The Maltese Falcon
Research Questions

Crime Writing
What are necessary elements to good crime writing?
Compare Dashiell Hammett’s writing style to other crime fiction writers (e.g. Agatha Christie, Raymond Chandler).

Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction
Compare Sam Spade with Sherlock Holmes.
Gumshoe. Private Dick. What are defining characteristics of a 1930s Hard-Boiled detective?
Consider the social, economic, historical, and philosophical, context of the world weary, morally ambivalent detective in this genre.
Why is Dashiell Hammett considered the Father of the Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction genre?

San Francisco
How important is the city of San Francisco to plot The Maltese Falcon? Would the story change if it had taken place in a different city?
Describe an aspect of San Francisco (e.g. history, culture, geography).

Private Investigator
Describe the career path of a Private Investigator.
What makes a good Private Investigator?
Explain how Sam Spade’s work would be different today. What type of technology or equipment would he require? What aspects of his Private Investigator business would be the same?

Crime Scene
What are Forensics?
Describe how current forensic technology could have helped Sam Spade solve the mystery of The Maltese Falcon.

The 1930s
Discuss a news event from the 1930s and describe its lasting impact.
Discuss a personality from the 1930s and describe his/her lasting impact or influence.
Discuss a popular culture feature or phenomenon from the 1930s and its impact or influence on today.

Film Noir
What is Film Noir? Describe how Film Noir has evolved over 20, 30 years or more.
How does film noir differ from other types of film, (e.g. thriller, comedy)? What does it have in common with other types of film?
What is a “Femme Fatale?” Describe how this character has evolved over 20, 30 years or more.
Greed
Does our consumer culture contribute to an individual’s greed? Does advertising?
Are Americans too materialistic?

Stereotypes
Are there “acceptable” stereotypes?
How do stereotypes develop? How do stereotypes evolve?
Describe how stereotypes or prejudices have changed the course of history.

Deception
Describe ways that lying or deception can be detected in conversations.
How can you tell if a relationship is good/bad for you? What is a “toxic” relationship?
Choose a character in *The Maltese Falcon* and describe his/her body language and other
characters reaction (or lack of reaction) to it.

Art Theft
Define Art Theft. What is Art Forgery?
What are some historical, famous or lucrative art thefts? What made them successful?