

Elementary!

Think of a famous detective, and Sherlock Holmes might come to mind. This well-known sleuth was not a real person, but a character created by Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887. Since his first appearance in Doyle's story, *A Study in Scarlet*, Sherlock Holmes has used his powers of observation and logic to solve crimes on the page, screen, and stage. *The Guinness Book of World Records* named him as "the most portrayed literary human character in film and television history."

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Scotland in 1859. He worked as a medical doctor but always enjoyed writing. He started publishing his stories when he needed some extra money. They were so popular that he retired from medicine and became the highest paid author of his time.

The character of Sherlock Holmes is known as a brilliant but quirky detective who is also a chemist, a boxer, a swordsman, and a violinist. In Doyle's stories, Holmes and his friend, Dr. John Watson, solve crimes from their apartment on Baker Street. Dr. Watson keeps detailed records of each case and serves as the narrator in the books. Sherlock Homes notices every detail of a situation and puts these small facts together to uncover the truth. He often says "elementary!" when explaining his solutions to Watson and to the reader.

One of the most famous of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries is *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. In this book, Holmes and Watson investigate the legend of a supernatural hound stalking a young man on the moors. Another popular story is *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*. Holmes and Watson solve a mystery that involves twin sisters, a fortune, and a snake.

Despite his character's tremendous popularity and appeal, Doyle grew tired of Sherlock Holmes. He invented a new character, Professor James Moriarty, to be Holmes's enemy. He then wrote a story in which Holmes falls off a cliff to his death while fighting Moriarty. Doyle hoped that, with the death of the great detective, he could finally be free to write more serious works. However, his fans protested so much that he brought Holmes back to life in his next book.

The character of Sherlock Holmes still intrigues mystery lovers today. Adaptations of Doyle's works continue to be made for the stage and screen, and there is even a literary society dedicated to Sherlock Holmes called the Baker Street Irregulars. Having charmed mystery readers for nearly 150 years, Sherlock Holmes is sure to live on for 150 more.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Which of the following titles was *not* written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle? (Literal)
 - a. The Hound of the Baskervilles
 - b. A Study in Scarlet
 - c. The Tell-Tale Heart
 - d. The Adventure of the Speckled Band

2. Who narrates the Sherlock Holmes stories? (Literal)
 - a. Sherlock Holmes
 - b. John Watson
 - c. Arthur Conan Doyle
 - d. James Moriarty

3. Why is the Sherlock Holmes Literary Society called The Baker Street Irregulars? (Inferential)
 - a. Because Doyle was a baker before he became a writer
 - b. Because Doyle was born on Baker Street
 - c. Because Holmes and Watson like to bake cakes
 - d. Because Holmes and Watson solve mysteries from an apartment on Baker Street

4. Which of the following is *not* a reason that Doyle decided to kill Holmes? (Inferential)
 - a. He wanted to go back to being a doctor.
 - b. He didn't realize how popular Holmes was.
 - c. He was bored of writing the character of Holmes.
 - d. He wanted to write more serious stories.

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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