

Thanks to the Jan Stauber grant from the Beacon Society, I was able to create a two-week unit that introduced my fifth graders to the stories of Sherlock Holmes. On the following pages, you will find my lesson plans, with objectives and pictures on pages 3-10 of this report. An assignment I created on identifying nouns is on page 11. Other resources used for this unit include information from Scholastic, the International Exhibition of Sherlock Holmes, and ReadingAtoZ.com. The texts used for whole class instruction are Classic Starts: The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and On The Case With Holmes and Watson: Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure at the Copper Beeches. The scripts for the Reader's Theater plays were The Red-Headed League and Sherlock Holmes and the Blue Carbuncle.

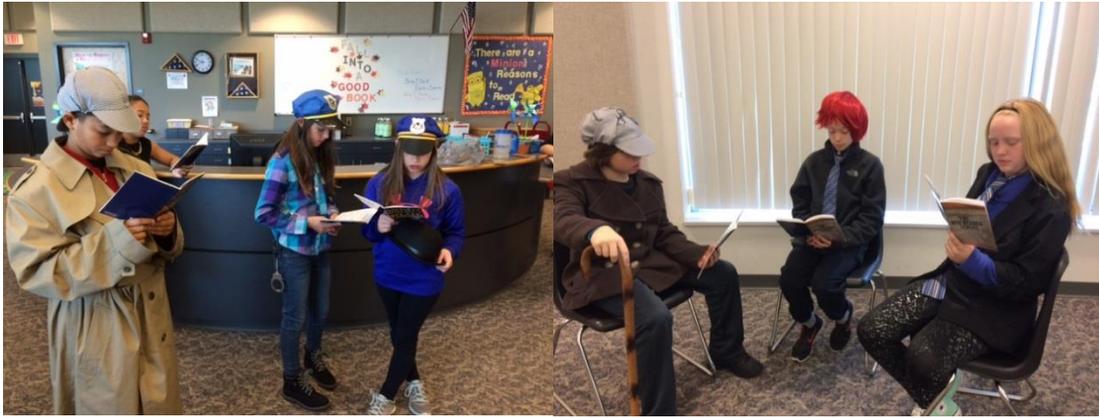
The unit on Sherlock Holmes began with an introduction to Sherlock Holmes in his many incarnations over the years from books and comics to movies and puppets. We then broke up into small groups and focused on what the elements mystery stories are while they read abbreviated forms of "The Blue Carbuncle," "The Red-Headed League," "The Speckled Band," "The Beryl Coronet," "The Copper Beeches," and "Silver Blaze."

As a whole class, we read five stories, with lessons focusing on different literary elements with each one. For "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," our class discussed character motivation which led to a class debate on if Holmes should have allowed James Ryder to go free. Our lessons on "The Adventure of the Red-Headed League" focused on character development and how characters are written for the short story format. "The Copper Beeches" discussed how a story can be structured to create tension and surprise with rising action. When we read "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," we focused on author's purpose and why Doyle made the choices he does in this particular story to help move the narrative. We wrapped up with "A Scandal in Bohemia," discussing how a foil character can be used to create conflict with the protagonist.



During our Language Arts lessons during the unit, the students spent these two weeks creating their own Sherlock Holmes pastiches. We worked our way through the writing process, starting with identifying story elements and brainstorming. The students also learned what it means to "see but not observe" by examining jackets, and explaining what type of person that coat would belong to. This activity helped them to understand the importance of using detail in their writing. After the students went through several edits and revisions on their stories, they had their very own Sherlock Holmes mystery to take home, as well as a better understanding of the writing process.

For the culminating activity of the Sherlock Holmes unit, the students presented two Reader's Theater plays based off of "The Adventure of the Red-Headed League" and "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle." Each student picked out and practiced their parts for a week leading up to this, deciding how their characters should move and what props and costumes would be appropriate for the performances. When the performance day arrived, they performed their plays to five other fifth grade classes in our building, introducing even more students to Sherlock Holmes and his masterful deductions.



As an educator, I love being able to share my passions with my students. It is extremely rewarding to see kids want to take our book home because we didn't have time to read "The Six Napoleons" or "The Greek Interpreter." I have different versions of the Sherlock Holmes stories in my classroom library, and they were in high demand going into the Thanksgiving break. So who knows? Maybe there are a few budding Sherlockians in my classroom. At the very least, I hope my students walked away from this unit of study with an appreciation for the world's greatest detective.

Sherlock Holmes Unit

Day 1

Introduction

Create a list on the board of anything that comes to mind when students hear “mystery and detective stories.” Introduce Sherlock Holmes to the class as the world’s most famous detective, written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887, and has been retold ever since. Discuss interpretations of Sherlock Holmes that they may be familiar with and show slideshow to give some recent examples and show the classroom collection of Sherlock Holmes books

Guided Reading

Objective: Introduce the mystery genre and the character Sherlock Holmes

Activity: Teach “Before Reading” section to whole class from Reading A to Z pack. Assign reading passages to students & students read passage independently and complete individual detective WS

The Blue Carbuncle

Students partner read “The Blue Carbuncle”

Working with partners, students answer the three key questions about the story

What is Dr. Watson’s role in this case? What does he contribute?

Would you have let James Ryder go? Why or why not?

Why do you think Holmes never spoke to the plumber who had been accused of stealing the carbuncle?



As a whole class, discuss the students’ answers to the questions

Writing

Discuss “Ingredients for a Mystery” from Scholastic. Complete the Detective Case Report WS for The Blue Carbuncle

Day 2

Guided Reading

Students do “During Reading” activities and “After Reading” teamwork from Reading A to Z lesson plans

The Speckled Band

Why does Helen’s mother’s will make Holmes suspicious of the stepfather right away?

What three facts does Holmes learn that convince him he knows what has been happening?

Why is the knowledge that Roylott keeps strange pets important to Holmes?

Copper Beeches

What clues lead Holmes to the conclusion that Violet is being paid to impersonate someone?

What action does Violet take in the story to show she is clever and resourceful?

Why did Rucastle keep his stepdaughter prisoner?

The Red-Headed League

Would you have answered the ad and joined the Red-Headed League? Why or why not?

What are some clues that told Holmes all he needed to know to solve the mystery?

What background knowledge Holmes have that led him to the solution of the case? How?

The Beryl Coronet

What made Holder assume his son was guilty?

Why is Holmes so interested in examining the alley behind the house and the window facing it?

How did Holmes' skill at disguise help him solve the crime?

The Blue Carbuncle

As a whole class, read "The Blue Carbuncle." Stop to discuss the following questions:

Compare how Watson and Holmes observed from the hat

What is a carbuncle? Who does it belong to?

What was in the goose? How did Holmes find out about it?

Why does Holmes think that Henry Baker had no knowledge of what was in the goose?

How did Holmes trick the innkeeper into telling him where the goose came from? Why would he trick him?

Who is James Ryder and how did he get the gem?

Have students debate whether or not James Ryder should have gone to jail for her theft and why they agree or disagree with Holmes' decision to let him go free.

Writing

Objective: Write narratives to develop events using well-structured event sequences

Activity: Tell students that they will write their own Sherlock Holmes mystery. Students complete the Planning Your Mystery WS

Homework: Write a rough draft of a mystery story

Day 3

The Red-Headed League

Students partner read "The Red-Headed League"

Working with partners, students answer the three key questions about the story

What does "The Red-Headed League" reveal about how Sherlock Holmes solves cases?

Watson says on p. 38 that he has seen everything that Holmes has, but he still didn't see what the crime was. Why wouldn't Holmes tell Watson what was happening?

What were some important clues along the way that helped Holmes solve the case?

As a whole class, discuss the students' answers to the questions

Guided Reading

Groups retell their cases to other students in the class. Pass out The Silver Blaze and follow Reading A to Z lesson plans



Writing

Do “The Game is Afoot” activity with class to focus on details.
Homework: Rewrite mystery story using more detail in descriptions

Day 4

The Red-Headed League

Objective: Examine the mystery genre

Activity: Read “The Red-Headed League” with class, stopping to answer the following questions:

What does Sherlock Holmes observe about Jabez Wilson?

What requirement is there to join the Red-Headed League? Why is there a vacancy?

Why would someone want the encyclopedia copied?

Sherlock Holmes believes that Mr. Wilson has no complaint against the Red-Headed League. Why do you think Mr. Wilson has come to Sherlock Holmes for help?

What does Sherlock Holmes learn about Vincent Spaulding?

Why didn't Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson go into the pawnshop?

Who is John Clay? How do you know?

Describe the two people that come out of the hole.

Why didn't anyone chase Mr. Clay's partner into the tunnel?

How did Sherlock Holmes guess the motive?

Do “If the Shoe Fits” activity with class

Assessment: Class discussion & Adjective/Adverb WS for homework

Reader's Theater

Objective: Introduce Reader's Theater plays

Activity: Students pick a part for Reader's Theater scripts

Writing

Review the editing process with class. Pass out editing marks list and have students glue them into the front cover of language arts notebooks. Students exchange mystery drafts and peer edit each other's work.

Day 5

The Speckled Band

Students partner read “The Speckled Band”

Working with partners, students answer the three key questions about the story

A good detective story has a clever and dangerous villain. How does Dr. Roylott meet this requirement?

The mood of this story is one of terror and suspense. Give three examples of how Arthur Conan Doyle used details to create that mood.

Sherlock Holmes is a master at taking what he sees and hears and making deductions. How was he able to do that in this story?

As a whole class, discuss the students' answers to the questions

Reader's Theater

Students practice their Reader's Theater plays



Writing

Students rewrite their mystery stories using corrections from yesterday & turn in for editing

Day 6

The Speckled Band

Objective: Examine the mystery genre

Activity: Read "The Speckled Band" with class, stopping to answer the following questions:

Why would the author have Holmes tell Helen Stoner how she got to Baker Street?

Why would the author have Helen tell her family's story to Holmes?

What is Ms. Stoner afraid of?

What is the purpose of having Helen be bruised and having Roylott visit and threaten Holmes?

What things did Sherlock Holmes find in Julia's room that were unusual?

What items did Sherlock Holmes find in Dr. Roylott's room that were unusual?

Who are the possible suspects at this point?

Who killed Julia? How was she killed?

Assessment: Class discussion & Noun WS for homework

Reader's Theater

Students practice their Reader's Theater plays

Day 7

The Copper Beeches

Objective: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text create effects as mystery, tension or surprise

Activity: Students read "The Copper Beeches" independently. When everyone is done, lead a discussion on rising action in stories from



Group Discussion section of “Cheap, Healthful Literature” lesson plan
 Compare a story being told in text vs. as a graphic novel.

Reader’s Theater

Students practice their Reader’s Theater plays

Day 8

The Speckled Band

Follow lesson plans for “On the Trail of a Mystery” from The International Exhibition of Sherlock Holmes

Writing

Students write final draft of mystery stories

Homework: Type mystery story

Sherlock Holmes Mystery Rubric

	3	2	1	0			
Sentence & Paragraph Structure							
Spelling & Grammar							
Neatness							
Name, Number & Date							
Title							
Detective							
Setting							
Problem							
Suspects							
Clues							
Evidence							
Conclusion							
First Draft							
Second Draft							
Editing							
Total x 2							/42

Day 9

A Scandal in Bohemia

Poll students for their opinions if Sherlock Holmes can be beaten, and if he can, what type of person would it take to beat him?

Read pages 1-14 of A Scandal in Bohemia with class

Stop to let students brainstorm how they would recover the picture from Irene Adler

Read pages 14-24 together

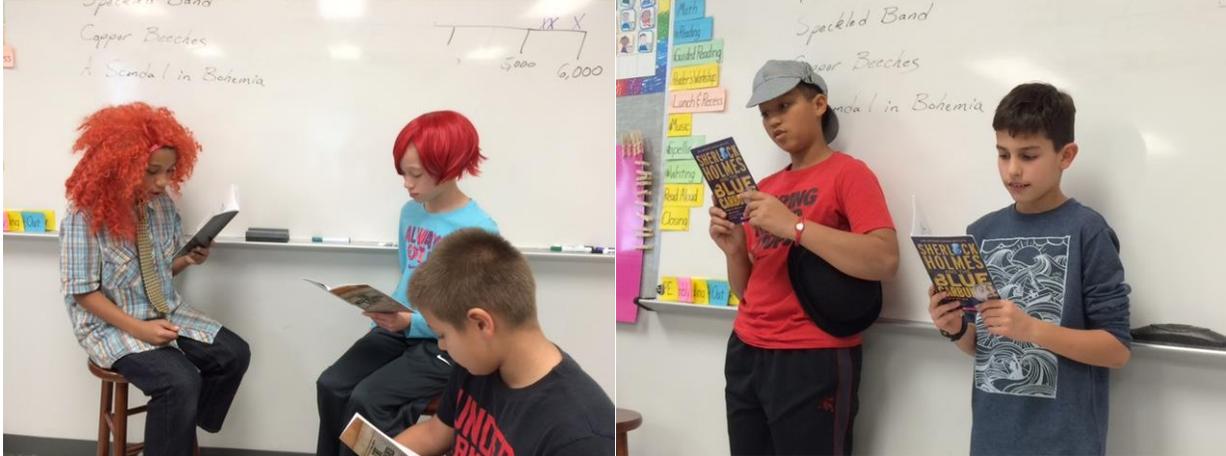
Evaluate if Sherlock Holmes accomplished his mission. If not, why was the king so happy? Did Sherlock get beaten? How?

Compare and contrast the five Sherlock Holmes stories we've read.

Assessment: Students rank the five stories in order of their favorite and write two sentences to support their opinions on each story.

Reader's Theater

Groups perform their plays for the other half of the class



Writing

Students create book covers for their mystery stories that includes a title, author and illustration (front outside), published date (front inside), about the author (back inside) and a story synopsis (back outside)



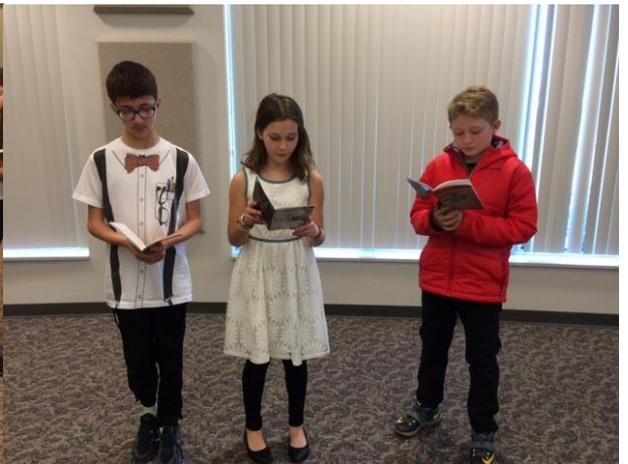
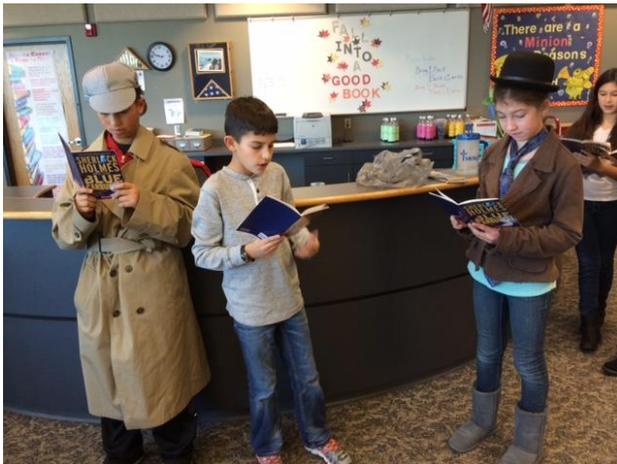
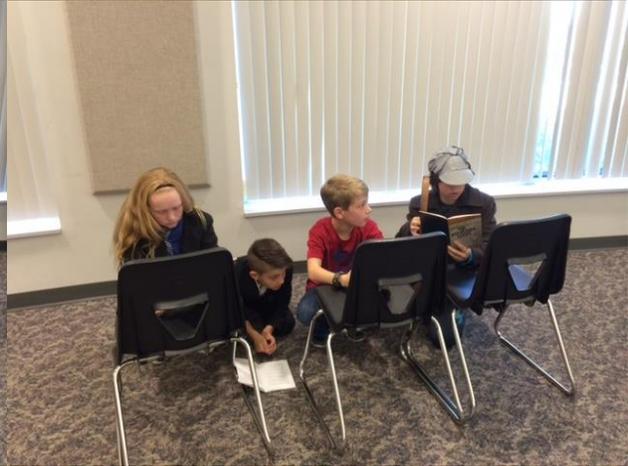
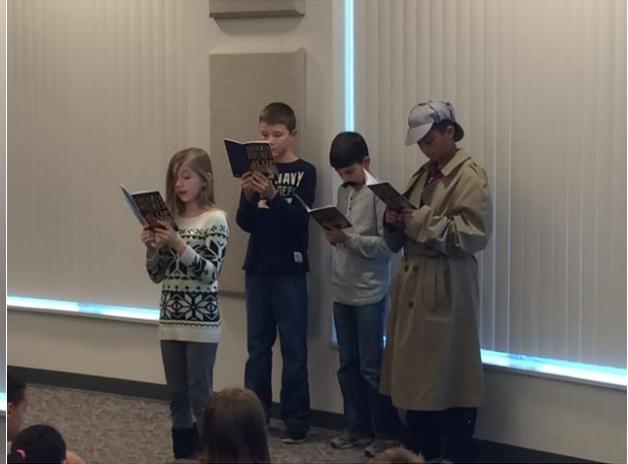
Day 10

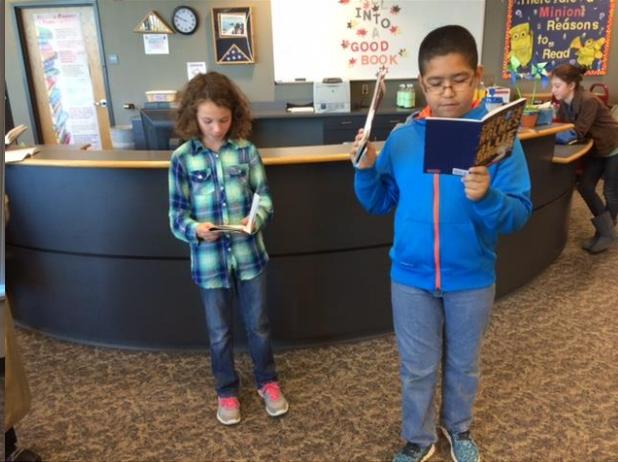
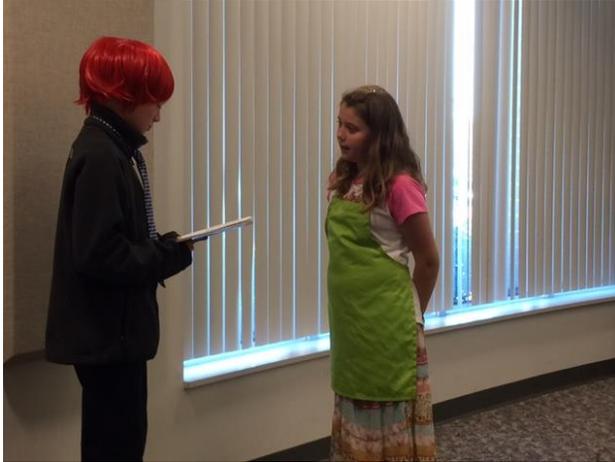
Culminating Activity

Discuss the different forms that Sherlock Holmes stories can be portrayed in
Watch "The Great Mouse Detective"

Reader's Theater

Groups practice Reader's Theater presentations
Groups perform their plays for other classes





Name_____Number_____Date_____

Nouns in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band”

Circle all nouns in the following passages.

When we inspected the rooms, I realized that no one could have entered the locked bedroom. I also took note of the bell-rope, the air vent, and the bed that could not be moved. It became clear to me that the rope was a bridge between the bed and the air vent.

Right away, I thought of a snake. If Dr. Roylott had a cheetah and a baboon, he might easily have a snake. As a doctor who practiced in India, he would also know that this poison could not be detected. And he would know that its bite would be invisible.

I could tell from looking at the chair in his room that he stood on it to reach the air vent. He would place the snake in the air vent. The deadly creature would crawl through the vent, down the rope, and onto the bed.

At first, the snake did not attack Julia Stoner. But the doctor had trained it to return at the sound of a whistle. That is what she heard. The milk also helped lure the snake back to his room. He would then catch it with the rope and put it in the safe. The clanging sound that the sisters heard was that of the safe being closed.