
SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Born: Edinburgh, Scotland; May 22, 1859

Died: Crowborough, East Sussex, England; July 7, 1930

PRINCIPAL SHORT FICTION

Mysteries and Adventures, 1889 (also as *The Gully of Bluemansdyke, and Other Stories*)

The Captain of Polestar, and Other Tales, 1890

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, 1892

My Friend the Murderer, and Other Mysteries and Adventures, 1893

The Great Keinplatz Experiment, and Other Stories, 1894

The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes, 1894

Round the Red Lamp: Being Fact and Fancies of Medical Life, 1894

The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard, 1896

The Man from Archangel, and Other Stories, 1898

The Green Flag, and Other Stories of War and Sport, 1900

The Adventures of Gerard, 1903

The Return of Sherlock Holmes, 1905

Round the Fire Stories, 1908

One Crowded Hour, 1911

The Last Galley: Impressions and Tales, 1911

His Last Bow, 1917

Danger!, and Other Stories, 1918

Tales of Terror and Mystery, 1922 (also as *The Black Doctor, and Other Tales of Terror and Mystery*)

Tales of the Ring and Camp, 1922 (also as *The Croxley Master, and Other Tales of the Ring and Camp*)

Tales of Twilight and the Unseen, 1922 (also as *The Great Keinplatz Experiment, and Other Tales of Twilight and the Unseen*)

Three of Them, 1923

Last of the Legions, and Other Tales of Long Ago, 1925

The Dealings of Captain Sharkey, and Other Tales of Pirates, 1925

The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes, 1927

The Maracot Deep, and Other Stories, 1929

The Final Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, 1981 (revised and expanded 2001)

Uncollected Stories: The Unknown Conan Doyle, 1982

OTHER LITERARY FORMS

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's more than one hundred published works include novels, autobiography, political treatises, plays adapted from his fiction, and works on spiritualism, as well as his short stories, for which he is best known. His character Sherlock Holmes has been the subject of innumerable films, plays, and radio scripts and has become the archetype of the conventional detective hero.

ACHIEVEMENTS

While Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was not the first to write short stories featuring a detective with great analytical powers, and while he acknowledged his debt to such writers as Edgar Allan Poe and Émile Gaboriau, who had written tales of intelligent amateur detectives solving crimes through logical deduction, in Sherlock Holmes Doyle created a character who has entered the popular imagination like no other. Sherlock Holmes is perhaps the most famous and popular character in detective fiction, if not in all modern fiction. Doyle's stories were a strong influence on writers such as Ellery Queen, Agatha Christie, John Dickson Carr, and the many others who create tightly constructed puzzles for their detectives to solve with clearly and closely reasoned analysis. Societies such as the Baker Street Irregulars have sprung up around the world to study Doyle's stories, and the name Sherlock Holmes has become synonymous with deduction, while "Elementary, my

dear Watson” is a catchphrase even among those who have never read the stories.

BIOGRAPHY

Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was born in Scotland of devout Irish Catholic parents and educated by the Jesuits in England and Austria. He graduated from the medical school at the University of Edinburgh and first went to sea as a ship’s surgeon on a whaler to the Arctic, later on a West African passenger liner. He opened a medical office in Southsea, England, and because of a dearth of patients, began writing to fill his leisure time and to supplement his income. He had previously published a few short stories anonymously, and in 1887 completed *A Study in Scarlet*, a novelette in which Sherlock Holmes, as the central character, appears for the first time. Urged on by his American editor, he wrote *The Sign of Four* (1890; also pb. as *The Sign of the Four*) and a series of Sherlock Holmes stories which appeared in *Strand Magazine*. The popularity of Holmes enabled Doyle to give up the practice of medicine, but since the author desired to be known as a historical romancer, Holmes was “killed off” in a struggle with his archenemy, Professor Moriarty, in the story “The Final Problem.” Ten years later, yielding to pressure from his publishers and the public, he resurrected Holmes, first in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901-1902, serial; 1902, book) and later in another series of Holmes short stories. Doyle was knighted in 1902 for his political service and principally for his publications defending the conduct of the British in the Boer War. Having left Catholicism, he turned to spiritualism and devoted the rest of his life to psychic research and propagandizing his beliefs.

ANALYSIS

In spite of his desire to be acknowledged as a writer of “serious” literature, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is destined to be remembered as the creator of a fictional character who has taken on a life separate from the literary works in which he appears. Sherlock Holmes, as the prototype of almost all fictional detectives, has become a legend not only to his devotees but also to those who have not even read the works in which he appears, the detective being immortalized by reputation and through the media of films, television, and radio.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Library of Congress)

Doyle claimed that the character of Sherlock Holmes was based on his memories of Dr. Joseph Bell, a teacher of anatomy at the University of Edinburgh, whose diagnostic skills he had admired as a student of medicine. Bell, however, disclaimed the honor and suggested that Doyle himself possessed the analytical acumen that more closely resembled the skills of Sherlock Holmes. Regardless of the disclaimers and acknowledgments, there is little doubt that Doyle owed a large debt to Edgar Allan Poe and other predecessors in detective fiction, such as Émile Gaboriau and François-Eugène Vidocq. Doyle records that he was familiar with *Mémoires de Vidocq, chef de la police de Sûreté, jusqu’en 1827* (1828-1829; *Memoirs of Vidocq, Principal Agent of the French Police Until 1827*, 1828-1829) and had read Gaboriau’s *Monsieur Lecoq* (1880). It is the influence of Poe, however, that is most in evidence in the character of Holmes and in many of his plots.

Poe’s character C. Auguste Dupin bears remarkable similarities to the Sherlock Holmes character. Both Holmes and Dupin, for example, are eccentrics; both