



English IV: Mystery Genre

10 Months - 5 Units

English IV: Mystery Genre explores the evolution of the mystery genre through reading, writing, discussion, and inquiry-based learning. Students examine how mystery stories have developed over time while analyzing the literary techniques authors use to create suspense, develop characters, and challenge readers to solve compelling puzzles.

The course is organized into four thematic units: History of the Mystery, where students trace the origins and evolution of detective fiction; Crime Scene Investigation, which examines the role of evidence, logic, and forensic science in both literature and real-world investigations; Psychological Mysteries, which explores character motivation, unreliable narrators, perception, and suspense; and Modern Mysteries, in which students compare two contemporary mystery texts to analyze how modern authors address a variety of issues.

Throughout the course, students engage in close reading, literary analysis, collaborative discussions, research, and creative problem-solving. Students complete investigative case files, literary analysis essays, multimedia presentations, research assignments, and collaborative investigations that require them to support their conclusions with textual evidence and critical analysis.

By the end of the course, students will have strengthened their analytical reading, argumentative writing, research, communication, and presentation skills while developing a deeper appreciation for the enduring appeal and evolving nature of mystery literature.

Curriculum Writer: Claudine Priola

Curriculum Written: July 2026

Board Approval Date: (Enter Date Here)

Grade Level: 12	Content Area: English IV: Mystery Genre Unit 1 Theme/Topic: History of the Mystery Duration: 8 weeks
Unit Summary (Enduring Understandings)	<i>Students will understand that...</i> 1. Mystery stories reflect the societies in which they are created, revealing cultural values, fears, and hopes. 2. The mystery genre has evolved over time, but its central purpose—engaging readers in solving problems and inference—has remained constant. 3. Authors use specific literary elements and conventions, such as clues, red herrings, suspense, and foreshadowing, to engage readers and shape the mystery experience. 4. The development of detective fiction has been influenced by historical events, advances in science, and changing social expectations. 5. Mystery readers actively analyze evidence, question assumptions, and revise conclusions as new information is revealed. 6. The search for truth often involves balancing facts, perspective, bias, and interpretation, both in the story and in the reader's mind. 7. Classic mystery writers established conventions that continue to influence contemporary books, films, and television. 8. Critical thinking, observation, and logical reasoning are transferable skills that extend beyond literature to everyday decision-making.
Essential Questions	Why are people fascinated by mysteries? How do authors create suspense and uncertainty? How can evidence be interpreted differently? How do mystery writers engage readers through clues and deception? How has the mystery genre changed over time, and why? How do historical events shape the stories people tell? What role do evidence and reasoning play in discovering the truth? Can truth ever be completely objective? Why do readers enjoy trying to solve a mystery before the detective does? How do authors manipulate readers' expectations?
Misconceptions	<i>Students may think that...</i> • Mystery stories are only about solving murders. • All mystery stories follow the same formula. • The detective is always a police officer. • There is always one clear, objective truth. • Modern mysteries are completely different from classic mysteries. • You have to wait until the end to solve the mystery.
Transfer	<i>Students will be able to use what they learn to...</i> • Identify conventions of mystery literature. • Analyze characterization.

- Distinguish between clues, red herrings, and foreshadowing.
- Practice close reading.

Important Facts
and Key
Concepts

Students will know...

- the major milestones in the development of the mystery genre.
- the contributions of influential mystery authors.
- the defining characteristics and conventions of mystery fiction.
- key mystery vocabulary and literary terms.
- how historical and cultural contexts influenced the evolution of detective fiction.
- the differences among major mystery subgenres.
- that mystery readers actively use observation, inference, and evidence-based reasoning to constr
- that many conventions established in early detective fiction continue to appear in contemporary games.

Standards

NJ Student Learning Standards—ELA

- L.SS.11–12.1. Demonstrate command of the system and structure of the English language when writing or speaking.
- L.VL.11–12.3. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on gr including technical meanings, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- L.VI.11–12.4. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Reading

- RL.TS.11–12.4. Evaluate the author’s choices concerning the structure and the effectiveness of specific parts of a t begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) and how they contribute to its overall stru aesthetic impact.
- RL.CI.11–12.2. Determine two or more themes of a literary text and analyze how they are developed and refined o including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account or analysis; provide an objectiv
- RL.IT.11–12.3. Analyze the impact of the author’s choices as they develop ideas throughout the text regarding how of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and deve

Writing

- W.AW.11–12.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasonin evidence.
- W.IW.11–12.2. Write informative/explanatory texts (including the narration of historical events, scientific procedur processes) to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effe analysis of content.

- W.WR.11–12.5. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question); narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation
- W.RW.11–12.7. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (e.g., one day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes.

Speaking and Listening

- SL.PE.11–12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, teacher-led discussions, and grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- SL.II.11–12.2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, and electronically) to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any strengths and limitations of each source.
- SL.PI.11–12.4 Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically. The content, organization, language, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WIDA Standards for Multilingual Learners

ELD-LA.9-12.Inform.Expressive

Construct informational texts in language arts that

Introduce and define topic and/or entity for the audience.

Establish an objective or neutral stance

Add precision, details, and clarity about complex attributes, qualities, characteristics, activities, and conceptual relationships

Develop coherence and cohesion throughout text.

- Students collaborate with classmates to solve mysteries, discuss clues, and participate in group investigations.
- Students read mystery texts, analyze characters, identify clues, make inferences

Computer Science and Design Thinking

- 8.1.12.CS.3 Compare the functions of application software, system software, and hardware.
- 8.1.12.DA.5 Create data visualizations from large data sets to summarize, communicate, and support different interpretations of phenomena.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

- 9.4.12.CI.1 Demonstrate the ability to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills and ideas
- 9.4.12.IML.2 Evaluate digital sources for timeliness, accuracy, perspective, credibility of the source, and relevance of information or other resources

Assessment Evidence

Students will demonstrate understanding by...

Formative Assessment Wanted Poster, Timeline Activity, Crime Report, Short story Questions, Film analysis

Benchmark Assessment Detective's Notebook, One Pager

Summative Assessment Literary Analysis, Famous Detective Project

Alternative Assessment News Report

Interdisciplinary Connections

A mystery unit requires students to think like investigators by analyzing evidence, evaluating multiple solutions, and determining the best solution to solve a complex problem. This engineering design standard aligns with the investigative process because students must weigh evidence, draw conclusions, and consider the advantages and limitations of different investigative methods.

HS-ETS1-3 Evaluate a solution to a complex real-world problem based on prioritized criteria and trade-offs that account for multiple constraints including cost, safety, reliability, and aesthetics, as well as possible social, cultural, and environmental impact.

Special Education	• Provide guided notes with key vocabulary highlighted. • Break readings into smaller chunks with comprehension checks. • Use graphic organizers (timeline, character map, clue chart). • Offer audiobooks or text-to-speech. • Reduce the number of required reading passages while maintaining key concepts. • Allow verbal responses or recorded answers instead of lengthy writing. • Provide extended time on assignments and assessments. • Model how to identify clues and make inferences using think-alouds.
504	• Extended time on tests and projects. • Frequent movement or brain breaks as needed. • Digital copies of notes. • Chunk multi-step assignments into manageable tasks. • Use visual schedules and checklists for long-term projects. • Preferential seating
At Risk/ I&RS	• Set short-term goals with frequent feedback. • Incorporate engaging, hands-on mystery activities. • Offer guided practice before independent work. • Celebrate small successes through positive reinforcement. • Provide clear routines and expectations. • Use cooperative learning groups with defined roles. • Check understanding frequently
ML	• Pre-teach mystery vocabulary with visuals (clue, suspect, evidence, motive, detective). • Provide bilingual glossaries when available. • Use sentence frames for discussion and writing ("I think the suspect is ____ because..."). • Pair students with supportive peers. • Include images, timelines, and graphic organizers. • Allow responses in the student's first language when appropriate. • Use closed-captioned videos and visuals to reinforce learning.
Gifted	Independent research project Higher-level analysis questions Enrichment activities

Resources

Edgar Allan Poe, “Murders in the Rue Morgue”

Agatha Christie

Sherlock Holmes short stories

Sherlock TV

Other Short Stories

Classic Mystery Puzzles

Mysteries of the Day

Film-Death on the Nile

Grade Level: 12

Content Area: English IV: Mystery Genre

Unit 2

Theme/Topic: Crime, Evidence, and Investigation

Duration: 8 Weeks

Unit Summary (Enduring Understandings)

Students will understand that...

1. Evidence must be carefully collected, analyzed, and interpreted before reliable conclusions can be drawn.
2. Investigators use observation, inference, and logical reasoning to solve crimes and mysteries.
3. Not all evidence carries the same weight, and evidence can support multiple interpretations.
4. Bias, assumptions, and incomplete information can lead to incorrect conclusions during an investigation.
5. Effective investigators continually revise their theories as new evidence becomes available.
6. Crime scene investigation requires attention to detail, collaboration, and ethical decision-making.
7. Mystery authors deliberately construct clues, evidence, and misdirection to engage readers.
8. Critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning are valuable skills that apply beyond the classroom and problem-solving.

Essential Questions

- What makes evidence reliable?
- How do investigators distinguish facts from assumptions?
- How do clues become evidence?
- Can the same evidence support different conclusions?
- How do bias and perspective influence an investigation?

	● Why is observation different from inference? ● How do authors use clues and red herrings to shape readers' thinking? ● When is there enough evidence to reach a conclusion? ● How does scientific evidence strengthen or challenge an investigation? ● Why is it important to question first impressions? ● What responsibilities do investigators have when interpreting evidence?
Misconceptions	<i>Students may think that...</i> ● Evidence always tells one clear story. ● Observation and inference are the same. ● Every mystery has one obvious solution. ● Crime scene investigations happen quickly. ● Eyewitnesses are always accurate. ● Detectives rely mainly on intuition.
Transfer	<i>Students will be able to use what they learn to...</i> ● Observe details carefully and distinguish observations from inferences. ● Collect, organize, and analyze evidence from a crime scene or mystery scenario. ● Differentiate between physical, testimonial, circumstantial, and digital evidence. ● Identify relevant and irrelevant evidence. ● Develop and revise theories as new evidence is introduced. ● Draw logical conclusions supported by evidence. ● Evaluate the reliability and credibility of evidence and witnesses. ● Recognize bias, assumptions, and logical fallacies that may affect an investigation. ● Distinguish facts from opinions and speculation. ● Compare multiple explanations for the same evidence before selecting the most supported.
Important Facts and Key Concepts	<i>Students will know...</i> ● the stages of a criminal investigation. ● the roles of professionals involved in solving crimes. ● the characteristics of different types of evidence. ● essential crime scene and investigation vocabulary. ● the differences between observation, inference, and deduction. ● how to evaluate the reliability and credibility of evidence. ● the relationship among motive, means, opportunity, and alibi. ● how mystery authors use clues, evidence, and red herrings to engage readers. ● that evidence-based reasoning leads to stronger conclusions than assumptions or intuition. ● that effective investigations require careful observation, logical analysis, collaboration, and revision of theories as new evidence emerges.

NJ Student Learning Standards—ELA

Language

- L.SS.11–12.1. Demonstrate command of the system and structure of the English language when writing or speaking.
- L.VL.11–12.3. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 11–12 content, including technical meanings, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- L.VI.11–12.4. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Reading

- RI.MF.11–12.6. Synthesize complex information across multiple sources and formats to develop ideas, resolve conflicts, and develop an interpretation that goes beyond explicit text information (e.g., express a personal point of view, new interpretation).
- RI.PP.11–12.5. Evaluate the author's choices concerning the structure and the effectiveness of specific parts of a text (e.g., begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) and how they contribute to its overall structure and as its aesthetic impact.
- RI.CR.11–12.1. Accurately cite a range of thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to strongly support analysis of multiple aspects of what an informational text says explicitly and inferentially, as well as interpretations.

Writing

- W.AW.11–12.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant evidence.
- W.IW.11–12.2. Write informative/explanatory texts (including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments and processes) to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the selection and analysis of content.
- W.WR.11–12.5. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation).
- W.RW.11–12.7. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (e.g., or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes.

Speaking and Listening

- SL.PE.11–12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, teacher-led) on grade 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- SL.II.11–12.2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively) to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any strengths and data.

- SL.UM.11–12.5. Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
- SL.PI.11–12.4 Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically. The content, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- SL.ES.11–12.3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, counterclaims, reasons and evidence, ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used

WIDA Standards for Multilingual Learners

ELD-LA.9-12.Inform.Expressive

Construct informational texts in language arts that

Introduce and define topic and/or entity for the audience.

Establish an objective or neutral stance

Add precision, details, and clarity about complex attributes, qualities, characteristics, activities, and conceptual relationships

Develop coherence and cohesion throughout text.

- Students collaborate in investigative teams, follow procedures, and discuss evidence respectfully.
- Students read crime reports, mystery stories, witness statements, and case files while writing evidence-based conclusions
- Students use scientific inquiry and forensic vocabulary to examine physical evidence.

Computer Science and Design Thinking

- 8.2.12.ETW.3 Identify a complex, global environmental or climate change issue, develop a systemic plan of investigation, and create an innovative sustainable solution.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

- 9.4.12.IML.8 Evaluate media sources for point of view, bias, and motivations
- 9.4.12.IML.2 Evaluate digital sources for timeliness, accuracy, perspective, credibility of the source, and relevance of data, or other resources

Assessment Evidence
<i>Students will demonstrate understanding by...</i> Formative Assessment Guided questions, Discussions, Socratic Seminar, Mock trial Benchmark Assessment Research Essay Summative Assessment Unsolved Mystery Project, Detective’s Notebook Alternative Assessment Podcast Investigation

Interdisciplinary Connections
A mystery curriculum challenges students to solve complex problems by analyzing evidence, evaluating multiple solutions, and creating a solution. This engineering design standard complements mystery investigations by encouraging students to evaluate not only what solution is best, but also how effective and practical that solution is under real-world constraints.
Science

HS-ETS1-3 Evaluate a solution to a complex real-world problem based on prioritized criteria and trade-offs that account for including cost, safety, reliability, and aesthetics, as well as possible social, cultural, and environmental impacts.

Accommodations and Modifications

Special Education	• Provide step-by-step investigation checklists. • Use graphic organizers for evidence, suspects, motives, and conclusions. • Pre-teach forensic and mystery vocabulary with visuals. • Break investigations into smaller tasks with frequent teacher check-ins. • Provide audio versions of case files or text-to-speech tools. • Reduce the amount of reading or writing while maintaining key concepts. • Allow oral responses, recorded explanations, or visual presentations instead of lengthy writing. • Offer extended time and guided practice for evidence analysis.
504	• Extended time for assessments. • Preferential seating during collaborative activities. • Digital copies of case files, notes, and graphic organizers. • Scheduled movement or sensory breaks, if appropriate. • Use organizational tools such as checklists and planners to support long-term projects.
At Risk/ I&RS	• Provide clear expectations and daily learning targets. • Use engaging, hands-on investigations and simulations. • Conduct frequent comprehension and progress checks. • Model how to analyze evidence before independent work. • Use cooperative groups with clearly defined roles (lead investigator, recorder, evidence analyst, etc.). • Offer positive reinforcement and opportunities to revise work based on feedback. • Connect investigations to real-world careers to increase relevance and motivation.
ML	• Pre-teach key vocabulary using visuals and real objects. • Provide bilingual glossaries or translated vocabulary lists when available. • Use sentence frames for speaking and writing (e.g., "The evidence suggests ____ because ____"). • Pair students with supportive peers for collaborative investigations. • Use diagrams, photographs, timelines, and labeled evidence charts to support comprehension. • Allow students to demonstrate understanding through visuals, oral presentations, or multimedia projects, if appropriate.
Gifted	• Evaluate multiple competing theories • propose additional evidence needed to strengthen the investigation.

Resources

“Serial” Podcast

The Central Park Five: A Film by Ken Burns, Sarah Burns, David McMahon (PBS film option)

Explore [Innocence Project](#)

[True Crime-Justice](#)

[True Crime](#)

OJ Simpson

Unsolved Mysteries

Grade Level: 12

Content Area: English IV: Mystery Genre

Unit 3

Theme/Topic: Psychological Mysteries

Duration: 8 weeks

Unit Summary (Enduring Understandings)

Students will understand that...

1. Psychological mysteries explore the complexities of human thoughts, motivations, emotions, and behaviors to create mystery and conflict.
2. Authors use perspective, memory, and perception to influence how readers interpret events.
3. Readers must evaluate both external evidence and characters' internal thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to solve a mystery.
4. A narrator or character's perspective may be limited, biased, or incomplete, requiring readers to verify information.
5. Human behavior is complex, and characters' actions often result from multiple motivations and causes.
6. Psychological mysteries challenge readers to distinguish between appearance and reality, and perspective.
7. Critical readers revise their interpretations as new information changes their understanding of events.
8. Empathy and critical thinking help readers understand characters' decisions without assuming they are justified or correct.

Essential Questions

- What makes someone capable of committing a crime?
- What makes a narrator or character reliable?
- How do perspective and point of view influence what readers believe?
- How do fear and emotion influence decision-making?
- How do authors manipulate readers' expectations?
- How do perspective and perception influence what we believe is true?
- How do authors reveal a character's true motivations?
- What is the relationship between memory and truth?
- Why do psychological mysteries focus more on people than on crimes?

	● When should readers question a character's version of events? ● How does understanding a character's motivation deepen our understanding of the m ● How do internal conflicts shape external actions?
Misconceptions	<i>Students may think that...</i> ● An unreliable narrator is always intentionally lying. ● People's actions always reveal their true motives. ● Emotions make characters irrational. ● Readers should accept the narrator's perspective as fact. ● If readers understand why a character acted a certain way, they must agree with or ex ● There is always one obvious "good" character and one obvious "bad" character.
Transfer	<i>Students will be able to use what they learn to...</i> ● Analyze how a character's thoughts, emotions, and motivations contribute to the mys ● Evaluate the reliability of narrators and other characters using textual evidence. ● Distinguish between fact, perception, memory, and interpretation within a story. ● Draw evidence-based conclusions about characters' motives and actions. ● Revise interpretations as new information is revealed throughout the text. ● Compare multiple perspectives to develop a more complete understanding of events. ● Explain how authors create suspense through characterization, pacing, point of view. ● Analyze how internal conflict influences characters' decisions and the development o ● Recognize how bias and assumptions affect both characters' decisions and readers' in
Important Facts and Key Concepts	<i>Students will know...</i> ● Psychological mysteries focus on characters' thoughts, motivations, emotions, and p ● of the mystery. ● A story's point of view influences what readers know and how they interpret events. ● An unreliable narrator may present events in a way that is incomplete, biased, mistak ● misleading. ● Internal conflict often drives the plot as much as external conflict. ● Memory and perception may be incomplete or influenced by personal experiences an ● Perspective influences how events are described and understood ● Unlike traditional detective mysteries, psychological mysteries often leave readers q ● Psychological mysteries frequently explore themes such as trust, deception, identity, ● perception. ● literary techniques that create psychological tension and suspense. ● how ambiguity can contribute to a mystery's meaning. ● key vocabulary associated with psychological mystery and literary analysis. ● that careful readers evaluate evidence, question assumptions, and revise interpretation ● emerges.

Standards	
NJ Student Learning Standards—ELA	
Language	
● L.SS.11–12.1. Demonstrate command of the system and structure of the English language when writing or speaking ● L.VL.11–12.3. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on gr content, including technical meanings, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. ● L.VI.11–12.4. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.	
Reading	
● RI.MF.11–12.6. Synthesize complex information across multiple sources and formats to develop ideas, resolve con develop an interpretation that goes beyond explicit text information (e.g., express a personal point of view, new inte ● RI PP 11–12.5 Evaluate the author’s choices concerning the structure and the effectiveness of specific parts of a tex begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) and how they contribute to its overall stru as its aesthetic impact. ● RI.CR.11–12.1. Accurately cite a range of thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to strongly sup analysis of multiple aspects of what an informational text says explicitly and inferentially, as well as interpretations ● RI.IT.11–12.3. Analyze the impact of an author’s choices as they develop ideas throughout the text regarding a com of events, and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop	
Writing	
● W.AW.11–12.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasonin evidence. ● W.IW.11–12.2. Write informative/explanatory texts (including the narration of historical events, scientific procedur processes) to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effe and analysis of content. ● W.WR.11–12.5. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-ge problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstratin subject under investigation ● W.RW.11–12.7. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter t or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purpose ● W.NW.11–12.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well- well-structured event sequences.	
Speaking and Listening	

- SL.PE.11–12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- SL.II.11–12.2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, and electronically) to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies in the data.
- SL.UM.11–12.5. Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) to enhance their understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
- SL.PI.11–12.4 Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically. The content, organization, style, and media are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- SL.ES.11–12.3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, logic, ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used

WIDA Standards for Multilingual Learners

- ELD-LA.9-12.Inform.Interpretive
 - Interpret informational texts in language arts by
 - Identifying and/or summarizing central ideas
 - Analyzing descriptions and inferences in textual evidence for key attributes, qualities, characteristics, and relationships
 - Evaluating cumulative impact and refinement of author’s key word choices over the course of text
- Students analyze literary elements including suspense, characterization, point of view, symbolism, theme, and unreliability
- Students collaborate in discussions, literature circles, and peer reviews while following classroom routines.
- Students read informational texts about perception, memory, observation, or cognitive processes that influence how we think

Computer Science and Design Thinking

- 8.2.12.ETW.3 Identify a complex, global environmental or climate change issue, develop a systemic plan of investigation, and create an innovative sustainable solution

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

- 9.4.12.IML.8 Evaluate media sources for point of view, bias, and motivations
- 9.4.12.IML.2 Evaluate digital sources for timeliness, accuracy, perspective, credibility of the source, and relevance of the data, or other resources (e.g., NJSLSA.W8, Social Studies Practice: Gathering and Evaluating Sources.

Assessment Evidence

Students will demonstrate understanding by...

Formative Assessment Character Mind Map, Discussion Circles, Graphic Organizers

Benchmark Assessment Detective’s Notebook

Summative Assessment Literary Investigation Case File, Psychological Character analysis

Alternative Assessment Evidence Board Activity, Reliability Rating

Interdisciplinary Connections

Standards for Cross-Content Areas

A Psychological Suspense unit provides opportunities for students to analyze how characters' choices, stress, relationships, influence their actions and the development of the plot. Rather than diagnosing characters or treating fictional portrayals as health conditions, students evaluate how behaviors affect judgment, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships.

Mental Health

2.1.12.PGD.2 Predict how healthy and unhealthy behaviors can affect brain development and impact physical, social and adulthood.

Accommodations and Modifications	
Special Education	• Provide guided notes and graphic organizers for plot, character development, motivation, t • Chunk complex texts into smaller sections with comprehension checks. • Pre-teach academic vocabulary using visuals and examples (suspense, foreshadowing, mo - narrator, perspective). • Offer audiobooks, text-to-speech, or teacher read-alouds. • Use sentence frames for literary analysis and evidence-based writing. • Allow oral presentations, recorded responses, or visual projects as alternatives to extended • Provide extended time and frequent teacher conferences.
504	• Extended time for assessments. • Preferential seating • Digital copies of readings and notes. • Chunk long-term assignments into smaller milestones with checklists. • Flexible response formats (typed, handwritten, or multimedia). • Scheduled movement or sensory breaks, as appropriate.
At Risk/ I&RS	• Use high-interest mystery texts and engaging opening activities. • Model annotation, close reading, and inference strategies before independent practice. • Incorporate collaborative learning with clearly defined group roles. • Provide frequent formative feedback and opportunities for revision. • Connect themes to ethical decision-making, perception, and human behavior to increase re • Celebrate incremental progress and mastery of skills.
ML	• Pre-teach literary and academic vocabulary with visuals and examples when appropriate. • Provide bilingual glossaries or translated vocabulary lists when available. • Use story maps, character relationship charts, and evidence organizers. • Provide sentence frames for discussion and writing (e.g., "The author creates suspense by. - unreliable because...", "The evidence suggests..."). • Pair students with supportive peers during discussions and collaborative tasks. • Allow students to demonstrate understanding through oral presentations, illustrations, diag
Gifted	● Independent literary research ● Advanced writing prompts ● Student-led seminars

	• Creative projects.
Resources	
<i>One of Us is Lying</i> Alfred Hitchcock: <i>Rear Window</i> , <i>Psycho</i> , <i>The Birds</i> <i>Get Out</i> Film <i>Girl on the Train</i> <i>Shutter Island</i>	

Grade Level: 12	Content Area: English IV Mystery Genre Unit 4 Theme/Topic: Modern Mystery Duration: 14 weeks
Unit Summary (Enduring Understandings)	<i>Students will understand that...</i> 1. Modern mysteries build upon traditional genre conventions while adapting to reflect contemporary cultural concerns. 2. Mysteries reveal the values, fears, conflicts, and challenges of the societies in which they are created. 3. Advances in technology, science, and communication have changed how mysteries are investigated. 4. Modern mysteries often explore complex ideas about justice, morality, identity, and the consequences of actions. 5. Evidence, perspective, and interpretation remain central to solving mysteries, even as investigative techniques evolve. 6. Modern mysteries often blur the boundaries between genres, combining elements of suspense, psychological fiction, and social commentary. 7. Readers must consider how cultural context, media, and technology influence the way mysteries are told and consumed.
Essential Questions	• How has the mystery genre changed over time? • What makes a mystery feel modern? • How do contemporary issues shape the mysteries authors create? • How do technology and science influence investigations in modern mysteries? • What makes a mystery relevant to today's audiences? • How do modern mysteries challenge traditional ideas about detectives, criminals, and justice? • How do different cultures and perspectives influence mystery storytelling? • Are modern mysteries more about solving crimes or understanding people and society? • How do new forms of media change the way mysteries are told? • What responsibilities do writers have when representing real-world issues in mysteries? • Why do audiences continue to be fascinated by mysteries?



Misconceptions	<i>Students may think that...</i> • Modern mysteries are completely different from classic mysteries. • All modern mysteries focus only on crime. • More technology automatically makes a mystery better. • Modern crime stories accurately represent real investigations. • The newest mysteries are always the most innovative.
Transfer	<i>Students will be able to use what they learn to...</i> • Identify how modern mysteries use traditional genre elements such as clues, suspects, motives, and resolution. • Analyze how contemporary authors adapt or challenge traditional mystery structures. • Compare modern mysteries with classic mystery examples to identify similarities and differences. • Explain how genre conventions evolve over time. • Examine how modern mysteries reflect current social, cultural, and ethical issues. • Analyze how themes such as justice, identity, technology, privacy, and morality influence a mystery. • Explain how authors use mysteries to explore real-world conflicts and human behavior. • Evaluate how a mystery reflects the time period and culture in which it was created. • Analyze how mysteries are presented differently in novels, films, television, podcasts, and digital media. • Evaluate how technology changes the way audiences experience mystery stories. • Compare how different formats influence suspense, character development, and audience engagement.
Important Facts and Key Concepts	<i>Students will know...</i> • How modern mysteries have evolved from traditional detective stories. • How Digital evidence can be manipulated, misunderstood, or taken out of context. • Modern mysteries often explore the impact of technology on crime, investigation, and personal identity. • The characteristics and conventions of contemporary mystery genres. • How technology and social changes influence modern investigations and storytelling. • How authors use evidence, perspective, and suspense to engage readers. • How modern mysteries explore complex themes related to justice, identity, ethics, and society. • How different forms of media shape the way mysteries are experienced. • How to analyze whether evidence, conclusions, and interpretations are logical and supported.

Standards

NJ Student Learning Standards—ELA *Language*

- L.SS.11–12.1. Demonstrate command of the system and structure of the English language when writing or speaking.
- L.VL.11–12.3. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level texts, including technical meanings, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- SL.ES.11–12.3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used

WIDA Standards for Multilingual Learners

- ELD-LA.9-12.Inform.Interpretive
 - Interpret informational texts in language arts by
 - Identifying and/or summarizing central ideas
 - Analyzing descriptions and inferences in textual evidence for key attributes, qualities, characteristics, and relationships
 - Evaluating cumulative impact and refinement of author’s key word choices over the course of text
- Students analyze modern mystery texts, including novels, short stories, podcasts, films, and digital mysteries.
- Students use logic, patterns, timelines, probability, and data organization to solve mystery-related problems.
- Students collaborate, discuss theories, ask questions, and communicate ideas during investigations and literary discussions.

Computer Science and Design Thinking

- 8.2.12.ETW.3 Identify a complex, global environmental or climate change issue, develop a systemic plan of investigation, and create an innovative sustainable solution.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

- 9.4.12.IML.8 Evaluate media sources for point of view, bias, and motivations
- 9.4.12.CT.2 Explain the potential benefits of collaborating to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving.

Assessment Evidence

Students will demonstrate understanding by...

Formative Assessment Graphic organizer, Guided questions

Benchmark Assessment Comparative Literary Investigation, Choice Reading Presentation

Mid-Unit Benchmark Assessment—Modern Mystery Multimedia Analysis: Tropes in Transition [Students will identify a "locked room" puzzle, the "unreliable narrator," or the "red herring") and analyze its evolution in a contemporary text of the short multimedia presentation (e.g., a video essay, podcast clip, or interactive digital board) that evaluates how changes in cultural values alter the investigation's effectiveness, reliability, and resolution compared to the traditional version of that trope.]

Summative Assessment Detective’s notebook, Multimedia Mystery Board

Alternative Assessment Choice reading log, Soundtrack

Interdisciplinary Connections

In this unit, students investigate complex problems—whether fictional or based on real events—and evaluate how scientists or journalists develop solutions within real-world constraints. Rather than simply identifying a problem, students explore the broader societal implications of crime, justice, technology, and public safety.

Science

HS-ETS1-1 Analyze a major global challenge to specify qualitative and quantitative criteria and constraints for societal needs and wants.



Special Education	• Provide guided notes and structured graphic organizers for characters, clues, evidence, suspects, and c • Provide audio versions, text-to-speech, or teacher read-aloud options. • Pre-teach vocabulary using visuals • Provide sentence starters for analysis and discussion. • Reduce the number of required examples while maintaining the same learning goal. • Allow alternative response formats (oral explanation, video, infographic, digital presentation). • Provide extended time and frequent teacher check-ins. • Use step-by-step investigation checklists to support organization.
504	• Provide extended time for reading, writing assignments, projects, and assessments. • Allow access to digital copies of readings and class materials. • Provide preferential seating • Break large investigations or projects into smaller deadlines. • Provide organizational tools such as planners, calendars, and assignment checklists. • Allow flexible methods of demonstrating understanding. • Provide movement breaks or sensory supports as appropriate.
At Risk/ I&RS	• Use high-interest modern mystery topics connected to real-world issues • Provide explicit instruction on how to analyze clues, evidence, and source reliability. • Model thinking strategies through teacher think-alouds. • Use small-group instruction and guided investigations. • Provide frequent feedback and opportunities for revision. • Assign collaborative roles (lead investigator, evidence recorder, researcher, presenter). • Connect mystery skills to careers such as journalism, cybersecurity, law enforcement, research, and di • Provide clear daily goals and success criteria.
ML	• Pre-teach academic and mystery-related vocabulary with visuals and examples. • Provide bilingual glossaries when available. • Use sentence frames for evidence-based discussions and writing: - "The evidence suggests ___ because ___." - "The most reliable source is ___ because ___." - "The suspect/theory is unlikely because ___." • Provide graphic organizers for theories, evidence, timelines, and source evaluation. • Use visuals, videos with captions, and real-world examples. • Pair students strategically for collaborative investigations. • Allow students to demonstrate understanding through oral presentations, diagrams, or multimedia proj • Model academic language used in investigations
Gifted	Independent research Advanced analysis Additional mysteries leadership opportunities

Resources

The Naturals by Jennifer Lynn Barnes

Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt

Choice Reading options:

Blood, Bullets, and Bones: the story of Forensic Science from Sherlock Holmes to DNA Bridget Heos

Seconds Away Harlan Coben

We Were Liars E. Lockhart

The Westing Game Ellen Raskin

The Gallery Laura Marx Fitzgerald

Chasing Lincoln's Killer James L. Swanson

The Emperor of Any Place Tim Wynne-Jones

Bonnie and Clyde: The Making of a Legend Karen Blumenthal

The Lie Tree Frances Hardinge

Monday's Not Coming Tiffany D. Jackson

Losing the Girl (Life on Earth-Book 1) Marinaomi

The Girl I Used to Be April Henry

The Turnaround-Mason Falls Mysteries R.T. Martin

Everything I Never Told You Celeste Ng

The Burning Room Michael Connelly



Grade Level: 12
Unit: 1
Content Area: English IV
Theme: History of the Mystery
Time Frame: 2 Months

Grade Level: 12
Unit: 2
Content Area: English IV
Theme: Crime, Evidence and Investigation
Time Frame: 2 Months

Grade Level: 12
Unit: 3
Content Area: English IV
Theme: Psychological Mystery
Time Frame: 2 Months

Grade Level: 12
Unit: 4
Content Area: English IV
Theme: Modern Mystery
Time Frame: 3 Months

Grade Level: 12
Unit: 5
Content Area: English IV
Theme: Mystery of Life
Time Frame: 2-3 Weeks (June)