Plan a Classroom Writing Contest

The Beacon Society wants to introduce young people to Sherlock Holmes. Giving a child a book is a start, but how about giving books to lots of children? And how about getting some publicity for Sherlock Holmes while you're at it? How about a CONTEST?

An essay or project based on a Sherlock Holmes story

The outline below has been developed from the detailed reports of two Beacon Award-winning Middle School projects organized by Beacon Society members with help from their Sherlockian scions. We think this outline is very helpful in planning projects with schools and libraries, but we always welcome suggestions on how to do things better.

- 2005 Beacon Winner: Robinson & Tuten, The Hansom Wheels (Hound of the Baskervilles)
- 2008 Beacon Winner: Watson's Tin Box (The Speckled Band)

- SCION SUPPORT
  - Begin with a nucleus of one or just a few committed people
    - Be an enthusiastic salesman for your program
    - Realize it will require a lot of time and work
    - Do your homework
      - Proposals require detailed paperwork
      - Donors need to know costs
  - Get the scion's vote to support the contest
    - Allow the committee chair to speak for the scion on the project
    - Decide on funding sources
      - Donations
      - Fundraising projects
  - Budget for books, prizes, events
    - Buy copies of the book/story for students
      - Arrange educational discounts with book dealers
      - Possible matching funds from businesses
    - Calculate costs for self-published booklets
    - Publicity for contest
      - Flyers for classrooms, libraries
      - Websites
      - Recognition of donors/sponsors
    - Prizes for winners
      - Books or cash… or both?
      - Donated by merchants
      - Certificates for entrants
      - Certificates of appreciation to schools, library, donors
    - Refreshments for events (Kickoff & Award ceremony)
  - Decision on type of contest
    - Written analytical essay (middle school and up)
    - Creative project based on story (elementary & middle school)
    - Individual or group winners (recommend individual)
  - Decision on focus of contest entries
    - Library, school, community
    - school, district, city, county
    - public, private, home-schooled students

- grade vs. age range
      - o Participate in kickoff and awards ceremonies (costumes?)
        - o School/library visits and/or exhibits
        - o Scion activity (e.g. conference) to coincide with award
        - o Appreciation to business donors/sponsors
      - o Final judging of entries
        - o Need for clear criteria for judging ahead of time
        - o A RUBRIC may be helpful to establish criteria
- CONTACT WITH TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS
  - o Proposal for school system
    - o Coordinator helpful for communication to teachers
    - o Specialist in grade level abilities (e.g. type of essay)
  - o Approved edition of story
    - o Bound volume (e.g. Hound) vs. booklet (e.g. Speckled Band)
  - o Guidance on rules for contest
    - o Flyers for students
    - o Communication with teachers
  - o Timing of contest
    - o School year is planned in early summer
    - o Connect to Holmes Birthday (Jan 6) or Halloween (mystery)?
    - o Summer project vs. Classroom
    - o Decide on announcement and deadline dates
  - o Classroom type
    - o advanced placement vs. general
    - o literature genre vs. English vs. history
  - o First-level judging (best two projects from each class)
- CONTACT WITH LIBRARIAN (school/community)
  - o Reading specialists for age/grade levels
    - o Library Website
      - Advertise contest
      - Post entry materials
    - o Contact Home-schooled students
      - Correspondence with parents
      - Deliver projects to library
    - o Scion connection
      - Exhibits
      - Events (e.g. "An Evening with Holmes")
      - Publicity posters
    - o Book award to library (copy of Canon, Klinger's Annotated Sherlock Holmes)
- CONTACT WITH COMMUNITY locations or events
  - o History museum
  - o Local Festival

William Gillette, the actor who first played Holmes on stage, is from Tryon, SC where they have an autumn Sherlock Holmes Festival.

For an example of specific materials distributed to students and teachers in planning an Original Mystery Story Contest, we thank Nadine Naujoks, the Events Coordinator for the Sherlock Holmes Festival, Tryon, NC.