Evaline Stoker and Mina Holmes never meant to get into the family business. But when you’re the sister of Bram and the niece of Sherlock, vampire hunting and mystery solving are in your blood.

STOKER & HOLMES NOVELS
By Colleen Gleason

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PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

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<th>AFTER READING</th>
<th>STATEMENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>It is better to trust your instincts than listen to those around than you.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It is acceptable to keep secrets from those closest to you if it protects them.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No matter the situation, you should always be able to count on your loved ones.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You should always put others before yourself.</td>
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Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a “+” sign in the box next to the statements for which they agree, and a “0” next to those for which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

Once students have had the opportunity to complete the guide, the teacher reads each statement aloud and has students who agree show it by standing or raising their hands. Each student should be permitted to provide their rationale for agreeing if they wish.

*Correlates to CCSS RL. 7.2, SL. 7-10.1, SL. 7-10.2, SL. 7-10.3.*

Through references to the famous family members of Evaline Stoker and Mina Holmes, readers get a brief introduction to two important characters in the literary canon. Using library resources and the Internet, have students research either Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of the character Sherlock Holmes, or have them discover more about Bram Stoker, author of Dracula. Then, using the information they have discovered, have students prepare a presentation which details the following:

- Biographical information about the author
- Specific information regarding the inspiration for his work and what work he is most known for
- Three examples of adaptations of the author’s work that have been produced in the past fifty years
- A favorite quote from the author’s work to share with the class
- Why they believe this author’s work has withstood the test of time

*Correlates to CCSS W. 7-10.7, W. 7-10.8.*
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions may be utilized with any/all of the novels as reflective writing prompts or, alternatively, they can be used as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection.

1. At the beginning of the series, Mina Holmes tells readers, “There are a limited number of excuses for a young, intelligent woman of seventeen to be traversing the fog-shrouded streets of London at midnight.” What is the mood or atmosphere, and how is it conveyed?

2. Describe the setting of the series. How is the setting true to the historical era? In what ways does it differ?

3. Using evidence from the text, characterize the two protagonists, Mina Holmes and Evaline Stoker. How do they develop over the course of a single book, or the entire series?

4. How would you characterize Evaline and Mina’s relationship at the beginning of the series? Discuss how it develops over the course of the three books.

5. Describe Mina’s and Evaline’s world views and values. How do they complement one another? How do they create tension?

6. The Stoker & Holmes series is told in first person point of view, from the alternating perspectives of Mina and Evaline. How would this series be different if it were told in third person? Discuss what is gained by using alternating first person point of view, or if it were told only from either Evaline’s or Mina’s perspective.

7. Research characteristics of steampunk fiction, and discuss how the series fits or does not fit with what you find. How would this series be different if it were not steampunk? Provide examples from the novel(s) as support.

8. How would you describe Dylan Eckhert? How do you think his being from the future affects his relationship with Mina? In what ways do you think they work well, or poorly, as a romantic couple?

9. How would you describe Pix? Is he a likeable character? Considering his actions over the course of the series, do you believe that he is a good match for Evaline? Why or why not?

10. What traits do Inspector Grayling and Mina Holmes have in common? Does their relationship remind you of any other pairings you have seen, in other books, television shows, or movies?

11. Both Mina and Evaline have famous relatives. Why don’t they ask them for more assistance? What can be inferred about Mina’s and Evaline’s personalities by their choice not to do so? Do you agree with their decisions? Why or why not?

12. Consider the covers for each of the three novels. Discuss alternative design options for any one of the three, and explain why that cover would be appropriate.

13. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges that Evaline and Mina face in each of these three novels? What further questions do you still have about the series?
**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (continued . . .)**

14. The Ankh appears in two of the three Stoker & Holmes books. What makes the Ankh an interesting or compelling villain? What makes the Ankh a villain at all?

15. Discuss the ending of *The Chess Queen Enigma*. Is this ending satisfying or frustrating, and why? What possibilities exist at the end of the story? Discuss alternate endings to the story.

*Correlates to CCSS RL. 7-10.1, RL. 7-10.2, RL. 7-9.3, RL. 7.5, RL. 7-10.6, W. 7-10.1, W. 7-10.2, W. 7-10.3.*

**LITERARY ANALYSIS AND CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES**

**HAiku OF LOVE:** Play matchmaker! Write three valentine haikus from one character to another, from you to a character, or from one book’s character to another book’s character.

- **Line 1:** 5 syllables
- **Line 2:** 7 syllables
- **Line 3:** 5 syllables

*Correlates to CCSS RL. 7-10.1, RL. 7-10.5, RL. 7-10.6.*

**ADVICE COLUMN:** Ask students to describe one of the problems faced by a character and write advice to him/her. Students may choose to be serious or humorous. Use the letter format common to newspaper advice columns, where the person with the problem writes for advice and the advisor writes back. Often the person seeking advice disguises his or her name with a descriptive name associated with the problem.

*Correlates to CCSS RL. 7-10.1, RL. 7-10.5, RL. 7-10.*

**ESSENTIAL QUOTES ANALYSIS:** The language that authors use in their work is essential to getting across the intended meaning. Select four quotes from any of the novels that seem to signify key ideas that the author hopes readers take from the text. These might be quotes spoken by characters or from the narration, and page numbers should be included with the quotes. Have students develop a chart with the following four columns:

1. Quote
2. Page Number
3. Relevance to the Novel
4. Intended Meaning for Readers

The intended meaning should have relevance not only to the characters in the text, but to the lives of anyone who reads the book.

*Correlates to CCSS RL. 7-10.1, RL. 7-10.5, RL. 7-10.6.*
LITERARY ANALYSIS AND CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES (continued . . .)

**CHARACTER REPORT CARD:** Ask students to examine the ethical nature of a character’s actions and choices in the Stoker & Holmes novels. Have them set up a “report card” using a chart and include the following eight categories: respect, responsibility, cooperation, caring, integrity, self-control, honesty, and effort. Using evidence from any, or all of the novels, have students assign a grade for each category. In addition, have them cite the specific incident from the book which they graded in one column, and also provide feedback to the character under a comments section.

*Correlates to CCSS RL. 7-10.1, RL. 7-10.5, RL. 7-10.6.*

**DIARIES, LETTERS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA:** The complexities of the characters, their relationships, and the situations in which they find themselves provide opportunities to dig deep into the text and examine and answer one of the following prompts:

1. Throughout the course of the novels, readers are offered great insight into both Mina’s and Evaline’s points of view. Assume the role of one of the secondary characters in either novel and draft a diary entry detailing what you experienced and witnessed. To prepare, create an outline using the five Ws (who, what, when, where, and why). Remember to write in first person and give special attention to sensory imagery (what you saw, smelled, heard, etc.).

   *Correlates to CCSS RL. 7-10.1, W. 7-10.1, W. 7-10.2, W. 7-10.3.*

2. In the Stoker & Holmes novels, many characters exhibit acts of great bravery. Consider the individual actions of these characters. Who do you believe to be the most courageous? Write a letter to that character explaining why you believe his/her actions are so brave.

   *Correlates to CCSS RL. 7-10.1, W. 7-10.1, W. 7-10.2, W. 7-10.3.*

3. Though the major players in the Stoker & Holmes novels live in a steampunk parallel version of Victorian London, if they lived in our time (like Dylan) they would likely use the same social media that is popular in our world. Select a character of your choice and create a faux Facebook page for that character, being sure to complete all the pertinent information, like education, relationships, groups to follow, pages to like, as well as 2 or 3 status updates.

   *Correlates to CCSS RL. 7-10.1, W. 7-10.1, W. 7-10.2, W. 7-10.3.*
About the Books

The Clockwork Scarab
Evaline Stoker and Mina Holmes never meant to get into the family business. But when you’re the sister of Bram and the niece of Sherlock, vampire hunting and mystery solving are in your blood, so to speak. And when two young society girls disappear—one dead, one missing—there’s no one more qualified to investigate. Now fierce Evaline and logical Mina must resolve their rivalry, navigate the advances of not just one but three mysterious gentlemen, and solve a murder with only one clue: a strange Egyptian scarab. The pressure is on and the stakes are high—if Stoker and Holmes don’t figure out why London’s finest sixteen-year-old women are in danger, they’ll become the next victims.

The Spiritglass Charade
After the Affair of the Clockwork Scarab, Evaline and Mina are eager to help Princess Alix with a new case close to her heart. Seventeen-year-old Willa Aston is obsessed with spiritual mediums, convinced she is speaking with her mother from beyond. What seems like a case of spiritualism fraud quickly devolves into something far more sinister: someone is trying to make Willa ‘appear lunatic,’ using an innocent-looking spiritglass to control her. The list of clues piles up—an unexpected murder, a gang of pickpockets, and the return of vampires to London—but are these events connected? As Uncle Sherlock would say, ‘there are no coincidences.’

The Chess Queen Enigma
Evaline and Mina have reluctantly agreed to act as social chaperones and undercover bodyguards for Princess Lurelia of Betrovia, who has arrived in London to deliver a letter with the location of an ancient chess queen that’s been missing for centuries. But when the letter—which will heal a centuries-old rift between England and the Betrovians—is stolen, the two girls are forced into a high stakes race to ensure they find the chess queen before anyone else does... including their foe, the Ankh. For the chess queen is not only a historic symbol of a woman’s political power, but it has literal power as well—the queen will unlock the chessboard, revealing both jewels and ancient secrets. It will take Mina’s smarts and Evaline’s strength to beat the thief and untangle this mystery before it is too late.

Praise for The Chess Queen Enigma
A Stoker & Holmes Novel

“Gleason has vamped up the familiar world of Holmes and Watson...to paranormally exhilarating effect.”
— The New York Times

“This book has it all...the vivid setting and the finely drawn, compelling heroines make this a fine choice for readers who like their stories with steampunk spice and smart, strong women.”
— School Library Journal

“Popular tropes (steampunk! vampires! Sherlock Holmes!) will bring readers in, but it’s the friendship between the two girls that will keep them.”
— Kirkus Reviews

“If Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Sherlock Holmes ever met, this book would be the result. If you loved ‘Nancy Drew’ or ‘The Hardy Boys’ as a kid, you’re going to love this sci-fi/fantasy mystery series.”
— Alexis C., age 18, SLJ Teen