

Worksheet 2

The Case of the Deadly Orchid

Mystery Story Secrets

The Case of the Deadly Orchid follows all the rules of an intriguing mystery story. Just as all types of texts have particular structures and language features to follow when they are written, mystery stories tend to follow a familiar set of standard components including plot and sub-plot development and inclusion of particular characters types. This is mainly due to the fact that readers of mystery stories are looking for a particular type of reading experience. Not only do they enjoy the challenge of trying to solve the crime themselves, they delight in the satisfaction that everything will be revealed in the end and the mystery will be ultimately solved.

Top Ten Secrets of a successful mystery story...

1. Introduce the 'crime' early in the story. This will 'hook' your reader and make them want to know how the mystery is solved.
2. Identify the detective in the story early as well but ensure this character is not the one who commits the crime!
3. Make the reader aware of the 'culprit' character sooner rather than later or they will feel cheated if this character enters the scene later on.
4. Reveal all clues to the reader as the detective finds them.
5. Include a 'red herring'. These are bits of information designed to make the reader suspect the wrong character.
6. Make sure the 'culprit' has a legitimate reason to commit the crime (motive) and that they are actually capable of committing the crime.
7. Keep each event relevant to the story so it keeps the momentum of the plot moving along.
8. Reveal the identity of the culprit at the last possible moment.
9. Avoid unlikely 'tricks' to solve the mystery such as blaming a character's 'twin' or the having detective suddenly developing supernatural powers.
10. Tie up any 'loose ends' at the conclusion of the story so the reader is not left dissatisfied.

Task 1: Carefully plan and write your own mystery text using the secrets listed above.

Extension Activities:

- Locate some mystery novels in your local library. Select from a variety of authors and study how they use the secrets listed above.
- Present a research project on one or more 'real life' unexplained mysteries of the world – e.g. Bermuda Triangle, crop circles, the Shroud of Turin, the Great Pyramid of Cheops, UFOs or Stonehenge.