



Sherlock Holmes

Arthur Conan Doyle wrote his first story about Sherlock Holmes in 1887. It was called *A Study in Scarlet*. Lots of readers liked Sherlock Holmes, so Arthur Conan Doyle wrote more stories. The stories were published in a monthly magazine called *The Strand*. Lots of people bought *The Strand* magazine every month to read a new story about Sherlock Holmes and his friend Doctor Watson.

Sherlock Holmes was a very clever detective. When he looked at a man or a woman, he did not just see a person with two arms and two legs. Sherlock Holmes made deductions¹ about the person. For example, in the story of *The Red-headed League*, Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson meet a man called Jabez Wilson. Sherlock Holmes asks Doctor Watson what he can deduce from looking at Jabez Wilson. Doctor Watson looks at the man's bright red hair and shabby² clothes and says "He looks like an ordinary tradesman. What can you deduce?"

Sherlock Holmes quickly replies "It is obvious to me he has done a lot of manual labour. He takes snuff³. He is a Freemason⁴. He has visited China. And he has done a lot writing recently."

Mr Jabez Wilson is very surprised. He says, "How did you know all that? It is true that I worked as a ship's carpenter when I was young."

"I looked at your hands," said Sherlock Holmes, "your right hand is much bigger than your left hand. I can see you have worked a lot with your right hand."

"Well, how did you know I take snuff and I am a Freemason?" asked Jabez Wilson.

"You have brown stains from snuff on your shirt and your tie clip has the mark of the Freemason's group," replied Sherlock Holmes.

"But how did you know that I have been writing a lot recently?" said Jabez Wilson.

Sherlock Holes said, "I looked at your jacket. The right sleeve is very shiny where it has rubbed against the table. And on the left sleeve I can see where you have rested your elbow on the table."

¹ deduce = to decide something by using observation and reasoning.

² shabby = not clean or smart

³ snuff = a brown powder made from dried tobacco which men used to put in their noses.

⁴ Freemason = a member of an international secret society of men in different businesses and trades.





Doctor Watson says, “But how did you know Mr Wilson has been to China?”

“Look at the tattoo on Mr Wilson’s wrist. You can only get tattoos like that in China. And if you look carefully, you can see that piece of metal on his watch chain is a Chinese coin.”

How did Arthur Conan Doyle think of this clever detective. He explained “I am a medical doctor like Doctor Watson. I learnt how to be a doctor at the Medical College in Edinburgh in Scotland. I had a teacher there called Doctor Joseph Bell. He was trying to teach us that doctors must learn to look at their patients and understand them. Doctor Joseph Bell was like Sherlock Holmes. He could look at a man and understand his profession, his history and his habits.”

Arthur Conan Doyle wrote 26 stories about Sherlock Holmes. But he became very tired of the work and so in 1893, he decided to kill Sherlock Holmes. In the story called *The Final Problem*, Sherlock Holmes dies in a fight near a waterfall in Switzerland.

But the readers of *The Strand* magazine were very angry. They wanted to read more stories about the famous detective. Twenty thousand people stopped buying *The Strand* magazine. They wrote many letters to Arthur Conan Doyle and asked him to bring back Sherlock Holmes. But Arthur Conan Doyle wanted to write different kinds of books. He didn’t want to write more stories about Sherlock Holmes.

Eight years later, the readers of *The Strand* magazine were excited to read a new Sherlock Holmes story, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Immediately thirty thousand new readers started buying *The Strand* magazine. Two years later, Arthur Conan Doyle started to write more stories about Sherlock Holmes.

There are 54 short stories about Sherlock Holmes and four long books, *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of Four*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and *The Valley of Fear*. He wrote his last story in 1917.





PENGUIN DOSSIERS

Activities

Before you read



Look at this picture
(or look at the cover of one of the Penguin Sherlock Holmes readers)

Who was this man?
Is he a real person or a person in a book?
Where did he live?
When did he live?
What did he do?

Have you read any stories about him?
Which stories did you like?

After you read

Answer the questions

1 What was the name of the first story about Sherlock Homes?			
a] The Strand	b] The red-headed League	c] A study in Scarlet	The Final Problem
2 Where were the Sherlock Holmes stories first published?			
a] in a weekly magazine	b] in books	c] in a monthly magazine	d] In 1887
3 How did Sherlock Holmes deduce that Jabez Wilson had done a lot of manual work?			
a] He looked at his hands.	b] He saw his shabby clothes.	c] He knew he was a Freemason.	d] He took snuff.
4 What are the Freemasons?			
a] People who work with their hands.	b] An international secret society for men.	c] People who take snuff.	d] A group of detectives.
5 What was special about Jabez Wilson's tattoo?			
a] It was on his wrist.	b] It showed he was a Freemason.	c] It was in the shape of a Chinese coin.	d] It was a special kind of Chinese tattoo.





PENGUIN DOSSIERS

6 Where did Arthur Conan Doyle study medicine?			
a] In London	b] In England	c] In Scotland	d] Dr Joseph Bell
7 Why do doctors need to look carefully at their patients?			
a] So they can understand their history, work and habits.	b] Because they want to be detectives.	c] Because they must have good eyes.	d] Because Dr Joseph Bell taught Arthur Conan Doyle.
8 Why did Arthur Conan Doyle kill Sherlock Holmes?			
a] He pushed him into a waterfall.	b] Because readers of <i>The Strand</i> magazine were angry.	c] Because people stopped buying <i>The Strand</i> magazine.	d] Because he was tired of the writing work.
9 What was the reaction to <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> ?			
a] People stopped buying <i>The Strand</i> magazine.	b] Readers of <i>The Strand</i> magazine were angry.	c] Readers of <i>The Strand</i> magazine were happy.	d] Arthur Conan Doyle started to write new stories.
10 For how many years did Arthur Conan Doyle write Sherlock Holmes stories?			
a] 54	b] 30	c] 17	d] 20

Think about the historical period of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Mark a **X** beside the things in the box do you think Sherlock Holmes might have used?

a telephone	a train	an underground train	a microscope	a steamship
a cab pulled by a horse	an electric telegraph	an aeroplane	a sports car	a magnifying glass

According to the stories, Sherlock Holmes lived at 221B, Baker Street in London. If you go to 221B Baker Street you can visit the Sherlock Holmes museum. If you are not in London now, you can visit <http://www.sherlock-holmes.co.uk/home.htm> and go on a tour of the museum and visit the shop.

Read about the museum. Which statements are correct?

- 1 There are 16 steps up to the first floor.
- 2 Visitors can sit in Sherlock Holmes's armchair.
- 3 You can hear Sherlock Holmes playing his violin.
- 4 You can see Dr Watson's diary.
- 5 You can buy a Sherlock Holmes tie or T-shirt in the shop.
- 6 There are special plates with pictures of Sherlock Holmes.
- 7 The Sherlock Holmes Museum is open every day (except Christmas Day) from 9.30 am -6pm.

