TEMA

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# The American Hard-Boiled Novel: D. Hammett and R. Chandler. The English Detective Novel. P. D. James

La novela negra norteamericana: D. Hammett y R. Chandler. La novela detectivesca inglesa. P.D. James.

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Material de elaboración propia a partir de las fuentes oficiales que se citan al final del tema. No es un temario oficial ni sustituye a la normativa publicada.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

"Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid." With these words Raymond Chandler described, in his essay "The Simple Art of Murder", the ideal detective of the American hard-boiled tradition: a man of honour who walks through a corrupt world without being corrupted by it. The sentence is useful because it captures the contrast on which this topic rests. On one side stands the American crime story of the 1920s and 1930s, born in cheap magazines, set in violent modern cities and written in a tough vernacular. On the other stands the English detective novel, which grew from Victorian sensation fiction into the elegant puzzle of the interwar years and which, in the work of P. D. James, became a serious novel of character, morality and institutions.

This topic is organised in the following way. I will first define the hard-boiled novel and its origins in the pulp magazines, above all *Black Mask*. Secondly, I will study Dashiell Hammett, the writer who gave the genre its first masterpieces. Thirdly, I will examine Raymond Chandler and his detective Philip Marlowe. Fourthly, I will turn to the English detective novel, from its nineteenth-century roots to the Golden Age of Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers. Fifthly, I will devote a section to P. D. James. Finally, I will consider the pedagogical and didactic implications of this content in the Secondary classroom, and I will close with a conclusion that returns to Chandler's image.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the sources consulted. For the critical background I have used Julian Symons's *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, Stephen Knight's *Crime Fiction since 1800*, Martin Priestman's edited volume *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) and P. D. James's own *Talking About Detective Fiction* (2009). For the legal framework of the last section I rely on Organic Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE), Royal Decrees 217/2022 and 243/2022, and the Extremaduran Decrees 110/2022 and 109/2022 on the curriculum of Compulsory Secondary Education and Bachillerato.