

Project Completion Report

By:

Mrs. Cheryl D'Aloisio
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When I was awarded the grant money from The Beacon Society, I was overjoyed! I've always loved the mystery genre, and now I was able to bring it into my classroom and share it with my students! They loved it! They really enjoyed reading Sherlock Holmes stories. Unfortunately, with the increase in technology, getting students to pick up a book and read it has become increasingly more difficult, but I feel confident in the success of the lessons I was able to complete thanks in part to the grant.

My school is fairly small, so there are only two English Language Arts teachers in the eighth grade. As such, my colleague and I were able to complete all of the lessons together, so every eighth grader was introduced to this genre and Sherlock Holmes. To introduce the mystery genre, we began by using mini-mysteries. Our students were given different scenarios and clues. It was up to them to decide who was guilty and why. This provided me with the perfect opportunity to have them complete argumentative writing which is a major Common Core standard. They had to write in paragraphs--sometimes full essays--and include a claim statement (who was guilty) and textual evidence to support their claim (reasons why that person was guilty). Once they completed a few of the mini-mysteries, I was also able to add in a counter-claim (reasons another suspect was innocent). These were on-going lessons throughout the year.

Around November, we were able to read "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle." The vocabulary used was challenging for my students, but they were so into the story! They all seemed to have a theory on who stole the gem and how it got in the goose. As we read, I had them jot down different clues and story elements on their 'solve it' graphic organizer. Since the language of the time was often confusing, this helped them to organize their thoughts and comprehend the story. My students were also encouraged to do a close reading of the text, so they could discuss what was happening, what they thought was happening, and why. I challenged them to pay attention to clues and use logical reasoning to figure out the mystery. Because of the time period, this proved to be difficult for most of my students mainly because they didn't understand certain elements of the story. For example, investigating the hat and realizing that it could tell the social class of an individual. Holmes was able to determine that the person that owned the hat had been well off but had recently fallen on hard times. He also determined that the owner's marriage was on the rocks. There was no way my students could come to those conclusions on their own. Next year when I teach the story, I'll do a lot of front-loading of information about the time period: social class, clothing, and what life was like in general. After we completed the story, my students were given a choice of a performance task. They had to demonstrate their understanding of the story and all of the events and identify certain literary elements that were present. Regardless of the text difficulty, my students really enjoyed reading the story.

Once we completed our mini-mystery lessons and reading "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," we were ready to do our large-scale, 'live' crime scene. My colleague and I had originally planned a crime scene where each student had a partner, and they had to work their way through a webquest to complete all of the required tasks. Unfortunately, due to state testing, we lost our technology (all chromebooks were used for testing), so we had to create a different lesson. We were able to create our crime scene in our book room. Students were given different pieces of the mystery to complete. They had to complete one piece in order to receive the next

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piece. Their final project was to create a case file that included a map with the suspects identified on it, a crime scene photo that included only relevant evidence, evidence cards, a decoded letter, a crime scene investigation form, and a written report (essay) that clearly identifies who is guilty (claim statement), the evidence to support why that person(s) guilty (textual evidence), evidence to support why other suspects were innocent (counter-claim & rebuttal), and a detailed account of how the crime was carried-out.

Receiving this grant allowed me the opportunity to create lessons that were highly engaging for all students. I was able to purchase materials to complete the mini-mysteries, the Sherlock Holmes story and lessons, and the large "live" crime scene. I know that my students will always remember how much fun they had in language arts class this year because they weren't just doing boring book work. I was able to cover writing standards and reading standards. These projects provided an engaging way to teach the same-old boring standards in a fresh, fun way. Rarely did I see any student unengaged in these lessons, and their reading comprehension and writing improved greatly from August. I am so grateful that I was given this grant and opportunity to implement these lessons. I'm already excited to do it again next year, and my goal is to add another Sherlock Holmes story. Ideally, I'd like to be able to read one each quarter.

Below are pictures from the "live" crime scene, mini-mystery lessons, and reading The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle. These lessons were very engaging and allowed for collaboration between students. I've also included the performance task students completed after reading the Sherlock story.

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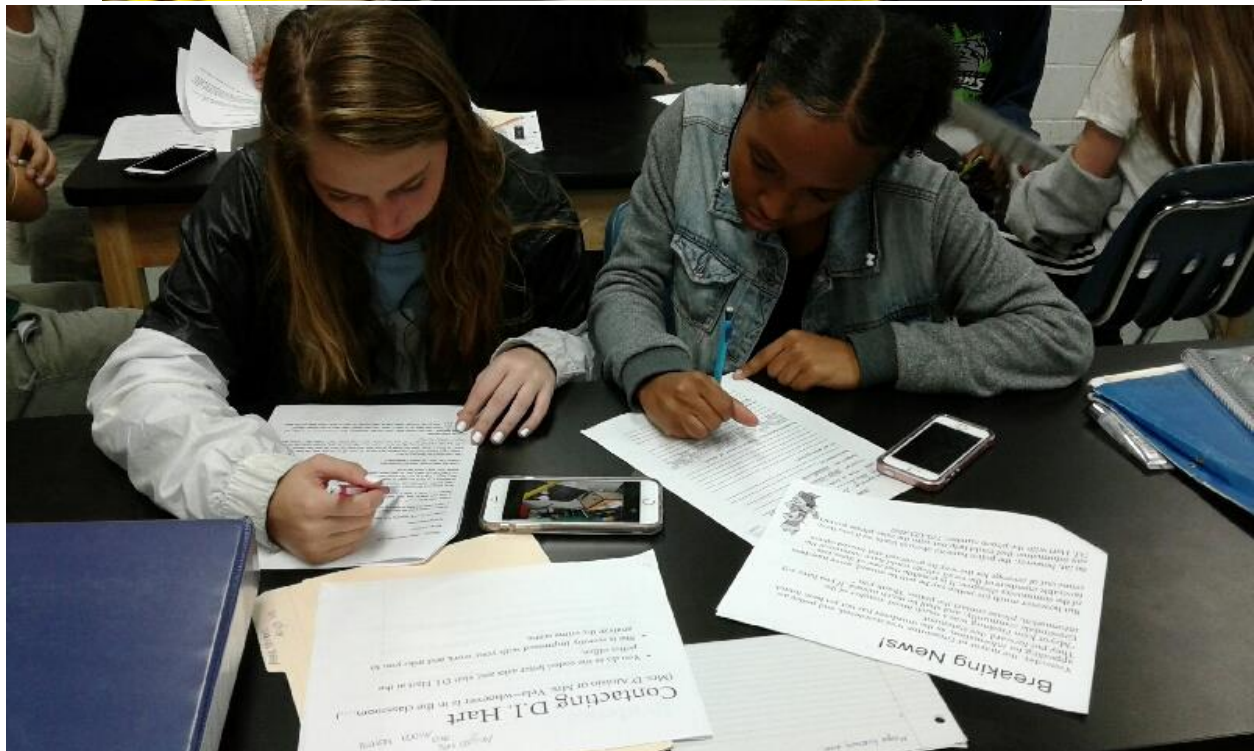
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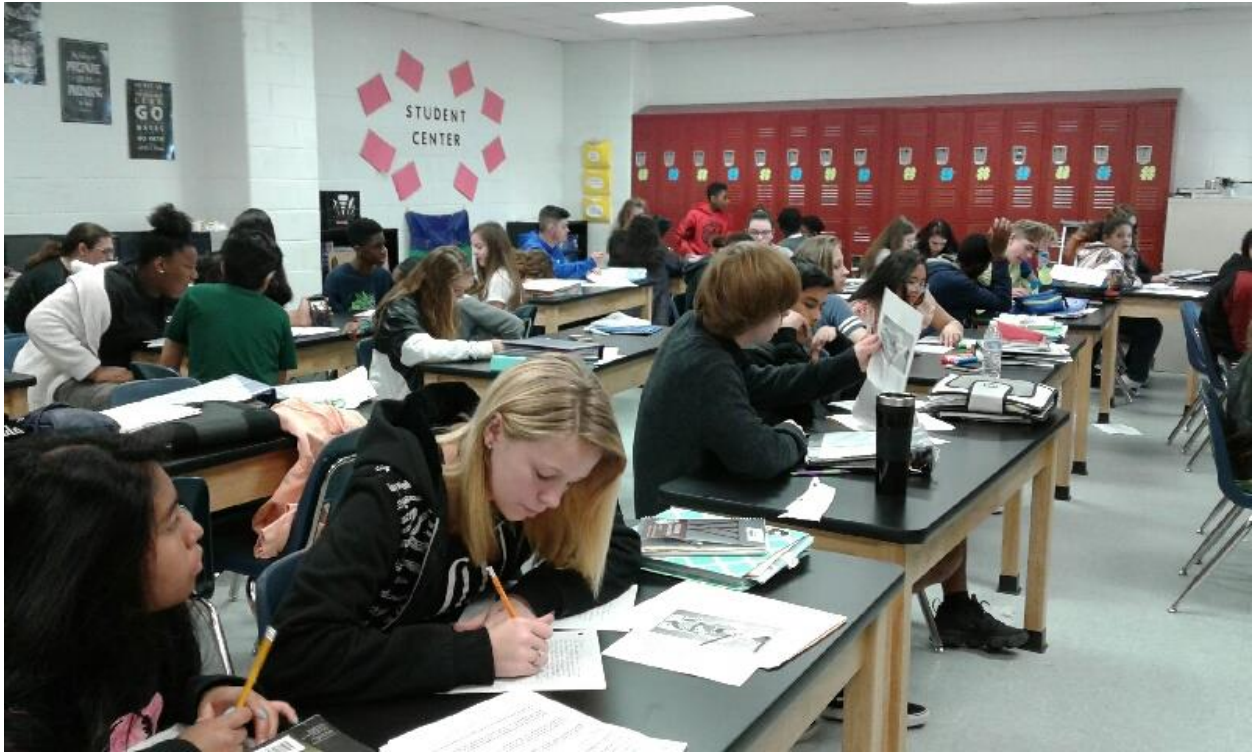
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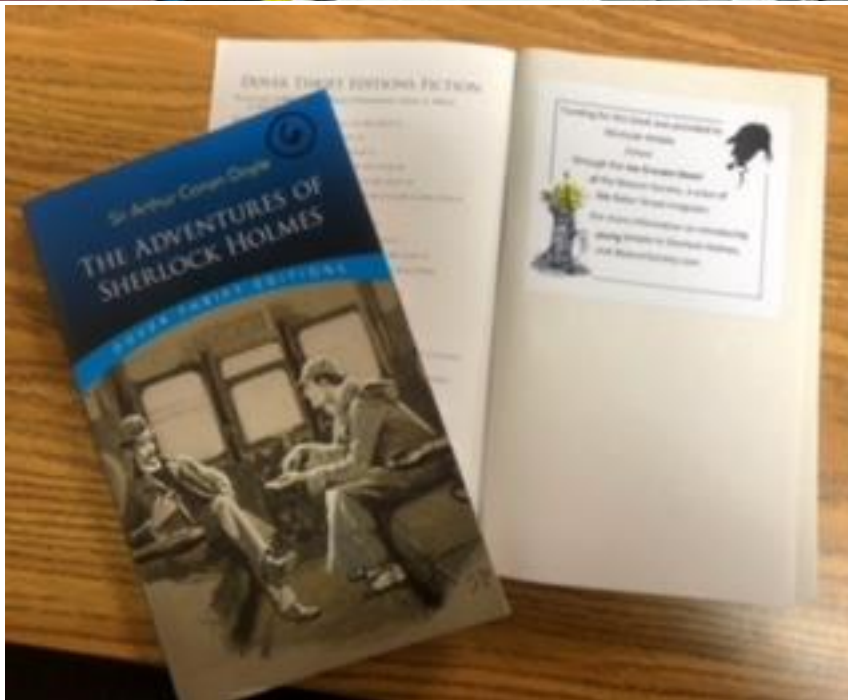
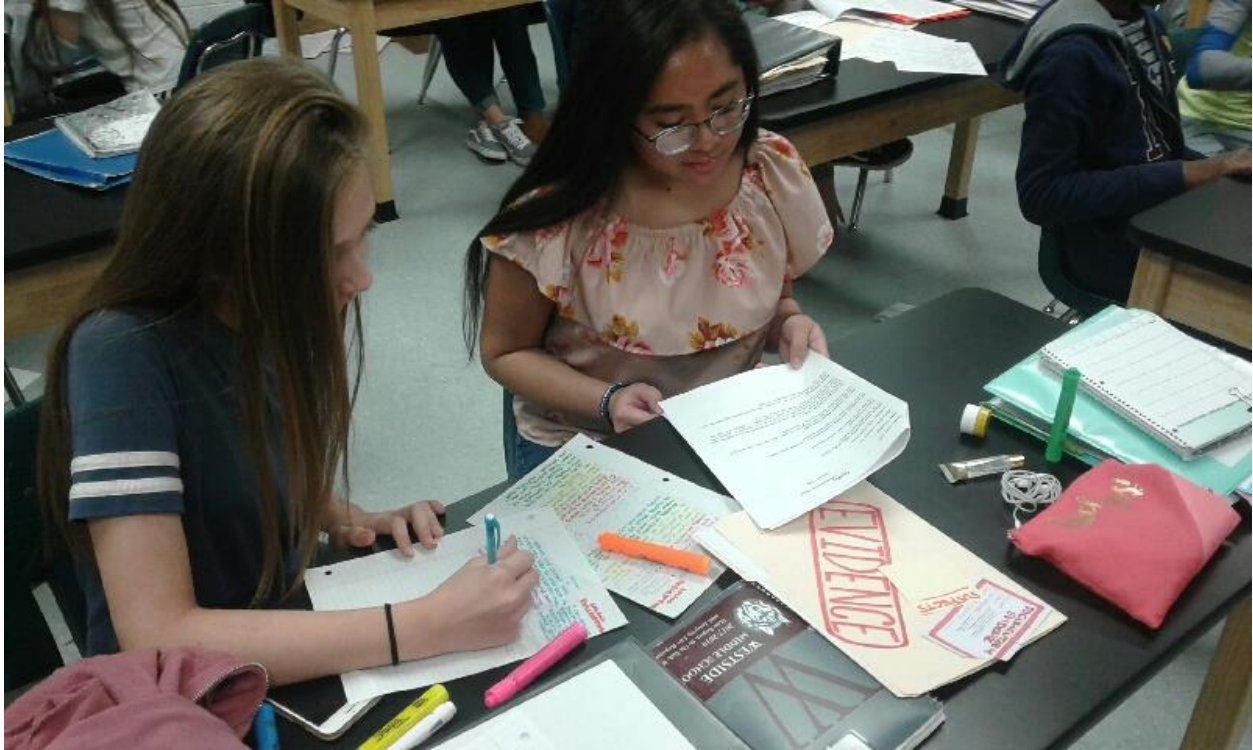
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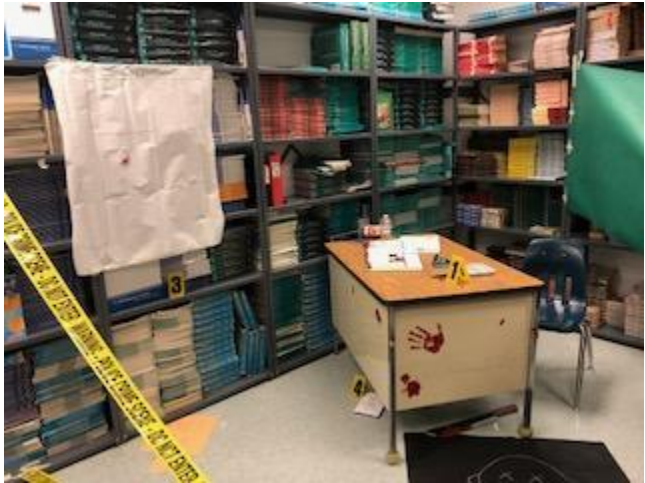
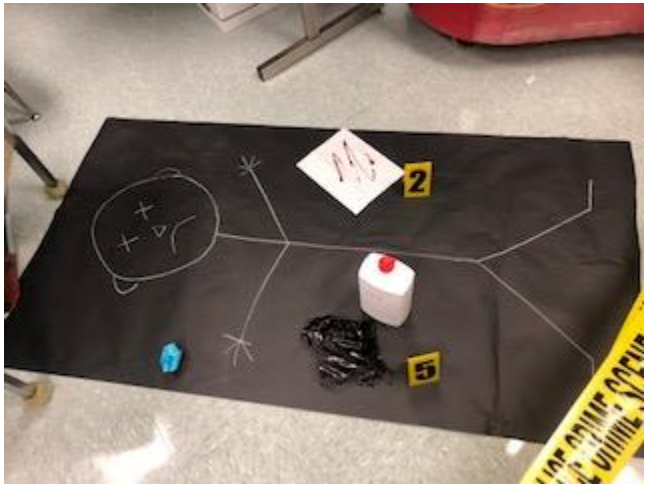
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The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle Performance
Task Instructions:

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Individually, you will create a performance task(project) that demonstrates your understanding of the literary elements discussed/covered while reading the short story "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle."

*Presentations **MUST** include evidence of the story's characters (primary and secondary), plot(including climax), conflict, setting, point of view, and sequence of events. ***DO NOT JUST LIST THESE!** Retell the story discussing these literary elements. All must be evident.

***Must** also include visuals: pictures, drawings, etc., as necessary for chosen performance task.

Task Options: Graphic illustration/poster, Rap/song, Comic Strip, Presentation, PowToons, Video, Skit, Commercial, Google slides, website, etc. If you come up with your own idea, please discuss it with me first.

This is **DUE BY THE END OF CLASS ON THURSDAY 11/16**. Everyone must submit something through our Google Classroom. For example, if you're creating a poster, you need to create a Google doc that tells exactly what you'll be including on your poster. Submit and click turn in.

Name(s): _____

Date: _____

STORY MAP for the *Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle*

Complete the following table while you read:

Title of Solve-It Story	
Main character	
Secondary character	
Setting (where and when)	
Problem	
Main events	
Climax	
Solution	
Example of suspense	
Specific clues the author gives	