

We Must Have Certainty surveys the development of the genre of the detective story from its origins in the mid-nineteenth century to its current profile in the early twenty-first century. It locates a principal appeal of the genre in the nature of the world that the detective necessarily inhabits: a world of more or less realistic violence and excitement and, at the same time, a world that always, in the end, makes sense. It suggests that there is a significance to a popular narrative formula that requires that an initial world of suspicion and uncertainty be inevitably transformed by the detective into a world of clarity and order. Though scholarship in the field is acknowledged, the authors citations are most often from detective stories themselves. The essays are written in an accessible style; those who have read a few novels in the genre, as well as those who have read many, will find the book stimulating and provocative, J. K. Van Dover is Professor of English at Lincoln University.

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