

ASF Study Materials for



Sherlock Holmes

adapted from William Gillette's play
by Geoffrey Sherman

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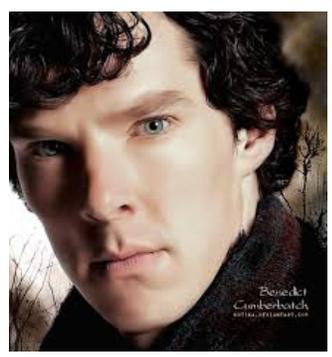
Welcome to *Sherlock Holmes*

We know Sherlock Holmes. He looks like Benedict Cumberbatch. Well, we know the latest in a long line of Sherlock Holmes incarnations, including here on the ASF stage an adaptation of the 1899 stage version penned and performed for 33 years by William Gillette. But the original Sherlock Holmes—and he was an original—flowed from the pen of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and famously into the monthly magazine *The Strand* in London between 1891 and 1893, captivating England, America, and the world with his observational acumen and deductive reasoning. He once told his friend, sidekick, and recorder of his cases, Dr. Watson: "I am a brain, Watson, ... The rest of me is a mere appendix." Not entirely true, but at times not much of an exaggeration either as we watch Holmes solve case after case with thrilling perception and logic. The series encored in 1903, continuing to 1925.

Holmes's stories had their own life in late Victorian England—Holmes walked the streets of his readers, wearing clothes like theirs, and the culprits he pursued succumbed to the same pressures others felt in Victorian life—money, power, and propriety. Some were weak, some were ruthless, but all were identified and almost all apprehended due to the ministrations of one very clever man, Sherlock Holmes. And now he's on stage at ASF.



Watson and Holmes in a Sidney Paget illustration for the original Strand series of stories



Sherlock Holmes revived for and in the modern world

Characters

at *Edelweiss Lodge*:
 Madge Larrabee } *criminals, the*
 James Larrabee } *"Chetwoods"*
 Alice Faulkner, *their captive*
 John Forman, alias Judson, *the*
butler, working with Holmes
 Térése, *a maid*
 Sidney Prince, *a safecracker*
 Sherlock Holmes, *the detective*

in *Moriarty's office or the gas chamber*:
 Professor Moriarty, *a villainous*
mastermind
 John, *Moriarty's subordinate*
 Alfred Bassick, *Moriarty's*
lieutenant/organizer
 Jim Craigin
 Thomas Leary } *hitmen*
 "Lightfoot" McTague }

in *Holmes's Baker Street flat or Dr. Watson's consulting room*:
 Billy, *Holmes's messenger boy*
 Dr. Watson, *Holmes's friend*
 Mrs. Smeedley, *Watson's client*
 Parsons, *Watson's servant*
 Count Von Stalburg
 Sir Edward Leighton

Setting: London
Time: early 1890s

Reading Stories for the Play

The William Gillette play that is the basis of Geoffrey Sherman's adaptation was written in 1898, when all the world thought its favorite detective was dead and gone, hurled over the Reichenbach Falls along with the criminal mastermind Moriarty.

Holmes first appeared in two novels (1887 and 1890) and then a series of 24 short stories for the *Strand* monthly magazine from 1891-93.

In the last of these stories, "The Final Problem," Conan Doyle apparently killed off Holmes because he wanted to pursue other novels and characters.

Gillette crafted his play from bits of the then available stories but mostly from his sense of melodrama, the popular late Victorian theatre form.

If you want to teach some Sherlock Holmes stories before seeing the play,

realize that none directly give the plot of this play, which Gillette invented. His premise uses pieces of two stories:

- "The Final Problem" is the only early story in which Moriarty appears
- "A Scandal in Bohemia" gives a bit of the play's ambience (the royalty) but not the female lead's nature or the plot

Reading these gives a glimpse of sources.

Good stories to watch Holmes detecting:

- "The Adventure of the Speckled Band"
- "Silver Blaze"
- "The Red-Headed League"
- "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (includes Lestrade, the police detective)

Available online @ <http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/authors/170/sir-arthur-conan-doyle/> in *Adventures* and *Memoirs* (Silver Blaze)



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A Conan Doyle.

A Conan Doyle Chronology

- (ACD=Arthur Conan Doyle)
- **1859:** ACD born in Edinburgh, Scotland to Catholic parents
 - **1876:** after 8 years in Jesuit schools, ACD becomes a medical student at Edinburgh University
 - **1877:** becomes surgeon's clerk to Prof. Joseph Bell, a major inspiration for Sherlock Holmes's reasoning process
 - **1879:** his first story published
 - **1880-82:** gets medical degree, serves as surgeon on steamers to the Arctic and West Africa coast
 - **1882:** moves medical practice in Southsea, Portsmouth, England
 - **1885:** marries Louisa Hawkins
 - **1886:** begins first Sherlock Holmes (SH) novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, published in 1887. Also becomes interested in psychic studies
 - **1890:** *The Sign of the Four*, second SH novel, published
 - **1891:** ACD an eye specialist in London. Begins to publish first six SH stories in *The Strand* magazine; six more in 1892, collected in *The Adventures of SH*.
 - **1893:** ACD finishes a second set of SH stories by killing off SH so he can do "more serious literary work."
 - **1900:** Unsuccessful run for Parliament (also in 1906)
 - **1901:** new SH novel, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (set before SH's "death") published
 - **1902:** ACD accepts a knighthood
 - **1903-4:** more SH stories in *The Strand* magazine, compiled as *The Return of SH* in 1905
 - **1906:** wife dies of TB; he then re-marries
 - **1908-25:** sporadic SH stories
 - **1914:** *The Valley of Fear* (last SH novel) starts serialization
 - **1925:** *The Case-Book of SH* collection published

Meet the Creator of Sherlock Holmes: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Today we know only about 10% of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's literary canon—the 56 short stories and 4 novels featuring Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, the first of which he began writing by 1886 and finally got accepted and published by late 1887. During his lifetime, Doyle considered the Holmes tales among the the least of his artistic efforts, preferring his works of historical fiction and his historical studies on the Boer War and World War I. But Fame makes up its own mind, and Sherlock Holmes is now a permanent part of our cultural heritage.

Doyle was a late Victorian who trained as a physician but became a writer. Born in 1859, he was too old to serve in the Boer War or World War I, but used his medical expertise to purvey himself into a close knowledge of each conflict. He believed in the promise and power of science, saw the urban consequences of the Industrial Revolution with its slums, crime, and poverty, believed in propriety and the gentlemanly code of conduct but acknowledged the beast within (as did many late Victorian authors; consider *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* or *The Heart of Darkness*), and praised the British Empire.

Raised in a Catholic family and educated in Catholic schools, Doyle later rejected organized religion and embraced the popular, supposedly scientific spiritualist movements/psychic studies of the 1890s and beyond, writing 20 books substantiating claims of after-death communication and the validity of seances. Critics today have trouble joining the creator of the hyper-rational Holmes with the crusader for spiritualism, but as Sherlock Holmes observed, "life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent" ("A Case of Identity").

Doyle was also active in public affairs—twice running for Parliament—and championed public causes. He spoke widely, led committees, and backed organizations across London and England. He debated whether to accept an offered knighthood in 1902 before complying. But he could never escape that one detective he created; Sherlock Holmes proved indefatigable. Not even Arthur Conan Doyle could do him in.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

"I intend to make an end of him. If I don't he'll make an end of me."

—Arthur Conan Doyle in 1893,
speaking about Sherlock Holmes

Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes

The Holmes saga began with two novels, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and *The Sign of Four* (1889). Yet only when Conan Doyle began writing Holmes short stories for the new monthly magazine, *The Strand*, in 1891 did the character rocket to fame.

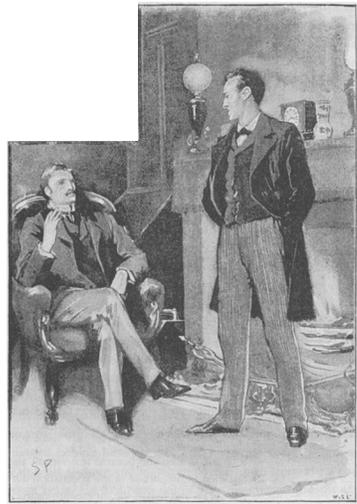
Doyle quickly tired of both the premise and character, wanting more time for his historical fiction, but the publishers kept raising his pay per story. He felt himself sinking into the slough so many of Holmes' clients and culprits had succumbed to in the tales—the lure of money. Finally, in 1893 he took a ruthless and sudden course: he killed Holmes off, in fact pitched him and his newly invented arch-nemesis Prof. Moriarty off the Reichenbach Falls to their deaths.

When readers in 1893 began reading "The Final Problem," they realized Dr. Watson was mourning the death of his friend. The story includes Holmes's farewell note, and Watson pays tribute to "him whom I shall ever regard as the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known." All London mourned; young clerks wore black arm bands. A woman opened her protest letter to Doyle, "You brute!" *The New York Times* wrote an obituary. But Doyle was unrelenting—until 1901, when he began writing two more novels and more stories after the Sherlock Holmes play's success.



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Doyle and Holmes Tidbits

- The "London" of the early Holmes novels is very fictional, since his author, Conan Doyle, did not move to London until after writing them; as scholars note, the early city descriptions partake more of his home town, Edinburgh, Scotland.
- Doyle invented Holmes's now famous Baker Street address; the street number 221B did not exist in the 1890s or earlier, though later it had to be invented to satisfy fans (like having to build a Hogwarts theme park after the Harry Potter novels appeared).
- Holmes is prone to playing practical jokes while in disguise by not immediately revealing his identity to associates
- Holmes is strong, a skilled fencer, boxer, shooter and practitioner of baritsu (a Japanese art of defense).
- His housekeeping is unique; he keeps tobacco in the toe of a Persian slipper, cigars in the coat scuttle, and pins pending correspondence to the mantelpiece with a knife.

Meet the Original Sherlock Holmes

According to the present incarnations of Mr. Holmes—the BBC/WGBH's *Sherlock Holmes* and CBS's *Elementary*—he's a moody, crime-solving genius who lives in modern London or New York. Actually the original Sherlock Holmes of the stories walked the streets of a fictional London in the late 1870s and 1880s, solving cases that Dr. Watson then wrote up for the public between 1887 and 1893. So Holmes was a part of the Victorian world of his readers; he's "there," hence the modern adaptations that move that trait of "walking known streets" and wearing familiar clothes into our world (the same approach often used for Shakespeare today—make him ours).

Since the play itself is Victorian, as is its famous protagonist, we need to know Holmes's original—and he *is* an original.

The Basics: What He Does, What He Says, What Others Say about Him

- Since all the early stories are narrated by Dr. Watson, we have a documentary account of Holmes—we watch him in action, we know what he tells Watson, but his thoughts and motivations are his own, unknown to the reader until he chooses to reveal them. As with anyone we get to know, Watson's and our view of the man change with time and more acquaintance. Early impressions are strong but limited.
- Watson initially calls Holmes brilliant but emotionless, machine-like in his thought process. Holmes plays into this view, for he emphasizes these traits about himself and does not hide his ego. Yet as the initial run of 2 novels and 24 stories progresses, Watson's view changes as does ours. We see the vivid imagination that engages with his reasoning; we see the humane good sense that tempers stern facts; we meet a complete man, bright, brash, brave.
- The police query his methods but grudgingly admire his success, opining that he has the *makings* of a decent detective (even as he solves their cases and gives them the credit).
- Holmes has arcane areas of expertise—history of European crime and criminals, tobacco ash, footprints, poisons— areas that help him analyze details at

a crime scene. He is CSI long before CSI was invented and, in fact, forensic investigation is sometimes credited to Holmes's approach. He studies minutiae and knows what they mean because his global background knowledge is vast.

- As Watson notes, Holmes has two basic states of being. One is intense activity when involved in a case, thinking, interviewing, traveling to examine details, checking records, making chemical analyses, doing undercover work in disguise, yet thinking is the key activity. The other is boredom between cases, which he abhors; during these periods he studies chemistry, plays the violin and attends concerts, or more usually takes cocaine as a stimulus for his mind, a habit which concerns Dr. Watson (Doyle, a medical man himself, does not advocate drug use in the era before its full effects were known). Holmes cannot abide mundane, everyday existence; he has to live, that is, think, at his own lightning pace.
- His use of disguise from all walks of life and all social levels demonstrates his deep understanding of his society and its individual roles.
- He is terse and does not often explain his ideas or actions, except occasionally to Watson (as readers appreciate). He can appear rude when he is problem-solving and keeps moving without always engaging the social niceties.
- Because he works to solve and understand the case and its perpetrator(s), and because he does not formally work for the police, he enacts his own view of justice in dealing with people (embodying the essential distinction between justice and the law made the first day at every law school) and explains his view to Watson.
- As much as he can, he helps and protects all his clients, though he may not always respect nobles who have self-indulgently compromised themselves. He holds himself strictly accountable if his "slow" solution harms anyone (most of his early cases in the stories are solved within two to three days); his expectations of himself are the highest and he judges anything less than perfection as unacceptable.

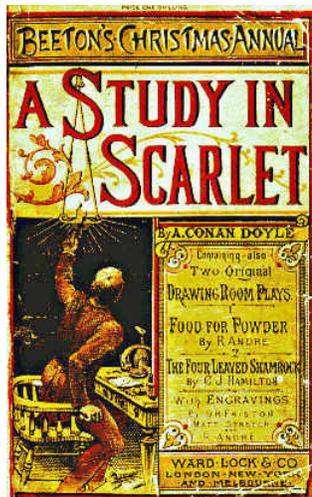


Sherlock Holmes

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"My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence."

—Sherlock Holmes



The short novel, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) first introduced Sherlock Holmes. Doyle sold the story rights for £25.

How Doyle Introduces Sherlock Holmes

He's not a policeman, not the "law." He's not a private investigator either. He often refers to his "unofficial" status and calls himself a consulting detective. He also calls himself Sherlock Holmes.

When Doyle first introduces his new character in *A Study in Scarlet*, he gives him the star entrance. The story opens with Dr. Watson, here a young Army doctor invalidated out in Afghanistan, who hears about this prospective flat-mate and is cautioned, "You don't know Sherlock Holmes yet." There's the name and the challenge; he's a man with strange ideas, Watson is told, but "a decent fellow enough," "too scientific ... a passion for definite and exact knowledge."

When Watson meets Holmes, fittingly in a laboratory, the two men are introduced by name only and Holmes's greeting is iconic: "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive," which astonishes Watson. It becomes the classic opening gambit for Holmes in meeting any new character or client—the telling observation, the initial mustering of facts; he knows without being told, a useful skill for an investigator.

At this first meeting, Holmes inquires if his tobacco, his chemical experiments, or his occasionally getting "in the dumps" will bother Watson. No? Then Doyle sets the hook again; Watson asks his friend how Holmes knew about Afghanistan and is told: "A good many people have wanted to know how he finds things out." (That "many" will soon include the reader.) Watson replies, "Oh, a mystery is it?" (indeed there is and will be every time, in every story, always in Holmes himself) and "The proper study of mankind is man," to which the friend replies, "You must study him, then." And study is just what we and Watson do, slowly and carefully through 56 short stories and 4 novels, studying Holmes as he leads us in a study of clients and criminals. Watson needs explanations (and so do we), so Holmes reveals his logic and myriad areas of expertise.

Holmes's primary asset is his mind and his "science of deduction" (fitting title of the first novel's second chapter). Watson comes across an article on the power of observation. He calls it "twaddle" and tells Holmes about it. Holmes claims authorship, "The theories which I have expressed there ... are really extremely practical.... I have a trade of my own. I suppose I am the only one in the world. I'm a consulting detective" and when the police or private detectives get snarled, "they come to me, and



The Sherlock Holmes statue in Edinburgh

I manage to put them on the right scent.... I have a kind of intuition that way." Sometimes he only needs to hear the facts, sometimes to see for himself using his special knowledge. "Observation with me is second nature," Holmes explains, and in story after story we are eager to watch him practice his reason, art, and intuition.

Another hook: Holmes laments, "No man lives or has ever lived who has brought the same amount of study and of natural talent to the detection of crime which I have done. And what is the result? There is no crime to detect,..." just before someone walks into the room with an interesting problem.

In the first short story, "A Study in Bohemia," Watson proclaims of Holmes, "All emotions, but [love] in particular, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen...." As Watson later comments, many who first meet Holmes think him a machine. But Watson and we learn better over time. We see Holmes work for justice—an unofficial justice he himself defines—so that at times he grants mercy where the law would administer none: "I suppose that I am commuting a felony, but it is just possible that I am saving a soul. This fellow will not go wrong again. ... Send him to jail now, and you make him a jaillbird for life. Besides, it is the season of forgiveness." Sherlock Holmes—complex, fair, fascinating.

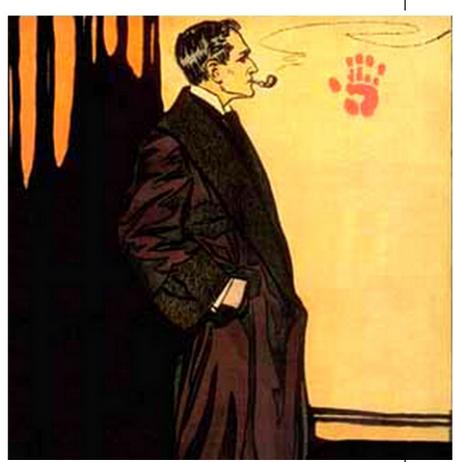


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"It is an old maxim of mine that when you have excluded the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."
—Sherlock Holmes



London historical marker



No need for a magnifying glass this time (Frederic Dorr Steele)

Sherlock Holmes's Methods

Observation

Sherlock Holmes once described the three qualities necessary for the ideal detective as the power of observation, deduction, and knowledge. His fictional career is a testimony to the skilled use of all three.

In an essay, Holmes writes of "how much an observant man might learn by an accurate and systematic examination of all that came in his way." The difference, he tells Watson, is between seeing and observing: Holmes knows because "I see it, I deduce it ... You see, but you do not observe. The distinction is clear."

One must "begin by mastering more elementary problems," Holmes advises. Let him: "at a glance ... distinguish the history of the man, and the trade or profession to which he belongs." Admittedly such observation might be more telling in Victorian England, which was more social stratified in terms of dress, dialect, and manner than our world of casual Fridays. Nonetheless, Holmes insists,

By a man's finger-nails, by his coat-sleeve, by his boot, by his trouser-knees, by the callosities of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt-cuffs—by each of these things a man's calling is plainly revealed. That all united should fail to enlighten the competent inquirer in any case is almost inconceivable (or at least inconceivable to Holmes, not to Watson, who never fully masters the task).

... and Deduction—Plus Imagination!

Skill at deduction and analysis "can only be acquired by long and patient study," and for Holmes it is the process of solving the crime, working back from effect to cause. While Holmes may present Watson with intermediate deductions, the grand elucidation of "how he solved it" occurs at the end, showing the causes of the effect, not just whodunit but why.

At times Holmes's process of deducing and analyzing is severe, scientific indeed. At other times he describes part of what he does as imagination: "See the value of imagination.... We imagined what might have happened, acted upon the supposition, and find ourselves justified" ("Silver Blaze"), though such "imagination" in this case is also grounded in a detailed knowledge of equine behavior and local geography. Holmes is not a machine; he just uses all aspects of his mind skillfully to solve the problems posed him.

Example: A Holmes Observation

Here Watson narrates the entrance of a caller and follows with Holmes's response:

I did not gain very much, however, by my inspection. Our visitor bore every mark of being an average commonplace British tradesman, obese, pompous, and slow....

"Beyond the obvious facts that he has at some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing else." ("The Red-Headed League")

Once Holmes mentions that the man's right hand is larger than his left, his Masonic breastpin, his smooth right cuff, and small fish tattoo with its distinctively Chinese coloring on his right wrist, Doyle comically undercuts the display with the client's response: "Well, I never! ... I thought at first you had done something clever, but I see that there was nothing in it after all." [Of course not, *if one can do it*—to observe and know what one is seeing.

Example: Holmes's Deductions

After the capture of the tunneling thieves in "The Red-Headed League," Holmes explains his reasoning to Watson:

"It was perfectly obvious from the first that the only possible object to this rather fantastic business of the advertisement of the League ... must be to get this not over-bright pawnbroker out of the way for a number of hours every day.... From the time that I heard of the assistant having come for half-wages, it was obvious to me that he had some strong motive for securing the situation."

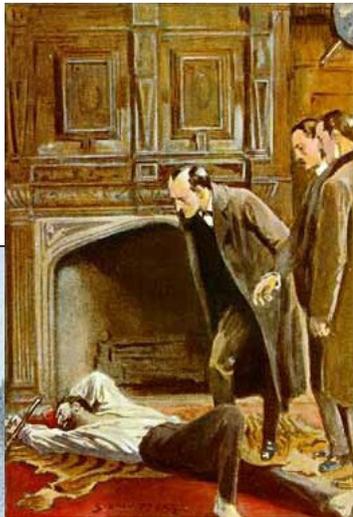
[It was only a small business with nothing of value and no women in the house, so] "it must be something out of the house. I thought of the assistant's fondness for photography, and his trick of vanishing into the cellar. The cellar! There was the end of this tangled clue." So on to the nearby bank, the holdings in its basement vault, and presto. One master crook captured.



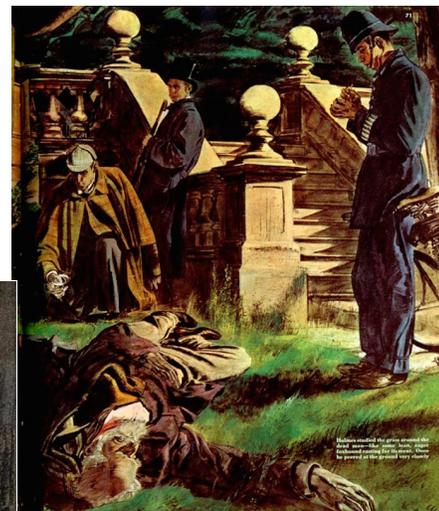
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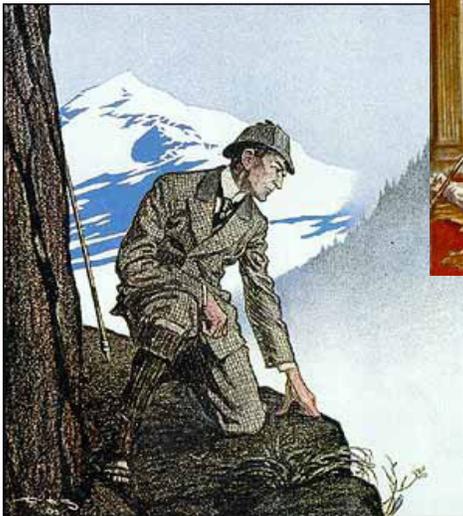
How Illustrators and Actors Present Holmes



(left) Frank Wiles's Holmes at work



(above) Robert Fawcett's Sherlock Holmes at work; (left) Arthur Keller's moody Holmes



Frederic Dorr Steele's Holmes, based on Gillette; (right) wax and live Holmes by Sidney Paget



(Far left) A modern-day, ex-drug addict Sherlock lives in New York with a female Dr. Watson (Jonny Lee Miller and Lucy Liu) on CBS's Elementary; (center) Robert Downey Jr. as Sherlock in the recent films; (above) Benedict Cumberbatch in a modern-day Sherlock, living in London with flatmate Dr. Watson (Martin Freeman in a BBC/WGBH Boston co-production).

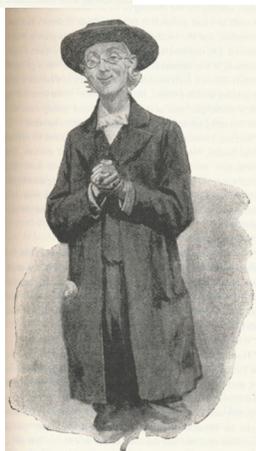


Holmes-isms

- [Policeman] "Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"
- [Holmes] "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."
"The dog did nothing in the night-time."
"That was the curious incident."
- [Watson] "How do you know that?"
- [Holmes] "I followed you."
"I saw no one."
"That is what you may expect to see when I follow you."



Holmes in Disguise



Holmes disguised as a drunken groom and a guileless priest (Sidney Paget)

The Lore of Sherlock Holmes

The Inspiration for Holmes

Holmes has an ideal skill set for a crime investigator. Or for a physician, since Conan Doyle credited his inspiration for Holmes's technique to one of his medical school professors, Dr. Joseph Bell, a brilliant diagnostician and surgeon who showed his students how much you could quickly see and know about people's lives, occupations, health, origin, and address by looking and listening.

Wanting to add a new element to the detective genre, Doyle said he:

thought of my old teacher, Joe Bell, of his eagle face, of his curious way, of his eerie trick of spotting details. If he were a detective, he would surely reduce this fascinating, but unorganized, business into something nearer to an exact science. It was surely possible in real life, so why should I not make it plausible in fiction.... [using] such examples as Bell gave us every day in the wards.

Attention to detail and the process of analytical deduction—"elementary" to Holmes, who in the first novel was taking some medical courses. Through the novels and stories we see Holmes amaze and unnerve many a man and woman he meets, both client and culprit, with his immediate insights—and solve many a crime.

The Master of Disguise

One of many examples, a common jest he pulls on Watson—in "The Final Problem" Watson is to meet Holmes at the train station to escape Moriarty's pursuit:

My only source of anxiety now was the non-appearance of Holmes. The station clock marked only seven minutes from the time when we were due to start.... There was no sign of him. I spend a few minutes in assisting a venerable Italian priest, who was endeavouring to make a porter understand, in his broken English, that his luggage was to be booked through to Paris. Then, having taken another look round, I returned to my carriage, where I found that the porter, in spite of the ["private"] ticket, had given me my decrepit Italian friend as a travelling companion.... A chill of fear had come over me, as I thought that [Holmes's] absence might mean that some blow had fallen during the night. Already the doors had all been shut and the whistle blown, when—



Creating the Iconic Holmes

- Doyle said, "I imagined him [with] a thin razor-like face, with a great hawk's bill of a nose, and two small eyes, set close together on either side of it." However, Sidney Paget, the artist illustrating the *Strand* magazine stories, based his Holmes sketches on his own handsome younger brother, Walter.
- Sidney Paget also gave Holmes the deerstalker hat (Doyle never specifies such a hat) and later included a straight pipe. A deerstalker hat and Inverness cape are Victorian country wear, not for the city. City wear would be a top hat or bowler.
- The actor William Gillette felt holding a straight pipe would block his mouth, affecting projection from stage when playing Holmes, so he used a curved pipe, a meerschaum, which itself became iconic.
- Holmes often uses a magnifying glass in the stories: "Holmes fell upon his knees upon the floor, and, with the lantern and a magnifying lens, began to examine minutely the cracks between the stones."
- "Elementary, my dear Watson" is a phrase Holmes never uses anywhere in the print canon. He uses each half, but never together. In the play, Gillette's "elementary, my dear fellow," almost gets there.

"My dear Watson," said a voice, "you have not even condescended to say good-morning."

I turned in uncontrollable astonishment. The aged ecclesiastic had turned his face towards me. For an instant the wrinkles were smoothed away, the nose drew away from the chin, the lower lip ceased to protrude and the mouth to mumble, the dull eyes regained their fire, the drooping figure expanded. The next the whole frame collapsed again, and Holmes had gone as quickly as he had come.



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“What is the meaning of it, Watson? ... What object is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear? It must tend to some end, or else our universe is ruled by chance, which is unthinkable. But what end? There is the great standing perennial problem to which human reason is as far from an answer as ever.”

—*Sherlock Holmes*,
“The Cardboard Box”



Sidney Paget's illustration of Holmes smoking and thinking, conjoined activities. As Holmes once told Watson, "This is quite a three-pipe problem."

See John Gray, "A Point of View: The enduring appeal of Sherlock Holmes," BBC Magazine (online), 17 August 2012 @ <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-19268563>

Assessing Sherlock Holmes in Our World

When the BBC premiered its new, Benedict Cumberbatch-led series *Sherlock*, the BBC online magazine asked philosopher John Gray to consider Holmes's methods in the modern context. His 17 August 2012 essay makes penetrating observations about Holmes, his techniques, and ourselves.

Consider the validity and implications of these observations about the character and our world:

- "Yet it's not the methods used by the fictional detective that fascinate us. It's the contradictory figure of Holmes himself."
 - [Since Holmes's time] "we've witnessed a succession of failed experiments in using reason," for which Gray cites the failure of communism and upheaval in free market capitalism, both supposedly rational systems; glitches in security software; stock market formulas that are less than reliable; efficiency plans for health care, prisons, and other institutions that prove insensitive and/or inhumane.
 - Thus, "the idea that the intellect alone can be our guide in life is weaker than it has been for many years." Yet we are fascinated by Sherlock Holmes, emblem of rationality.
- "It's not the science of deduction that gives Holmes his power over us, since he doesn't in fact use it." His method is neither philosophical deduction nor induction; it is instead "abductive reasoning," which is more conjectural, based more in probability than certainty, and cannot be practiced by following rules.
- Holmes works by observing "trifles," using his creative imagination, and testing hypotheses. The details and asking the right questions are the key. His method, like a physician's, is evidence plus judgment.
 - "He wants justice to prevail, and where necessary he's willing to flout the law in order to ensure that it does. The servant of reason, Holmes is also a romantic hero ready to defy authority in order to stand by his sense of morality."



One of
Britain's five
Sherlock Holmes
stamps

Questions for Analysis or Discussion

- < Does the play present a contradictory Holmes? What are the contradictions? Are they disturbing?
- < What examples would you give of planning based solely on reason that worked or went awry. Are Gray's examples good ones? Is humaneness always excluded from the exercise of reason?
- < Do we not believe in the value of reason any more? Is our faith in its virtue less than it has been culturally or historically since the 17th century?
- < Check the definitions of deduction and induction. Does either describe Holmes's reasoning processes (especially in the stories)? What is "abductive reasoning"? Does it better describe Holmes's approach? What approach do you take to problem-solve? Why?
- < Do details matter? Are they crucial? Does the imagination benefit from testing—and testing benefit from imagination?
- < The romantic hero is sometimes called the Byronic hero, a self-exile, someone of extreme ability or insight yet outside of and challenging social boundaries and established morality. Does that describe Holmes? Is his appeal for us both rational and romantic?



Sherlock Holmes

adapted from
William Gillette
by Geoffrey Sherman

"I had heard what [Holmes] had heard, I had seen what he had seen, and yet from his words it was evident that he saw clearly not only what had happened, but what was about to happen, while to me the whole business was still confused and grotesque."
—Dr. Watson

Dr. John Watson: Sidekick and the Tales's Essential Narrator

Watson as "Boswell"

Sherlock Holmes always calls Dr. John Watson his "Boswell," so we should understand what information that allusion provides:

- James Boswell wrote the famous *Life of Samuel Johnson*; Johnson was the eminent 18th-century literary lion
 - Boswell had a vast amount of material to work with, organize, and present appropriately (plus Johnson himself had been a skilled biographer of others)
 - Boswell "wrote with his eye on the [main] object," his central figure
 - "individual episodes are designed to reveal the great protagonist in a variety of aspects"
 - "the world that Boswell created and populated is sustained by the vitality of his hero,..." and since he did not know Johnson as a young man, it is "the portrait of a sage."
- [quotations from *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 9th ed., Boswell headnote]

What is true of Boswell is also true of Dr. Watson, a fictional character who narrates much of the novels and all but four of the Sherlock Holmes stories.

The Narration

Sherlock Holmes solves the crimes, writes up his notes, orders his card file, and waits languidly for the next case. It is Watson who begins to recount these cases in retrospect, starting either from the moment he was invited to join or when the client walked in on his visit with Holmes at his Baker Street flat. In each case, the action itself is already completed; the verbs are always past tense.

Watson is remembering, recording, sharing as accurately as he can—and with recourse to Holmes's records—from his own point of view. That narrative choice gives us two points of view in each tale—Watson's and Holmes's within it, for Holmes is the dynamic force Watson follows in his account.

But Doyle layers the narration even more complexly—each client has a tale to tell and tells it; many suspects and neighbors, servants, cabmen, and locals are interviewed and tell tales, and culprits, when apprehended, sometimes confess with their own accounts of their malefactions. Many voices telling many tales comprise one Sherlock Holmes story, but always the overriding perspective is Watson's supposedly unobtrusive recounting.

Watson as Character

Yet Dr. Watson is not just the stage dummy for Holmes's explanations and talents (though at times he may seem such). Watson plays his own balancing role in the overall narrative, with his own values, questions, and perspectives. He may never solve a case, but he wields a pistol in the chase, and for the reader he provides the zest, the thrill, the suspense, the emotion that a narration by Holmes himself would never yield.

Watson is the storyteller, at times the voice for Doyle himself, and it is a metafictional pleasure every time Holmes assails Watson for his methods of storytelling. Holmes, who privileges only facts, complains to Watson that "You have erred, perhaps, in attempting to put colour and life into each of your statements, instead of confining yourself to the task of placing upon record that severe reasoning from cause to effect which is really the only notable feature about the thing." Yet Holmes understands the lure of the tales for Watson: "You have shown your relish ... by the enthusiasm which has prompted you to chronicle, and, if you will excuse my saying so, somewhat to embellish so many of my own little adventures." For the readers, however, the "colour" and "life" of these tales of reasoning lure us back for more, as Doyle knows all too well.

Dr. Watson is more the everyman (or EveryVictorian) to Holmes's exceptional man or übermensch. They share many values, but Holmes is a one-off—the lone wolf, the bachelor expert and aesthete, the expert whose practice we scrutinize, while we rarely share much of Watson's medical practice or scenes of his domestic life. The tales are Holmes's via Watson. But this lone wolf actually has a sidekick much of the time, and if he does work alone or in disguise, he returns to his friend to report his findings and deductions to him and thus to us.



Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce played Holmes and Watson in 14 films between 1939 and 1946, the first two set in the Victorian era, the rest (for another production company) contemporary, with Holmes battling Nazis and others.



Sherlock Holmes

adapted from
William Gillette
by Geoffrey Sherman

Illustrations of the Unobserved Critical Moment at Reichenbach Falls



Harry C. Edwards's American illustration for McClure's, 1893

The Arch-Villain: Professor Moriarty

"You hope to place me in the dock. I tell you I will never stand in the dock. You hope to beat me. I tell you that you will never beat me. If you are clever enough to bring destruction upon me, rest assured that I shall do as much to you."
—Professor Moriarty to Holmes

Popular culture presents Professor Moriarty as Sherlock Holmes's perpetual nemesis, the great criminal mastermind who plotted evil doing invisibly and sought to foil the greatest detective mind in the world. Actually, between 1887, when Sherlock Holmes first appears in literature, and 1893, when Conan Doyle tosses him into the torrent of Reichenbach Falls, Moriarty appears in one and only one story, that last one, "The Final Problem." He appears as the excuse for Holmes's presumed self-sacrifice—to be sure of finishing off Moriarty, Holmes takes him down himself, all the way down. No one sees the actual event in the story; the rivals are alone, but Dr. Watson shortly thereafter interprets the unmistakable physical evidence of fracas and fall on the edge of the precipice.

Of his new arch-villain, Doyle says he was "endowed by nature with a phenomenal mathematical faculty." Having won a chair at a smaller University, he "had, to all appearances, a most brilliant career before him. But the man had hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind. A criminal strain ran in his blood, which, instead of being modified, was increased and rendered infinitely more dangerous by his extraordinary mental powers."

Holmes himself describes his nemesis: "...there is no one who knows the higher criminal world of London so well as I do. For years past I have continually been conscious of some power behind the malefactor, some deep organizing power which for ever stands in the way of the law, and throws its shield over the wrongdoer. Again and again ... I have felt the presence of this force.... For years I have endeavoured to break through the veil which shrouded it, and at last the time came when I seized my thread and followed it, until it led me ... to ex-Professor Moriarty....

He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and of

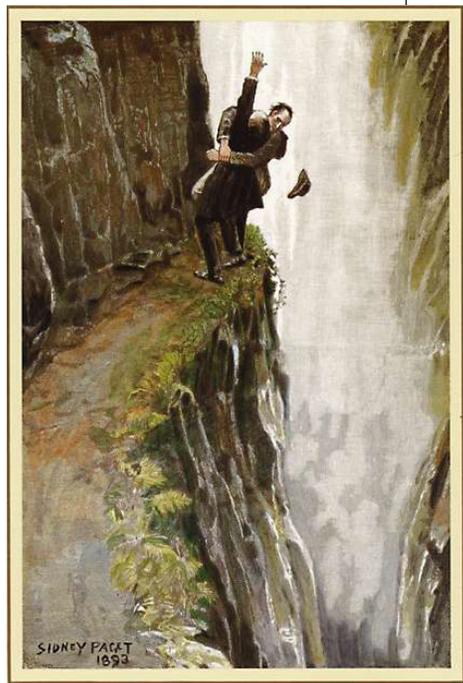


Moriarty as illustrated by Sidney Paget

nearly all that is undetected in this great city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them. He does little himself. He only plans. But his gents are numerous and splendidly organized.... But the central power which uses the agent is never caught—never so much as suspected. This was the organization which I deduced, Watson, and which I devoted my whole energy to exposing and breaking up.

The two men's conflict in the story is an exquisite chess match of plotting, counterplotting, deception, and gall. They chase each other from England to Switzerland and on a narrow mountain ledge have their final confrontation.

"Your memoirs will draw to an end, Watson, upon the day that I crown my career by the capture or extinction of the most dangerous and capable criminal in Europe."
—Sherlock Holmes



Sidney Paget's English illustration for The Strand, 1893; compare the effect of the pictures



Sherlock Holmes

adapted from
William Gillette
by Geoffrey Sherman

"Of all forms of 'light literature,' the detective story is the most inescapably concerned with moral issues. A crime has been committed; the criminal must be discovered and judged."

—Christopher Clausen



Holmes examining footprints (Sidney Paget)

How Scientific Is Holmes?

As it turns out, not so scientific after all. Once the tales were published, questions emerged about errors or flaws in Holmes's deductions or "knowledge." Moreover, the late 19th century had developed fingerprint analysis, the basic absorption spectroscope, the colorimeter, and good analytical laboratories, none of which the early Holmes ever seems to use.

Holmes's science is limited by his author's knowledge, and critics comment that while Doyle did deep research for his historical novels, he "simply didn't care enough about Holmes to spend the time needed for authenticating his scientific data." A pity. Even the science is sometimes fiction.

Source: *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, ed. Harold Orel (New York: G. K. Hall, 1992)

Crime Fiction

Good crime stories are nothing new—after all, Genesis tells us the story of the Fall of Man and then of Cain and Abel, and some of our earliest Greek plays are the *Oresteia*, a thrilling, three-part, multi-generational crime tale, ending in a trial. While the flashiest crime is murder, many other crimes and deceits abound in literature, such as theft or robbery, fraud, blackmail, treason and vengeance. Lawbreaking gets our attention, and so do the crime solvers who address it.

The foundation of crime fiction is a belief in order and law as the basis of a civilized society, so restoring that order whenever it is threatened by outrage or violence is essential. And the stories believe order can and will be restored (as Oscar Wilde said, "That is what Fiction means").

Detective fiction traditionally descends from Edgar Allan Poe's Monsieur Dupin, an investigator who outdoes the police in "The Mystery of the Rue Morgue" (1841) and two other Poe stories, and later from the six cases of French author Émile Gaboriau's Monsieur Lecoq, who started with *L'Affaire Lerouge* [*The Red Affair*, 1866—compare Holmes's first appearance in *A Study in Scarlet*—how aware is Doyle of taking on tradition?], so an English sleuth was obviously overdue. Police had ordered London and beyond since 1829, and detectives joined the force in 1842. Dickens and Wilkie Collins then created fictional detectives. Note that Holmes leaves the police to it and solves crime his own way, often for them and letting them take credit.

Crime fiction became popular during the 19th century when serialization in cheap, mass-produced, illustrated magazines brought stories to a wide reading public. Such magazines as

England's *The Strand*, which published Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, and America's *McClure's* and *Harper's* led this movement.

While Doyle's mysteries occasionally overlap with the later country house/stately home/locked room mysteries, he moves beyond murder to cover many kinds of crime. The details of the crime interest Doyle, but his focus is the particular method of the solution, Holmes's exquisite reasoning, his exceptional observational skills, his deductions, his array of expertise and arcane knowledge—the kinds of cigarette and cigar ash, the particular soil on the boots, as well as the vast history of English and European crime and criminals.

The individuals who pursue criminals in modern crime fiction are usually police or some other version of the Law—the FBI, the CIA, MI5, Secret Services and even "black ops" since the sub-forms of thrillers, procedurals and forensics, and espionage are all loosely part of the crime genre. On television CSI shows now dot the map with a combination of stalwart crimestoppers and high-tech support. Holmes was a do-it-yourself investigator.

The golden age of murder mysteries is widely considered to be the 1920s and '30s, when Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and others sent Hercule Poirot, Miss Marple, Lord Peter Wimsey, and many more to solve mysterious crimes in polite society. Their golden age is a particular kind of whodunit effort, a game of red herrings and extra suspects. The authors usually start drafting with the ending and then set up the necessary complications. American crime fiction at this time went noir, grittier and sleazier. Holmes worked in all worlds, opulent estates and opium dens—and succeeded.

The Cases of Sherlock Holmes

We think of Conan Doyle as writing murder mysteries which Sherlock Holmes solves. Yet murder is but one of the challenges Holmes pursues in his cases.

In the early stories, critics observe, murder is actually rare. Greed drives most of the incidents—and not so much criminal greed, though that occurs, as "disorders in the respectable bourgeois family." Stepfathers want to keep their stepdaughters' inheritances; rascals lure young women with false love to aid theft; past greed or crime now haunts a

family head, often greed from far-flung areas of the Empire. Betrayal of trust leads to harm. When the upper class is concerned, past love affairs and the propriety of marriages emerge along with the clients' *nobless oblige* attitude that Holmes seems to disdain.

Selfishness drives these tales; greed and revenge haunt them. Murder occurs, but not always; Holmes faces a Victorian smorgasbord of issues, and as critics observe, his cases take the pulse of his era's anxieties.



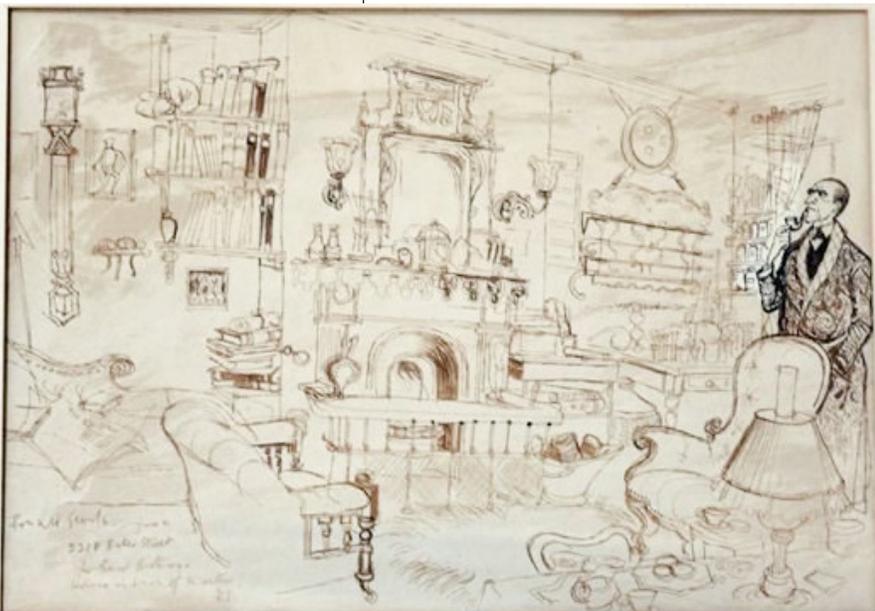
Sherlock Holmes

adapted from
William Gillette
by Geoffrey Sherman



Ronald Searle's sketch of Holmes's Baker Street flat, when a replica was built for the 1951 Festival of Britain

Russell Stutler has a bird's-eye view of the Baker Street flat @ www.stutler.cc/other/misc/baker_street.html



The Structure of a Holmes Story

In 1911, Monsignor Ronald A. Knox (then an Oxford undergraduate) presented a satiric paper, "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes," to the Gryphon Club at Trinity College. In it, he brilliantly satirizes literary criticism, filling the essay with Greek terms and comparisons to ancient Greek drama and Biblical criticism, invents Holmes critics with hilarious names (such as Monsieur Piff-Pouff, the French critic), criticizes their (non-existent) "theories," and uses as subject a piece of popular culture, Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories—the satiric idea of hunting a fly with a high-power rifle. But because Holmes is a fine author, not a hack, and Knox an astute reader, he makes a number of insightful comments about the fiction. Good satire often speaks truths.

Knox lists 11 parts of a Sherlock Holmes story, and any reader of the tales will attest to his accuracy. He notes that 1-3 are almost always present, while 4-6 vary:

- 1) the prologue in the Baker Street flat, with personal details and often a display of Holmes's observational skills
 - 2) the first explanation—the client's statement of the case
 - 3) the personal investigation of facts
 - 4) refutation of the Scotland Yard theory of the case
 - 5) hints to the police
 - 6) discussion of investigation's progress with Watson
 - 7) follow-up, including cross-questioning of relatives and employees, visits to Record Office, investigations in disguise
 - 8) the capture or exposure of the criminal
 - 9) the criminal's confession
 - 10) Holmes's description of the clues and his process of deduction/solution
 - 11) the epilogue, sometimes quite short
- Rarely does a story have all the traits; some have as few as four, but all are familiar.

The Game of "Sherlockian" Criticism

The preface of an impressive multi-volume edition of Holmes fiction edited by Leslie S. Klinger (2005), *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, explains the idea of "Sherlockian scholarship": "in the 'game' of treating the stories as biography, not fiction.... I perpetuate the gentle fiction that Holmes and Watson really lived and that (except as noted) Dr. John H. Watson

wrote the stories about Sherlock Holmes." Fiction is fact, Holmes and Watson are historical, Holmes's London is the real universe or at least a virtual reality one inhabits, and Doyle is an editor or a figment of the imagination. Got it?

This "game"—or "tedious pseudo-scholarship," as scholars label it—is perpetuated by the Baker Street Irregulars, a by-invitation-only London fan club for Sherlock Holmes, which like many other of the worldwide Holmes fan clubs (each taking its name from the stories) has a journal and publishes papers using this assumption.

One wonders if fandom and fan fiction—the glories of Comic-Con, Star Trek conventions, and fan fiction/spin-off novels—actually began with Sherlock Holmes. Certainly the credit for inspiring this critical "game" goes to Monsignor Ronald A. Knox's 1911 satire, "the cornerstone of Sherlockian literature" (the "game"). Amid the fun of his essay, Knox asserts that Dr. Watson is at times an unreliable narrator and may have authored stories as pure fiction after the purported death of Holmes—an idea Sherlockians, as they call themselves, have pursued exponentially. In fact, so pervasive is the game that there is now a plaque at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London commemorating the first meeting of Holmes and Watson there. So watch the assumptions if your students do online research.



Sherlock Holmes

adapted from
William Gillette
by Geoffrey Sherman

Cable to Doyle from William Gillette: "May I marry Sherlock Holmes?"
Doyle's reply: "You may marry him, murder him, or do anything else you like with him."
—during Gillette's writing of the play

Sherlock Holmes Takes the Stage

The Genesis of the Play

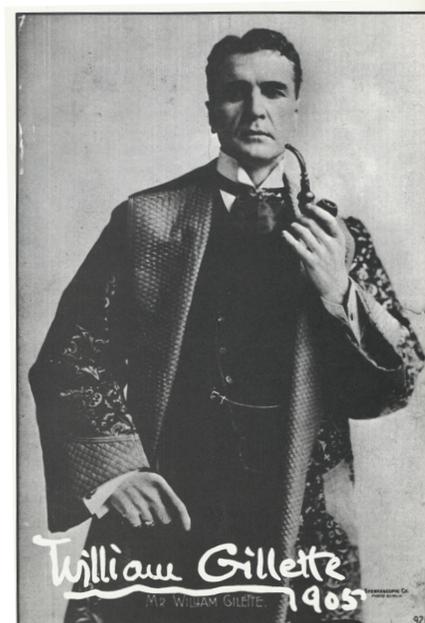
When Conan Doyle killed off Sherlock Holmes, his immensely popular fictional character, in 1893, a vacuum emerged that could not long remain unfilled.

Doyle himself apparently wrote a play about Holmes which was never performed. Accounts of events at this point differ—either that manuscript or the idea made its way to New York and to enterprising American actor William Gillette, who likewise abhorred potentially profitable vacuums. He probably wrote his own play, asking Doyle if he could so far alter the detective's character as to have him marry (a large alteration indeed). Doyle gave him carte blanche (see left), and a rip-snorting melodrama starring Sherlock Holmes was born—and graced the boards for 33 years with Gillette in the lead, a savvy and profitable career move indeed.

In the course of the play's development, Doyle and Gillette became life-long friends, and Doyle much approved of Gillette's portrayal of his detective, who by the play's premiere was six years "dead." At their first meeting, Gillette had proven his mettle, emerging from the train dressed as Holmes and examining Doyle with a magnifying glass in his carriage, concluding, "Clearly an author," to Doyle's amusement.

In fact, after seeing the play, Doyle said he almost missed the detective, so that Gillette may have had a major hand in inspiring the last half of the Holmes's canon. Shortly after the play's premiere, Doyle had begun writing a thriller based on a local Dartmoor legend he had been told and realized he already knew the character who should solve it, his own Sherlock Holmes. He dated the events prior to Holmes's "death," but *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was enough to revive public clamor for more, and he soon obliged by having a very-much-alive Holmes re-appear.

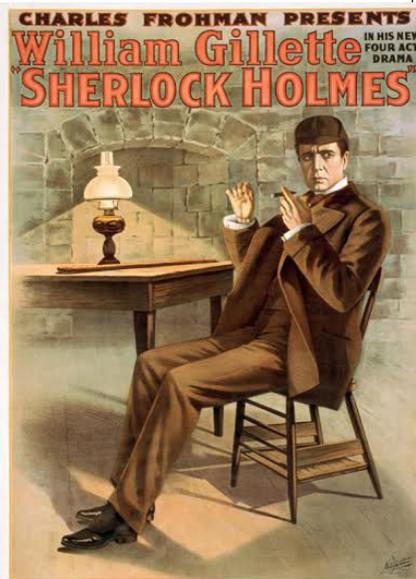
Of course, during its span as a popular culture icon, the Sherlock Holmes canon has partaken of many genres—drama, television, film, cartoons, comics, and myriad advertisements selling safety razors, Arrow shirts, Crawford cream crackers, Mann's Brown Ale, and Grand Cut tobacco, among others, and given name to dozens of pubs across the British Isles and the world. But as the first crossing of genres, we must examine the play more closely.



Gillette as Holmes

Holmes on the Page/ Holmes on the Stage

- In the novels and stories written through 1893, Sherlock Holmes only rarely dealt with organized crime. His cases were usually one-off, individual crimes or by lone con men/thieves. The play takes the daring new character Doyle invented for Holmes's demise, Prof. Moriarty, and back-writes a meeting for them. Thus the audience's sympathies are clearly defined in the play, with no sympathy for any criminal involved, whereas in many stories the reader understands and sympathizes with an avenger or someone with a "past" who has stepped beyond it and reformed.
- Because the stories begin either when the crime has already occurred or when something ominous is about to happen and help is sought, we learn the scheme as backstory at the end, as the "why." In the play, however, we meet the criminals immediately and like a sports match watch each side's moves and countermoves in the present—"you are there."
- In the play, Holmes works for an aristocratic client and must thwart not only criminals but the vengeful, virtuous sister of the "other woman." Where is justice here? Does Holmes serve it, as he does in the fiction?





Sherlock Holmes Shifts Genres: Fiction into Drama

How Melodrama Works

- characters are two-dimensional: good or evil (no gray areas)
- the threat is often to unprotected women, especially a young woman, who usually stand to lose their homes and/or savings
- the villain is implacable and may want the money and the girl; the action is villain-driven
- the hero enters or returns; he may be stymied for a time by the villain's treachery
- just when all seems lost, the hero or another powerful force saves the day in the nick of time
- melodrama appeals to emotion, not to thought
- melodrama likes stirring action (like the classic Little Nell tied to the train tracks) and uses spectacle and local color (song, music)
- the form emerged from the late 18th-century sentimental values of virtue, innocence and poetic justice
- melodrama was the dominant form of 19th-century drama with popular appeal to a large audience

Values in Action

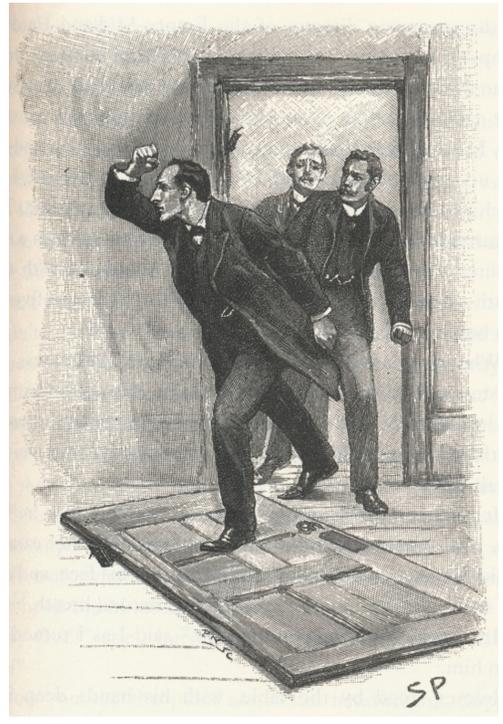
- Often played for comedy today, melodrama still uses methods it shares with advertising and political discourse. Compare the way the play works with the values and appeals of these other modes.

Fiction

- Fiction narrates a story, establishing background and context, describing setting, clothing, even the scent and sound in the air, and zeroing in on scene, dialogue, and thoughts.
- The narrator can be a part of the action, an observer, or an omniscient presence.
- In his novels, which are short by 19th-century standards, Doyle develops at least two stories at length—Holmes's solution of the case and the reason for the crime itself. The first two novels involve revenge stories from afar (Utah, the Far East) that culminate in London.
- The short stories of necessity tell the story of the solution, but manage to include a brief tale of the motives by the end, so we have the thrill of the chase and the reason for it.

and Drama

- While drama can incorporate narration individually or collectively, usually plays present the action in the moment—and that creates an immediate contrast with the Holmes stories, all but two of which are reports of past cases, not in-the-moment action.
- On stage the setting and clothing need not be described; we can see them, and we can hear the sounds in the air. Like fiction, drama moves from scene to scene, but whereas in fiction there may be narrative connections with a variety of information, in drama a blackout, turntable move, or curtain rise may be all we get between scenes. At times, in fact, the scenes may overlap with continuous action.
- The Sherlock Holmes story is told two quite different ways in these genres—the Holmes stories as fiction are more than usually thoughtful and full of speeches, since "tell your story" or "give me the information" is vital to the plot, and thought is Holmes's trademark.
- On stage, the entire structure of the familiar tale changes. Instead of being told of a dilemma, we drop directly into the dilemma itself. We are with the bad guys, not with Holmes in Baker Street. The sense of threat increases, whereas having Holmes sit in his chair listening to the problem puts us in safer territory at the start of a story. In the play, Holmes heroically arrives amid the first scene, already actively on the case.



No barrier keeps Holmes from solving a case, and he and Watson break down their share of doors in the tales (Sidney Paget illustration)



A still from the newly discovered print (2014) of Gillette's lost silent film of Sherlock Holmes based on his stage play and performance.



Sherlock Holmes

adapted from
William Gillette
by Geoffrey Sherman



Everyone wants to be Sherlock, even Daffy Duck (In a cartoon called "Deduce, You Say" with Porky Pig in the Watson role)

Victorian Science

- Check Holmes's science in the stories and/or the play. What was cutting edge science (especially forensic science if it existed) in the 1890s vs. today?

Victorian Social History

- What causes crime in the Holmes stories? Do social problems, especially issues of poverty and Victorian views of the poor (as underclass, brutes) vs. lack of education and opportunity, low pay, and poor housing affect motives? How does that compare to organized crime?

Justice vs. Law

- A major element of Doyle's stories is Holmes's dedication to justice whether inside or outside the law. Define the difference and decide whether or not you can justify Holmes's stance/behavior and why.

Activities for Working with *Sherlock Holmes*

Working with Plot and Character. Story and Stage

- Consider whether the plot of the play follows or uses the 11 elements described as characteristic of the fictional Holmes stories/novels, and if so, how closely:
 - 1) the prologue in the Baker Street flat, with personal details and often a display of Holmes's observational skills
 - 2) the first explanation—the client's statement of the case
 - 3) the personal investigation of facts
 - 4) refutation of the Scotland Yard theory of the case
 - 5) hints to the police
 - 6) discussion of investigation's progress with Watson
 - 7) follow-up, including cross-questioning of relatives and employees, visits to Record Office, investigations in disguise
 - 8) the capture or exposure of the criminal
 - 9) the criminal's confession
 - 10) Holmes's description of the clues and his process of deduction/solution
 - 11) the epilogue, sometimes quite short
 If elements are not there, why not? Are the needs of drama different than fiction's? How? Are any of the 11 elements adapted to the dramatic medium in any way? Do they occur in another order? Which are not as relevant or useful on stage? (Remember, not all occur in all the stories either.)

- On stage we see Holmes in action and must deduce his thoughts and methods by watching. How does that compare to the stories' explanations from Holmes along the way and at the end?
- What role does Dr. Watson have in the play? Is it as strong as his narration and participation in the stories? Does the change to drama take care of his role of adding "colour" and "life" to the process?
- Most of Holmes's cases are individual crimes, whereas the play eventually involves organized crime and a major crime boss. What is the difference between the two levels of crime? Are there any differences in addressing or solving it?

The Stories as Background for the Play

- Read Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia" (first story in the first collection, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*) and compare it to the play's story. How many aspects of the play come from this tale?
Compare Irene Adler to Alice Faulkner.
- Gillette takes Moriarty from "The Final Solution" (last story in the second collection, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*), which of necessity has quite a different plot, since the goal is that both men must die. How does Gillette take the hints in that story and use them to create a sense of Moriarty's active crime empire in the play? Does the play's portrayal live up to the story's description of Moriarty and his operations and to your expectations based on them?

Problem-Solving in Your Locale

- If you could channel Sherlock Holmes into your world, what problems (not necessarily crimes) would you want him to consider? What issues might a combination of reasoning and imagination address? How about imitating his methods and outlining a solution for one of the those problems yourself.

Compare Modern Versions of Sleuthing

- Compare the methods of Sherlock Holmes in the play with any of the CSI or other procedural television shows. Do the protagonists deduce and imagine? Do they use "abductive" reasoning? Do they use a computer for what Holmes carries around in his head?
- Compare Doyle's Sherlock Holmes with the Sherlock Holmes in either the modern television series *Sherlock* or *Elementary*. How similar are they? What do they keep of the original Holmes? What becomes different by transporting Holmes into our world? How does the modern Holmes work?
- Check out film history and the various antagonists Sherlock Holmes has confronted through time—Victorian and contemporary. How does this iconic figure change with setting?



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