The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Author: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Sir Doyle was born May 22, 1859 in Scotland and died July 7, 1930. He was a British writer and physician. He created the character Sherlock Holmes in 1887. In addition to the Holmes stories, his works include fantasy and science fiction. One of Doyle's early short stories, "J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement" (1884), helped to popularize the mystery of the brigantine *Mary Celeste*, found drifting at sea with no crew member aboard.

Doyle's father died in 1893, and his rich uncles paid for Doyle's education. He first went to boarding schools in England, followed by a school in Austria. He studied medicine and practical botany in Edinburgh. During this time, he started writing; he published his first academic article, "Gelsemium as a Poison" in the British Medical Journal - a study which The Daily Telegraph regarded as potentially useful in a 21st-century murder investigation. Arthur Conan Doyle Wikipedia entry

Learn more about Doyle's passions

While being known for the logic of Sherlock Holmes, Doyle was great believer in Spiritualism Movement at that time and was taken in by many who were exposed as fakes. (He insisted that Houdini had supernatural powers despite Houdini's insistence that he didn't.) See: Spiritualism Movement

American Spirits: the famous Fox sisters and the mysterious fad that haunted a nation by Barb Rosenstock.

The Coming of the Fairies by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (available as an eBook in different formats at Project Gutenberg)

The Witch of Lime Street: séance, seduction, and Houdini in the spirit world by David Jaher.

Other Books by Doyle

The man wrote over 300 books/short stories; see the website devoted to him for a complete list: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia. Burbank Public Library only owns the Sherlock Holmes stories and several movies, TV shows, and books by other authors based on Doyle's characters.

Map of Victorian London:

This website not only gives you maps of London in general, but it's also searchable by a particular Sherlock story: layers of London

Learn more about Sherlock Holmes in person!

There is a Sherlock Holmes Museum located right where his flat would have been: The Sherlock Holmes Museum

This link will give you a YouTube guide of Sherlock's London: Tours of Sherlock Holmes locations

There are also several walking tours but the library is not allowed to recommend a particular one.

Other books recommended by Burbank Public Library staff:

The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins. Credited with creating the troupe of a mystery solved by an English Detective, it is set in a countryside estate with a limited number of suspects. Burbank also owns the BBC Masterpiece Theatre program on DVD

The Yard by Alex Grecian is a little more gruesome than the Sherlock stories are but are good mysteries and draws one into to that London. It also covers the founding of Scotland Yard.

The Murder of Mr. Ma by John Shen Yen Nee. In 1924 London, when shy academic Lao She meets larger-than-life Judge Dee Ren Jie, these unlikely allies investigate the murders of Chinese immigrants. (Judge Dee was based on the real-life Di Renjie, whose exploits were fictionalized and are similar in structure to a detective story.)

Discussion Questions for *Sherlock Holmes:*

1. Describe the character of Sherlock Holmes. What do you know about him? What are his motivations, his likes and his dislikes? Try to name at least one strength and at least one weakness.
2. **The Adventure of the Norwood Builder**
   Notice the way Sherlock observes people extremely closely, and makes careful judgments about them based on the evidence. Can you think of a time (or many times) where you did something similar? Have you ever made a judgment based on something you observed, but were wrong? How can we keep from making wrong judgments?
3. **The Adventure of the Dancing Men**
   What is the role of deception in "The Adventures of the Norwood Builder" and "The Adventures of the Dancing Men"? Which characters use deception and why? Is deception used for good or for ill? Is there ever a good time to deceive? If so, when?
4. **The Adventure of the Solitary Bicyclist**
   What do you think each character's philosophy is about when violence should be used? Which do you most agree with?
5. **The Adventure of the Priory School**
   As you read/listen, think about the role of secrets in this story. Who keeps secrets and why? What would happen if these secrets were revealed? Why does it matter so much? Do you think they should have kept those secrets? Why or why not?
6. **The Adventure of Black Peter**
   Consider the character of the murdered man. How is he described? How does he treat others, particularly his own family? Is there anything sympathetic about him?
7. **The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton**
   What sets Sherlock and Watson apart from the criminals they pursue? Especially consider "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton," where our heroes blatantly break the law. Were they justified in doing so? Why or why not?
8. **The Adventure of the Six Napoleons**
   This adventure hints that Holmes sometimes acts more cold and unfeeling than he actually is—what do you make of that?
9. Think about the following BIG questions: How does the way things appear sometimes contrast with the way they actually are? How can we know what we're seeing is true rather than just an appearance? How should we decide when things aren't clear? Think about how, sometimes, Sherlock Holmes lies for the benefit of someone else. Is this a valid way to help someone?