

Defining the Mystery Genre

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Defining is explaining the meaning of a word or concept.

You use definitions when you

- answer a child's question about what a word means
- explain what you mean by *out of bounds* as you play a game
- learn a technical term like *photosynthesis* by stating its meaning in your own words
- discuss whether your idea of mystery is the same as someone else's

When else might you use the skill of defining?

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Cluster Question: What makes a mystery?

Defining is explaining the meaning of a word or concept.

Directions: In both of the passages on the following screens, one person is being questioned by another. However, only one of these passages is clearly from a mystery story. Read both passages and then answer the questions that follow.

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Passage A

“How long have you been on Earth?” Robert asked.

“About six hundred years,” Calendar said matter-of-factly.

“But where did you come from?”

“It’s a place called Lir.”

“Another planet?”

“With lots of moons?” Linda asked

continued

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“Yes,” Calendar said. “It’s a beautiful place. Never gets dark. The moons fill the world with bright-colored light, even when the sun goes down.”

“Why did you leave?” Linda asked.

from *Calendar’s Years* by D. F. Rider

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Passage B

The police sergeant . . . stalked across to the bed and confronted the shrinking Mr. Duckworthy.

“It’s the man all right,” said he. “Now, Mr. Duckworthy, you’ll excuse this late visit, but . . . we’ve been looking for a person answering your description, and there’s no time like the present. We want—”

“I didn’t do it,” cried Mr. Duckworthy wildly. “I know nothing about it—”

continued

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The officer pulled out his note-book and wrote: “He said before any question was asked him, ‘I didn’t do it.’”

“You seem to know all about it,” said the sergeant.

from “*The Image in the Mirror*” by Dorothy L. Sayers

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1. Which is the mystery passage, **Passage A** or **Passage B**? _____

2. Give one or two reasons for your choice.

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3. Based on your reasons, write a brief definition of mystery.

4. There are many types of genre: mythology, humor, science fiction, sports. Which genre do you think the other passage belongs to?
