



Note to editors: Please find attached a PhotoShopped jpeg image of the missing Gillette Castle.

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CONTACT: Amanda Roy, program officer, CTH, aroy@cthumanities.org, 860-685-7599

24 Authors & Artists To Pen Serialized CT Storybook *In The Great CT Caper, Kid Detectives Search for Missing Landmark*

EAST HADDAM – Gillette Castle has vanished. Now it’s up to a couple of kids to scour Connecticut, piece together clues to unravel the mystery of its disappearance and, hopefully, restore the treasure.

That’s the plot of *The Great Connecticut Caper*, a serialized suspense storybook for fourth through seventh graders being published online by Connecticut Humanities (CTH), with help from the University of Connecticut and a NewAlliance Foundation grant.

CTH selected five Connecticut landmarks for potential disappearance. Online voters chose Gillette Castle, a 24-room mansion reminiscent of a medieval castle, which is a national historic landmark owned and managed by the state.

Twelve Connecticut authors and 12 state artists are volunteering to write or illustrate a chapter, with only the chapters that came before and their own imaginations as their guides. Connecticut is the first state to create a state-specific, collaborative mystery story, tapping into the skills of its own writers and artists.

Connecticut Humanities is modeling this e-book after a serialized episodic book released in 2011 by the national Center for the Book office at the Library of Congress. That book, called *The Exquisite Corpse Adventure*, was read by hundreds of thousands of children and adults from across the country and abroad.

“Connecticut has a rich cultural heritage along with significant literary and artistic talent,” says Amanda Roy, program officer for Connecticut Humanities. “We want to share all of this with the young people of Connecticut. So what better way than a mystery story?”

The Connecticut version has captured national attention. “The Library of Congress is thrilled to see that one of our affiliates, the Connecticut Center for the Book, has embarked on this exciting project,” said John Y. Cole, director of the National Center for the Book. “Our ECA [Exquisite Corpse Adventure] reading-promotion partner, the National Children’s Book and Literacy Alliance, was key in getting this project off the ground.”

The first chapter of *The Great Connecticut Caper* is scheduled to be released online Jan. 4, 2015, with a new chapter and illustration released every two weeks thereafter until June.

Students and staff from UConn’s digital scholarship and data curation department are melding text and images to create the e-book. In addition, the staff is working with Roy to create interactive games connected to the story’s scenes and plot. The online games will be launched this November.

Roy, who has a background in education, is writing Common Core-compatible curriculum with guidance from the National Children’s Book and Literacy Alliance. The curriculum can be used by schools, homeschoolers, scout troops and boys’ and girls’ clubs to connect lessons in art, reading and writing to the story.

CTH is partnering with other organizations as information about Connecticut is introduced in the story. Since the author of Chapter 1 mentions the Connecticut River watershed, Roy says it offers “a great opportunity to work with the Connecticut River Watershed Council on an activity.”

“We’re providing objectives, materials, resources and activity ideas and pointing them to where it connects to the Common Core,” she says, though it is left open ended enough to allow for teachers, parents, librarians and others to create their own lessons.

For example, there will be online puzzle games and interactive maps, where players can learn about Gillette Castle and its builder, William Gillette, a playwright, director and actor famous for his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes on stage and in film. Connecticut Humanities plans to have an audio recording of the story made after the book has been completed.

About Connecticut Center for the Book

The Connecticut Center for the Book promotes reading, writing and Connecticut’s literary heritage. It is a state affiliate of the Library of Congress’ Center for the Book. *The Great Connecticut Caper* is made possible through a grant from NewAlliance Foundation.

About Connecticut Humanities

Connecticut Humanities (CTH) is a nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, which funds, creates and collaborates on hundreds of cultural programs across Connecticut each year. It is headquartered in Middletown. Learn more by visiting www.cthumanities.org.