Sleeping Beauty" would be the memorizing of and the telling of each story to the class. The Cheyenne Indians assignment and the Lenape Indians assignment would be special cases. Four students would receive assignments on each culture in order to present a fairly complete picture of each culture: history, place, significant events and people, and their situation today. Each student would pick a topic from a hat. Each topic would have a due date. Two or three students per day would present their findings parallel to the reading of the mystery. There would be leeway for trading topics so that a student could feel somewhat at ease with the subject matter and due date. I'll check all of the materials in the packets for completeness and accuracy weekly.

Classroom Activities

As for the nitty gritty of implementing the unit on a day-to-day basis, the following will give three exemplary moments.

First Lesson

Objectives: Students will go over what can be expected when we say a story is a mystery: a protagonist who will, over the course of the plot, solve a seemingly insoluble crime before the actual ending of the mystery. Students will examine the tone of the first scene, focusing on the humorous aspects of it.

Having taken care of the distribution of the reading schedule, the learning packets, and the assigning of topics, and having taken care to make sure that everyone understands what's going on, I'll begin the first lesson by talking about the characteristics of a mystery and how the "mystery morphology" template can be used to plot the development of the mystery. Then we'll go over the first scene in the book, when Walt reads to a group of pre-school children. I'll first of all ask whether anyone found any aspect of the scene humorous. What is humorous in the scene is of course the remarks by the children during the reading of the two folktales. We can discuss the element of tone in this mystery as we first experience in the opening scene. I'll ask students to talk about what they have found humorous in this scene. Students can present the first topics which are the two folktales, "Brier Rose" and "Sleeping Beauty". The class will discuss these stories and leave open whether they are merely random selections by the writer or whether the reader should be ready for further resonances later in the story. Students would also begin the character analysis sheets by noting down traits belonging to Walt Longmire, Cady Longmire, and Henry Standing Bear.

Lesson Two

Class can begin on this day with the presentation of papers. The city of Philadelphia itself would be the first topic. Students then would be able to discuss the aspects of the city brought up in their own presentations while the presenting student answered questions. Students then would view the large map of the city meant for classroom use. In an attempt to familiarize them with the city as well as to find out what they know, I would call on various students to come up to the map and put pushpins in named parts of the city. *The New York Times* for Friday, July 27, 2007 describes mapmaking tools available on the web by which a user can create a customized map. Links to these mapmaking tools are at nytimes.com/tech and will prove indispensable to following the setting of this mystery. We can now begin the discussion of the assigned reading, in which Walt and Henry arrive in Philadelphia. We would go over the guide questions and discuss the problems or issues they cover.

Lesson Three

Students will pursue the development of the plot and see how the succession of episodes mirrors the usual progression of a mystery

The next topic would be the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts where Walt and Henry stop when they arrive in the city. After the student presentation and question-and-answer session, students would view a virtual tour of the Academy and then discuss any issues raised by the student's presentation and the virtual tour. Students would then continue their character analyses, adding to the list Lena Moretti, who is the mother of Walt's deputy, a young woman who for the moment is still back in Wyoming. Students will also mark on their maps where in Old City Cady's apartment is because that is where Walt will be staying. The pleasant atmosphere of Walt and Lena's enjoyable evening is suddenly shattered by the news that "There's been an accident" (Johnson 39). Students will now be able to fill in the mystery template. Now is the time when the happy setting is interrupted by the news that Cady, Walt's daughter, lies in a coma at the Trauma Center of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. Students would then describe the scene which is disturbed by this news.

Lesson Four

Objectives: Students will see how the author has reinforced his purpose in this mystery by using seemingly irrelevant details

Because this is a crucial time in the novel, the whole period will be devoted to explicating the story. First the students must plot on their own maps where the setting moves to. Cady lies in a coma. When the students have arrived at a definition of a coma, we will return to the very beginning of the mystery and talk about the stories that Walt was reading to the children, namely "Brier Rose" and "Sleeping Beauty". At this point we may be able to discover why the author decided to use these two stories in the very beginning of this novel. He obviously meant them to be fairy tale evocations of a coma.

This effort to examine the author's use of these stories is a continuation of my efforts to show something about the craft of narrative writing, to bring home to my students that a writer is not from outer space, but is a thinking, feeling human being just like us.

The reader now learns that Cady's coma is not the result of an accident, but that a witness heard Cady and a "male, Caucasian, approximately mid-thirties" (Johnson 43) arguing at the Franklin Institute where she has

been found. Students will add to their description of Devon Conliffe. The second part of the mystery template can now be filled in, keeping in mind that this crime is not the only one, nor yet the pivotal one which puts Walt and Henry in the center of a maelstrom of violence. The large map will be used to indicate the scene of the crime and the location of the other places named so far.

Evaluation

Evaluation of students' performances will be an easy task. Frequent quizzes will give me a good idea of how much of the reading they comprehended. Their reports on the story-related subjects will give me a measure of their writing and speaking ability. Their responses to the guide questions will tell me how involved students were in keeping up with the daily reading. The quality of their mapping and the accuracy of their graphic organizers will give me a measure of the quality of students' higher- order thinking ability. Does the student understand the normal elements that go into the plot of a mystery? Can the student evaluate how closely *Kindness Goes Unpunished* fits that template? Has the student grasped the idea of what makes something humorous? Can the student understand how the writer has manipulated his plot to keep the reader interested and misled, when necessary, by red herring clues? Does the student understand how the writer gives the reader an idea of what type of people his characters are? Finally, can the student see how all of the elements of a mystery conspire to keep the reader guessing while at the same time these elements serve the ultimate purpose of the writer? The quality of work in students' packets will give me a fair way to measure how well students have answered these curriculum-based questions.

All of these activities will hopefully lead students to surmount their usual apathy and become eager and competent readers. For some it will be still too much to ask, but I think for a significant number of formerly unwilling students, this unit will be the stimulus needed to prod them to become what English teachers hope all students will become: readers.

Notes

Bakerman, Jane S. "Guises and Disguises of the Eccentric Amateur Detective."

Bargannier 111-127.

Bargannier, Earl F., ed. *Comic Crime.* Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State

University Press, 1987.

Bateson, Gregory. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1972.

Bible

Bloom, B.S. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook 1: The Cognitive*

Domain. New York: David McKay Co. Inc., 1956.

Browne, Ray B. *Murder on the Reservation: American Indian Crime Fiction.*

Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

Cavin, Ruth. "The Mystery Novel From an Editor's Point of View."

Grafton 205-215.

Connelly, Michael. "Characterization." Grafton 57-64.

Christie, Agatha. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd: A Hercule Poirot Novel*. New

York: Berkley Books, 1926.

Dove, George N. *The Reader and the Detective Story.* Bowling Green, Ohio:

Bowling Green State University Press, 1997.

Dunne, Michael. "The Comic Capers of Donald Westlake." Bargannier 168-180.

Fry, Paul. Seminar Lecture.

Giedd, Dr. Jay. "Adolescent Brains Are Works in Progress." *Frontline.* WGBH,

Boston. 31 Jan. 2002.

Grafton, Sue, ed. Writing Mysteries: *A Handbook by the Mystery Writers of*

America. Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 2002.

Healy, Jeremiah. "The Rules and How to Bend Them." Grafton 6-12.

Johnson, Craig. *Kindness Goes Unpunished.* New York: Viking Penguin, 2007.

Kozol, Jonathan. *On Being a Teacher*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1993.

Paretsky, Sara. *Hard Time.* New York: Dell Publishing, 2000.

Wheat, Carolyn. "Dress for Success: Developing Your Personal Style."

Grafton 121-128.

Winks, Robin. *Modus Operandi.* Boston: David R. Godine, 1982.

Teacher Resources

Ball, John, ed. *The Mystery Story.* Del Mar, Ca.: Publisher's Inc., 1976. Phyllis A. Whitney, John Ball, Otto Penzler, Hillary Waugh all have something to say about one aspect or another of the mystery from pseudonyms, the spy, the ethnic detective, women in detective fiction, etc.

Bargannier, Earl F., ed. *Comic Crime.* Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987. Writers talk on the varieties, manifestations, and meanings of comedy in mystery fiction.

Browne, Ray B. *Murder on the Reservation American Indian Crime Fiction: Aims and Achievements.* Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004. Browne discusses a few writers whose mysteries have Indian culture as a backdrop, e.g. Tony Hillerman. There are interviews with these writers in the last chapter.

Cherniak, Warren, Martin Swales, and Robert Vilain, eds. *The Art of Detective Fiction*. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000. Scholarly treatment of detective fiction. There's a fun chapter on the detective as clown.

Dove, George N. *The Reader and the Detective Story.* Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997. Abstruse and scholarly. In one chapter he discusses the detective story as a type of play.

Gosselin, Adrienne Johnson ed. *Multicultural Detective Fiction: Murder From the "Other" Side.* New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999. Chapters touch on Tony Hillerman, Linda Hogan, Louis Owens, Walter Mosley. Gay and lesbian crime fiction, and more. Scholarly treatment.

Grafton, Sue, with Jan Burke and Barry Zeman eds. *Writing Mysteries A Handbook by the Mystery writers of America.* Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 2002. The nuts and bolts of writing mystery stories from writers, editors and publishers of mysteries.

Haycraft, Howard. *The Art of the Mystery Story A Collection of Critical Essays.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946. A smart treatment of the mystery genre by people who know it well.

Johnson, Craig. *Kindness Goes Unpunished*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2007. You should also look for his other mysteries which take place in Absaroka County, Wyoming, viz. *The Cold Dish* and *Death Without Company*.

Nina King ed. *Crimes of the Scene A Mystery Novel Guide for the International Traveler.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Robin Winks and others describe mysteries occurring in many lands.

Pepper, Andrew. *The Contemporary American Crime Novel: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class.* Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000. Scholarly treatment of American mystery writers of all persuasions. A conflation into one book of many writing perspectives.

Winks, Robin. *Modus Operandi: An Excursion into Detective Fiction.* Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, 1982. A clever, idiosyncratic ramble through the field of detective fiction and the byways of spy novels.

Student Resources

Once you whetted students' appetites for more mysteries, let me recommend the following writers:

Tony Hillerman - a well-known writer whose protagonists are Navajos living in the Southwest - for an immersion into Navajo culture.

Walter Mosley - whose mysteries feature Easy Rawlins, a black LA private detective. These mysteries are hard-boiled.

Craig Johnson - whose other novels besides *Kindness Goes Unpunished* take place in the modern West in Wyoming.

William Kent Kreuger - whose protagonist is Cork O'Connor, who lives in upper Minnesota and has a close association with the

Ojibwe.

Barbara Neely - whose mysteries feature Blanche White who is an African-American housemaid.

Sara Paretsky - whose tough V.I. Warshawsky lives and investigates in Chicago.

Ian Rankin - whose John Rebus is a flawed outsider cop working in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Louis Sachar whose book, *Holes,* is a high school staple and which involves the solving of a mystery.

Dana Stabenow - whose setting is Alaska and whose protagonist in most of her mysteries is an indomitable Aleut woman, Kate Shugak.

Appendix A

Guide Questions

Chapter 1

Where is the protagonist when the story opens?
Name an incident that you think is funny.
Who is the Basquo?
Why does Cady want her father to bring his gun to Philadelphia?
Why is Henry Standing Bear going to Philadelphia?
Who else is going with them?
Name the car they use to get there.
How did you react to the Omar-Myra Rhoades contretemps?
Who is Lucian?

Chapter 2

Where in Philly do they first stop?
What happens to Walt while he is waiting for Henry?
Where is Old City is Cady's apartment?
As Lena and Walt return after their walk, what news do they get and who gives them this news?

Chapter 3

What bad thing happens to Walt in the waiting room?
What has happened to Cady? Where did it happen?
What does Michael Moretti look for and find in Cady's PDA?
What prognosis does Dr. Rissman give for Cady?
How does Walt react to the memory of his photos back on his desk back in Wyoming?
What does Walt discover on Cady's cell phone
Describe the messages
Bear says, "Do not do this thing. . .. Do not do this." What thing?

Why do Walt and Henry go to a Phillies game?
What caused the damage to Cady's skull?

Chapter 4

24. How do they get tickets to the game?

How does Walt identify Devon Conliffe?
What does Walt do with Devon?
Why does Devon react the way he does to Walt's assault?
According to Walt, what does just about everyone do ". . .to you when you're a cop."?
What news does the man in the black trench coat and the glasses with designer frames with red dots bring to Walt?

Chapter 5

Why do Katz and Gowder question Walt?
KEEP THIS QUESTION IN MIND AS YOU READ THE MYSTERY. Cowder ". . . looked at Katz longer than necessary."(p 82 middle of the page) Why?
Why does Walt get upset as he searches Cady's apartment?
What does Lena admit happened eight years ago?
What startling information does Esteban Cordero give about the man who pounded on the museum's door and told him about Cady's fall?

Chapter 6

What does Walt conclude about the person who knocked on the museum door?
What does Henry say people must do for Cady? Why?
What does Walt find among the flowers and what does it say?
What does Walt conclude from the message?
Where do Walt and Henry go?
What find makes Walt cry?

Chapter 7

Who walks in on them?
What pro bono case was Cady working on?
Who do you think is the father of Joanne Fitzpatrick's baby?
What do Walt and the other policemen do in West Philly?

Chapter 8

Describe Devon's physical condition when he died.
Why do Walt, Katz, and Cowder go to the Grand Opera House in Wilmington, Delaware?
Describe the Roosevelt Boulevard incident.
What reason does Joanne Fitzpatrick give for being at the gun range? (REMEMBER THIS INCIDENT!)
Why did Walt want to grab Osgood's throat?

Chapter 9

Where do Walt and Lena go for dinner?
Why can't Lena go with Walt to Henry's museum opening?
Do you think she's happy about that? Why or why not?
What does Walt use for eagle feathers which Henry wants him to get?
Describe the incident involving Shankar DuVall, Billy Carlisle, and Devon Conliffe.
What does the note say which Walt finds on the Benjamin Franklin Bridge?
Whom does he meet on the bridge?

Chapter 10

What does Henry say about the ceremony he has just performed?
Who wrote the poem in the brochure for Henry's Mennonite photograph exhibit?
Who contacted Vic and asked her to come to Philly?
What does the driver of the SUV say he is looking for?
Where is Walt when he regains consciousness?
How does Walt find the Indian mentioned in the latest message?

Chapter 11

Describe what the police find in the Bodine St. warehouse.
What startling thing do they discover about Billy Carlisle?
Why does Walt get angry with Katz and Cowder?
How does Walt describe the connections among Carlisle, DuVall,Diaz, and Osgood.
Who do they is leaving the notes?

Chapter 12

Who is the killer Walt decides to look for?
Who does Walt think hurt Cady?
What news does Walt receive when he gets to the intensive care unit?
What do they find on page 72 of the ledger?
Who wanted Walt looked after?
Where does Osgood want to meet Walt?
Why?
Describe who was under the awning of the back door.
What happened in the alley?

Chapter 13

Who is Walt chasing?
What does he say when Walt catches up to him?
What happens to Walt and Shankar DuVall?
Where is the next message found and what does it say?
Why does Walt think William White Eyes is following him around?
Why does Walt stop at City Hall?
Who gives Walt what message?

Chapter 14

What is Walt's theory about the notes?
What startling thing does Henry Standing Bear do in the ICU?
What is the result? (SLEEPING BEAUTY)
Who is driving the Cadillac Escalade, according to Walt?
Why should Henry be upset?
What happens to Vic?

Chapter 15

Where did William White Eyes have a job?
Who does Walt suspect of working there too?
What does the next note say?
Describe Creampuff.
What does find on the office of the Chamounix Stables?
What question does Walt ask Joanne Fitzpatrick and what is the answer?
What has William White Eyes borrowed?
Why is Forbidden Drive called that?
What are Walt and Henry both thinking?

Chapter 16

99. Who is "Big Chief'?

Epilogue

1. What happens to Toy Diaz?
2. What happens to Jo Fitzpatrick?
3. What was the "tripping point" of the whole operation?
4. What might be "turning into a situation".
5. What is Walt doing at the end of this mystery?

Appendix B

Topics for reports

Cheyenne Indians Wyoming "Sleeping Beauty" "Brier Rose"

Old City Betsy Ross House Fireman's Hall Independence Hall

Franklin Mint Liberty Bell City Hall National Constitution Center

Christ Church Painted Bride Art Center Italian Market Elfreth's Alley

The Reading Terminal Market Benjamin Franklin Bridge Boathouse Row

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts Philadelphia Museum of Art

Fairmount Park Phillies Eagles Four Squares of the City

Franklin Institute MOVE Delaware River Schuylkill River

Pine Barrens Mennonites Forbidden Drive statuary mentioned in story

Graterford Prison Wyoming Basques Lenape Indians Broad Street Line

Philadelphia Main Line Frankford El Citizen's Bank Park

Appendix C

Mystery Morphology

The following outline gives a skeletal framework which is common to mystery stories.

PREAMBLE: Story begins; a happy setting soon to be disrupted; or victim is accompanied to his/her death.

CRIME REPORTED OR DISCOVERED:

PROBLEM-SOLVER INTRODUCED (detective, private eye, cop):

INTERESTED PARTIES APPEAR (are tracked down):

SUCCESSIVE INTERVIEWS:

ADDITIONAL CRIME OR THREAT OF CRIME: (in response to pressure of interviews)

CLUES LEAD TO CULPRIT: (but no prosecutorial proof)

ENTRAPMENT OF CULPRIT: (showdown)

AFTERMATH: (often humorous)

Subplot(s)

> The subplot may or may not tie into main plot.
> There may be a love interest.
> The investigator has domestic duties or difficulties.
> There may be tensions within the investigative team.

Appendix D

Character | Traits | Source (pg.#)

1. Walt Longmire

2. Henry Standing Bear

3. Cady Longmire

4. Vic

5. Devin Conliffe

6. Lena Moretti

7. Detective Katz

8. Detective Gowder

9. Vince Osgood

10. Joanne Fitzpatrick

11. Billy Carlisle

12. Shankar DuVall

13. Toy Diaz

14. William White Eyes

Appendix E

Pennsylvania Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening met by this unit:

1.1. A- Establish the purpose for reading a type ot text (literature, information) before reading.

1.1. G- Make and support with evidence, assertions about texts.

1.2. A- Use teacher and student established criteria for making decisions and drawing conclusions.

1.3. A- Analyze the relationships, uses and effectiveness of literary elements . . . including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone, and style.

1.4. A- Write complex informational pieces (e.g. research papers, analyses, evaluations, essays).

1.5. A- Listen to others. Ask clarifying questions. Synthesize information, ideas, and opinions to determine relevancy. Take notes.

1.6. C- Speak using skills appropriate to formal speech situations

1.7. D- Contribute to discussions. Ask relevant, clarifying questions. Respond with relevant information or opinions to questions asked.

1.6. E- Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.

1.6. F- Use media for learning purposes.

1.8. B- Locate information using appropriate sources and strategies

1.8. C- Organize, summarize, and present the main ideas from research.