

Jan Stauber Grant Report

In December and January of this year, my senior English class, a themed class revolving around mystery, undertook an extensive study of Sherlock Holmes. Students read A Study in Scarlet, did close analysis of Conan Doyle's character development and writing, conducted crime scene analysis of a staged version of the Lauriston Gardens crime scene, viewed two film versions of the novel (A 1968 BBC version and the 2010 Sherlock episode "A Study in Pink") and then wrote a 5-8 page paper establishing criteria for a successful film adaptation and evaluating which of the two versions they watched was more effective. This assignment aimed at the highest level of thinking as established in Bloom's Taxonomy and required the students to use significant evidence to support an argument. Then, the students read "A Scandal in Bohemia" and evaluated Irene Adler's role as a femme fatale, comparing her to John Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci," and then, in groups, they selected another of the canonical stories and completed 'Murder Boards,' graphic representations of the investigation that required them to follow the complicated logic of the story.

My high school is exceptionally diverse (the most diverse high school in Massachusetts, in fact), with over fifty-five languages represented, and the majority of our students are on free or reduced lunch, a federal indicator for living in poverty. My class is unleveled, meaning that it serves students of all skill levels, from Honors level students planning on attending four year colleges to students who have recently exited our English Language Learners program to students with special needs. With the grant money, I purchased copies of the graphic novel A Study in Scarlet and some adapted text copies of the short stories. These resources made the text much more accessible to struggling students. All students were given the complete text; students with identified difficulties were also given the graphic novel and the remaining books were made available to any student on a first come, first served basis. The students truly enjoyed using these texts. Many students wanted to borrow a graphic novel and I observed multiple students using them exactly as I intended: reading the full text first, then clarifying their understanding with the images in the graphic novel. So many of our students have no picture in their head of Victorian England; the books helped them to imagine the world of Sherlock Holmes, improved their critical thinking skills, and, hopefully, made them excited to read more!

I have attached a folder of resources from this unit.

Thank you!