

PRESTWICK HOUSE LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS

THE BEST OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

The Red-Headed League and Six Others

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



UNABRIDGED WITH GLOSSARY AND NOTES

THE BEST OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

The Red-Headed League and Six Others



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



Prestwick House

LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS

P.O. Box 658 Clayton, Delaware 19938 • www.prestwickhouse.com

SENIOR EDITOR: Paul Moliken

EDITORS: Lisa M. Miller, Darlene Gilmore

COVER DESIGN: Larry Knox

PRODUCTION: Larry Knox



P.O. BOX 658 • CLAYTON, DELAWARE 19938

TEL: 1.800.932.4593

FAX: 1.888.718.9333

WEB: www.prestwickhouse.com

Prestwick House Teaching Units™, Activity Packs™, and Response Journals™ are the perfect complement for these editions. To purchase teaching resources for this book, visit www.prestwickhouse.com

This Prestwick House edition is an unabridged republication, with minor emendations, of seven Sherlock Holmes stories, taken from various sources in the public domain.

©2006 All new material is copyrighted by Prestwick House, Inc.
All rights reserved. No portion may be reproduced without permission in writing from the publisher. Printed in the United States of America. *Revised 2015*

ISBN 978-1-58049-173-0

THE
BEST OF
SHERLOCK
HOLMES
The Red-Headed League and Six Others

BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

C O N T E N T S

5		Notes
6		Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights
9		A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA
29		THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE
49		THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE
67		THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND
89		THE FINAL PROBLEM
105		THE ADVENTURE OF THE EMPTY HOUSE
123		THE ADVENTURE OF THE BRUCE-PARTINGTON PLANS
147		Glossary
152		Vocabulary

Notes

What are literary classics, and why are they important?

A literary classic is a work of the highest excellence that says something important about life and the human condition—and says it with great artistry. It has withstood the test of time and is not bound by any specific time, place, or culture. For this reason, a classic is considered to have universal appeal and significance. It speaks to us today as forcefully as it spoke to readers when it was first written, and its power will continue to give future generations new perspectives on life.

Arthur Conan Doyle

S I R A R T H U R C O N A N D O Y L E

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on May 22, 1859. After his father was institutionalized because of epilepsy, Conan Doyle's mother encouraged the young boy to explore literature, which he did. However, as a young man, Conan Doyle seemed destined for a career as a doctor, not an author; he went to Edinburgh University, graduated, and even began to practice medicine, specializing in eye care.



Conan Doyle married Louise Hawkins in 1885 and later began writing seriously. His first story dealing with Sherlock Holmes, *A Study in Scarlet*, was published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* magazine in 1887. The detective and his exploits quickly became extremely popular with the British public, but after four years of writing just this one type of story, the author became disinterested in the genre and decided to stop writing Sherlock Holmes mysteries. Fans protested, even going so far as to wear black armbands and cancel subscriptions to *The Strand*, the magazine in which the stories were published. Holmes's creator bowed to public pressure to resurrect the detective, which he did in 1902 in "The Adventure of the Empty House." King Edward VII awarded Conan Doyle the title of Sir in 1903, not for authoring the Sherlock Holmes books, but for writing a pamphlet on the Boer War, *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct*.

Before his death of heart failure on July 7, 1930, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had become one of the highest paid authors in the world, and Sherlock Holmes had achieved the status of the world's most well-known detective.

Pointers

READING POINTERS

Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

While reading these Sherlock Holmes tales, the reader should keep the following points in mind:

1. Surprise endings

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was one of the most popular mystery writers of the nineteenth century. Conan Doyle portrayed Holmes's brilliance at piecing together various clues, discarding others, and applying a vast store of knowledge in many fields as a simple task. Yet, to attract more readers and to have them try to solve the problems he presented, Conan Doyle often complicated the stories by inserting false leads. This made it necessary to distinguish which clues were important and which were unimportant. Frequently, the least significant observation by Holmes proves to be the crux of the case.

2. Holmes's brilliance

Holmes is the epitome of the rational thinker, who pieces information together to draw an inescapable conclusion, one that was not evident to the others in the story. Note that after the case is actually solved, Sherlock Holmes summarizes the facts and conclusions for the people in the story, usually Doctor Watson or the ineffectual police.

3. Repetition of plot elements

Many of the stories share similarities, so that the plot line is basically the same:

- the introduction of the crime
- the presentation of the case as “unique” or “singular”
- adding odd characters
- Watson's ignorance or lack of understanding of the case and his function as Holmes's foil
- the setting out of clues and the introduction of false clues
- adding complications to the case
- the resolution and explanation of the crime by Holmes

4. Conan Doyle's use of verisimilitude

The names of actual people and places around London are generally accurate, although he sometimes makes up fictitious names. He does refer to crimes that were actually committed, however. This technique makes the stories more plausible. Readers should note that various elements in some stories are false or scientifically incorrect:

- A “swamp adder” is not a type of poisonous snake.
- Many foreign areas that he mentions do not exist.
- Numerous dates are incorrect.

Conan Doyle, however, wrote in a letter, “It has always seemed to me that so long as you produce your dramatic effect, accuracy of detail matters little. I have never striven for it, and I have made some bad mistakes in consequence. What matter if I hold my readers?”

5. Personality and behavior versus appearance

Holmes is described at various times as handsome, lean, lithe, and powerful, with “aquiline” features. He has “piercing eyes” and is very strong. However, with the exception of Professor Moriarty, the master criminal, Holmes's adversaries are described as dirty, obese, physically unattractive, large, clumsy, deformed, or unusual-looking. This concept, that a person's physical appearance determines his or her behavior, dates back to antiquity.



A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA

I

TO SHERLOCK HOLMES she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, 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,[†] but as a lover he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer. They were admirable things for the observer—excellent for drawing the veil from men's motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results. Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, would not be more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature such as his. And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory.

I had seen little of Holmes lately. My marriage had drifted us away from each other. My own complete happiness, and the home-centred interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment, were sufficient to absorb all my attention, while Holmes, who loathed every form of society with his whole Bohemian soul,

[†]Terms marked in the text with (†) can be looked up in the Glossary for additional information.

remained in our lodgings in Baker Street,† buried among his old books, and alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition, the drowsiness of the drug, and the fierce energy of his own keen nature. He was still, as ever, deeply attracted by the study of crime, and occupied his immense faculties and extraordinary powers of observation in following out those clues, and clearing up those mysteries which had been abandoned as hopeless by the official police. From time to time I heard some vague account of his doings: of his summons to Odessa in the case of the Trepoff murder, of his clearing up of the singular tragedy of the Atkinson brothers at Trincomalee, and finally of the mission which he had accomplished so delicately and successfully for the reigning family of Holland. Beyond these signs of his activity, however, which I merely shared with all the readers of the daily press,† I knew little of my former friend and companion.

One night—it was on the twentieth of March, 1888—I was returning from a journey to a patient (for I had now returned to civil practice†), when my way led me through Baker Street. As I passed the well-remembered door, which must always be associated in my mind with my wooing, and with the dark incidents of the Study in Scarlet, I was seized with a keen desire to see Holmes again, and to know how he was employing his extraordinary powers. His rooms were brilliantly lit, and, even as I looked up, I saw his tall, spare figure pass twice in a dark silhouette against the blind. He was pacing the room swiftly, eagerly, with his head sunk upon his chest and his hands clasped behind him. To me, who knew his every mood and habit, his attitude and manner told their own story. He was at work again. He had risen out of his drug-created dreams and was hot upon the scent of some new problem. I rang the bell and was shown up to the chamber which had formerly been in part my own.

His manner was not effusive. It seldom was; but he was glad, I think, to see me. With hardly a word spoken, but with a kindly eye, he waved me to an armchair, threw across his case of cigars, and indicated a spirit case and a gasogene in the corner. Then he stood before the fire and looked me over in his singular introspective fashion.

“Wedlock suits you,” he remarked. “I think, Watson, that you have put on seven and a half pounds since I saw you.”

“Seven!” I answered.

“Indeed, I should have thought a little more. Just a trifle more, I fancy, Watson. And in practice again, I observe. You did not tell me that you intended to go into harness.”

“Then, how do you know?”

“I see it, I deduce it. How do I know that you have been getting yourself very wet lately, and that you have a most clumsy and careless servant girl?”

GLOSSARY

A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA

“...the most perfect...the world has seen...” – Note that here, Holmes is compared to a machine, possibly a reference to one made by Charles Babbage (1791–1871), that could calculate numbers mechanically.

Baker Street – The traditional residence of Holmes and Watson was 221B Baker St., in London. The house still exists in its original Victorian style and is kept as a museum honoring Holmes.

“...which I merely...of the daily press...” – Watson, the narrator, is the person who supposedly wrote the numerous stories about Holmes’s adventures for the newspapers, but, since he has been married, he must read about his friend in the papers, just as the rest of London must do.

“for I had now returned to civil practice” – Watson has left the British armed forces and has returned to being a private physician.

“...have been burned...” – burned at the stake

nitrate of silver – a combination of nitric acid and silver used by doctors to kill unhealthy tissue

Boswell – a reference to James Boswell (1740–1795), the biographer of Samuel Johnson

Hercules – an allusion to the Greek mythological figure, who was considered to be the strongest man in the world

La Scala – an opera house in Milan, Italy

bijou villa – [*French*] a jewel of a house

Inner Temple – an area of London where many lawyers live

“...only three minutes, or it won’t be legal.” – In England at the time, all weddings had to be performed by 12 noon.

the Continent – Europe, except for the parts belonging to the British Empire

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE

“...for strange effects...the imagination.” – Holmes is relating the idea that truth is stranger than fiction, despite the fact that these stories are complete fiction.

Albert chain – a watch chain

Freemason – a member of the Masons, a private, secret organization founded on the principles of fellowship, duty, and morality

“*Omne ignotum pro magnifico*” – [*Latin*] “The unknown is always thought to be magnificent.”

“...off you go at scratch...” – “start at the beginning”

VOCABULARY

A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA

abhorrent – hated

acute – keen, sharp

antagonist – an adversary, opponent

astrakhan – a fine wool

august – impressive; important

averse – opposed to

aquiline – with a curved nose resembling an eagle's

beryl – a semi-precious stone

brooch – a decorative pin

brougham – a type of carriage

cabinet – a large photograph

capital – very large

carte blanche – [French] a blank paper; traditionally, however, *carte blanche* means freedom to do as one pleases or being able to use unlimited resources.

chagrin – embarrassment; sadness

chamois – soft leather

compunction – regrets

condescend – to lower oneself from a dignified level

copper – a copper penny

docketing – listing

endeavouring – [endeavoring] attempting

epistle – a letter

expostulating – arguing

formidable – alarming; frightening; dangerous

gasogene – an early type of machine for putting carbonation into a liquid

gibe – a sarcastic comment

grit – a tiny piece of dirt

half a guinea – a gold coin

hansom – a carriage

incognito – [Latin] “in disguise”

incorrigible – very difficult to control

indiscretion – carelessness

inextricable – very complicated and confused

introspective – deep in thought

invariable – unchanging

inviolate – pure; unable to change

iodoform – a type of iodine

landau – a carriage

stile – a step used for climbing over a wall or fence

tiara – a small crown

THE FINAL PROBLEM

abyss – a deep gorge or hole

ascetic – disciplined; reserved

caldron – a kettle

cassock – a full-length robe, usually worn by priests

chasm – a deep opening in the ground

congenial – agreeable

consumption – another name for tuberculosis

coup-de-maitre – [*French*] a master stroke

devolves – becomes the duty of; transfers

ecclesiastic – a religious person, such as a priest

equanimity – composure, calm

exuberant – joyful

hamlet – a small village

hemorrhage – a sudden and extreme loss of blood

incoherent – not making sense; rambling

incommoded – inconvenienced, bothered

injudicious – unwise, foolish

malefactor – a felon, criminal

oscillating – vibrating, shifting

pinnacle – the highest point

recurred – returned

reptilian – like a reptile

salle-à-manger – [*French*] the living or dining area

suffice – be enough

venerable – old and respected

vogue – an appeal, popularity

wily – sneaky

THE ADVENTURE OF THE EMPTY HOUSE

abominable – horrible

asperities – harshness or roughness of manner

audacity – daring; boldness

austere – plain; serious

bereavement – grief over the death of a loved one

bibliophile – a lover or collector of books

cataracts – a disease of the eyes

conjecture – thought