

Year 7 Workbooklet – Arthur Conan Doyle & Sherlock Holmes

1. Arthur Conan Doyle – The Man Behind Sherlock Holmes

Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1859. He studied medicine and became a doctor, working both as a surgeon and a writer. His medical training influenced the way he wrote, giving his stories a sense of scientific detail and realism. Doyle's most famous creation, Sherlock Holmes, first appeared in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). However, Holmes only became truly popular when Doyle's short stories were published in *The Strand Magazine* during the 1890s. Readers loved the clever detective, and every new story was eagerly awaited.

Questions

1. How might Arthur Conan Doyle's career as a doctor have influenced the way he wrote Sherlock Holmes stories?
2. Why do you think *The Strand Magazine* helped Sherlock Holmes become so popular?
3. In what ways does knowing about Doyle's medical background help us to understand why he created Dr Watson as a doctor?

2. Victorian Britain and the Fascination with Crime

The late 1800s, known as the Victorian period, was a time of rapid change. Cities were growing, and new inventions and industries were transforming everyday life. The police force was still quite new, and the public often doubted how effective it was at solving crimes. At the same time, newspapers were filled with shocking stories of murders, robberies, and mysterious cases. People became fascinated with detectives, both real and fictional, who could solve problems through intelligence and observation. Sherlock Holmes captured this obsession, offering readers a brilliant character who seemed capable of solving any mystery.

Questions

1. Why might the growth of newspapers in Victorian Britain have increased people's interest in crime stories?
2. What connection can you make between the new police force and the popularity of fictional detectives like Sherlock Holmes?
3. How do you think Victorian readers would have felt when reading Holmes' logical explanations for crimes?

3. The Characters of the Sherlock Holmes Stories

Sherlock Holmes is one of the most famous detectives in literature. He is observant, logical, and extremely intelligent. Holmes notices tiny details that others miss and uses science and reasoning to solve cases. Sometimes, however, his cold and arrogant personality can make him seem distant.

Dr John Watson, Doyle's creation based partly on himself, is Holmes' loyal friend and the narrator of most stories. Watson is a doctor and war veteran who admires Holmes' brilliance, even though he cannot always follow Holmes' methods. Through Watson's eyes, readers get to experience the excitement of Holmes' deductions. Watson's profession as a doctor reflects Doyle's own background, and his role as narrator gives readers a clear, understandable view of Holmes' unusual methods.

Questions

1. Why do Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson work well together as a pair? Why might Doyle have chosen to use Watson as the narrator instead of Holmes?
2. In what ways does Watson reflect Arthur Conan Doyle himself? Why might Doyle have chosen to write through Watson's perspective rather than his own?
3. Holmes is often described as "brilliant but cold." Do you think this makes him more or less likeable as a character? Explain your view.

4. Extract to Explore

From *A Scandal in Bohemia*:

"You see, but you do not observe."

Task

- What does this extract reveal about Holmes' way of thinking?
- How might readers in Victorian Britain have reacted to such an idea?
- How does this quote show the difference between Holmes and ordinary people, including Watson?

5. Creative Tasks

Task 1: Design a Front Cover

Imagine *The Strand Magazine* is about to publish a brand-new Sherlock Holmes story. Design a bold front cover that would catch a reader's attention. Include:

- A powerful title for your story.
- An illustration of Holmes, Watson, or a mysterious setting.
- A short tagline that makes the reader want to buy the magazine.

Task 2: Write Your Own Sherlock Holmes Detective Story

Write a short detective story inspired by Sherlock Holmes.

- Create a mystery for Holmes to solve (for example, a theft, a missing person, or a puzzling clue).
- Use Watson as the narrator to describe Holmes' actions and explanations.
- Show Holmes' cleverness by having him notice details that no one else does.
- End your story with Holmes revealing how he solved the mystery.

6. Glossary

- **Victorian Britain** – The period of Queen Victoria's reign (1837–1901).
- **Narrator** – The person who tells the story.
- **Detective** – Someone who investigates and solves crimes.
- **Observation** – Watching carefully and noticing small details.
- **Deduction** – Reaching a conclusion using logic and evidence.
- **Magazine** – A regular publication that includes stories and articles.