

A Community Mystery Writing Contest

Adapted from the plan of Nadine Naujoks, Events Coordinator, Sherlock Holmes Festival, Tryon, NC

These specific guidelines show the details involved in planning a community contest. Note how special needs of home-schooled and bilingual students are addressed, how a library can be a drop-off point for manuscripts, how students are told what will disqualify them, a teachers' list of talking points for their classes and the inclusion of a judge's scorecard.

MYSTERY WRITING CONTEST SCORE CARD

MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES for students

- Who can enter?
All middle school students in Polk County and Landrum, including those in private schools and those who are being home-schooled.
- When is the deadline?
Deadline for dropping off manuscripts is Friday, Oct. 13. No manuscripts will be accepted after the deadline.
- How many can win?
First, Second and Third place will be awarded.
There will also be three honorable mentions.
Prizes (to be chosen later) will be given to all six winners.
- What are the rules?
An original mystery fiction story, length of 1500-1800 words.
The story must be the original work of only one student.
Stories should include a beginning, middle and an end, following a plot or theme.
Bilingual students may have their stories translated by another student or teacher. Stories must be submitted in English but the manuscript in the original language may be included.
- How must I format my manuscript?
Write legibly on one side of each page in ink, typewriter or computer. Manuscripts chosen as semi-finalists must be typed or done on a computer/word processor.
Left-hand margin of 1 1/2 inches to allow for binding.
Illustrations are allowed but must be the author's own art. Computer illustrations must be original. Clip Art and Print Shop cannot be used.
- What could disqualify my entry?
You aren't allowed to use illustrations you didn't draw yourself. Clip Art and Print Shop cannot be used.
You must NOT put your name anywhere on the manuscript – your name only goes on the student identification slip which you then attach to your manuscript.
- Where do I turn in my paper?
Public school students give manuscripts to the school office or the Polk County Public Library in Columbus.

Home-school students should check with the county Home School Coordinator to arrange for manuscript drop-off, or turn manuscript in to the desk at the Polk County Library. DO NOT DROP MANUSCRIPT IN THE LIBRARY BOOK DROP BOX.

- Fill out the student identification slip

Student identification slip (see below) MUST be attached to the manuscript, and must be written legibly or typed. DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME ON THE MANUSCRIPT ITSELF OR YOU WILL BE DISQUALIFIED. Your paper will be given a number for identification.

MYSTERY WRITING CONTEST IDENTIFICATION SLIP

Student name: _____ Manuscript # _____
School: _____ Grade Level _____
Home Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip _____
Telephone: _____

Mystery Writing Contest: Information for Teachers

- Contest announcement for appropriate classes

In connection with the Sherlock Holmes Festival, to be held in Tryon, North Carolina, Nov. 3-4, a mystery story-writing contest is being offered to all middle school students in Polk County and Landrum.

Please hand out the attached forms to your students in Language Arts/English or Reading classes who might be interested in writing a story.

- Website and email addresses for students

You may post this announcement and/or write web addresses and deadline on class board.

Entry information may also be downloaded from the website, [provide website address]

For more information, students may inquire by e-mail to: [provide email address]

- Deadline for entries

THE DEADLINE FOR STORY ENTRIES IS FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13.

- Tips about judging (items not appearing on the guidelines) A few points to emphasize:

Extremely bloody, graphic or gory stories are NOT encouraged, and will probably not make it past a first reading.

The stories do not have to include Sherlock Holmes. As a matter of fact, we would prefer they be more original than that.

Prizes have not yet been determined, but will probably include one or more of the following: cash, videotapes, books, gift certificates, t-shirts, fingerprint or ID type kits.

Students will be notified by a telephone call from a member of the Sherlock Holmes Committee, and they will be told where the awards ceremony will be held.

MYSTERY WRITING CONTEST SCORE CARD

TITLE: _____

GRADE: _____

MANUSCRIPT #: _____

Score Responses to Questions

0 = Not at all 1 = Fair 3 = Good 5 = Excellent

STORY POINTS

- Does the story have an interesting beginning? Does it catch the reader's attention?
- Did the student/author use colorful details and words in revealing the characters, or at least the main character?
- Did the student/author develop the setting by the use of clear and descriptive words?
- Did the student/author include a problem/mystery in the story that was a logical outgrowth of the characters or setting?
- Did the student/author create clues that resulted in either a logical conclusion or a cliffhanger?
- Does the ending fit the story and include details that successfully finish the movement of the story?
- Are the ideas expressed in words that are interesting, creative and descriptive?
- How is the format of the manuscript? Is it neat and clean? Are there signs of pride of authorship?

Judge's Name: _____

TOTAL: _____

Optional comments: