

Sherlock Holmes on the Internet

*Language Arts Teams Up with
the Computing Librarian*

Many children and adults love mystery stories as well as tales of hauntings, ghosts, the bizarre, and the supernatural. This extremely popular and broadly defined (at least here) genre of literature—the mystery—begins with offerings for the youngest child such as *Boo Who? A Spooky Lift-the-Flap Book* and continues with enticing tales for young adults, such as Joan Lowery Nixon's *Murdered, My Sweet*. Finally, the genre provides fare for older young adults and grown-ups, such as John Grisham's *The Client* and *The Firm*; Sharyn McCrumb's *The Ballad of Frankie Silver*, *She Walks These Hills*, and *The Rosewood Casket*; Mary Higgins Clark's *Remember Me*; Patricia Cornwell's *Cause of Death*; and Ed McBain's 87th Precinct series, of which *Lightning* is a recent example.

The mystery genre, which vies with the romance genre for most popular in the public library, can be taught as an integral part of the language arts curriculum, using resources found on the Internet. And it can foster integration of this content area with both technology and library/information standards. (See Relevant Information Literacy, Content, and Technology Standards on the next page.)

By Carol Truett

Subject: Language arts, WebQuests

Audience: Teachers, library/media specialists, teacher educators

Grade Level: 8–12 (Ages 13–18)

Technology: Internet/Web

Standards: NETS•S 3–5; NETS•T II, III (www.iste.org/standards). AASL 1–9 (www.ala.org/aasl/ip_nine.html)

Supplement: www.iste.org/L&L

Relevant Information Literacy, Content, and Technology Standards

The WebQuest is an integrated, resource-based teaching model strongly promoted in the newest version of the American Association of School Librarians (AASL)/Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) national standards (AASL/AECT, 1998), focusing on the following nine information literacy standards for student learning (pp. 8–9). Though all of these are relevant to this lesson, the bold and italicized ones below are especially relevant.

Information Literacy

The student who is information literate:

Standard 1: accesses information efficiently and effectively.

Standard 2: evaluates information critically and competently.

Standard 3: uses information accurately and creatively.

Independent Learning

The student who is an independent learner is information literate and:

Standard 4: pursues information related to personal interests.

Standard 5: appreciates literature and other creative expressions of information.

Standard 6: strives for excellence in information seeking and knowledge generation.

Social Responsibility

The student who contributes positively to the learning community and to society is information literate and:

Standard 7: recognizes the importance of information to a democratic society.

Standard 8: practices ethical behavior in regard to information and information technology.

Standard 9: participates effectively in groups to pursue and generate information.

Here are some sample information skills objectives from North Carolina's ninth-grade curriculum:

1. Participate in read-aloud, storytelling, booktalking, silent, and voluntary reading experiences.
2. Identify characteristics of various genres (e.g., mystery genre).
3. Produce and present [research] findings in various formats (print, graphical, audio, video, multimedia, Web-based).
4. Collaborate with others, both in person and through technologies, to identify information problems and to design, develop, and evaluate information products and solutions.

The ninth-grade North Carolina English language arts curriculum also includes some relevant objectives.

Competency Goal 5: The learner will demonstrate understanding of various literary genres, concepts, elements, and terms.

- 5.01 Read and analyze various literary works by—recognizing and analyzing the characteristics of literary genres, including fiction ... short stories, novels ... and
 - explaining how the writer creates character, setting, motif, theme, and other elements, and
 - producing creative responses that follow the conventions of a specific genre and using appropriate literary devices for that genre.
- 5.02 Demonstrating increasing comprehension and ability to respond personally to texts by selecting and exploring a wide range of genres (e.g., such as the mystery).

Relevant computer skills in North Carolina include producing word processed documents, searching the Internet, and creating multimedia products (e.g., PowerPoint or HyperStudio presentations), all of which are extremely easy to integrate into virtually any research project. Though, of course, not all of our readers follow the North Carolina curriculum, virtually all states have comparable curriculum objectives today.

Finally, the NETS for Students (ISTE, 2000) also include the following relevant objectives.

3. Technology productivity tools
 - Students use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity.
 - Students use productivity tools to collaborate in constructing technology-enhanced models, prepare publications, and produce other creative works.
4. Technology communications tools
 - Students use telecommunications to collaborate, publish, and interact with peers, experts, and other audiences.
 - Students use a variety of media and formats to communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences.
5. Technology research tools
 - Students use technology to locate, evaluate, and collect information from a variety of sources.
 - Students use technology tools to process data and report results.
 - Students evaluate and select new information resources and technological innovations based on the appropriateness for specific tasks. (pp. 14–15)

References

American Association of School Librarians/Association for Educational Communications and Technology. (1998). *Information power: Building partnerships for learning*. Chicago: American Library Association.

ISTE. (2000). *National Educational Technology Standards for Students—Connecting curriculum and technology*. Eugene, OR: Author. Available: <http://cnets.iste.org>.

Everyone Loves a Good Mystery

Good teachers are always looking for new ways to deliver the curriculum. The WebQuest format developed by Bernie Dodge is an excellent way not only to teach the WebQuest model to teachers but also to present the mystery genre to students, all the while combining language arts, computer skills, and library objectives. This WebQuest lesson, which I developed as a model for an electronic research course taught to graduate students in library science, includes photographs of graduate students who accompanied me on a Mystery Tour of England study-abroad course during the summer of 2000.

The WebQuest format basically uses the Internet to present an interactive lesson that requires students to use the Internet to complete the lesson successfully. And though the sample here uses Sherlock Holmes, you can assign students a broad range of mystery stories, both classical and modern, to research in a similar manner. The *WebQuest Taskonomy* (Dodge, 1999) points to mysteries as one of 12 types of tasks well suited to the WebQuest format. Others are compilation, retelling, journalistic, scientific, design, judgment, analytical, creative product, self-knowledge, persuasion, and consensus building.

Sherlock Holmes Is a Good Example

By now you are probably asking, where is this Sherlock Holmes WebQuest you've promised us? (Find this URL and others under Resources at the end of the article.) Though there are many possible ways to do a WebQuest, note that this one includes these essentials, which correspond to buttons on the Web page:

1. Introduction
2. Tasks to be accomplished
3. Resources: A specific Sherlock Holmes Web Pathfinder with links to Web sites to help with the assignment and WebQuest. (Figure 1)

Basically Sherlock Holmes Sites

- [The Sherlock Holmes Collection of Stories](#)
- [Sheryl's Sherlock Home Page](#)
- [The Sherlock Holmes Museum, London, England](#)
- [Brief Profile of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle](#)
- [The Sherlockian Web Site](#)
- [More Sherlockiana](#)
- [Sherlock Holmes Top Web Sites](#)
- [Claire's Sherlock Page](#)

Figure 1. Web pathfinders help students focus their research and ensure that students visit appropriate Web sites.

4. Process: This outlines activities to be accomplished and links to the worksheet "Will the Real Sherlock Holmes Please Stand Up?"
5. Evaluation: Indicates how the students will be assessed or graded on their activities and assignments This section includes a link to a group evaluation from a Cinco de Mayo site that offers an excellent rubric for cooperative group evaluation. (Figure 2)
6. Conclusion: This summarizes what students will have learned when they complete the WebQuest.

The Web Holds What You Need

Dodge (1995-97) defines a WebQuest as "an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet." He also enumerates the basic WebQuest format, or critical attributes, and distinguishes between two types of WebQuests: short term and long term.

Bernie Dodge's WebQuest site at San Diego State University provides resources that further explain WebQuests

(e.g., overview and FAQ, training materials, and examples). The *WebQuest Taskonomy* (Dodge, 1999) gives full definitions of the 12 various task types, including sample WebQuests that use each task format. For example, under the mystery task, one finds a link to Was It Murder? The Death of King Tutankhamun: The Boy King. This is an especially good site to illustrate the fully developed use of the mystery task format and to show how some of the greatest mysteries are true life ones. (*Editor's note:* Read more about WebQuests in "FOCUS: Five Rules for Writing Great WebQuests" by Bernie Dodge, *L&L*, May 2001, and "The Student WebQuest: A Productive and Thought-Provoking Use of the Internet" by Maureen Brown Yoder, *L&L*, April 1999.)

The teacher can do some preliminary Internet research to locate authors for whom there are Web sites students can use as reference sources. For example, during a recent workshop on WebQuests, I found two excellent Web sites on Edgar Allan Poe: a Poe WebQuest and the home page from the Edgar Allan Poe Home National Historic Site in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which includes links to related sites and a brochure on Poe that includes biographical material, a bibliography, and an outline of his life. Of course, you should examine potential Web sites for appropriateness beforehand and should usually develop a Web pathfinder to get students started.

In the Sherlock Holmes WebQuest, the students must determine (1) the key elements or distinguishing characteristics of the mystery story or genre and (2) how the universal literary elements of plot, characterization, theme, mood, setting, and so on support the mystery story and its development. A good teacher clue might be to ask students to find Hillary Waugh's (1991) rules for a good mystery and to ensure fair play on the part of the mystery author.

Cooperative Group Rubric		Student Name _____			
		Date _____			
	<i>Beginning 1</i>	<i>Developing 2</i>	<i>Focused 3</i>	<i>Exemplary 4</i>	
Contribution to group					
<i>Is punctual</i>	Doesn't hand in assignments.	Hands in many assignments late.	Hands in most assignments on time.	Hands in all assignments on time.	
<i>Researches information</i>	Does not collect information.	Contributes little information.	Contributes information that mainly relates.	Contributes a good deal of relevant information.	
<i>Shares information</i>	Shares no information with group.	Shares some information with the group.	Shares important information with the group.	Communicates and shares all information with the group.	
Cooperation within group					
<i>Cooperates with group members</i>	Never cooperates.	Seldom cooperates.	Usually cooperates.	Always cooperates.	
<i>Listens to group members</i>	Always talks and never allows others to speak.	Talks much of the time and rarely allows others to speak.	Talks too much at times, but usually is a good listener.	Balances listening and speaking well.	
<i>Makes fair decisions</i>	Always wants things his or her way.	Often sides with friends and doesn't consider all viewpoints.	Usually considers all viewpoints.	Total team player.	
Responsibility to group members					
<i>Fulfills duties</i>	Does not perform any duties.	Performs very little in the way of duties.	Performs nearly all duties.	Performs all duties.	
<i>Shares responsibility</i>	Always relies on others to do work.	Rarely does work—needs constant reminding.	Usually does the work—seldom needs reminding.	Always does assigned work without being reminded.	

Figure 2. This rubric is excellent for evaluating group work. Copyright © 1999, 2000, Cheryl J. Cox. Reprinted with permission.

WebQuests and Mysteries Make for Good Learning

The WebQuest format combined with the teaching of virtually any subject area can be a winning combination. But when joined with the teaching of the mystery genre, a WebQuest can become an outstanding lesson that integrates language arts, other subject areas such as social studies or science, and library and information skills and that promotes and develops computer skills in a meaningful and appropriate manner. It requires active learning and the development of higher-order thinking skills on the part of the student,

and it encourages teachers to use motivational methods and interesting task formats as they follow the WebQuest design, which virtually demands the use of good instructional design principles. It is a creative and engaging learning model for both students and teachers.

Resources

Carol Truett's WebQuest

www.les.appstate.edu/libsci/holmques.html or www.iste.org/L&L (find the supplement to this article)

Sherlock Holmes Sites

Holmes Discussion Group (<http://mysterynet.com/community/holmes/>):

Group members exchange research links on Holmes and Doyle.

Sherlock Holmes Biography (<http://mysterynet.com/holmes/timeline/>): Part of the History of the Mystery Timeline.

Sherlock Holmes Museum and Virtual Tour (www.sherlock-holmes.co.uk/home.htm): Official site for the Sherlock Holmes Museum in London, includes a virtual tour of all the rooms at 221B Baker Street, a biography of Holmes, and links to other relevant sites.

Mystery Sites

Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site (www.carolhurst.com/newsletters/31newsletters.html): Features different genres for the month, book reviews of titles with high interest for students, and a chart for students to categorize mystery stories.

Edgar Award Nominees—2000 Juvenile and Young Adult list (<http://mysterynet.com/edgars>): Librarians can use list for collection development.

Edgar Award Winners—Adult List (www.nciba.com/edgar.html): Winners from 1954 to 1999.

History of the Mystery Timeline (<http://mysterynet.com/timeline>): Excellent site to begin gathering data on some of the “greats” and have your students do similar short bios to add to the Timeline.

Learning with Mysteries (www.mysterynet.com/learn): Links to other mystery resources (e.g., Mystery Greats) and a set of generic lesson plans that can be easily adapted.

Mystery Case Site for Kids (<http://kids.mysterynet.com/kids/solveit>): Presents a 3–5-minute solve-it-yourself case for kids every month; creative writing, contests, magic tricks, and puzzles; and seasonal ideas and mysteries.

Mystery Photo Writing Contest Site (<http://mysterynet.com/photo>): Contest encourages creative writing, could be adapted for particular mystery authors.

Small Town Murder Site (www.autopen.com/mystery.small.town.shtml#england): Some good resources here (e.g., history of police) but it is a commercial site. Links to historical mysteries.

Standards

North Carolina's curriculum standards and objectives:

Computer skills:

www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/computer.skills/9_12.html

Information skills:

www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/information/gradenine.htm

English language arts:

www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/languagearts/englishi.htm

WebQuest and Other Resources

Bernie Dodge's WebQuest site (<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/webquest.html>)

Cinco de Mayo site (www.zianet.com/cjcox/edutech4learning/index.html)

Edgar Allen Poe National Historic Site (www.nps.gov/edal/index.htm)

Edgar Allen Poe WebQuest (www.ncwiseowl.org/webquest/poe/)

Was It Murder? The Death of King Tutankhamun: The Boy King (www.pekin.net/pekin108/wash/webquest)

Women Detectives

Female Sleuths (www.autopen.com/female.detective.shtml)



Historical Detecting Women

(www.autopen.com/female.detective.shtml#anchor64543)

Modern Female Sleuth Books

(www.autopen.com/female.detective.shtml#female.detective.book)

The three above are part of the Small Town Murder Site (www.autopen.com/mystery.small.town.shtml#england).

Nancy Drew: Knowing Nancy (<http://mysterynet.com/nancydrew/kids/nancy>): The official Simon & Schuster Nancy Drew site; includes an introduction to Nancy Drew, Nancy Drew through the decades, a tribute by modern novelist Nancy Pickard, and lesson plans for the teacher—reading intuitively, vocabulary, creative writing, and story web.

References

Dodge, B. (1995–97). *Some thoughts about WebQuests* [Online document]. Available: http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/edtec596/about_webquests.html.

Dodge, B. (1999). *WebQuest taskonomy* [Online document]. Available: <http://projects.edtech.sandi.net/staffdev/tps99/tasksimap/>.

Waugh, H. (1991). What is a mystery? *The basics of writing and selling mysteries and suspense: A writer's guide* 10, 6–8.



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