

Writing Activity: Defining a Mystery

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Directions: Using the class definition of *mystery*, and your own ideas, create your own personal definition of *mystery fiction*. Your responses to the questions below might be helpful in composing your essay.

- What elements are needed to create a true mystery?
- What is the purpose and appeal of a mystery?
- How are mysteries different from other popular genres—for example, romance, horror, or science fiction?

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When defining, begin by stating the term you will define—in this case, mystery fiction. Then list all the qualities or characteristics of mystery fiction you can think of. Choose the most important characteristics for your essay. Explain why each characteristic is important. Also give one or more examples of each characteristic to help readers understand what makes mystery fiction unique. End with a summary, or final definition, that will help readers distinguish between mystery fiction and other genres.

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Use the chart below and on the next screens to gather quotations and develop explanations.

Characteristics of Mystery Fiction	Why This Is Important	Examples I Could Use
A mystery creates suspense.	In order to stay involved in the story, the reader must want to know what's going to happen next.	In "The Framing Game," readers want to know if Tommy can find out who framed him and prove his innocence.

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Characteristics of Mystery Fiction	Why This Is Important	Examples I Could Use

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Characteristics of Mystery Fiction	Why This Is Important	Examples I Could Use

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Which of the quotations and explanations do you feel best describe a mystery? Use these in your essay. Remember, a strong definition

- begins by stating the term to be defined
- lists the various characteristics or qualities of this term
- organizes information clearly
- ends with a final definition