



Dark Chronicles: The Literature of True Crimes and Mysteries

Course Information

Grade(s):	10-12
Discipline/Course:	English/Semester Elective
Course Title:	Dark Chronicles: The Literature of True Crimes and Mysteries
Prerequisite(s):	English 9 College Prep or English 9 Honors
Course Description: <i>Program of Studies</i>	This course explores the writing about crimes and the criminal mind, an area of morbid fascination in modern society. Students will look at some of the more gruesome crimes that have been captured in literary works, including such classics as Truman Capote’s <i>In Cold Blood</i> . They will also use their analytical skills to evaluate and piece together evidence in their role as citizen detectives when listening to podcasts like <i>Serial</i> and <i>My Favorite Murder</i> . In addition, students will explore detective mysteries by the likes of Edgar Allan Poe, Agatha Christie, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Walter Mosley, Stephen King and other detective writers. Students will also try their hand at writing about a real crime using the strategies and structures of true crime literature.
Course Essential Questions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What steps does a detective follow to solve a mystery? What skills are needed? ● What influence did real crimes and criminals have on the detective/mystery story? ● Why is it important to understand the criminal mind? ● What effect does violent trauma have on a community and the individuals that make up that community?
Course Enduring Understandings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Though mysteries can be winding, following a plan of steps and using such skills as reflection and critical thinking are key to solving any crime. ● Real crime and criminals sometimes inspired mysteries, but sometimes, potential criminals were inspired by the mysteries they read. ● To catch a criminal and prevent further violence, a detective must first understand how the criminal mind works.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Violence can both polarize and unify a community, and it can have similar effects on each individual.
Duration: Credit:	One semester .5 credit
Course Materials/Resources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” by Edgar Allan Poe ● <i>In Cold Blood</i> by Truman Capote ● <i>The Executioner’s Song</i> by Norman Mailer ● <i>Serial</i> (Podcast) ● <i>My Favorite Murder</i> (Podcast) ● “<i>Grisly Murders and Serial Killers? Ooh, Tell Me More</i>” (The New York Times) ● “<i>The Bloody History of the True Crime Genre</i>” (JSTOR) ● <i>I’ll Be Gone in the Dark</i> (Television series) ● <i>Devil in the White City</i> by Erik Larson ● <i>Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI</i> by David Grann ● Various works by Agatha Christie, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and other detective writers ● <i>Devil in the Blue Dress</i> by Walter Mosley ● <i>Holly</i> or <i>Mr. Mercedes</i> by Stephen King ● <i>The Silence of the Lambs</i> by Thomas Harris ● <i>Murder on the Orient Express</i> by Agatha Christie ● <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ● <i>The Maltese Falcon</i> by Dashiell Hammett ● <i>In the Woods</i> by Tana French ● Current crime articles <p>Each year, teachers of this course will identify one common text to be read by all students.</p>
FPS Course Academic Expectation(s):	Synthesizing and Evaluating Conveying Ideas
Year at a Glance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Portfolio

(Units)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The portfolio is an unnumbered, overarching literacy endeavor culminating in a multimodal, curated compilation of work that demonstrates a student’s understanding of content, mastery of skills, metacognitive awareness, and growth in these areas over time. ● Unit 1: It’s Elementary: The Art of the Detective Story ● Unit 2: The Criminal Mind
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Units

Unit Number and Title:	Unit: The Portfolio
Duration:	One Semester
Resource(s):	<u>English Portfolio Directions</u>
Unit Overview:	The portfolio is a metacognitive, multimodal presentation exhibiting students’ acquisition of knowledge and skills over the course of their sophomore year in English. It is the culminating demonstration of district and State standards. Because the portfolio is an ongoing, year-long experience that captures a student’s achievement in language and literacy skills, all language standards related to grammar and the standard conventions of English are articulated in this part of the curriculum document and will be taught on an ongoing basis.
Standard(s):	All of the Connecticut Common Core Standards 11-12 (Reading Literature, Reading for Information, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening) will be demonstrated in the portfolio. However, the

following standards are the ones that most apply to the new, reflective writing students compose for the final metacognitive piece:

Reading:

RL.11-12.10 By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

RI.11-12.10 By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Writing:

W.11-12.2.b Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

W.11-12.2.c Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

W.11-12.3.a Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

W.11-12.3.c Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).

W.11-12.3.d Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

W.11-12.3.e Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

W.11-12.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grades 11-12 here.)

W.11-12.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

W.11-12.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Language:

L.11-12.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L.11-12.1.a Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.

L. 11-12.1.b Resolve issues of complex or contested usage, consulting references (e.g., *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage*, *Garner's Modern American Usage*) as needed.

	<p>L.11-12.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</p> <p>L.11-12.2.a Observe hyphenation conventions.</p> <p>L.11-12.2.b Spell correctly.</p> <p>L.11-12.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.</p> <p>L.11-12.3.a Vary syntax for effect, consulting references (e.g., Tufte's <i>Artful Sentences</i>) for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.</p>
<p>Essential Question(s):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can a portfolio of work show achievement and growth in literacy skills? ● How does reflecting on one's growth as a reader, writer, speaker, listener, and thinker enrich and deepen one's understanding? ● How does growth in one aspect of literacy (reading, writing, speaking, listening, etc.) facilitate growth in other areas? ● How does a multi-genre and a multimodal approach to writing and expression create a more fluent and well-rounded learner?
<p>Enduring Understanding(s):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By collecting, reflecting on, and revising my work in one portfolio, I can track my achievement and formulate new goals for continued growth. ● Reflection allows me to continue to develop my literacy skills because I can step back from the individual works, try new strategies, and consider the level of success I've achieved with each piece. ● When I try new strategies and increase my skills in one area of literacy, I can use that increase to inform and expand my expertise in the other areas of literacy, as well. ● Because I can express my ideas through a variety of genres and modes, I am able to more

	fluently share my thinking with more people and across all disciplines.	
Learning Goals:	Content: Students will know...	Skills: Students will be able to...
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Self-reflection/metacognition (understanding of one’s own achievement and growth in literacy skills) ● Comprehension strategies for reading and understanding literature and literary nonfiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrate the ability to read and comprehend literature (including drama, stories, and poems) at the high end of the Grades 11-12 text band. ● Demonstrate the ability to read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the Grades 11-12 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflective writing techniques (such as use of voice, organization, and integration of illustrative examples) ● Technology platforms and tools for sharing and collecting writing in a meaningful way ● MLA style (humanities) ● APA style (sciences) ● Turabian’s Manual (research) ● Spelling rules and tools ● Metacognition ● Organizational structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use technology appropriately ● Write and edit work so that it conforms to the guidelines in a style manual (e.g., MLA Handbook, APA style, Turabian’s Manual for Writers) appropriate for the discipline and writing type. ● Spell correctly. ● Write metacognitive reflections. ● Employ personal voice. ● Organize reflective thinking

Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parallel structure ● Types of phrases ● Types of clauses ● Semicolon usage and rules ● Colon usage and rules ● Capitalization rules ● Other punctuation rules for English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. ● Use parallel structure. ● Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) and clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations. ● Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. ● Use a semicolon (and perhaps a conjunctive adverb) to link two or more closely related independent clauses. ● Use a colon to introduce a list or quotation. ● Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
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Unit Number and Title:	Unit 1: It's Elementary: The Art of the Detective Story
Duration:	One quarter
Resource(s):	<p>The following are best aligned with this unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” by Edgar Allan Poe ● <i>Murder on the Orient Express</i> by Agatha Christie ● <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ● <i>The Maltese Falcon</i> by Dashiell Hammett ● <i>In the Woods</i> by Tana French ● <i>The Silence of the Lambs</i> by Thomas Harris ● <i>Devil in the Blue Dress</i> by Walter Mosley ● <i>Holly</i> or <i>Mr. Mercedes</i> by Stephen King ● Series by mystery writers
Unit Overview:	<p>In this first unit, students will become acquainted with the structure and characteristics of mystery writing. They will explore the patterns writers use and consider the development of characters, both criminal and victims. Real-life crime stories like those of Lizzie Borden and Jack the Ripper will be discussed for the role they may have played in inspiring the works of Conan Doyle and others.</p> <p>Students will read and view several works of both classic and contemporary mystery writing with a critical eye, following typically winding plots and evaluating evidence and clues throughout the story in an effort to solve the crime. Students will also engage in discussions as they collaborate with their peers on the solving of mysteries. They will have an opportunity to apply their knowledge of the genre by creating their own mystery stories.</p> <p>Specific content, including information and ideas connected closely to science, social studies, and the arts, will be explored and deeply considered as it is applicable to the works of literature read. Building background knowledge and learning how to recognize when and where it is needed are essential to being competent readers, and, as such, this type of content will be relied on in that way.</p>

Standard(s):	<p>Reading</p> <p>RL.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text</p> <p>RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed)</p> <p>Writing</p> <p>W.11-12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences</p> <p>W.11-12.3a Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events</p> <p>W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience</p> <p>Speaking and Listening</p> <p>SL.11-12.1c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives</p> <p>SL.11-12.1d Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task</p>
Essential Question(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What steps does a detective follow to solve a mystery? What skills are needed?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What influence did real crimes and criminals have on the detective/mystery story? 	
Enduring Understanding(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though mysteries can be winding, following a plan of steps and using such skills as reflection and critical thinking are key to solving any crime. • Real crime and criminals sometimes inspired mysteries, but sometimes, potential criminals were inspired by the mysteries they read. 	
Learning Goals:	Content: Students will know...	Skills: Students will be able to...
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme or central idea • Credibility of evidence • Literary elements, including setting, plot, and characters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the development of a theme or central idea through the course of a text • Critically evaluate evidence offered and declarations made in a story • Evaluate author's choices regarding setting, plot, and character development
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics and structure of narrative writing, particularly for the mystery genre • Audience and task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write mysteries that follow the expectations for the genre • Write for a specific task and audience
Speaking and Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis • Question formulation strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesize comments, claims, and evidence into a coherent understanding • Probe reason and evidence with questions

Unit Number and Title:	Unit 2: The Criminal Mind
Duration:	One quarter
Resource(s):	<p>The following are best aligned with this unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>In Cold Blood</i> by Truman Capote ● <i>The Executioner’s Song</i> by Norman Mailer ● <i>Devil in the White City</i> by Erik Larson ● <i>Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI</i> by David Grann ● <i>Serial</i> ● <i>My Favorite Murder</i> ● <u>“Grisly Murders and Serial Killers? Ooh, Tell Me More”</u> ● <u>“The Bloody History of the True Crime Genre”</u> ● <i>I’ll Be Gone in the Dark</i> ● Current crime articles
Unit Overview:	<p>In this second unit, students will turn their focus to the even more alarming body of true crime literature, both fiction and nonfiction. Students will examine how accomplished writers like Truman Capote and Norman Mailer captivated the reading world with their accounts of real murderers and started a national fascination with the macabre. They will also explore the role digital media, particularly podcasts and docuseries, has played a role in expanding the audience for the underbelly of society.</p> <p>Students will develop their ability to analyze sets of complex ideas and events and articulate how they fit together. They will also look more closely at the structure of texts and the impact that has on the story. As they explore true crime cases, they will practice integrating information from multiple sources into their discussions and writing.</p> <p>Specific content, including information and ideas connected closely to science, social studies, and the arts, will be explored and deeply considered as it is applicable to the works of literature read. Building</p>

	background knowledge and learning how to recognize when and where it is needed are essential to being competent readers, and, as such, this type of content will be relied on in that way.
Standard(s):	<p>Reading</p> <p>RI.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text</p> <p>RI.11-12.5 Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging</p> <p>RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem</p> <p>Writing</p> <p>W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content</p> <p>W.11-12.3c Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution)</p> <p>Speaking and Listening</p> <p>SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks</p>
Essential Question(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it important to understand the criminal mind?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect does violent trauma have on a community and the individuals that make up that community? 	
Enduring Understanding(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To catch a criminal and prevent further violence, a detective must first understand how the criminal mind works. • Violence can both polarize and unify a community, and it can have similar effects on each individual. 	
Learning Goal:	Content: Students will know...	Skills: Students will be able to...
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactions between individuals, ideas, and events • Structure of a true crime narrative • Information from a variety of media and platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the interactions between individuals, ideas, and events in a true crime work • Analyze the structure of a true crime narrative • Integrate information from a variety of media and platforms
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics and structure of informational text • Sequence and tone appropriate for true crime works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write informative pieces as a way of examining complex ideas • Write original texts about a true crime using appropriate sequence and tone
Speaking and Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present findings and assertions in a clear and convincing manner