



Question 3: Crime Fiction.

Crime fiction is popular when times are bad, for example, war and depression. What keeps crime fiction, as a genre, popular is its ability to reflect society and perhaps explore uncharted territory. The view that 'the appeal of crime fiction is in its teasing-out of order from disorder' is a valid point of view and one to be considered. Crime fiction appeals to us because it uses disorder to 'tease out' order. We can best see this in the novels *Snow Falling On Cedars*, by David Guterson, *The Skull Beneath The Skin*, by P.D. James, *Murder on The Orient Express*, by Agatha Christie, and the movie *The Bone Collector*.

Snow Falling On Cedars is popular

crime fiction because it was able to reflect society, a society that would actually trial someone for murder based on race. The trial of Kabuo Miyamoto was perhaps the islands way of getting back at all Japanese in general for attacking America in World War II. The irony in this case being that Kabuo actually fought to save America. This novel reflects American society ~~after~~ after World War II, in the late 40's early 50's. It teases out order by disorder, the trial was the 'red-herring', the truth was only discovered by Ishmael by chance. The fact that the crimes of this are not of normal murder, but of racial hatred and xenophobia (fear of



strangers or outsiders), makes Snow Falling On Cedars popular crime fiction.

In *The Skull Beneath The Skin*, P.D. James used a castle on an island as her setting. It was set in the early 1980s, ~~and~~ although it very well could have been set decades earlier (she wrote it in 1982). This is popular crime fiction because P.D. James has managed to reflect society at that time. A lot of unfortunate incidents occur on Courcy Island and it's only by the 'teasing-out of order from disorder' do we learn the truth. Ambrose said "the police have a formula for these things." But P.D. James uses her own formula and she managed to produce a novel



fit for the crime fiction genre.

~~The~~ Agatha Christie is probably one of the greatest crime fiction writers to date. Her novel, *Murder On The Orient Express*, is no exception. In this novel she manages to try something different. She has roughly about ~~about~~ ten-twelve murderers, all on one train and all in on it together. But could this be a reflection on society? If not, then how is it popular crime fiction? Christie manages to use confusion to temporarily startle the reader. Everything on the 'Orient Express' is disordered, from the snow outside to the people inside the train. But Christie uses this disorder to 'tease out' order and finally, and very cleverly, let

the reader know what is going on.

The movie *The Bone Collector* manages to explore uncharted territory. It has a hero as being a bed-ridden black man, crippled with only the use of a finger and his shoulders. This is popular crime fiction because it manages to reflect society, the late 1990's ~~in~~ⁱⁿ the New York crime world.

In this society, crime fiction is ~~as~~^{as} popular ~~as~~^{as} ever. Viewers of this movie are not as shocked as what we would be had we been viewing the same movies forty or fifty years ago. Society today have become more tolerant on what we view. *The Bone*

Collector has pushed the crime fiction genre and modernized it to



fit the times.

There are a few things that have managed to endure the popularity of crime fiction. The fact that it reflects our society helps give us an understanding of the text and helps with our tolerance.

Texts that explore uncharted territory, such as *The Bone Collector*, help keep crime fiction popular and give the viewer (or reader) hope that there will be new developments in the genre. Good crime fiction has been produced when times are bad, an example being *Snow Falling On Cedars*. These four texts, *Snow Falling On Cedars*, *The Skull Beneath The Skin*, *Murder On The Orient Express* and *The Bone Collector*,



have all followed their conventions (of crime fiction). But that is not the only factor we identify crime fiction by. As society has changed, so has crime fiction texts, and our tolerance of what we view. All these factors have helped endure crime fictions popularity. The only question left is, where do we go from here?