

Chapter 1

A Snapshot of Sherlock Holmes and the Stories That Made Him Famous

In This Chapter

- ▶ Debunking the erroneous popular image of Sherlock Holmes
 - ▶ Tracing Holmes the creation and Doyle the creator
 - ▶ Reviewing all the stories that comprise the Holmes canon
 - ▶ Looking at Holmes's enduring popularity
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Try this experiment: Ask ten random people if they know who Sherlock Holmes is. Odds are they'll say yes. Then ask what they know about him. Chances are they'll say he's a detective, he has a friend named Watson, he smokes a pipe, and he wears a funny hat. Some will even think he was *real*. What's even more amazing is that if you were to try this experiment on every continent on the planet, you'd likely get the same results, demonstrating the grip that Sherlock Holmes has on the popular culture, even to this day.

Sherlock Holmes: Not Who You Think He Is

The popular image of Sherlock Holmes is largely made up of clichés that have become associated with the Great Detective over the years. Some of these do come from the actual character as written in the stories, while others have come from the countless adaptations on TV and in the movies. But if you're approaching the Holmes stories for the first time, you may be surprised at the person you find. Sherlock Holmes is not who you think he is. (And neither is his friend, Dr. Watson!)

Pop culture portrayal versus portrayal in the stories

The common picture of Holmes is of a square-jawed, well-off, middle-aged, stuffy do-gooder who lives with an elderly, slightly befuddled roommate in a quaint London apartment. Both men while away their time until Scotland Yard appears with a particularly baffling case of murder that's so mysterious it has the official police force stumped. (Well, this bit about the official police force being stumped *does* happen a lot in the stories!) Holmes comes off as a bit of a prig — stern, cold, scientific, and humorless. And always running around in an odd cape and funny hat.

Surprise! That is *not* Sherlock Holmes.

Who you meet in the stories is a young man (both Holmes and Watson are in their 20s when they meet) who's poor enough to need a roommate and untidy and strange enough that he has trouble finding one. Sherlock is musical (he plays the violin and loves to attend concerts), occasionally funny, and, as becomes clear over time, a loyal friend.

In the fashion department, it's top hat and frock coat for Sherlock, not a checked cape and hunting cap! Holmes has a dark side as well — impatience, vanity, depression, drug abuse, and an antisocial streak that keeps him from making many friends or forming romantic relationships. These are all personality traits that help define the real Sherlock Holmes.



In other words, you won't find the cartoon image of Holmes in the stories. Instead, you meet a character with virtues *and* vices, strengths *and* weaknesses, and professionally, successes *and* failures. It's a complex personality that has kept fans coming back to his adventures over and over for more than a century.

Why the confusion

As the famous poet T. S. Eliot once said when speaking of Holmes, it's hard "not to slip into the myth of his existence." And in fact, many people think Holmes was a real, living, historical person. So great is the impression he made, first on his readers and then on the popular culture, that thinking he actually lived is an understandable mistake. Of course, the myth of Sherlock's reality has been helped along by a number of factors.

His fans treated him as though he were real

From the moment Sherlock Holmes appeared in his first short story in 1891, fans began treating the detective as real. For instance, when readers learned that Holmes had died in “The Final Problem,” a public outcry of shock and grief ensued that equaled, and even exceeded, that which would occur at the death of real-life persons. Young businessmen in London even wore black armbands in mourning.

He’s been written about as if he were real

Since the early 1900s, fans and scholars have perpetuated the myth by writing about Holmes — his adventures, his methods, his world — as if he were real. The best example of this phenomenon is *The Baker Street Journal*, a quarterly publication by the Baker Street Irregulars, the oldest and most prestigious Sherlock Holmes society in the world. (For more on the Baker Street Irregulars and other Holmes organizations, go to Chapter 15.)

The Baker Street Journal was founded in 1946, and it’s devoted to publishing essays, commentary, and research papers that “play the game,” a term Sherlockians use for pretending that the stories are factual accounts of real persons and events. However, there have been quite literally tens of thousands of similar publications: books, articles, journals — the list is endless!

He still inspires the pros

To this day, Holmes continues to be held up as a role model in police departments around the world. He is cited in countless academic and professional articles and journals. College classes in forensic science, logic, chemistry, and scientific method, using Holmes as a model, are taught every day around the world.

For a fictional character, he gets a lot of kudos!

Imagine you’re on vacation in Switzerland and you come to a small village in the Alps, and there outside an inn is a life-sized statue of Sherlock Holmes! Nearby is a plaque that reads, “At this fearful place, Sherlock Holmes vanquished Professor Moriarty, on 4 May 1891.” The fact is that Holmes has more plaques, statues, and museums erected in his honor than most real-life historical figures!

- ✓ In the Criterion Bar in London’s Piccadilly Circus, a plaque commemorates the place where Dr. Watson met his friend Stamford, who went on to introduce Watson to Holmes.



- ✓ A chemical laboratory in London's St. Bartholomew's Hospital has a plaque identifying it as the location where Holmes and Watson first met.
- ✓ On London's Baker Street, where Holmes lived, stands a museum dedicated to him. The museum not only re-creates his rooms down to the smallest detail but also has a blue plaque (see Figure 1-1).

For decades, the actual 221b Baker Street address was occupied by Abbey House, a financial institution. Abbey House opened for business on this location in 1932 and immediately began to receive letters addressed to Sherlock Holmes. Holmes received so much mail that Abbey hired a secretary to answer it, and the letters continue to arrive to this day, with many people asking for Holmes's help in solving a mystery!

Blue plaques are historical markers used in many European countries that are installed in public places to commemorate a link between the location and a famous person or event. It's believed that Holmes's residence is the only fictional location to receive such an honor.

- ✓ You can find more statues of Sherlock Holmes than of his creator, Arthur Conan Doyle! Commemorative statues of the Great Detective can be found in London, England (see Figure 1-2); Edinburgh, Scotland; Meiringen, Switzerland; Moscow, Russia; and Karuizawa Town, Japan.



Figure 1-1:
Sherlock
Holmes
Museum
with blue
plaque.

Photo courtesy of Steven Doyle.

Figure 1-2:
Sherlock
Holmes
statue
outside
Baker
Street Tube
station,
London.



Photo courtesy of Steven Doyle.

Given all these accolades and commemorative markers, what's a person to think?

Though Sherlock Holmes may seem more real to people than many actual historical figures, he is, of course, a work of fiction. But as a work of fiction, his identity has eclipsed the author of the stories. More people know of the creation than the creator. For even more details on Holmes, head to Chapter 2.

Arthur Conan Doyle: Holmes's Creator

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born in 1859 in Edinburgh, Scotland. His father was Charles Altamont Doyle, an artist and painter. His mother was Mary Foley. As a boy, his main interests were sports and storytelling. He attended private schools and entered Edinburgh University medical school in 1876. He completed work on his doctor's degree in 1885 and entered into private practice.

In his early career, in order to both pass the considerable time between infrequent patients and earn a little extra money, he began writing. He had a number of short stories published anonymously and wrote several novels of questionable quality. His main interests were in historical fiction and the supernatural. He didn't set out to be a mystery or detective fiction writer. When Doyle wrote the first Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*, he had no idea he had created the defining character of his career.



In medical school, Doyle was influenced and inspired by his professors, especially Dr. Joseph Bell. Bell was a master of diagnosis using observation and deduction. It was from Bell that Doyle learned the Sherlock Holmes method. Doyle's medical training and career were to be major sources of writing inspiration throughout his life, including the Holmes stories. For more on Doyle, the Holmes stories, and his other works, head to Chapter 3.

Sherlock Holmes's debut

In 1887, Doyle got the idea to write a detective story and to model the main character after his old medical school professor, Dr. Bell. He gave it the lurid title of *A Study in Scarlet*. This was the first Holmes story, and despite being the best thing Doyle had written up to this time, very few publishers were interested. Finally, out of desperation, he accepted an offer from Ward, Lock & Co. to purchase the copyright for £25. The novel appeared complete in 1887, in the seasonal publication *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. It was a great story, but to be honest, it just sort of came and went without a lot of hoopla.

That might have been it for Sherlock, but then, in 1890, Holmes made his second appearance in the novel *The Sign of the Four*. This exciting tale was commissioned by the publisher of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, an American publication. (That's right, Sherlock Holmes owes his continued existence to an American.) *The Sign of the Four* did a little better than *A Study in Scarlet*, but bigger and better things were right around the corner for both Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes.

Changing the way stories were serialized

The Victorian era was a golden age of magazine publishing, especially from the 1860s to the first decade of the 1900s. These reasonably priced monthly publications appealed to a wide range of readers and featured essays, stories, poetry, and serialized novels.

Many famous authors serialized novels over a number of months in a magazine. For example, most of Charles Dickens's best-known works appeared as serialized installments in magazines before they were published in book form. The problem with this was that if readers missed an issue, they were lost!



In 1891, Doyle had an idea that revolutionized the way fiction was published in magazines. Instead of having a continuing story appear over numerous issues, Doyle decided to have a continuing *character* appear in a series of short stories. If you missed an issue, hey, no big deal — the character would be back the next month in a brand new, self-contained adventure. The character Doyle chose for this innovation was Sherlock Holmes, and he placed the stories in a new monthly called *The Strand Magazine*.

Holmes was an overnight sensation! Subscriptions to the magazine went through the roof. At the end of the first 12 stories, *The Strand* asked for more. Doyle in turn asked for more money and got it. And so it went until Holmes made Doyle a very rich man.

It turned out to be a long, profitable relationship. The first story appeared in *The Strand* in 1891, and the last one appeared in 1926. In England, new Holmes stories always made their first appearance in *The Strand*, and the detective and magazine are permanently linked.

The Canon of Sherlock Holmes

When Doyle wrote the very first Holmes story, he thought that was it. He never dreamed that he'd be writing stories about this character his entire life. The detective's enormous popularity and the love/hate relationship that Doyle had with the character (Doyle felt that Sherlock's popularity obscured his more important writing, which goes to show that an artist isn't always the best judge of his own work!) ultimately compelled him to write 60 official adventures of Sherlock Holmes. These 60 stories are what fans and scholars call *the canon*.

So, what kind of stories are they?

If you're unfamiliar with the Holmes adventures, you may think that every story finds Holmes and Watson solving a baffling case of murder. This *is* the case for many famous detectives who came in Sherlock's wake. Let's face it — murder sells.



However, this *isn't* the case with Holmes. Oh, the canon has plenty of dead bodies — in fact, 263 dead bodies and 119 murders! But despite the body count, a large percentage of the tales are *not* murder mysteries. For example, only 4 of the 12 stories from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* have anything to do with murder. In fact, many of the tales have, in the end, nothing criminal about them at all. They're often more accurately described as *detective stories* than *murder mysteries*.

The Holmes stories can be classified into different categories. Following are some of these categories, and many tales actually fall into more than one:

- ✔ **The “locked-room” mystery:** This is a type of detective story in which a murder is committed under impossible conditions, usually in a place that the murderer couldn’t have entered or left. Although he isn’t given enough credit for it, Doyle was one of the earliest innovators of this classic subgenre of crime fiction. Examples of this type include “The Speckled Band,” “The Empty House,” and *The Valley of Fear*. (For more on locked-room mysteries, see the nearby sidebar.)
- ✔ **Crime prevention:** Often, Holmes’s participation in a case results in crime prevention instead of crime detection. Whether thwarting a bank robbery, preventing a kidnapping and forced marriage, or stopping the embezzlement of money, Holmes is up to the task. “The Red-Headed League,” “The Solitary Cyclist,” and “The Three Garridebs” are examples of this type of tale.
- ✔ **Espionage:** Several stories find Holmes working on behalf of the British government, often recovering stolen state secrets, and in one unique instance, actually going undercover as a spy. These tales include “The Naval Treaty,” “The Second Stain,” “The Bruce-Partington Plans,” and “His Last Bow.”
- ✔ **Missing persons:** In real life, private detectives are often hired to find missing persons. It was the same for Sherlock Holmes. In “A Case of Identity,” it was a missing bridegroom. In “The Noble Bachelor,” it was a missing bride! Other missing-persons cases include “The Man with the Twisted Lip” and “The Priory School.”
- ✔ **Weird tales:** Some of the stories just defy categorization! They aren’t exactly crime stories, and they aren’t really mysteries. Instead, although they have elements of adventures and romance, they’re really just weird tales. “The Yellow Face,” “The Crooked Man,” and “The Veiled Lodger” are clearly in the realm of weird tales.

The long and the short of it

The Sherlock Holmes canon contains 4 novels and 56 short stories. Both forms have their strengths and weaknesses, but Doyle generally excelled at the short story format. He once explained that it took as much effort to concoct the plot of a short story as it did a novel, and it’s clearly easier for him to sustain a tale over fewer pages. Three of the four novels have a lengthy flashback that explains the back story and motivation of the adventure at hand. Of course, there’s an exception to every rule! The greatest of all Holmes adventures, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, is a novel.

Masters of the locked-room tale

The “locked-room” mystery is perhaps the best-known subgenre of crime fiction. Arthur Conan Doyle wasn’t the first author to write this style of story, nor was he the last. Some of his fellow locked-room authors include

- ✓ **Edgar Allan Poe:** Poe’s tale “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841) is a classic of the locked-room style. When a mother and daughter are brutally murdered, investigators discover that the room is locked from the inside and is too high up for window access. So who — or what — could have come down the chimney?
- ✓ **Dorothy Sayers:** Mystery writer (and Holmesian) Dorothy Sayers introduced a locked-room-style mystery into her Lord Peter Wimsey series in *Have His Carcase* (1932). When a man is found with his throat cut on a rock, which is located in the middle of a smooth stretch of sandy beach, authorities are baffled!
- ✓ **John Dickson Carr:** Carr was one of the masters of the locked-room story. For instance, in “The Case of the Constant Suicides” (1941), a dead man is found in a Scottish castle at the top of the tower. All the evidence indicates that he was alone when he died and points away from suicide.
- ✓ **Ellery Queen:** The great Ellery Queen wrote a fair number of locked-room mysteries, including *The King is Dead* (1951). A millionaire locked in a room far away from his brother is found shot dead. But there’s no gun in the room!

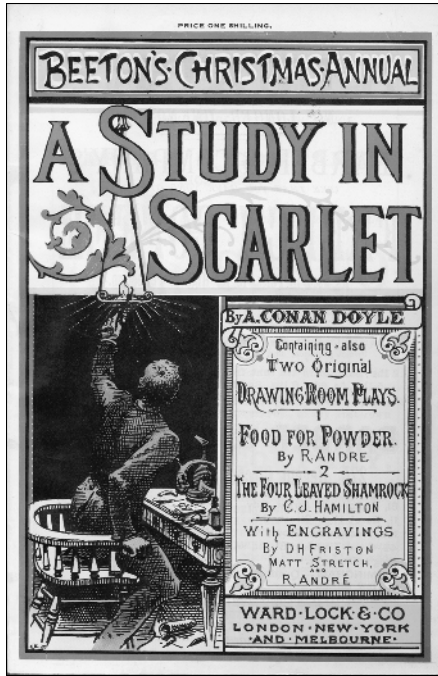
A Study in Scarlet

First published in 1887 by Ward, Lock & Co. in *Beeton’s Christmas Annual* (see Figure 1-3), this novel is the first Sherlock Holmes story. In this landmark adventure, Dr. John H. Watson is looking for a roommate, and when he’s introduced to Sherlock Holmes, their immortal partnership begins. As they take up residence together, Watson begins to wonder about the weirdo he has moved in with. What’s with the mysterious chemical experiments? The endless parade of unusual visitors? What is his line of work? The mystery involves a case of revenge, murder, and obsession that dates back 30 years to the Mormons in Salt Lake City, Utah. Not a bad start!

The Sign of (the) Four

On August 30, 1889, Joseph M. Stoddart, the managing editor of the American publication *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*, held a remarkable dinner party. The guests included Oscar Wilde and Arthur Conan Doyle, two British authors whom Stoddart greatly admired and wanted to publish in his magazine. Wilde went on to contribute *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Doyle wrote *The Sign of the Four*, the second Sherlock Holmes novel.

Figure 1-3:
Beeton's
Christmas
Annual,
1887.



In Doyle's sophomore effort, readers discover Holmes's drug abuse ("What is it today?" asks Watson in disgust. "Morphine, or cocaine?"), meet the Baker Street Irregulars (the ragtag group of street urchins Holmes uses as his eyes and ears around London), and head off on a treasure hunt featuring bloodhounds, savage natives, blowguns, and a boat chase on the Thames. Great stuff!



The Sign of the Four first appeared in the February 1890 edition of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. In America it was called *The Sign of the Four*, but in Britain the title was shortened to *The Sign of Four*. However you title it, it's a classic.

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

The Adventures collects the first 12 Sherlock Holmes short stories into one volume. These tales were originally published serially in *The Strand Magazine* from July 1891 to June 1892. *The Adventures* was published in book form in 1892.

The 12 stories in this collection are

- ✓ **"A Scandal in Bohemia":** Hired to thwart a public scandal involving the king of Bohemia, Holmes encounters the beautiful Irene Adler, who, as he puts it, "has a face that a man might die for."

- ✓ **“The Red-Headed League”**: This story begins with high comedy but ends with a dangerous vigil in a darkened bank vault full of French gold.
- ✓ **“A Case of Identity”**: Holmes uncovers a heartless deception in a case he solves without ever leaving his rooms.
- ✓ **“The Boscombe Valley Mystery”**: It’s murder! Here Holmes uses his powerful forensic crime-scene investigation skills (see Figure 1-4).
- ✓ **“The Five Orange Pips”**: Not a shining moment for Sherlock as he underestimates the power and reach of the Ku Klux Klan.
- ✓ **“The Man with the Twisted Lip”**: Holmes uses one of his greatest tools — his pipe — to work out the solution to this case. It’s a real “three pipe problem”!
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle”**: The only Christmas-time tale in the canon is a tour de force of detection as Holmes traces the journey of a stolen jewel from a hotel room to the crop of a Christmas goose.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Speckled Band”**: One of the spookiest and best-known tales in the canon. What killed Julia Stoner as she lay in bed behind her locked bedroom door? What was the mysterious whistle in the night? And what did she mean by, “It was the band! The speckled band”? This story is one of the canon’s best locked-room mysteries!

Figure 1-4:
Sherlock
Holmes
examin-
ing clues
in “The
Boscombe
Valley
Mystery.”



Illustration by Sidney Paget, The Strand Magazine.

- ✔ **“The Adventure of the Engineer’s Thumb”**: One of the grisliest Holmes stories relates Victor Hatherley’s unfortunate encounter with a meat cleaver.
- ✔ **“The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor”**: Holmes investigates the case of a jilted groom and a missing bride. But is there a crime?
- ✔ **“The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet”**: The theft of a priceless piece of jewelry allows Holmes to once again display his amazing crime-scene investigation skills.
- ✔ **“The Adventure of the Copper Beeches”**: Definitely a weird tale. Why must the new governess obey her employer’s strange rules, like wearing a blue dress and cutting her hair? And why must she never go into a certain wing of the house?

The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

This is the second collection of Holmes short stories, originally published in 1894 in *The Strand Magazine*.

- ✔ **“Silver Blaze”**: An investigation into a stolen racehorse and a murdered trainer leads to a surprising suspect!
- ✔ **“The Adventure of the Cardboard Box”**: This story of marital infidelity and murder was considered too racy for the American edition of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* and didn’t appear in book form in America until *His Last Bow*.
- ✔ **“The Adventure of the Yellow Face”**: Another strange tale with little detection and no crime. And yet, its surprising conclusion pays off.
- ✔ **“The Stockbroker’s Clerk”**: Holmes cracks a case of early identity theft and narrowly prevents a serious crime.
- ✔ **“The Gloria Scott”**: The normally secretive Sherlock suddenly opens up and tells Watson about his very first case, an adventure that took place during college.
- ✔ **“The Musgrave Ritual”**: Holmes must have been in a chatty mood as he follows “The Gloria Scott” with yet another tale of college-age mystery solving.
- ✔ **“The Adventure of the Reigate Squire”**: While recovering from a nervous breakdown, Holmes investigates a strange burglary that led to murder.
- ✔ **“The Adventure of the Crooked Man”**: The mysterious death of Col. Barclay unearths a terrible, heartbreaking secret.
- ✔ **“The Resident Patient”**: Holmes looks into the hanging death of a wealthy but paranoid man in another crime-scene investigation tour de force.

- ✓ **“The Greek Interpreter”**: This thrilling, horrifying tale of kidnapping and murder introduces readers to Holmes’s brother, Mycroft.
- ✓ **“The Naval Treaty”**: A stolen military treaty shakes the British government and afflicts another man with “brain fever.” It also offers a surprising glimpse of the religious views of the Great Detective.
- ✓ **“The Final Problem”**: This tale, which introduces Professor James Moriarty, the “Napoleon of crime,” has a shocking conclusion that few readers can forget. “It is with a heavy heart” that Watson relates the death of Sherlock Holmes.



The Hound of the Baskervilles

This supposedly posthumous story is the greatest of all Sherlock Holmes adventures. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is a Gothic masterpiece of suspense, atmosphere, and horror. Originally serialized in *The Strand Magazine*, it appeared in book form in 1902. It tells the tale of the Baskervilles, who live on the moor and are haunted by a spectral hound, “the hound from hell.” When the current resident of Baskerville Hall dies under mysterious circumstances, Watson is sent to protect the new heir from harm. With mysterious neighbors, an escaped convict on the loose, and a glowing hellhound, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is consistently named by fans as their favorite Holmes story of all.

The Return of Sherlock Holmes

When Arthur Conan Doyle killed Sherlock Holmes at the end of “The Final Problem,” he immediately felt intense pressure to bring him back to life. He held out for ten years, but he finally gave in. *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* is the collected short-story adventures published after the Great Detective’s return from the dead. It appeared in 1905.

The stories in this volume include

- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Empty House”**: Holmes has been dead for three years when a lonely Watson becomes interested in the mysterious death of the young Ronald Adair. But then this classic locked-room mystery becomes secondary to a shocking revelation: Sherlock Holmes lives!
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Norwood Builder”**: Unrequited love and revenge drive this story of a retired builder who is murdered immediately upon making out his will.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Dancing Men”**: This story has it all: mysterious codes, gangsters, a love triangle, murder, and one of Holmes’s greatest crime-scene investigations.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist”**: Violet Smith is being followed. Having no one to turn to, she appeals to Holmes for advice. This creepy story of a young woman being stalked by bicycle on a lonely country lane is a classic.

- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Priory School”:** Kidnapping, murder, and high society result in a case that ends with Holmes becoming a very rich man.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of Black Peter”:** The solution to one of the grisliest murders in the canon (the victim is pinned to the wall with a harpoon!) hinges on the location of a blood drop.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton”:** In an effort to save the reputation of an innocent woman, Sherlock resorts to housebreaking as he battles the “king of the blackmailers.” Prepare yourself for the shocking climax!
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Six Napoleons”:** Why is someone smashing statues of Napoleon all around London? It looks like madness, but the Great Detective sees something else.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Three Students”:** While doing research in one of England’s “great university towns,” Holmes is asked to look into an academic cheating scandal. Which of the three students is guilty?
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez”:** When a bedridden scholar’s personal assistant is murdered, Holmes solves the case by smoking cigarettes and looking into the killer’s dropped eyeglasses.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter”:** This missing-persons case begins by looking like foul play, but it ends in brokenhearted tragedy.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Abbey Grange”:** A husband is dead and his wife is tied to a chair. It’s a clear case of home invasion. *Or is it?*
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Second Stain”:** This is one of the greatest cases in Sherlock’s career! It has everything — blackmail, stolen state secrets, a jealous mistress, and murder. It also has one of the strangest crime-scene clues of all time!

The Valley of Fear

The Valley of Fear is the fourth and final Sherlock Holmes novel. Originally serialized in *The Strand Magazine*, it was published in book form in 1915. As in *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of the Four*, the story is divided into two parts. The first part is a classic locked-room mystery. How did someone get into John Douglas’s room and blow his head off with a sawed-off shotgun, especially when the drawbridge across his moat was up?

The second half reveals the back story, which is based on the real-life criminal activities of the Molly Maguires and their downfall at the hands of a Pinkerton Agency detective in Pennsylvania. And, oh yeah . . . it also has Professor Moriarty.

His Last Bow

Originally published in 1917 during World War I, *His Last Bow* collects into one volume the stories published between 1908 and 1913, plus the title story, “His Last Bow,” which was published in 1917. The American edition of the book had an additional tale, “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,” which had been suppressed years before.

The seven stories are

- ✓ **“The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge”**: When Mr. John Scott Eccles accepts an invitation from his new friend to visit Wisteria Lodge, little does he know what he’s getting himself into. By morning, his host is dead, and he’s a wanted man.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Red Circle”**: A murderous secret society and a young, persecuted couple are at the heart of this story. When a young woman spurns the advances of a Mafia chief, her husband takes extraordinary action to protect her.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans”**: How did the body get on the underground tracks, and how did the stolen submarine plans get in his pocket? Missing state secrets, murder, espionage, and another stint of Holmesian housebreaking can be found in this adventure.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Dying Detective”**: Sherlock Holmes is dying! Having contracted a deadly infectious disease while working on a case, the Great Detective is feverish and delirious. He sends Watson to summon the only man in London who can cure him. But will he come?
- ✓ **“The Disappearance of Lady Francis Carfax”**: “One of the most dangerous classes in the world,” says Holmes, “is the drifting and friendless woman. She is the inevitable inciter of crime in others.” So it is with Lady Francis Carfax.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Devil’s Foot”**: When an entire family is driven insane, the village priest is sure it’s the work of the devil. Sherlock Holmes isn’t so sure.
- ✓ **“His Last Bow”**: Set in 1914 on the eve of World War I, this case of espionage and spying is, chronologically, the very last adventure that Holmes and Watson work on together. (Stories that Doyle wrote after “His Last Bow” were set in a time period before it.)

The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes

The last volume of Sherlock Holmes adventures was published in June 1927. It collects the final 12 short stories, which Arthur Conan Doyle sporadically wrote over the last decade of his life. By the time *Case-Book* was published,

Holmes had been appearing for 40 years! The struggle Doyle had in sustaining the stories is evident; some of these adventures are a bit strained. But others are as good as anything he ever wrote.

The final adventures of Sherlock Holmes are

- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone”:** This story was adapted from a stage play by Doyle called *The Crown Diamond*. Holmes uses several tricks, including a wax dummy and a record player, to extract a confession and recover a stolen jewel. It’s definitely the weakest story in the canon.
- ✓ **“The Problem of Thor Bridge”:** Holmes makes a fine recovery in one of the *best* stories in the canon. It’s another locked-room mystery, except this time the room is a bridge over a pond. There’s a body with a bullet in the brain, but is it murder? Or suicide? If so, *where’s the weapon?*
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Creeping Man”:** This story has a dash of science fiction in it. When an aging professor begins treating himself with a mysterious serum, he undergoes a startling transformation!
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire”:** When Bob Ferguson finds his mysterious South American wife sucking blood from the neck of their infant son, he fears he’s married to one of the undead.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Three Garridebs”:** What begins as an odd story of misdirection ends with terror for Holmes when Watson is shot.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Illustrious Client”:** When the daughter of a member of high society falls under the spell of the “Austrian murderer” Baron Gruner, an “illustrious client” hires Holmes to prevent the marriage. This dark tale takes Holmes and Watson into the underbelly of London life in a story of violence, sexual abuse, and revenge.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Three Gables”:** Mrs. Maberley receives an unusual offer to purchase her house (the buyer wants *everything*). Thus begins another adventure of Sherlock Holmes.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier”:** James Dodd wasn’t worried when he didn’t hear from his friend Godfrey for over six months. But when he’s told that Godfrey is taking a cruise around the world, he doesn’t buy it, especially when he sees Godfrey looking in his window at night! This is the first of two stories told by Holmes instead of Watson.
- ✓ **“The Adventure of the Lion’s Mane”:** In this, the second story told by Holmes, he has retired to a cottage on the Sussex Downs near the coast. One morning a neighbor staggers up from the beach and dies, crying out, “The lion’s mane!” Holmes finds that the man’s back is covered with what looks like whip marks. What killed the man, and what do his dying words mean?

Arthur Conan Doyle's favorite stories

In 1927, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle made a list for *The Strand Magazine* of what he believed were the best Sherlock Holmes short stories.

- ✓ "The Adventure of the Speckled Band"
- ✓ "The Red-Headed League"
- ✓ "The Adventure of the Dancing Men"
- ✓ "The Adventure of the Final Problem"
- ✓ "A Scandal in Bohemia"
- ✓ "The Adventure of the Empty House"
- ✓ "The Five Orange Pips"
- ✓ "The Adventure of the Second Stain"
- ✓ "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot"
- ✓ "The Adventure of the Priory School"
- ✓ "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual"
- ✓ "The Adventure of the Reigate Squire"

- ✓ **"The Adventure of the Retired Colourman":** "Burglary has always been an alternative profession, had I cared to adopt it," remarks Sherlock Holmes. It's a skill he turns to in solving a case of a missing wife and her lover.
- ✓ **"The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger":** When summoned by a landlady to check out a mysterious tenant who never shows her face, Holmes finds himself in the role of confessor instead of detective. "The Veiled Lodger" is one of the most tragic tales in the canon.
- ✓ **"The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place":** Sir Robert Norberton has everything riding on his horse winning a race. Winning will save him from financial ruin. But why is he visiting an ancient family crypt at night? And how do you explain the human bone in the furnace? Sherlock's love of dogs holds the key to solving this case.

Three Centuries and Counting



Sherlock Holmes debuted in 1887. The staying power of this eccentric, moody, drug-abusing Victorian bachelor is amazing. Holmes's popularity now spans three centuries. Other famous literary detectives, and even pop culture icons, have come and gone, but Holmes is still going strong.

His esteem has never really waned. At times, of course, his light has seemed to shine brighter than it normally does, but from the moment Holmes debuted in *The Strand Magazine* to this day, his popularity has manifested itself in an astonishing number of ways.

Foreign translations

Sherlock Holmes is well-known worldwide, so it comes as no surprise that the stories have been translated into over 80 languages. These include Arabic, Chinese, Czechoslovakian, Egyptian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Portuguese, Russian, Sinhalese, Spanish, Swedish, and Urdu, as well as more than 60 others. In addition to spoken-language translations, the canon has also been rendered in Braille, Morse code, and Pitman shorthand!

Dramatic adaptations

Almost as soon as the stories appeared in *The Strand Magazine*, dramatic portrayals of the Great Detective began to emerge. Today, Sherlock Holmes is one of the most dramatized characters in history. His dramatic exploits have appeared in every entertainment medium, be it stage, screen, TV, radio, and now even video games!

- ✓ **Stage adaptations:** The earliest dramatic adaptations of Holmes appeared on the stage. The first known play was appropriately titled *Sherlock Holmes* and was written by an enterprising man named Charles Rogers. It was 1893, and Arthur Conan Doyle had just killed Sherlock Holmes. Rogers realized that a mourning public would love to see its hero alive on the stage, and he dashed off his melodrama — the first of literally hundreds.
- ✓ **Sherlock on the silver screen:** Holmes was also there at the dawn of the motion picture era. In 1900, the American Mutoscope & Biograph Company produced the very first Sherlock Holmes film. *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* had a running time of 30 seconds and was shown in Mutoscope machines in arcades. Since then, there have been over 260 motion pictures featuring Holmes.
- ✓ **Sherlock on TV:** In addition to a stellar career on the big screen, Holmes was the first fictional character adapted for TV. In 1937, the American Radio Relay League broadcast an adaptation of “The Three Garridebs” from New York City’s Radio City Music Hall. Since then, Holmes has been a TV staple, appearing in both long-running series and made-for-TV movies in Canada, Czechoslovakia, England, Poland, Russia, the United States, and other countries around the world.
- ✓ **Radio:** From the golden age of radio up through the modern era, Holmes has appeared in over 700 radio adaptations.

Sherlock Holmes societies

Perhaps the most obvious sign of the amazing popularity of Sherlock Holmes is the phenomenon of clubs and literary societies devoted to his adventures. To date there are over 260 Sherlock Holmes societies around the world, including ones in such countries as Australia, Denmark, France, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland!

Continuing adventures

So what happens when you finish the final Holmes story? Well, many people read them again! But others turn to the groaning bookshelves of Sherlockian *pastiche* (works that deliberately imitate the style of Doyle's Holmes stories) and *parody* (works that poke fun at the character and the stories) that make up the continuing adventures of Sherlock Holmes. (And some even go on and write their own. . . .)



No other character in history has appeared in as many stories written by other authors as has Sherlock Holmes. This phenomenon started early, with the first known parody appearing in 1893. What began as a trickle is now a tidal wave, as new stories appear every year, literally by the hundreds.

Whether in the form of pastiche or parody, or maybe somewhere in between, devoted followers often need a fix of extra-canonical Sherlock!

