

## TEEN READ WEEK: FOCUS ON SHERLOCK HOLMES for grades 6-8

Janelle Kelly, Big Stone City Middle School, Big Stone City, South Dakota.

The Jan Stauber grant from the Beacon Society was appreciated and used in our school to buy several Sherlock Holmes books that were Accelerated Reader in a variety of AR levels for our Middle School students to read for their first quarter reading. Name plates provided by the Beacon Society were put inside the front cover of each book.

After the students were finished with their book, they made posters to tell about their books and to encourage others to try it. These posters were hung up on the walls in the Middle School area and down the hallway to the lunchroom.

During Teen Read Week (October 17-22) the students had a variety of activities to do with Sherlock Holmes.

Monday we had our special guest, Jeff Falkingham, come in and do a special kick-off presentation and he told of the two books he has written with Sherlock Holmes and Watson. He had a fun skit for the students to watch with a mystery actor portraying Sherlock Holmes. Also he showed two Power Point presentations and had time for Questions and Answers of the Sherlock Holmes character in his books as well as the one written from Doyle.

Also that week the students had a Sherlock Holmes relay game in Gym class, forensic activities in Science class, and reading activities (including time to quietly read their choice of reading material during a Read-In) during Language Arts class.

Book discussion groups were all held one afternoon, dividing up the students according to what Sherlock Homes book they had read. The teachers each took one group of students and discussed the books together with them.

The students were also given out prizes of magnifying glasses, bookmarks and pencils (all marked with a special Sherlock Holmes sticker that the librarian put on each ahead of time) and encouraged to give an oral book report to the Librarian of a book they have read of their choice recently (Teen Read Week theme has always been “READ FOR THE FUN OF IT!”—which encourages the Preteens and Teens to read on their own what they like outside of school homework.). When the students told of their free choice book to the Librarian they were given a mystery prize.

Another way of getting one of those mystery prizes was to complete two of the four Sherlock Holmes puzzle pages given out to them at the special presentation on Monday of TRW.

We concluded the week with a special treat provided by the Librarian, handing out mystery cupcakes with Sherlock Holmes flags in each.

This week was made more special with the grant money. It paid off by letting the students try a genre of book they maybe would never had tried before and will hopefully read for their own fun reading choice in the future.

I really enjoyed planning the entire week of activities, working with Jeff Falkingham on his program, and by encouraging the students to read one or more of the Sherlock Holmes books. Two students have come up to me and said they really liked their books and they would like to read more of them.

One of those students has read every book that I had bought with the grant money and wants to find other books (because I only purchased the Sherlock Holmes books that were Accelerated Reader). I plan on interlibrary loaning her some books from other libraries to let her read more. It was worth all the work and planning then to know it changed one student's perspective of types of books she likes.

Even though much of the excitement is now over with the Teen Read Week activities, we will continue to have the books available in the library and to encourage students to try them, especially if they already like mystery books but have never tried a Sherlock Holmes book. I have had some of the elementary students in the lower grades already check out some of the lower AR level books. These books will be a great new improvement to our library as I have them on a display rack that is labeled "Sherlock Holmes books" which are available now to students in all grades.

A portion of the Sherlock Holmes books are in graphic novel form, which seem to be a hit for all the students in the school to want to check out and read them. I do not have too many other graphic novel books in the School library, so it is a fun thing for the students in all grades to want to check them out.

The feedback from Middle School students now of what their favorite part of that week was, with a variety of answers, they all include the Sherlock Holmes name in their comments, whether it was the books themselves, the presentation, the gym activity, the science activity, etc.

I was tickled to have a lady come out from the SD State Library and interview me to write up the article for the Cornerstone magazine they print up each month.

I have gained much knowledge from Jeff Falkingham, and will have him visit our school again to talk to the students when he has his third book published. He is a true Sherlockian. (He has visited our school twice before in the last 6 years after each of his books were published. Our students love him and he loves our students and he tells me he has ideas from them to use in his next two books he writes.)

I think the students –as well as the teachers, principal, our guest, and myself really enjoyed all we have done with this Sherlock Holmes project, which all was made possible by your grant.

So thank you! I encourage other schools to apply for this grant to have the books available in their school (use a variety of reading levels) and do simple activities such as I did with the students to introduce them to the Sherlock Holmes book character. We have gained so much in the experience of it all.

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### BIG STONE CITY SCHOOL LIBRARY SLEUTHS INVESTIGATE SHERLOCK HOLMES

When school librarian Janelle Kelly of Big Stone City asked the State Library for grant information, one particular grant stood out to her as interesting and doable with sixth through eighth graders in her small school of 122 students. Kelly and Big Stone City School were awarded the Jan Stauber Grant through the Beacon Society, with which she was able to purchase a variety of Sherlock Holmes books and plan activities centered around a teaching project.

The mission of the Jan Stauber Grant is "to provide needed financial assistance to persons and organizations proposing literacy projects and other educational experiences that will introduce young people to Sherlock Holmes." Kelly produced a unique experience for students through collaborating with other teachers in her building to create interdisciplinary activities, inviting an author to share his expertise on Sherlock Holmes, and setting up book discussion groups through the library. By combining the project with Teen Read Week (October 17+22), Kelly was able to encourage students to try a different author/genre than they might normally read. As an incentive, she also awarded mystery prizes to students for sharing about books they had read for enjoyment or by completing puzzles.

Students in the middle grades began reading Sherlock Holmes stories when school started and have built upon their enjoyment and knowledge through a variety of activities. They created posters for their books which hang in the school hallways. Author Jeff Falkingham, a Minnesota mystery writer who has written two books for middle graders, *Sherlock Holmes and the County Courthouse Caper*, and *Sherlock Holmes: In Search of the Source*, donated his services as a presenter to students and the community to aid in the study. Falkingham portrayed Dr. Watson in the opening skit, giving principal/superintendent Dan Swartos the opportunity to play the role of Sherlock Holmes (costume included). Falkingham also offered a wealth of information on Holmes' clothing (hat, cape, pipe), illustrations of Holmes from 1891 in magazines to movies as current as 2011. Falkingham closed the school program by making the connection between the crimes Sherlock Holmes solved and forensic science, including blood analyses, fingerprinting, toxicology, and ballistics.

With a strong base of background information through the author visit, students continued to study forensics during science class with thumb printing, identifying shoe tracks, and using/reading invisible ink. Students in gym class used their energy in detective relays with each group racing to dress and act the part of Sherlock Holmes. Language arts classes enjoyed choice reading books and materials during a Read-In, and book discussion groups continued the Sherlock Holmes study, coming together in the library to talk about their first quarter reading requirement on Holmes.

Regarding the Jan Stauber Grant process, Librarian Janelle Kelly remarked, "It has been really worthwhile, because I had a student come forward to say that she loved Sherlock Holmes and wanted to read more, and she didn't even like mysteries before. Even if you have served one student, all the work pays off."

For more information on the grant mentioned in this article, see [beaconsociety.com](http://beaconsociety.com), or to find more information about author Jeff Falkingham, go to his website at [www.cccaper.com](http://www.cccaper.com).