

"sherlock holmes" by  
arthur conan doyle  
essay sample



**ASSIGN  
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## **“ Sherlock Holmes” by Arthur Conan Doyle Essay Sample**

Arthur Conan Doyle is a Victorian writer. He introduced his fictional character in 1887. At this time, there were huge differences in wealth between the classes, working class and middle class. Those in the working class lived in poor cramped conditions with poor sanitation and very little access to education. Because they had little access to education, they were usually illiterate so the middle classes formed Conan Doyle’s readership.

Crime in poor areas was rife and public hangings was frequent due to minor crimes such as stealing and because of all the poverty and sickness on the streets , it lead to crime as this was the only way to survive. Prostitution, drug abuse and murder were common at the time and at this time, jack the ripper, the first modern sexual serial killer, was on the streets. He murdered many prostitutes and because the police couldn’t catch this infamous murderer, their methods were seen as inefficient. Many of the officers were publicly exposed as corrupt.

The Victorians immediately fell for Sherlock Holmes as he cracked every case that came across him. In 1893, Conan Doyle tried to end the appearance of Sherlock Holmes but received death threats telling him to keep Holmes alive.

Detective fiction is a branch of crime fiction that centres upon the investigation of a crime, which is usually murder by the detective which is either a professional or an amateur.

In my opinion, Arthur Conan Doyle created detective fiction stories that are so realistic so that the audience can learn something and prevent it from happening and it teaches the moral message crime never pays.

Arthur Conan Doyle includes the main features that are essential for detective fiction. These essential features are villains, victims, suspects, clues- red herrings, concrete clues and a detective to solve the mystery. Doyle uses his own knowledge as well as one of his professors, Joseph Bell as he was greatly influenced by him. He also used the facts, the truth and the things that were happening around him to create this phenomenal character called Sherlock Holmes.

In this essay, I will be analysing the three stories, ' Silver Blaze', ' The Specked Band' and ' The Red-Headed League'. These three stories are written by Arthur Conan Doyle. In all three stories, the detective is Sherlock Holmes.

The detective, Sherlock Holmes, in this genre is frequently solving crimes/mysteries that are in the middle and upper classes. He, himself fits into this category. He is a well respected man. Sherlock Holmes' physical description matches him personality. ' Sharp, eager framed in his ear - flapped cap'. The deer stalkers hat is symbolical of him hunting down criminals. Although, Sherlock Holmes was actually an amateur detective, he performed better and achieved more success amongst his readers and more results than professional police officers. Sherlock Homes became one of the most celebrated and most famous fictional detectives the world has ever known. As a result of this, Conan Doyle received death threats when he tried

to end Holmes' appearance. In all three stories, Holmes shows intelligence. He deduces his clients. He is a detective of the world of art. He is clever and respected by all. " There was but one problem before the public which could challenge his powers of analysis". Conan Doyle describes Holmes' intelligence. Here, his powers refer to strength. He doesn't care whether he is paid or not. " As to reward, my profession is its reward....." Whereas professional police officers at the time were much worse at solving crimes and all they were interested in was money.

In The Speckled Band, he shows kindness to Helen Stoner when she comes in to see him. " Ha, I am glad to see that Mrs Hudson has had a good sense to light the fire..... I shall order you a cup of hot coffee, for I observe that you are shivering". He shows kindness and empathy to the victim, Helen Stoner in The Speckled Band but he doesn't to Jabez Wilson. His reaction is different. This is because he is presented as a comical character rather than one who is suffering. " Holmes, the sleuth hound, Holmes, the relentless, keen witted ready". The language used here, is that Conan Doyle uses adjectives for cumulative effect and he gives the impression that he is a really able detective.

Sherlock Holmes is quick witted and he uses his powers of deduction to help him investigate. For example, he uses this method when travelling by train, " Our rate at present is fifty-three and a half miles an hour". Sherlock Holmes belongs to the upper class, " Ear flapped travelling cap", the way he dresses suggests his social standing. This also suggests Holmes is like a hunter tracking down an animal.

Dr. Watson is Sherlock Holmes' assistant, as detectives do not usually work alone. He is not as clever the detective. He feels inferior to Holmes because either during the story or at the end of the story, the crime is explained to the assistant, or both, Watson and the readers admire the detective. " You could not possibly come at a better time, my dear Watson". He said cordially" Holmes is polite and considerate. They have a friendship of mutual respect.

In all three stories, Sherlock Holmes' assistant is Dr. Watson. Dr. Watson helps Holmes to solve the mysteries and look for clues. In Red- Headed League, when Holmes says that " This gentleman (Watson) has been my partner and helper in many of my successful cases, and I have no doubt that he will be the utmost to me in yours also". Dr. Watson always helps Sherlock Homes and Holmes is always grateful.

The criminals in two stories, ' The Speckle Band' and ' The Red-Headed League' are Doctor Roylott, who is Helen Stoner's step-father and John Clay, who attempts to rob a bank on Coburg Square. Both the criminals have a mercenary motive. Dr Roylott and John Clay are both from wealthy backgrounds; however, they commit crimes to gain money. They are both intelligent and ingenious in committing crimes. They are both clever mastermind criminals. John Clay is very arrogant. " I beg you will not touch me with your filthy hands..... I have royal blood in my veins". John Clay has had previous offences. Dr Roylott has committed indecent crimes such as violently murdering his butler. " He beat his native butler to death". He is a big aggressive man that everyone seems to be scared of.

In detective fiction, the victim is often from either from the middle class or the upper class. Helen Stoner is the victim in *The Speckled Band* and her sister was the previous victim. " We could see that she was indeed in a pitiable state of agitation, her face all drawn gray, with restless, frightened eyes, like those of some hunted animal". Conan Doyle uses a simile and colour imagery to describe Helen Stoner so we can imagine what the character is like and words like " pitiable and agitation" describes how terrified, scared and disturbed she is and only the victim can be terrified, scared and disturbed and the phrase " frightened eyes" show how " frightened" she is like " some hunted animal". This detailed description encourages the reader to feel pity for Helen as she appears vulnerable. Jabez Wilson is not a typical victim as he is working class. Holmes does not treat him the way he treats other victims. He is comical (Wilson) and Doyle's readers were from a predominantly middle class background.

Sherlock Holmes exhibits eccentric behaviour and restores order to an otherwise civilised section of society.

In the ' Sherlock Holmes' stories, Arthur Conan Doyle features a villain and victim, they are fundamental characters in any story.

Thus, the setting of the story, like the victim, is typically in the upper class. Settings from two stories are *The Speckled Band* and *The Red Headed League*. The setting of *The Speckled Band* is opened in the rooms of Baker Street, where Helen comes in and asks for Holmes' help in his apartment. The second scene is Dr Roylott's mansion. His mansion is neglected and dilapidated. " The building was of grey, lichen blotched stone, with a high

central portion and two curving wings, like the claws of a crab, thrown out at each side. The simile ' like the claws of a crab' creates a threatening atmosphere and increases the suspense in the narrative.

The setting of Red Headed League is set in Sherlock's home. Later on in the story, the setting is in the area near the pawnbrokers and the bank. They are situated on Coburg Square. " I have a small pawnbroker's business at Coburg Square, near the city".

The story is organised into different parts. There is the beginning, the mystery which seems to be unsolvable at first but then gets solved at the end. There is the development-where the detective gathers clues and evidence, the climax-where the detective catches the criminal by setting a trap for them, the resolution-where the mystery is solved, the narrator, the clues and the red- herrings.

Dr Watson is the narrator of the story, he is not as clever as Holmes, and we are left in a position of ignorance until the end of the story as to how Holmes solves the mystery. The audience are encouraged to admire Holmes' abilities as a result of the narrative style.

The methods of Sherlock Holmes are finding the clues, questioning suspects, speaking to the local police, he uses his powers of observation which he uses to draw conclusions about its relevance- he deduces and uses the method of drawing hypothesis's and he also uses his imagination.

Overall, I think that Arthur Conan Doyle's stories which make typical of detective genre are the villains, the victims, clues, red herrings, suspects

and the detective. The detective always uses his intelligence to solve the mystery by producing theories and thoughts of what had happened and then going to look for clues to test them. He does this with the help of Dr Watson and experiences which he has, he uses them to work out facts about the character from what he sees.

In Arthur Conan Doyle's stories, the villain is either arrested or dies at the end like in *The Speckled Band*, Dr Roylott dies at the end the victim is always stressed and worried about the unsolved mystery. The detective gathers clues to help solve the unsolved mystery. The suspects are used to make the audience think. These features make the story much more interesting.