

# Genealogical Crime Mystery



## Creative Writing Course

# Session overview

## **Week 6 – Unravelling the Past: Plotting Your Mystery**

- Review previous task
- Developing a strong plot with twists and turns (creating suspense)
- The Genealogist in Trouble!
- Writing scenes – how to start and where to end
- Assignment: Develop one of your chapters through to a cliffhanger / exciting end (or just the ending if too much!)

# Using genealogical records...



## Using thoughts

- Can be italicized, i.e. *What am I going to do now?* Morton wondered.
- But it doesn't have to be, i.e. What am I going to do now? Morton wondered.
- Sometimes in speech marks, i.e. 'What am I going to do now?' Morton wondered.
- Main point is to be consistent!

# A strong plot...

Column No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration	
183	Joseph Hinton 1839 Savannah Ga	Male	Charles Godwin	Elizabeth Godwin Winnery Milledgeville	Farmer	J. Godwin 1000 Savannah Ga Bristol Hill	1859	Thomas Charlesley Reynolds		



Serial	Name	Sex	Age	Married	Signature	Remarks
1	John Hinton	Male	21			
2	Elizabeth Hinton	Female	19			
3	John Hinton	Male	17			
4	Elizabeth Hinton	Female	15			
5	John Hinton	Male	13			
6	Elizabeth Hinton	Female	11			
7	John Hinton	Male	9			
8	Elizabeth Hinton	Female	7			
9	John Hinton	Male	5			
10	Elizabeth Hinton	Female	3			

- Your story needs several plot twists / revelations that the reader doesn't see coming (use genealogical records!)

# A strong plot...

**Port at which Passengers have contracted to land:** Port Said  
**Name of Passengers:** SPENCER, Mr Hubert J.  
**Age of Passengers:** 18  
**Last address in the United Kingdom:** 2 Street Lane, Ardingly, West Sussex  
**Profession, Occupation, or Calling of Passengers:** Student  
**Country of Intended Future Permanent Residence:** Egypt

Hubert had left the country in 1945 under his own name. To be certain that his theory, that Hubert had returned as a dead double, was correct, Morton ran a search for him in the *UK, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960* record set. As he expected, though not conclusive, there was no matching record.

Morton returned to the outward passenger page, then clicked to print it out. There was little point now in trying to squeeze it onto the investigation wall, so he collected it from the printer and placed it beside him on the desk.

As he shut his laptop, preparing to head down to the playpark to meet Juliette and Grace, he spotted something on the passenger list that made him gasp. *Someone*, to be precise.

- Use revelations / plot twists in both past and present narratives

‘But it was more complicated than that, wasn’t it?’ Ellen suggested. ‘Because somebody else was operating out in Egypt independently from you and Nikita Sokolov. A double agent, working within MI6, who relayed his own intelligence to someone higher up the command chain in the KGB: Viktor Zima. *This* double agent in MI6 was the person with the codename of Jericho, *not* Gilmour. The information you were stealing from the Foreign Secretary did, as a rule, pass along this three-person chain ending with Gilmour but, crucially, if it pertained to live operations in the Middle East, then you were instructed to contact Sokolov, who would send that information out to Jericho via Zima. To Jericho—my...husband.’

Flora tossed her cigarette to the ground, blew out a breath of smoke, then said, ‘Wow, you really are quite the hot-shot detective, aren’t you? Impressive, I must say.’

She turned and placed her hand on the door handle, as though about to re-enter the house.

‘Aren’t you going to deny any of it? Where are you going?’ Ellen demanded.

‘To get you a coat and a cup of water. Look at the state of you,’ Flora replied.

Standing alone in the dark, Ellen saw herself, shivering and shattered. She could no longer control herself and hot, angry tears streamed down her face. How could she have been so blind? So naïve? So stupid?

# Show don't tell!



- If you have a dramatic scene – show us it, don't tell us about it later
- If you have important characters meeting for the first time – show us
- If you're showing a crucial event in the past, consider if your genealogist character needs to also know about it (if they don't, then don't repeat that information. If they do, be brief / creative in retelling the reader something they already know)

# Foreshadowing



## **DUGGAN BOY DROWNED WHEN ICE GAVE WAY**

*Maurice Duggan, the son of renowned local businessman, Gerald Duggan of Knowles, Ardingly, was drowned on Saturday afternoon when the ice gave way on which he had been playing at Westwood Lake. This tragedy was attended by a deed of great pluck and heroism by a 17-year-old boy, named Hubert John Spencer from 2 Street Lane, Ardingly. He was nearby and plunged into the icy water to Maurice's rescue. He succeeded in getting Maurice onto his back and, holding him with one hand, swam to the edge of the lake. Hubert continued his heroic endeavours to get Maurice out of the water but he suddenly slipped out of his grasp and disappeared under the ice. Hubert, himself well-nigh exhausted by the cold and his strenuous efforts, managed to scramble out. Another of the boys' friends, William Gilmour sent for P.C. Foster, and after attempting to reach the hole in the ice, ran half a mile to fetch a ladder. Sub-Divisional Inspector Martin and other officers made efforts to get to the boy. They procured a boat which they launched, quickly finding Maurice Duggan's body. Attempts to revive him were made whilst still in the boat and continued when he was on the bank. A resuscitator was also used until the arrival of Dr Rooney, who pronounced life extinct. At the inquest of Wednesday, Mr J. Baily-Gibson, Deputy Coroner recorded a verdict of "Death by misadventure."*

# Exercise



With the Galveston Storm story, what kinds of plot twists could be used?

Are they shown in the past narrative, or does Morton discover them?

Can you tie any genealogical / historical records to this plot twist?



# Exercise



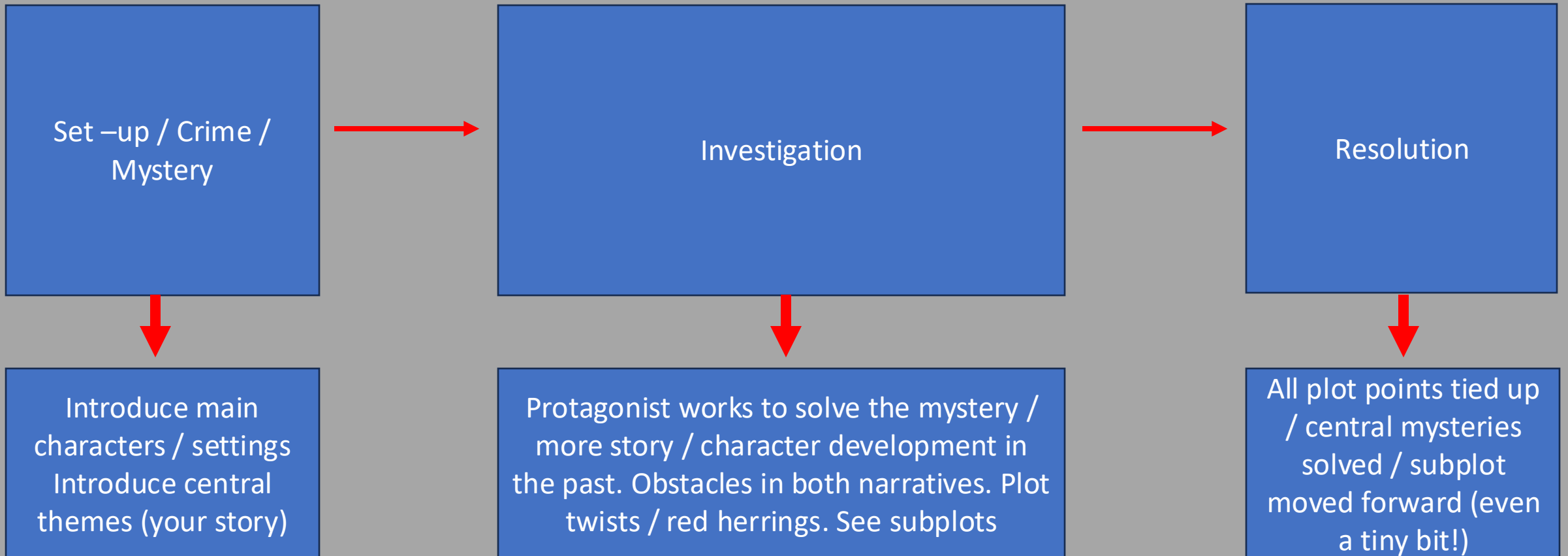
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Can you tie any genealogical / historical records to this plot twist?

- The baddie isn't a simple criminal – his backstory ties in with Ernest's birth parents' story
- DNA – shows Ernest's German heritage
- The locket – has no financial value but its provenance does
- The mysterious rich lady knows more than she's letting on
- Ernest's true heritage
- (more will likely come as I write...)

# How to start? Where to end?



# Plot twists...

- **Early Twists:** Engage readers early with a surprising event or revelation in the first few chapters.
- **Midpoint Twist:** A major, unexpected turn around the halfway mark keeps the momentum going.
- **Late Twists:** Introduce final twists as you approach the climax, reshaping the story's resolution.



# How to start? Where to end?

## Where to start a chapter...

- **Start with description that leads to action (your story)**

### Chapter Two

23<sup>rd</sup> September 1973, Haywards Heath, West Sussex

Kathy Steadman was sitting in the dining room of her quiet bungalow, eating a cheese-and-ham sandwich. Despite the light rain, the patio door was open to her compact but well-tended garden. She was arching forwards over the plate to ensure that she didn't spoil her smart suit jacket and skirt. It was a workday for her as a WDS—Woman Detective Sergeant—in Sussex Police, but, with it being a Sunday, she was permitted to go home for her lunch.

She took another bite of the sandwich and tossed a small piece of crust out through the open doorway, and then watched as a tame robin bounced down from the fence to peck at it until it was able to be carried off.

The stillness of the bungalow was suddenly broken by the trilling of the telephone. Kathy set down her sandwich and hurried into the hallway where she duly sat at the telephone seat and picked up the receiver. 'Four three one, one double seven,' she announced.

'Sorry to disturb your lunch break, Sarge,' the male voice said. She recognised it immediately as belonging to the Station Officer at Burgess Hill Police Station, which could mean only one thing: an incident requiring her attention had occurred. She picked up a pen and held it poised over the notepad.

'Go ahead,' she said.

'Abandoned baby. Found just after eleven o'clock this morning in a telephone box in Hayward's Heath. Taken to Cuckfield Hospital.'

'Condition?' Kathy asked, scribbling down what he had told her.

'Well, it was alive when they took it in,' he answered.

'Who found it and what was the precise location?'

'A teenage girl wanted to use the telephone and heard it crying. She used the phone in the box to ring 999. It was the one on The Broadway, right outside Seeboard. The baby was in a cardboard box inside a red and white bag. Witnesses reported seeing a young woman walking away in the direction of Heath Road.'

'Boy or girl?' she asked.

'Haven't had that confirmed yet, Sarge.'

'Anything else?'

# How to start? Where to end?

## Where to start a chapter...

- **Dialogue that leads to action (your story)**

### Chapter Twenty-One

**19<sup>th</sup> December 1980, Reno, Nevada, USA**

‘Welcome to Reno,’ the taxi driver sang, raising his hands from the steering wheel and inviting Alfred to see what was being revealed through the windscreen.

‘Wow,’ Alfred gasped, leaning forward from the spongy back seat and resting his elbow on the driver’s headrest. In front of him, converting night to day, was an endless flood of illumination from the grand buildings that they were passing; hotel and casino lights flickered, flashed and rotated as far as his eyes could see, and, directly in front of them, suspended above the street, was the famous Reno Arch, with *THE BIGGEST LITTLE CITY IN THE WORLD* lit up underneath the name; it was like nothing he had ever seen before in his entire life.

‘First time, here, I’m guessing?’ the driver chuckled.

‘Yes,’ Alfred confirmed, struggling to take it all in. ‘What a place.’

# How to start? Where to end?

## Where to end a chapter...

- **Cliffhanger!**

‘And, so, we meet again,’ Frank said.

‘Nice to see you again, WDS Steadman,’ Steve added with a laugh. ‘Seems you’ve got a bit of a thing for our family. We’re honoured; we really are. Your first time meeting our Rosie, though.’

Kathy stepped backwards away from the two brothers and went to turn around.

Suddenly, a searing, unbearable pain shot through her head from the back of her skull, sending her plummeting forwards onto a horizontal gravestone and into unconsciousness.

‘What *is* the matter?’ Juliette demanded, sliding out of bed to comfort Grace. ‘You’ve woken everyone up, now. It had better be something good.’

‘Rosie Hart died...the exact same day as my grandfather murdered Candee-Lee Gaddy...in exactly the same location,’ he whispered in reply.

Juliette nodded as she cuddled Grace to her chest. ‘Okay. Fine. Yeah. That *was* something good enough to wake everyone,’ she was forced to concur.

# How to start? Where to end?

## Where to end a chapter...

- **A moment of tension**

'What's your name?' the Matron demanded.

'Mr Colby,' he replied, without turning back.

He walked as fast as he could towards the exit, hoping to goodness that there were no security guards employed at the hospital. He left the building without being accosted further and emitted a huge sigh of relief as he considered what a stupid thing it had been that he had just done. But one other thing that this visit had achieved was to knock his preceding conviction severely that the child could not be his.

# How to start? Where to end?

## Where to end a chapter...

- **Scene shift / setting shift**



## Chapter Twenty-Two

21<sup>st</sup> December 2019, Cadgwith, Cornwall

Morton eased off the accelerator as barbed tendrils of gorse from the high hedges on either side of the single track began to brush against both wing mirrors of the car. They passed a five-bar gate that opened onto a wide grassy field beyond which he could see the rooftops of the beautiful cottages dotted on the hills surrounding Cadgwith Cove. ‘Get ready!’ he said, trying to muster some enthusiasm from the last vestiges of his energy.

‘Thank God for that,’ Juliette muttered from the passenger seat beside him as she shifted uncomfortably. ‘I really can’t take much more of this.’

‘What?’ Grace asked, leaning as far forwards as her car seat would allow. The journey had been painful for all of them, but most of all for Grace. Boredom, travel sickness and the need for regular stops at every service station that they had passed had dominated the excruciating ten-hour journey.

‘Look at the houses, Grace; they’re called thatched cottages because the roofs are made from reeds,’ Morton said with forced cheerfulness. ‘And look—the sea!’

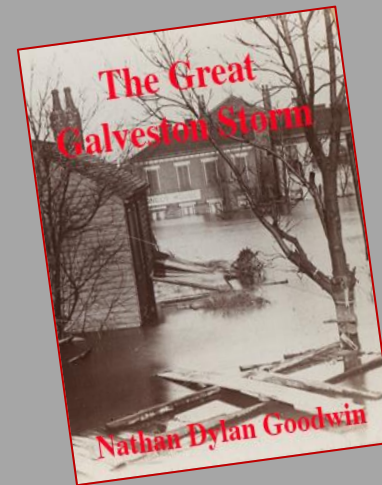


How to start? Where to end?

The most important thing to consider is this:

**What is the point of this chapter?**

# The Genealogist in Trouble!



When esteemed forensic genealogist, Morton Farrier is called upon to investigate what happened to a priceless artefact that disappeared on the night of the Great Galveston Storm in 1900, he is drawn into a world of murder, deception and fake identity. While Morton uses his unrivalled skills to uncover the past, there is a killer out there who will stop at nothing to prevent him from discovering the truth.

# Plotting The Great Galveston Storm story

## Structure:

**Prologue** – Ernest's perspective – see snippet of the storm at its worst

**Chapter 1** – Morton – client unexpectedly arrives at his house. Introduce mystery. Morton starts research right away – give basics of Galveston Storm to the reader. Verifies basics of what client told him. Show domestic situation around case (perhaps use this as an end of chapter)

**Chapter 2** – Morton – More research into the specifics of the case. Looks at some genealogical documents. Sends a DNA kit to client. End on a question / something that doesn't make sense to him related to Ernest Gorton

**Chapter 3** – Ernest – see him at the orphanage xx days before the storm. Establish normality. Introduce Clara / her father / key characters at the orphanage. End on a hint at the mystery of the locket

**Chapter 4** – Ernest – see him leaving orphanage for day's work on the boats. See ports / wharves in normal times. See baddie antagonist and hint at his interest in the locket. End on a hook.


**Chapter 5** – Morton – see him making some discoveries and building up a timeline of Ernest's life.

# Exercise



- Think about the plotting of your story (**inside the 3-act structure**)
- Will you have a prologue?
- What is the structure? Past past / modern modern? Past / Modern / past / modern? Or something else?
- If you have multiple characters in the past will you have a pattern to switching between each of their perspectives? Or switch within each chapter?

# Final week!

- Information on final submission
  - Reminder of structure of genealogical crime mysteries / common themes / character, etc
  - Formatting & editing
  - What else?
- 

# Assignment



**Develop one of your chapters through to a cliffhanger / exciting end!**

(If you are a long way from the end of a chapter, just write the ending)

- Try and read some fellow students work and offer constructive criticism
- Name your document ***your name week 6***
- Upload by Sunday if possible

## **Things to consider:**

- Remember your work from the previous weeks regarding setting, character, dialogue & using genealogy
- Choose either the past or present narrative chapter to end
- Can you end on an exciting cliffhanger which makes the reader want to read more?





# Dashboard



## MATERIALS

Access course materials, assignment details, PowerPoint slides and video playback for each session  
*(note: only available from the date of each live session)*



## FORUM

Interact with the writing group!



## RESOURCES

Supporting materials for the course



## ASSIGNMENTS


Share your work with the group. Comment on other people's work



# Upload & View Assignments here


Choose a folder & upload




Week 6 Assignments   
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
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
Week 5 Assignments   
Upload your work here

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Week 4 Assignments   
Upload your week 4 assignments in this folder

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Any questions?

