

# Seeing into Suspicion: Weighing the Probabilities of Contending Narratives, Developing as a Narrative Inquirer

NONA LYONS

National University of Ireland, Cork

**ABSTRACT.** The author investigates the recent, surprising discovery of the invention of suspicion in the development of 16th century English drama to consider how this discovery might contribute to a new elaboration of narrative inquiry, specifically, to new ways of becoming a narrative inquirer. In her book, *The Invention of Suspicion*, scholar and author Lorna Hutson (2007), explained “that important changes took place in dramatic narrative—or the way of telling a story on stage—in late sixteenth-century England that corresponded closely to developments in the popular legal culture” (p. 1). Hutson identified the origins of the word invention as meaning not something newly created but something discovered or uncovered, in this case about suspicion and how people come to know others’ sometimes hidden motives. Hutson argued that 16th-century England saw the flowering of the uses of realism in English drama which was the direct result of a more frequent use in England of evidence and its evaluation in the law. The author takes up this idea of the invention of suspicion in drama with its interest in proof and evidence, and uncertainty in judging people’s motives to explore how this way of knowing could similarly shape inquiries into contending narratives of any day’s investigation, offering through the study of such dramas the possibility of a new way of becoming a narrative inquirer.

**Keywords:** coming to know others’ motives and intentions, developing as a narrative inquirer, English drama and the law, evidence and proof, narrative inquiry

**A**s a long-term practitioner of narrative inquiry research, I consider narrative inquiry to be a scientific endeavor, a fundamental activity of mind, constituting an intentionally reflective activity in which narrative is simultaneously a story, a way of knowing, and a mode or method of inquiry, of investigation. It thus shares in narrative’s ancient roots in meanings derived from the Latin *gnarus* (knowing, expert, skillful) and *narro* (tell, relate) as well as the Sanskrit *gna* (know; Lyons, 2007; White, 1981). It also shares in John Dewey’s (1933/1998) deep concern for reflective inquiry, “the kind of thinking that consists in turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration” (p. 1) and finding grounds for action. One purpose of narrative inquiry is to uncover meanings.

Although narrative inquiry is usually considered a complex, qualitative research method with quite diverse and sophisticated approaches, how narrative inquiry is taught has only recently received critical attention (see Clandinin, 2007; Clinchy, 2003; Josselson, Lieblich, & McAdams, 2003). As several narrative inquiry practitioners have acknowledged, teaching narrative inquiry, especially narrative research, requires something different. In their book, *Up Close and Personal: Teaching and Learning Narrative Research*, Josselson et al. stated that narrative research

takes a giant step away from parsing human experience into predefined “variables” and requires of the researcher an equally major shift in perspective and approach. Rather than forming hypotheses the researcher frames questions for exploration; in place of measurement are the challenges of deeply listening to others; and instead of statistics are the ambiguities of thoughtful analysis of texts. These shifts in task and epistemological foundations require a new set of skills of the researcher and raise important questions about how such skills are learned and taught. (p. 3)

Acknowledging that they themselves were not taught how to do it, these researcher-teachers said: “We all learned it on the road, learned it while doing it” (p. 3). They then considered what it takes to teach narrative research, which they present in their book. To them, narrative research is up close and personal in a number of ways, in that it involves in-depth study of particular individuals in social contexts and time.

Second, teaching this work is similarly intense and personal centered; the mode of inquiry requires a highly sensitized and self-reflective inquirer rather than a set of objective, impersonal skills. . . . Neither the doing nor the teaching of narrative research is linear. It is inherently an inductive process that involves shaping the instrument of research, the researcher, as a medium for the discovery and interpretation of meanings. (pp. 3–4)

Thus, these researchers said they are not about method. They advocate teaching students a new way to think. Narrative research is about thinking and approach.

---

Address correspondence to Nona Lyons, US P.O. Box 27, Kennebunkport, ME 04046. (E-mail: nonalyons@hotmail.com)

Our task as researchers is to raise questions about the phenomena and ever more probing questions about what it is we are doing—questions about standpoint, about the role of the researcher, about how we know something about another person and what it may mean. These are unsettling questions, and for seasoned researchers, the more unsettling the better. . . . Our task as teachers is to empower our students as knowers, to support inquiry, to suggest conceptual frameworks and penetrating analytic lenses. (p. 5)

Teaching or learning narrative inquiry research thus shares in some of the concerns that inquiry teaching in general faces: that it is about empowering students as knowers in their efforts to know how we know something about another human being, and that inquiry is difficult to learn and to teach at nearly all levels of learning. Researchers and scholars Deanna Kuhn, Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University, and teacher educators Tom Russell and John Loughran, have all identified the phenomena (see Bok, 2006; Kuhn, 2002; Loughran, 2006; Russell, 2005; see also Clandinin, 2002). As Bok asserted for college students, many lack critical thinking skills and the ability to “reason clearly or perform competently in analyzing complex, non-technical problems” (p. 8). Psychologist Deanna Kuhn asserted that although inquiry learning is an enthusiastically endorsed movement across all K–12 grade levels, it is one that encloses a paradox. What is striking is “just how widely inquiry learning has been embraced” while simultaneously just “how little teachers have to go on in striving to fulfill these objectives” (Kuhn, p. 39). Kuhn asked the following questions: What exactly are the skills that need to be developed? How can they be assured students will make progress toward acquiring them?

Students must have not only the skills and the opportunity to engage in increasingly complex forms of inquiry . . . it is equally essential that they develop a firm belief that engaging in inquiry is worthwhile. Such a belief can be grounded only in their own experience. (Kuhn, p. 59)

Inquiry is in the service of changing understandings. Learning involves changing understandings. One path out of these dilemmas is knowing how to connect, read and evaluate evidence, an ability critical to understanding the inquiry process. But to develop this ability students must first be able to sustain observation, connect both observation and evidence to the central question of their investigation, and then write up a conclusion, what they have discovered not just what they have done (Kuhn, 2005, p. 54).

This spring the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning issued a report entitled “Strengthening the Foundations of Students’ Excellence, Integrity, and Social Contributions.” Authors Ann Colby and William M. Sullivan (2009) decried the limitations of the ways students are introduced to analytic skills. They claimed that this method results in an overemphasis on thinking, which results in disconnecting rigorous thinking from the sources of human meaning and value.

In order to prepare students for decision and action in the world, students need to develop not only facility with concepts and critical analysis but also with judgment about real situations in all their particularity, ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity. (Colby & Sullivan, p. 2)

I believe the power of narrative inquiry is that it focuses on the stories people tell of their lives and their encounters with particularity, ambiguity, and complexity. These events make it possible to consider their ways of dealing with uncertainty, and to make sense of other peoples’ ways of knowing and making meaning. But I ask, What made 16th-century English inquirers grow in numbers whereas 21st-century students at many levels do not? What might we who are interested in teaching inquiry learn by investigating this discovery of suspicion?

In the present article, I take as rationale and starting point the growing acknowledgment of the challenges of teaching students how to engage in inquiry thinking. Simultaneously, I look to the discovery described by author Lorna Hutson (2007) of the invention of suspicion in English drama, with its increasingly widespread use of evidence and its assessment as a motivating factor driving English drama. In her book, Hutson argued that 16th-century England saw justices of the peace and juries routinely required to weigh the probability of competing narratives of facts. Simultaneously, English dramatists were using these experiences as well as rhetorical, forensic practices of an older Latin comedy to increase realism in their plays, to become more probable. In these plays, characters—and audiences—were to gather evidence, invent arguments, and weigh the probabilities—including suspicions—about one another. It seems critical to point out that, in effect, legal practices were creating changes not only in English drama but also in epistemology, in how we know and in what counts as knowledge. One aim of this article is to offer a way to replicate these exercises in gathering evidence, investigating arguments, and weighing probabilities of peoples’ intentions and to do so through drama, in this case through reading, studying, and acting out dramas to uncover meanings and their complications.

The following three purposes shape the work of this article:

1. To present a fuller description and explication of Lorna Hutson’s discovery of the invention of suspicion, the changes it brought about in English drama, and why it may be a useful perspective from which to approach how to teach inquiry in general and narrative inquiry in particular.

For example, plays are frequently applauded for holding a mirror up to nature. But Hutson (2007) argued that 16th-century English playwrights held a mirror up to the actual motives of people, making it possible for spectators as for jurors to infer motives, test evidence, and make conjectures about people. As Anthony DiMatteo (2009), a reviewer of Hutson’s book suggested, these

playwrights hold a mirror up . . . to the motives and consequences, as they were trained to do not only by their own experiences but by their Roman forerunners in drama—Plautus and especially Terence, great comic dramatists—whose works were often cited in *Roman law books*. The forensic rhetoric of Roman New Comedy, with its ability to summon up realities that may or may not exist, had a pervasive effect across all the genres of English Renaissance drama . . . and links to major reformations in the understanding and practice of law and justice. (p. 1; italics added)

In the present article, I highlight some of these inventions and, in addition, also seek:

2. To identify, suggest and present a set of dramatic experiences that could serve as exemplars of narrative inquiry, models of how an inquiry practice works through various dramas that can be introduced read, taught, or acted out. These suggested teaching practices in this instance take the form of a mini curriculum, a set of dramatic works designed to be seen, read, witnessed, or dramatized. These are exercises in examining evidence of motives and actions individuals take in ambiguous situations.

I explicate these teaching practices with enough detail for practitioners to judge whether they would like to try them in their own classrooms (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002; Mishler, 1990). In this section of the article, I also elucidate the exemplar idea as a valid model for narrative inquiry, drawing on the work of Eliott Mishler. Mishler first identified that exemplars can be tested through a process he called validation. Validation here refers to trustworthiness, that is, the degree to which other practitioners or researchers turn to, rely on or will rely on, and use the concepts, methods, and inferences of a practice as the basis for their own theorizing, research or practice in their own settings (Mishler, 1990, p. 419). Most teachers and researchers I believe do rely on the believability of a practice and, if persuaded, will consider trying it out in their own work. A set of exemplars will be offered to be tried out—mostly all previously tested in classrooms.

Finally, the third purpose of the article is the following:

3. To identify and present a template of questions for engaging in narrative inquiry with its goal to uncover how people come to know with its emphasis on weighing facts and drawing inferences that might have a pervasive effect across the practice of inquiry, especially narrative inquiry. A set of questions can serve as a methodology, in this case a method for engaging in narrative inquiry, to address the investigation and interrogation of a series of plays.

I argue that this approach, in which people apply ideas of examining suspicion in the reading or acting out of dramas, in turn, provides a way of practicing narrative inquiry, of becoming a narrative inquirer.

In sum, in the present article I offer readers a set of curricular materials and teaching practices to introduce and teach inquiry to students of K–12 and college levels, indicate how, suggest a process of its validation, and provide information

to determine if others would like to try them out. The article illuminates a major argument of this work: It reveals how dramatic narratives opened a new epistemology to a wider group of people. This article suggests a similar objective for today's students engaging in a similar strategy: in performing or reading a set of dramas.

### Discoveries Leading to *The Invention of Suspicion in English Law and Drama*

In this opening segment of the article, I focus on the epistemology of judgment as it developed through English drama and the law. As Hutson (2007) revealed, the epistemology of judgment is based on the extensive participation of lay persons (justices, victims, neighbors, jurors) in deciding what was to count as knowledge in legal judgments. Through the widespread uses of this practice of participation, a new epistemology emerged. The English criminal justice system put great faith in witness observers and jurors as judges of fact, and especially as evaluators of contradictory witness testimony.

Sixteenth century developments in the participatory justice system involving the taking of written examinations by Justices, the need for jurors to evaluate evidence at the bar, were directly engaging the very same questions of probability and likelihood with which dramatists were also being concerned. (Hutson, p. 6)

Similarly, in 1590, English dramatists

for the very first time began to make use, for mimetic purposes, of the practice of raising and then not answering questions about how to interpret evidence. That is to say, dramatists were newly concerned with casting doubt on the reliability and probability of the signs and indications on which people base judgments about one another. (Hutson, p. 12)

This new awareness of the dramatic uses of evidentiary uncertainty, Lorna Huston contends, has been overlooked in histories of English Renaissance drama largely because its effects were so successful as to seem, to later generations, like dramatic naturalism.

Dramatists—Shakespeare, Kyd, Marlowe—of the 1590s began the process of focusing their attention on the ways in which agents in a story actually gain their knowledge about the events supposed to have taken place in that story and infer, from various speeches and signs, what each other think about these events.

Such a focus is constitutive both of complex social interaction and of apparent psychological depth. It allows for verisimilitude in the dramatic representation of questions of politics and justice as well as in what we think of as the more private questions of intimacy and love:

This innovative focus on evidential uncertainty cuts across the strict tragic and comic divisions. It cannot be traced to any native English tradition of dramatic storytelling. It can be derived from Latin dramatic sources, but it adapted these sources to representational conditions peculiarly constituted by developments in thinking about evidence in English common law. (Hutson, 2007, p. 12)

Following Hutson, I call this development of an epistemology of judgment in the law and dramas the invention of suspicion. With this, my intention is to identify several key events of this history. Although these developments are richly elucidated and documented by Huston in her intriguing history, I identify only a few events (six in number). My purpose is to highlight elements of this history that illuminate what was going on, how change occurred, what difference it made to dramatic narrative, and why these changes may influence becoming a narrative inquirer.

There are several observations that can be made about the history of the invention of suspicion that bear on becoming a narrative inquirer, especially in revealing aspects of inquiry that can be found in the history of drama or experienced through reading or acting in dramatic plays. In the following sections, I highlight six elements of legal developments in English law and drama.

### 1. *Interpreting Evidence of Contradictory Facts*

One example can be found in Shakespeare's play *Henry VI, Part 2*, Act 3, first put on in 1594 as used in his earlier version of the play known as the *Contention Betwixt the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*. The action focuses on the discovery of the murder of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. The stage directions of the opening of the scene read:

Enter two or three running over the stage, from the murder of Duke Humphrey. Previously the stage directions tell us that we see two men smothering Humphrey in his bed. From an exchange between the Duke of Suffolk and the murderers, Humphrey is to appear as if he died peacefully in his sleep. (As cited in Hutson, 2007, p. 13)

But the people believe Humphrey has been murdered. Confusion ensues. The King and peers enter. Humphrey was to go on trial for trumped up charges of treason. The Duke of Warwick reports to the King that the commons are so angry at Humphrey's death that they are ready to commit violence. Someone must view Humphrey's body. Warwick then vows solemnly that he too believes Humphrey to have been murdered, and when asked for an instance of how he knows, he replies:

Oft have I seene a timely parted ghost  
Of ashe semblance, pale and bloodless,  
But loe the blood is settled in his face,  
More better coloured that when he liv'd,  
His well proportioned beard made rough and sterne,  
And fingers spred abroad as one that grasps for life,  
Yet was by strength surprised, the least of these are probable,  
It cannot chuse but he was murthered. (Hutson, 2007, p. 13–14 as quoted in the *Contention*)

But the signs reviewed by Warwick are inconclusive. The corpse coloring or grasping hands could suggest either stran-

gulation or suffocation. The scene distinguishes between what the audience knows from what the King and Warwick suspect, and

the speech performs a process of reasoning probably from uncertain signs as an explicitly forensic activity, with Warwick in the position of the coroner at an inquest. In English law the coroner was required to inquire into unexplained deaths, on viewing of the corpse. "He shall see the dead bodie when hee doth make the inquirie, or otherwise the inquirie is not good (1609)." (Hutson, p. 13)

Humphries' murder must be investigated and the corpse viewed. Thus, Shakespeare indicated how the potential of public violence could shape public demand for a judicial inquiry, implying that the public is capable of evaluating evidence and that a participatory judicial process could challenge a corrupt government (Hutson, p. 15). Knowing that it is important to know how to evaluate ambiguous evidence is part of becoming a reflective inquirer.

### 2. *Establishing Trial by Jury of One's Peers*

One critical element in the history of the invention of suspicion is the expanding uses of trial by jury. The jury trial came to England via the Romans. In Roman law, judges were civilians and trials were—following the Greeks—held in front of hundreds of people. The convention of English trials came most likely when the Norman William the Conqueror in 1066 overcame the Saxons to take over Britain. He introduced greater interest in Roman law. Major changes came about in 1215 with Henry II of England, William the Conqueror's grandson, who set up a system to resolve land disputes using juries. A jury of 12 free men were assigned to arbitrate these disputes. Unlike a modern jury, these men were to uncover the facts of the case on their own, and not by listening to arguments in a courtroom. Rather, the jurors were required to investigate the case themselves. King Henry also introduced a grand jury. A jury of free men was charged with reporting to a justice any crimes that happened in their communities, known then as a *hundred*. A criminal accused by this jury was given a trial by ordeal.

In 1215, trial by jury was made an explicit right through its inclusion in one of the clauses of the Magna Carta,

No free man shall be captured and or imprisoned, or disseised of his freehold, and or of his liberties, or of his free customs, or be outlawed, or exiled, or in any way destroyed, nor will we proceed against him by force proceed against him by arms, but by the lawful judgment of his peers, and or the law of the land. (As cited in "Jury Trial," 2009, p. 2)

Over time, English juries became less self-informing and relied more on the trial itself for information on the case. But jurors remained free to investigate cases on their own until the 17th century. One threat to this development of trial by a jury of one's peers was the often usurpation by the king of greater power and control.

In its development, one important task of the jury became increasingly identified with the evaluation of evidence. This

transition extended from the beginning of the 15th century to the end of the 17th century. “The jury’s task was increasingly conceived of as a ‘wise sifting and examination of the fact, where testimonie was obscure’” (Hutson, 2007, p. 104–105). Hutson drew on Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* to show how the 16th-century play is different from present-day detective stories. In *Titus*

the audience knows who is guilty, who are the murderers and rapists. But there is still uncertainty in the play about the legal issues involved allowing for the emotional power to engage audiences through the partial, uneven, conjectural knowledge of another’s thoughts and hidden actions. (Hutson, p. 105)

In present times, inquiry is still likely to involve situations in which the hidden thoughts and actions of people are obscured yet involved.

### 3. Evidence, Evidence Gathering, and Evolution of Writing as Legal Evidence

A 15th-century carving in a church in England depicts the figure of a demon, Tutivillus, holding a pen, engaged in writing down something on a long scroll of parchment. This figure of the devil has the task of recording in writing—on his rolls of parchment—all the individual’s sins of inattention to God and lack of charity to neighbors gossip, mumbled prayers and psalms, the evidence of lack of attention. This devil, with his roles, is an interesting figure. The fact that in some representations he not only witnesses secret sin but records what he has witnessed in writing links his life in the popular imagination to the increasing use of writing as a form of legal evidence in English local and crown courts from the 13th century onward to the 15th century in England.

The Latin word *evidential* is a rhetorical term meaning distinctness or clarity. But some scholars note that a peculiarly English sense of the word evidence as designating “information proving the truth of a statement or claim” seems first to have appeared in the Anglo-Norman terminology of thirteenth-century common lawyers and seems to have referred exclusively to written documents. (Hutson, 2007, p. 53)

In 15th-century England, formally binding agreements to exchange property, marry, and pay money at a future time were made

by way of witnessed oaths, sealed with drinking together or exchanging pledges or other rituals. The King’s courts of common law . . . however, would not give an action of debt unless the creditor could show evidence in writing (a ‘specialty’) of the agreement to pay, or a ‘quid pro quo’, something the debtor had received in exchange. Conversely, if the debtor . . . took no written receipt or ‘acquittance’ of his payment he could be obliged, in common law, to *pay again*. (Hutson, 2007, p. 53; italics added)

The opening of Shakespeare’s comedy *Love’s Labour’s Lost* revealed in the story of a debtor who had a written obligation that had been paid but the debtor failed to get a written receipt. The emissary of the debtor was told that she—or her father, the actual debtor—was legally bound to pay again.

Shakespeare incorporated a common event in English life in his comedy, and highlighted the significance of the practice of having something in writing at the time of its invention.

### 4. Confession: Dealing with the Problem of Intention

In the time before the Reformation, there was a practice of once a year receiving the Eucharist (Holy Communion), which was accompanied by the legal obligation to be shriven (confessed) so as to be made worthy to receive the host. But this confession was more than a private affair: It involved relationships with God, with the priest, and with the community at large. The ideal was that this act would bring about the achievement of reconciliation among parishioners and mending broken ties of charity or love by the restitution of any goods wrongfully withheld.

The church’s jurisdiction over penance was exercised through confession, which had been made mandatory once a year by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. But by end of the 13th century, confession was considered to be a formal legal jurisdiction. Penitential manuals, the guides to confession, developed enormously complex legalistic procedures to enable the just calculation of penances according to degrees of intentional guilt, the material circumstances of the sin, and the possibility or otherwise of performing direct restitution. So important and sophisticated was this legal discourse of intentionality that in England juries in cases of homicide were using methods drawn from manuals for confession to distinguish unintentional from intentional slaying. Eventually the church’s jurisdiction over conscience became translated into a common-law jurisdiction.

One common theme of Shakespeare’s has to do with just punishment, as with *The Merchant of Venice*. When Antonio, a merchant, borrowed money so that his friend Bassanio could seek his fortune and the love of the lady Portia, he agreed to the outrageous guaranty of a pound of flesh demanded by Shylock, the money lender, if Antonio were to forfeit the loan. It happens that Antonio’s ships and his fortune were all lost at sea, forcing him to pay Shylock. In the end, Portia disguised herself as a lawyer and in her hearing of the case defeated the moneylender. But the question of how intention was involved was always difficult to determine in how restitution was to be paid.

### 5. Constructing and Inventing the Interior Life of Characters: The Importance of the Narrative

Sixteenth-century dramatists made it possible for observers and audiences to believe that characters in dramas had interior motives of their own. In itself, the narrative presented

fostered an awareness of the facts of the story had been given an order and coherence of their telling. It thus fostered a tendency to represent *dramatis personae* as, on the one hand, engaged in persuading one another of the truth of highly disputable facts, and, on the other, as suspiciously testing and

trying out the grounds for belief in one another. (Hutson, 2007, p. 7)

Hutson argued that these devices and use of the narrative were learned from lessons derived from judicial rhetoric in which students of the law—through studying Cicero and others—as advocates were taught how to open a case with an irrefutable narrative of the facts. In this, the dramatists themselves indicated how they had absorbed these lessons and knew how to embed circumstantial evidence or its arguments and then allow characters to indicate their consciousness of these facts. Hutson presented an argument about Shakespeare's use of narrative in *Othello*, in which the dramatist used the plot to indicate an argument that could be construed in entirely opposite positions.

#### 6. *The Role of the Jury: Becoming Evaluators of Evidence Rather Than Witnesses*

The role of the jury evolved over time, especially the jury's evidential role.

It became commonplace to define the witness's testimony in jury trial as "but evidence to a jury." In 1607, James VI signed a proclamation which declared that the law of the realm placed such confidence in jurors "as it doeth not absolutely tye them to the evidences and proofes produced, but that it leaveth both supplie of Testimonie, and the discerning and credit of the Testimonie, to the Juries consciences and understanding." The jury may evaluate "the evidence and proofes produced." (Hutson, 2007, p. 76)

In addition, King James dignified the jury's role by aligning it with the most famous judgment in all Scriptures, the judgment of Solomon:

For even that Judgement which was given by a King in person, and was so much commended in the Scriptures, was not any learned exposition of the law, but *a wise sifting and examination of the fact*, where testimonie was obscure, and failed. (Hutson, p. 76; italics added)

In the following 16th and 17th centuries, jurors were gradually becoming more reliant on the testimony presented in court. One observer of the time urged trial jurors in the 1580s "not to look *upon evidences* only, but to look *into them*" (Hinde, 2000, p. 129).

#### Conclusion

Instances of the ideas discussed previously can be found embedded in various 16th-century English dramas, including Shakespeare's. As Hutson suggested, they had an important impact on making the certain plays more powerful stories and effective on-stage dramas. Importantly, they broadened the development of the epistemology of everyday life: how to engage with more complex inquiries about human motives, intentions, and the need to be sophisticated about how to weigh evidence. These are also ideas and skills important in becoming a reflective inquirer. Knowing how evidence matters, especially in cases in which it is not easily obtained

or discerned, knowing how to judge, or what one needs to know in order to judge are all crucial today. In the following section, I suggest a set of experiences with dramas classic and contemporary that teachers and students might study and act out in their own classrooms, engaging themselves in these important aspects of narrative inquiry and how we come to know, and know that we know.

#### Seeing into Suspicion: An Approach to Becoming a Narrative Inquirer Through Drama

In this section of the article, I present a suggested curriculum for students of middle through postsecondary school to try out and pursue experiences using dramas as a means of fostering the skills of a reflective inquirer. My goals are the following:

1. Present a curriculum with its questions that serve as a conceptual framework.
2. Outline the content of the curriculum: five dramatic pieces suggested for study or performance by students.
3. Pose a set of questions for the study of the dramas.

#### Conceptual Framework

I based these organizing questions after considering the role of law and the uses of evidence in the development of English drama. There are at least four questions that can serve this role. How do we know what other people know? How do we know what people think and feel when we can't judge their motives with certainty? What evidence is needed to judge? What is required to act? Or not act? What difference does it make that we know that we know?

*Curriculum and performance.* At the heart of the curriculum are five dramatic readings. They may be performed and studied as a set of five or reconfigured in any number of ways for classroom use. Each drama is introduced, identifying its origins, author, and major characters. The plays may be viewed, acted out, or both. Information is provided subsequently about how they can be obtained for viewing, either on DVD, videocassette, or other formats. For details, see "Drama Curriculum."

*Idea of a Reader's Theatre.* If the plays are to be acted out, one suggestion is that they be performed as a part of a Reader's Theatre (i.e., by members of a class drama group who take parts of the play and simply read them aloud). Props and costumes are not required. However, it is recommended, that members of the cast rehearse their parts in the play prior to its performance. In subsequent sections I offer information about how to obtain them in film or other versions. Each class needs to determine its purposes, what the students want to achieve, and how to achieve it. The suggested dramas suggested are all ones that have been reviewed for appropriateness.

*Suggested Dramas*

1. *Drama: Trifles*. *Trifles* is a play that later was introduced as a short story entitled "A Jury of Her Peers," by Susan Glaspell, and is available as a radio play. *Trifles* was first performed at the Provincetown Players in Provincetown, Massachusetts, in 1916. The play, set in the Midwest, is based on the murder of John Hossak, which Glaspell had covered while working as a journalist for the Des Moines Daily News. The characters in the story are George Henderson (County Attorney), Henry Peters (Sheriff), Lewis Hale (a neighboring farmer), Mrs. Peters (the Sheriff's wife), and Mrs. Hale (Lewis's wife).

The play begins with the arrival of the sheriff, his wife, and a neighbor, Mr. Hale, at the desolate Wright's farm house where on the previous day Mr. Hale had found Mrs. Wright in a rocking chair. When asked about her husband, she tells Mr. Hale that Mr. Wright is upstairs, dead, with a rope around his neck. She knows not how. When the Sheriff and the others arrive on the following day, they find the kitchen in an unkempt state, with items scattered around. Mrs. Wright's preserves had frozen in the night and the glass cracked and broken. The women are concerned but Hale dismisses the women's concerns about the frozen preserves as trifles when there are larger issues at stake. The men go upstairs to investigate the scene and the women continue to go through things in the kitchen. When the women stumble upon a dead canary, they begin to speculate what Mrs. Wright's life was like and what had happened. Mrs. Wright, the main protagonist of the story, plays no part in it but to the women, the jury of her peers, her presence is evidenced in the things she has left behind.

2. *Drama: The Winslow Boy*. *The Winslow Boy*, a play by Terence Rattigan (1940; available as a film [1948]), is based on the real-life story of a 13-year-old cadet at the Osborne Naval College in the isle of Wight who was charged with stealing a 5 shilling postal money order from one of his classmates in 1908. The real-life child, George Archer-Shee, was the son of Martin Archer-Shee, who fiercely defended the boy. The case stirred up enormous response from the public who followed it over the long years of the litigation. The story's characters are Ronnie Winslow (the 13-year-old naval cadet), Arthur Winslow (the father who is adamant that his son is innocent), Sir Robert Morton (one of England's great barristers who decides to take the case), and Catherine Winslow (the suffragette sister of Ronnie who joins with Arthur Winslow in defending the Ronnie).

The story opens with the Ronnie returning home having been dismissed from the Naval Academy, charged with stealing money from a classmate. Shortly after, Sir Robert Morton comes to the house to question the boy, which he does for 3 hours about the details of the charge. He is satisfied and agrees to take the case for only a nominal fee, arguing that the boy had been dismissed without due process (i.e.,

without the opportunity to defend himself before a jury and respond to the charges against him), a guarantee of Magna Carta. The charge shocked and angered the public who followed the case assiduously. They were impressed with the father who used—and depleted—his fortune to defend his son. The case went on for some 2 years. Sir Robert was a fierce defender and was especially motivated because he was pitted against the government's Solicitor General, his arch rival. Sir Robert was thrilled when he won the case.

3. *Drama: Mostellaria*. *Mostellaria* (*The Haunted House*) is a Roman comedy created by T. M. Plautus, the great writer of Roman comedy. Its documentation is so subtle that some of the plots about how people could fool others or engage them in suspicion that Roman comedies were studied by law students. First staged after 193 BC, *Mostellaria* is a typical Roman comedy with stock characters, two old men, two young men, two women having affairs with the young men, a scheming servant, and a money lender, among others. The story's characters are Theopropides (the father, a merchant of Athens who has been away for 3 years), Simo (elderly friend of Theopropides), Philolaches (Theopropides's son who is pursuing a debauched lifestyle), Tranio (servant of Philolaches), Grumio (servant of Theopropides), and Philematium (mistress who has been partying with Philolaches).

The title of the play refers to the little ghost who supposedly haunts the house of Theopropides who returns home after 3 years abroad. The story of the play is concocted by his slave Tranio to cover the escapades of his son Philolaches, who has been reveling during his father's absence. Tranio has locked Philolaches in his father's empty house to prevent the Theopropides from entering and seeing his deeds.

When Theopropides finds his house dark and shut up and asks Tranio what is going on, Tranio convinces him that the house is haunted.

4. *Dramatis Film: To Kill a Mockingbird*. The novel of the same name on which the film *To Kill a Mockingbird* version (Lee, 1960) is based is considered one of the bestselling novels in US history. In the first 35 years after its release, it was never out of print. It has often been identified as a work that has made an important difference in people's lives. Some believe the difference it has made is because it offers readers an opportunity, through the lives of the children characters, to walk around in the shoes of those different from themselves. In spite of winning a Pulitzer Prize for literature, the book has never been without criticism and has been repeatedly challenged for references to the supernatural, its representation of blacks, its discussions of race and class within the small town. The characters of the story are Atticus Finch (father and lawyer), Scout (Atticus's 6-year-old daughter), Jem Finch (Atticus's son and Scout's older brother), Dill (the children's friend), Boo Radley (the

mysterious inhabitant of the neighborhood, rarely seen in public), and Tom Robinson (a black man accused of rape and defended by Atticus).

The story, written by Harper Lee, takes place in the 1930s in the town of Mycomb, Alabama and involves Scout Finch and her brother Jem, along with their friend Dill and their mysterious neighbor Boo Radley. The children are obsessed with Boo and are always trying to find out who he is and what he is about. Over the course of the story, the children learn to appreciate Boo as well as their father and his values. A single parent and lawyer, Atticus Finch is assigned a case to defend a local black man, Tom Robinson, who has been unjustly accused of rape by Mayella Ewell, a poor white woman. Over the course of the trial, Scout and Jem's world collides with the adult world of the courthouse.

5. *Drama: The Merchant of Venice*. One of William Shakespeare's (1603/1998) plays, *The Merchant of Venice* is often identified as a still-veiled drama because of its historical content and context, namely the anti-Jewish bias that influences the plot. At the time, Jews were not welcomed to live in England, even though they were allowed to live there.

One editor and student of Shakespeare, G. B. Harrison (1952) wrote about this issue, indicating how the role of Shylock has been portrayed over time:

As for Shylock opinion has changed during the centuries following its creation. In Shakespeare's time a Jew, especially on the stage, was a monster capable of any cruelty towards a Christian; yet, Shakespeare made him a man of real and bitter grievances. . . . When the play was first acted there was little sympathy for him, and some surprise that he was let off so lightly. In more recent times, star actors who had taken the part have rather stressed the pathos in the Jew, so that in spite of his vindictiveness, Shakespeare often seems to stand out as the only man of worth in a worthless society. (Harrison, p. 582)

The drama's characters are Antonio (the merchant), Bassanio (his young friend), Shylock (the money lender), Jessica (Shylock's daughter, pursued by a Christian), and Portia (pursued by Bassanio). The story revolves around Antonio, the merchant who decides to help his young friend, Bassanio, with funds so that he might pursue his fortune and his courtship of the lovely Portia. When the merchant, Antonio, borrows money from Shylock, the Jewish money lender, Shylock demands that if Antonio were to forfeit the debt, he, Shylock, would demand a pound of Antonio's flesh. When Antonio's ships are lost at sea, the debt is forfeited. But it is a clever Portia who confronts Shylock in one of the great courtroom scenes of literature and in the end defeats him.

#### *A Set of Questions*

A method of inquiry for use in analyzing the dramas is to question students. The following are a set of questions that can be used to analyze the plays presented in this curriculum.

*Description:* What is going on here? What happened? Who is involved?

*Question(s):* Is there a question that the story raises for you? What is it that you want to know?

*Inquiry:* What evidence would be needed to address the question raised? How could the evidence be acquired?

*Resolution:* What is the resolution in the story or play? With what effect? Is there/could there be another resolution? What would that take? What is unresolved?

*Reflection:* What would you say is learned? Are there actions that should be taken? By whom? What stands out for you in this resolution? What would you say you learned?

#### *The Curriculum and Its Sources*

In the following section, I outline the elements of a curriculum experience in narrative inquiry through the exploration of how people gain knowledge of others, considering the evidence of what is said and done through their actions in a dramatic story. In the following section, I provide information about the availability of the drama on different formats and offer some suggestions. This curriculum is an opportunity to participate in the study of dramas and challenges they can present to interpreting peoples' motives and intentions.

#### *Overview*

A suggestion for beginning this project includes a brief introduction to 16th-century English drama and to several of its changing legal conventions with their emphases on evidence and motivation and the influence of these developments on acting and drama. In this, the work and discoveries of Lorna Hutson (2007) can guide the discussion of these developments, specifically the six elements identified previously in the present article.

#### *Drama Curriculum*

The following curriculum comprises a set of dramatic narratives for reading, acting out, or viewing, listening. See the Appendix for a list of computer links to these resources.

1. Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" or *Trifles*: The short story or the excellent radio version of some 25 min.
2. Terrance Rattigan's play *The Winslow Boy*: The film available is on DVD or videocassette, and I especially recommend the 1948 Robert Donat film adaptation.
3. *Mostellaria*, a play by Roman dramatist Plautus: I recommend producing *Mostellaria* (also called *The Haunted House*) as a reader's theatre presentation. *Mostellaria* is available in full on the Internet through Google Books, free of charge.
4. Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*: Available as a novel or the classic film starring Gregory Peck.



5. Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: I recommend viewing the BBC film version for first half and then acting out Act IV and Act V in a reader's theatre production.

*Curriculum Option: Creating a Scene, a Writing Workshop, or an Assessment*

*Being above suspicion* is an activity in which students create scenes of their own. This activity can be designed simply as an optional exercise or as a form of an assessment. The idea is that students try creating a short drama of their own about how knowing other people and what they think and feel, especially when they cannot be sure how they think and feel. As an assessment, students might be able to identify how they went about creating their drama and what they learned from it. Then teachers might have—in modest beginnings—a window into the skills students use and how they arrive to use them.

*Portfolio Reflection*

Considering two of the several plays read for class, teachers should prepare an entry for a portfolio on the theme of becoming a reflective inquirer. In the portfolio, teachers should respond to the following questions: What do you believe the plays most seriously addressed? What interested you the most in these plays? and What would you say you learned from these experiences? Be prepared to write a summarizing reflective portfolio entry on the entire experience of the curriculum.

*Drama Option*

For college-level or mature students, I recommend studying Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* (film) or William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (film). In *A Man for All Seasons*, when Henry VIII, King of England, demands the approval of his Chancellor of State, Roman Catholic, Sir Thomas More, to divorce his wife in order to marry his mistress, Ann Boleyn, More chooses to say nothing. More's lack of response sparks the rage of the King and his counselors who had expected More's affirmation. The situation pits More's conscience against his duty to the King and, for the audience, prompts consideration of what saying nothing in response to a request really can mean (Bolt, 1960).

Shakespeare's (1604–1605/1998) *Hamlet* is surely a favorite play of many. It was also Shakespeare's own favorite. The story is quite old, dated by some to the 12th century, although the first record of a play is in 1594. There are other plays, not Shakespeare's, that tell the story of Hamlet, a story of revenge by Hamlet for his father's murder by his own brother, and Hamlet's uncle, Claudius. Shakespeare's play shows up in the records in a 1602 performance: *The Tragic Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. The plot of the play opens when Hamlet learns from the ghost of his father who appears to him to reveal his murder. Following the

murder, Claudius had immediately married the dead King's wife, Hamlet's mother. With the revelation of the ghost, Hamlet begins to ponder what his mother knew. *Hamlet* embodies some of Shakespeare's most sophisticated portrayals of how people deal with suspicion and coming to know how to act.

**Discussion**

This curriculum has been in its several parts tried before by teachers in many classrooms. But the claim that such a curriculum could serve as a means to encourage the development of narrative inquiry skills is still in need of testing. It would be quite interesting to carry-out some assessment of a curriculum such as the one described in the present article. However, one approach I recommend is that teachers take the opportunity to explore the curriculum option of having students create a short drama of their own, following the idea described in the previous section entitled "Creating a Scene" and use the activity as a kind of assessment. The purpose would be to create a scene that explores the theme of how we, as humans, know what others think and how we find out, especially when that is not easily done. Teachers would then have an opportunity to discuss with their students how their thinking had changed or not about their own constructions of meaning.

Of course, it also would be interesting to have this kind of assessment in a Time-1 and Time-2 sequence for the assessment of inquiry. Then before the first drama in the curriculum, Trifles, students would be asked as Time 1 to comment on how we, as humans, know what others think and know and then follow up with the students at the conclusion of the curriculum after studying the different works. How do we know what others know? How do we find out? As an assessment, of this Time 1 and Time 2 data from students teachers can ask: What might we expect to find? What do we find? What do we learn? What do we now know?

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The author wants to thank her former Dartmouth student, Erin Moodie, who demonstrated how a class of high school students could enjoy Plautus as they very competently under her direction acted out one of his comedies. The author also thanks Joan Moon, who gracefully edited my work while engaging in serious conversations about Shakespeare's uses of suspicion. Finally, the author thanks Bob Lyons, who played the heavy in tracking down the computer links to the dramas of the curriculum.

**REFERENCES**

- Bok, D. (2006). *Our underachieving schools*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bolt, R. (1960). *A man for all seasons*. London: Heinemann.
- Clandinin, D. J. (Ed.). (2007). *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*. London: Sage.
- Clinchy, B. (2003). An epistemological approach to the teaching of narrative research. In R. Josselson, A. Lieblich, & D. McAdams, (Eds.), *Up close and personal: The teaching and learning of narrative research* (pp. 1–2). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

- Colby, A., & Sullivan, W. M. (2009). Strengthening the foundations of students' excellence, integrity, and social contribution. *Carnegie Perspectives*. Retrieved May 24, 2009, from <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/perspectives>
- Dewey, J. (1998). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (Original work published 1933)
- DiMatteo, A. (2009). The invention of suspicion: Law and mimesis in Shakespeare and renaissance drama [Review]. *College Literature*, 36, 154–156.
- Glaspell, S. (1916). *Trifles*. In N. Baym (ed.), *The Norton anthology of American literature* (Shorter, 6th ed., pp. 1893–1903). New York: W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1916)
- Glaspell, S. (1916). *Trifles*. Retrieved October 30, 2009, from <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/eng384/trifles.htm>
- Harrison, G. B. (Ed.). (1952). *Shakespeare: The complete works*. New York: Harcourt.
- Hinde, S. (2000). *State and social changes in early modern England, c. 1500–1640*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.
- Hutson, L. (2007). *The invention of suspicion: Law and mimesis in Shakespeare and renaissance drama*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Josselson, R., Lieblich, A., & McAdams, D. (Eds.). (2003). *Up close and personal: The teaching and learning of narrative research*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Jury trial. (2009). Retrieved October 30, 2009, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jury\\_trial/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jury_trial/)
- Kuhn, D. (2005). *Education for thinking*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lee, H. E. (1960). *To kill a mockingbird*. New York: Lippincott.
- Loughran, J. (2006). *Developing a pedagogy of teacher education*. New York: Routledge.
- Lyons, N. (2007). Narrative Inquiry: What possible future influence on policy or practice? In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *The handbook of narrative inquiry* (pp. 600–631). London: Sage.
- Lyons, N., & LaBoskey, V. (Eds.). (2002). *Narrative inquiry in practice: Advancing the knowledge of teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Mishler, E. (1990). Validation in inquiry-guided research: The role of exemplars in narrative studies. *Harvard Educational Review*, 60, 415–442.
- Plautus, T. M. *Mostellaria*. (1912). In Riley, H. T. (Ed.), *The comedies of Plautus* (Vol. 2, pp. 459–511). London: G. Bell and Sons.
- Rattigan, T. (1940). *The Winslow boy* (Acting ed.). New York: Dramatis Play Service.
- Russell, T. (2005). Can reflection be taught? *Reflective Practice*, 6, 199–204.
- Shakespeare, W. (1998). *Hamlet*. In R. Proudfoot, A. Thompson, & D. S. Kasten (Eds.), *The Arden Shakespeare complete works* (pp. 291–332). Cheltenham, UK: Thomas Nelson. (Original work published 1604–1605)
- Shakespeare, W. (1998). *The merchant of Venice*. In R. Proudfoot, A. Thompson, & D. S. Kasten (Eds.), *The Arden Shakespeare complete works* (pp. 829–856). Cheltenham, UK: Thomas Nelson. (Original work published 1600)
- White, H. (1981). *The value of narrativity in the representation of reality*. In W. J. T. Mitchell (Ed.), *On narrative* (pp. 1–23). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## AUTHOR NOTE

Nona Lyons has been a visiting research scholar at the National University of Ireland in Cork for the last ten years. There she has been teaching and coaching professionals in a variety of disciplines to engage in reflective inquiries about their professional growth and development and to document these inquiries through a reflective portfolio process. Presently Lyons is editing the forthcoming *Handbook of Reflection and Reflective Inquiry: Mapping a Way of Knowing for Professional Reflective Inquiry*, to be published by Springer Publishers. From her research, Lyons is convinced that reflective inquiries and portfolio development need to be taught and coached, something not always acknowledged or achieved. Lyons received her doctorate in Human Development from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and has taught at Harvard, Brown, the University of Southern Maine and most recently at Dartmouth College before going to Ireland.

## Appendix

### Links

1. Glaspell, S. (1916). *A jury of her peers: Trifles* [Radio drama]. Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Theatre of the Air. Available from <http://odeo.com/episodes/23506132-Trifles>
2. Robert Donat. (Producer). (1948). *Winslow boy* [Videocassette]. Available from <http://www.amazon.com/Winslow-Boy-VHS-Robert-Donat/dp/6303250742>
3. Plautus, T. M. *Mostellaria*. Available from [http://books.google.com/books?id=82DgvAOeiuIC&pg=PA3&dq=mostellaria+plautus&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](http://books.google.com/books?id=82DgvAOeiuIC&pg=PA3&dq=mostellaria+plautus&source=gbs_navlinks_s)
4. Mulligan, R. (Director). (1962). *To kill a mockingbird* [DVD]. Available from <http://www.moviesunlimited.com/musite/product.asp?sku=D11882&gclid=CI-nvLTpjJsCFYZM5Qod4I5jqA>
5. Gold, J. (Director). (1980) *The merchant of Venice* [DVD] Available from <http://www.amazon.com/BBC-Shakespeare-Merchant-Venice/dp/B000MN069K>
6. Zinnemann, F. (Director). (1966). *A man for all seasons* [Videocassette].
7. Olivier, L. (Director). (1948). *Hamlet* [Videocassette].

Copyright of Journal of Educational Research is the property of Taylor & Francis Ltd. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.