

The Ten Commandments of Detective Fiction

- I. The criminal must be someone mentioned in the early part of the story, but must not be anyone whose thoughts the reader has been allowed to follow.
- II. All supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course.
- III. Not more than one secret room or passage is allowable.
- IV. No hitherto undiscovered poisons may be used, nor any appliance which will need a long scientific explanation at the end.
- V. No Chinaman must figure in the story.
- VI. No accident must ever help the detective, nor must he ever have an unaccountable intuition which proves to be right.
- VII. The detective must not himself commit the crime.
- VIII. The detective must not light on any clues which are not instantly produced for the inspection of the reader.
- IX. The stupid friend of the detective, the Watson, must not conceal any thoughts which pass through his mind; his intelligence must be slightly, but very slightly, below that of the average reader.
- X. Twin brothers, and doubles generally, must not appear unless we have been duly prepared for them.

Source: R. A. Knox in Father Ronald Knox and H. Harrington, eds., *The Best Detective Stories of the Year, 1928* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1929, Introduction, pp. xi–xiv).