

Detective Novel and its Significant Elements: A Critical Analysis of *The Woman in White*, *The Sign of the Four*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, and *The Skull Beneath the Skin*.

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Abstract

This study examines the pivotal elements and conventions of detective fiction in four novels: Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859), Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of the Four* (1890), Agatha Christie's *Murder in the Orient Express* (1934), and Phyllis Dorothy James' *The Skull Beneath the Skin* (1982). This study aims at elucidating the role of the techniques the writers have followed in making detective fiction one of the popular genres since they attract readers from all ages and give them the chance to take part in solving the crime. It also aims at investigating how these significant elements make detective novels one of the best-selling books. In fact, all the writers beginning with Wilkie Collins and ending with P.D. James have contributed to establishing some of these elements that have become a model to be followed by the later writers of detective stories and novels.

Keywords: murder, victim, suspects, culprit, detective, the detective's sidekick, investigation process, policeman, mystery, suspense.