

## Unit Nine- The Modern and Post-Modern Periods (1901-present)

### Arthur Conan Doyle and the Detective Story Genre

#### Characteristics of a Detective Story

In C. Hugh Holman's *A Handbook to Literature*, a **detective story** is defined as "a novel or short story in which a crime, usually a murder (the identity of the perpetrator unknown) is solved by a detective through the logical assembling and interpretation of palpable evidence, known as clues."

*A good detective story generally follows six rules:*

- 1) The crime must be significant.  
(Most stories involve murder, although Doyle tied the majority of his crimes to greed and theft.)
- 2) The detective must be a memorable character. (He or she must be very intelligent, unusually clever and observant, but also quirky, possessing some odd distinguishing characteristics that make him/her unique.)
- 3) There must be an outstanding opponent.  
(He/she must be a match for the hero. Solving the crime can't be too easy.)
- 4) All suspects of the crime must be introduced early in the story. (A large part of the attraction of a detective story is the opportunity for the reader to try to figure out the solution along with the detective.)
- 5) All clues must be available to the reader
- 6) The solution must seem obvious, logical, and possible. (The crime must not have resulted from accident or supernatural intervention, and the detective must be able to explain all aspects of the case in a reasonable way.)