

“Education never ends, Watson” (REDC)

## **2017 Jan Stauber Grant Final Report**

submitted by

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“221b Baker Street” of the Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem

“The Seventeenth Step” of the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes

“Beacons of the Future!” of the Baker Street Irregulars

Seven years ago, my classroom became 221b Baker Street, Sherlock Holmes’s home. The Sherlockian theme encourages my students to employ the mindset and skills needed for optimal growth, provides an engaging framework for learning, and supports students in their attempts to be productive citizens. My students can relate to and learn from Sherlock Holmes’s character traits, observational skills, capacity for critical thought, and inductive and deductive reasoning. As Sherlockians at Moore Elementary, students read and analyze abridged versions of the Canon and pastiches.

Because I was awarded 2017 Jan Stauber grant funds, five class sets of pastiches (sixty-five books) were purchased for my 1st, 3rd, and 4th grade Sherlockians to analyze for literary elements. These pastiches were also purchased for my Sherlockians to identify Sherlock Holmes's mindset/skills and be encouraged to employ these daily to become better learners-observant, active participants in their learning, and critical thinkers. This year, thirty-six students participated in the pastiche studies. It is anticipated that the books will be utilized every year. Therefore, hundreds of Sherlockians will ultimately benefit from this grant.

### **Learning Activities**

#### *Hamster Holmes series*

The first-grade students read Albin Sadar and Valerio Fabbretti’s Hamster Holmes series- Hamster Holmes, A Mystery Comes Knocking (book #1); Hamster Holmes, Combing for Clues (book #2); and Hamster Holmes, On the Right Track (book #3). Before reading each book, the students completed vocabulary maps for the following words- “detective” (book #1), “spectacles” and “observe” (book #2), and “clever” (book #3). As the students read each book, they completed the “Evidence of Sherlockian Habits” learning activity- a character analysis of Hamster Holmes or his firefly sidekick, Dr. Watt. In addition, the students participated in the following extension studies-

Book #1- “morse code” study

Reading A-Z- Sending Messages

<https://www.readinga-z.com/book.php?id=753>

The Dr. Binocs Show- Invention Of Morse Code

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORIDAmGf\\_yQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORIDAmGf_yQ)

Morse Code Scavenger Hunt, Sara Barnum

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Morse-Code-Scavenger-Hunt-2363962>

Book #2- “color combining” study

Color Changing Milk

<https://www.stevespanglerscience.com/lab/experiments/milk-color-explosion/>

Book #3- “optical illusions” study

Optical Illusions- Optics for Kids

<https://www.optics4kids.org/illusions>

### *The Great Shelby Holmes*

The third-grade students read The Great Shelby Holmes, by Elizabeth Eulberg. Before reading the book, we played “Fake It or Define It.” During the vocabulary game, each student attempted to deceive her/his peers by sharing 3 definitions for an unknown word from the novel. Two of the definitions were fake. The class had to determine which definition was real. I assigned the following words for this game- civilian (p. 2), landlady (p. 2), sobriquet (p. 21), decipher (p. 67), amateur (p. 89), peculiar (p. 148), interrogation (p. 160), alibi (p. 161), motive (p. 162), cryptically (p. 200), deerstalker cap (p. 240), and brain attic (p. 243). While reading the text, the students completed the “Literary Analysis Wheel.” As a final assessment, the students drew arrows across the elements to show connections, and they had to justify their thinking.

In the text, nine-year-old Shelby Holmes and eleven-year-old John Watson must use their talents to solve a dognapping case in their Harlem neighborhood. Therefore, I visited Harlem while in New York City for the 2018 Baker Street Irregulars weekend. I shared photos of my visit when I returned. Finally, the pastiche is littered with nods to the Canon. I pointed out this “evidence” as we read through the pastiche.

### *Imogene and the Case of the Missing Pearls*

The fourth-grade students were immersed in the Victorian London setting as they read Imogene and the Case of the Missing Pearls, by Elizabeth Varadan. While the students read the pastiche, they completed the “My Curiosities and Confusions” learning activity. After reading each section, they wrote two questions conveying their curiosities and/or confusions. They identified what they wondered about and what was especially puzzling. By the end of the story, the clever, budding detective, Imogene, *had been taught* how to be a detective by Sherlock Holmes and was even instrumental in helping Holmes and Watson solve a case. For a concluding activity, I asked the students what they *had been taught* by reading the pastiche. Their responses varied from very practical to insightful/thoughtful. Some student responses were-

“I learned to identify figurative language better. There are many examples of it in the book.”

“I learned that authors should use more sensory details in their writing. While reading this book, I felt like I was there among the characters.”

“I learned that detectives may get stuck. However, they do not panic when they are stuck. They just keep moving forward.”

“I learned that sicknesses were not easily cured in Victorian times. It was also hard to afford medicine and find the right ones needed.”

In addition, my eleven-year-old daughter read the book. And, on May 19, 2018, my daughter and I presented “Victorian Dining with Imogene, Rusty, and Sherlock Holmes” to the Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem, my local Sherlockian group. To begin our presentation, my daughter shared the section of the text in which Holmes observes that Imogene had just enjoyed a raspberry scone. Holmes had noticed the crumbs caught in her overskirt. And, to his “expert eye,” he observed that they were scone crumbs not toast crumbs. Then, my daughter shared a list of the foods and drinks the characters enjoyed in the pastiche. From the lengthy list of foods, she baked and brought four of them using recipes found in Julia Carlson Rosenblatt’s book Dining with Sherlock Holmes: a Baker Street Cookbook for the Scholars to

sample. After the taste testing, she asked the Scholars to vote on their favorite recipe. The treacle tart with the custard sauce received the most votes. In addition, she decorated the tables with flowers arranged in the empty golden syrup bottles and lemon curd jars. These were door prizes. Also, we shared John Bennett Shaw's "Alimentary, My Dear Wason" essay from 1967.

### **Other Sherlockian Adventures from the 2017-2018 School Year**

1. To begin the school year, eighty-six fourth graders participated in Sherlockian Training. During the week long training, the students were introduced to Holmes's observational skills in "A Scandal in Bohemia." Then, they used their observational skills to examine a crime scene and used their deductive reasoning to draw conclusions about the crime after listening to suspect interviews and analyzing forensics lab results. By the end of the training, the students were taught to be observant, active participants in their learning, and critical thinkers... just like the great detective.
2. At our district's September school board meeting, nine students were recognized for their May 2017 honorary membership into Watson's Tin Box of Ellicott City. The students had become honorary members because of their thoughtful addition of Henry Baker's walking stick to Paul Churchill's BLUE artifact box. At the same meeting, the school board recognized two students for their "Magnifying Parallel Plots" essay's publication in the 2017 summer edition of The Serpentine Muse.
3. Fourth graders interviewed and wrote biographies for the following Sherlockians- Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Denny Dobry, Mark Jones, Scott Monty, and Betsy Rosenblatt. Their biographies now hang in the "Singular Sherlockians" section of The Sherlock Holmes Museum for the Young, Curious, and Observant Mind, our classroom museum.
4. Fourth graders added three new artifacts, with interpretive labels, to the classroom museum- Watson's Tin Box (donated by Denny Dobry), Undershaw and Stepping Stones School photo album (with assistance from Nick Hyett, Stepping Stones School Head of Curriculum- Primary/Upper KS2 Teacher), and Photographs and Videos of Current BLUE Locations (with assistance from Mark Jones).
5. In December, Dr. Marino Alvarez led the fourth graders in an analysis of BLUE and shared photos and stories of his visits to Undershaw and Stepping Stones School.
6. Throughout the year, the fourth graders communicated with Stepping Stones students using Padlet, an online bulletin board. In May, the students used Google Meet, a video conference application, to ask the students follow-up questions and take a virtual tour of Conan Doyle's former study. The Fresh Rashers (Marino Alvarez, Jim Hawkins, Bill Mason, Dean Richardson, and Drew Thomas) were present for the Google Meet and stayed to play REDH Jeopardy.
7. Dr. Robert Katz donated twenty-five copies of The Grand Game: a Celebration of Sherlockian Scholarship, Volume Two, 1960-2010, for me to gift to young Sherlockians that would truly appreciate the "writings upon the writings." To date, I have gifted one copy to Conor Kimbro. Conor was a student in my classes, had research published in the Serpentine Muse, and has been a member of the Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem since he was eleven. He is now a freshman in high school. In addition, I gave copies to the students that received honorary membership into Watson's Tin Box of Ellicott City. This year, they have been students at our district's intermediate school. That school's Accelerated Learning teacher secured time for me to meet with them.

When we met, we read parts of “The Blue Enigma” essay, by Judge S. Tupper Bigelow. The essay focuses on the inconsistencies found in BLUE including the color of Holmes’s dressing gown. I shared Christopher Morley’s thoughts on the fading gown colors. Immediately, the students were eager to share their thinking. Although most of the students agreed with Morley’s thoughts, some of the students just couldn’t see the logic in it. In fact, one student pointed out that it is often cloudy in London; and therefore, it would be difficult for clothing to fade in that climate. The students could have continued to wonder about the gown colors for quite some time, but we moved on to discuss the Bakers in 1890 London, Holmes’s deductions made from Henry Baker’s hat, the absence of crops in geese, laws of England, and the blue carbuncle. Finally, we concluded our time by talking with Dr. Katz using the Google Meet application. When Dr. Katz asked the students to describe their initial impressions of the book, one student mentioned that he looked forward to reading about others’ opinions of the stories. Another student stated that she thought the book will encourage thinking. Another student wondered if Conan Doyle’s inconsistencies were intentional so we could play “the game.” And finally, another student decided that when we are analyzing errors or researching interests... we are playing detective! To end the Google Meet session, Dr. Katz encouraged the students to write their own articles.

These additional Sherlockian adventures, from the 2017-2018 school year, were possible because the students have a great understanding and appreciation for Sherlock Holmes. That understanding and appreciation has been nurtured as the students read and analyze the pastiches and abridged stories from the Canon. Most of these texts were purchased with 2015 and 2017 Jan Stauber Grant funds.

### **In Conclusion**

Jerry Flack, Professor Emeritus of the University of Colorado, has stated, “In all of literature, it is hard to find a hero or protagonist who better exemplifies the intellectual traits and behaviors I want my students to acquire. Holmes was a student of all disciplines—science, math, history, art, and language. He believed education to be a lifelong pursuit.” I concur with Dr. Jerry Flack. It is difficult to find a hero or protagonist who better exemplifies the intellectual traits and behaviors I want my students to acquire other than Sherlock Holmes. Therefore, I have embraced the Sherlockian theme in my classroom. And since “education never ends” (REDC), my students are equipped to embrace future educational experiences like the great detective. I am grateful for the Beacon Society and the Jan Stauber grant funds.