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This essay explores closure in the detective story, a genre that is generally recognized as a paradigm case of strong closure and thus has a special claim to notice in a general study of narrative closure. The essay starts by outlining a theoretical model of narrative closure based on a synthesis of Barbara Herrnstein Smith's approach to the problem of closure with Meir Sternberg's rhetorical-functionalist approach to the definition and understanding of narrative in terms of three major types of interest (suspense, curiosity, and surprise). The essay then proceeds to extend this model to the closural mechanisms operating in the detective story and the reasons for their special force. To round out the picture, the argument concludes by examining two detective novels with unconventionally open endings: Anthony Berkeley's *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* and Chester Himes's *Blind Man with a Pistol* serve to illustrate the other pole on the closure/openness spectrum.

Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics
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