Context: How do writers and film directors bring readers and audiences to the edge of their seats, making them want to read and watch on? *Picking Up the Clues* exposes students to the work of Edgar Allan Poe, unlocking strategies for approaching challenging texts and revealing how Poe’s work has influenced suspense-filled genres today. Students analyze how suspense is constructed in contemporary and classical fiction, and then infuse suspense into their own creative projects.

**Project:** The final project, the crafting of a graphic novel, builds on the knowledge and skills developed during the study of suspense. Students take one of their short stories, a work from Poe, or a chapter from their outside reading, and transform the most suspenseful segment into a script format that is then adapted into a graphic short story.

**Approach:** Students reflect on and analyze the elements of suspense in a contemporary novel, *Girl Stolen* by April Henry. The students create their own 1- to 2-page suspense narrative using the same elements of suspense that have been discussed in class. Students then read and analyze several of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories and follow a transmedia story in order to reinforce comprehension and place the stories in a different context, and to learn about Poe and the time in which he lived. Students write two more narratives to practice using the elements of suspense and common tropes of mystery, horror, and thriller genres. They submit this work to an online audience.

**Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) Template Task:** Students will engage in extended reading and writing by creating a suspenseful narrative.

**LDC Task:** Having read “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” a classic text that is cited as the first detective story with a detective duo, write a narrative from the perspective of a detective or his/her sidekick. Use stylistic devices such as the locked room trope and use at least two elements of suspense. (Narrative/Description)

**Expert Involvement:** Experts who have a background in creative writing (ideally mystery, horror, and thrillers) are first asked by students how they create suspenseful plots and then review student narratives periodically. Students are encouraged to revise their work with expert feedback in mind. Another set of experts who are scriptwriters or graphic novelists provides students with nuanced feedback to allow for more interesting and well-thought-out suspense videos.

**Digital Tools:** Teen Ink site, Figment.com, Pixton, Video editing software.

### Primary Standards: Core State Standards: Reading

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

### Primary Standards: CC Writing

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.