

Rasher Measures: A Visit to 221b in Franklin
by Dean Richardson

On May 8, 2018, at 7:50 a.m., five of the rasher members of the Nashville Rashers met Shannon Carlisle at Moore Elementary School in Franklin, Tennessee. The mission: inflict our curmudgeonly ways on an innocent group of fourth graders.

As Nashville Scholars know, member Shannon (BSI; Beacon Society) teaches an accelerated learning class at Moore, demonstrating the methods of the Great Detective via some of his documented cases to guide students in developing modes of rational thought. (O, that we could qualify for the class!) During the course, she references both the Nashville Scholars and the Rashers, and she invited the latter to fellowship on this date with the class and join in a ~~fiendish~~ friendly game of *Jeopardy* using “The Red-Headed League.”

Marino Alvarez, Jim Hawkins, Bill Mason, Drew Thomas, and your humble servant were able to accept the invitation and were richly rewarded (not counting the Starbucks gift cards). Our visit began with a tour of the library, which boasts a large mural incorporating many literary references, including Sherlock and Watson in a hot-air balloon. Then we proceeded to her classroom, whose number is 221b, of course. The décor features a remarkable variety of Holmesian material, including books, figures, photos, slogans and sayings from the Canon, and Lego versions of the London Bridge and Big Ben.

The students began arriving a little after 8:00, and we had an opportunity to get acquainted with them before the first scheduled event. At 8:30, via Google Meet, Shannon connected with a similar class of Stepping Stones students at Undershaw, ACD’s former residence in rural England (where he wrote HOUND). Due to technical difficulties on their end, we could see and hear them, but they could only see us. Still, through texting, writing on tablets, and gestures, we were able to carry on a lively conversation with them. Their teacher showed us several of their Holmesian artifacts, including several first editions, and the Stepping Stones students traded questions and dance moves (something called “the Floss”) with our students and one agile Rasher (who gave new meaning to the term *Freemason*).

Next up was the highly competitive game of *Jeopardy*, with Rashers distributed among four groups of students. Last was a grilling session, in which the Rashers lined up in front of the class and answered questions about their backgrounds and interests in the Great Detective. At the bell the class ended, and reluctantly we said our goodbyes and were escorted off the premises.

Shannon truly teaches the best and the brightest, making at least this writer feel like Watson’s conductor of light (at best). The girls and boys are sharp, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic. We were privileged and blessed to spend time among them.

By the way, the Fresh Rashers of Nashville is not an exclusive group. All Sherlockians are welcome. You just have to be willing and able to meet us at 7:00 on Friday mornings, currently at the International House of Pancakes at 2214 Elliston Place in mid-town Nashville.