

**“It is quite a three pipe problem,
and I beg that you won’t speak to
me for fifty minutes.”**

**“The Red-Headed League” a Sherlock
Holmes Short Story**

SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE VERY FIRST CASE

**TEACHERS’
PACK
2025/2026**



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NOTES FOR TEACHERS

The play aims to be first and foremost an entertainment.

In writing and rehearsing the play we went through the novels and the short stories; as well as many of the films featuring Holmes and Watson.

The plot is original but compiled from various sources. All the cases and all the deductions we use appear in the books. They are exaggerated, sometimes modified and changed in their context but they are all taken from the original source.

However; it must be stressed; it is a comedy, the principal aim of the play is to be an entertainment. We aim to make you smile and laugh. It has been put together to be enjoyed.

And we hope you do.

You don't have to know a thing about Sherlock Holmes to enjoy the tale as all thrillers and detective stories largely follow the same plots, with the same types of characters in them Sherlock Holmes was simply one of the first. He's also the most frequently performed in film, on television or in the theatre and the books are never out of print.

The essential thing to prepare the students for our performances is to make them aware of the premise of the play, what it is, what it is about, and who the central characters are.

Anything else in this pack is a bonus. We've added a few activities that connect thematically to the performance and do get your students thinking about the themes. However it is not indispensable that you do them. The premise and the characters and the style, perhaps, are.

The actors are well trained to adapt their performance to the specific audience they have in front of them.

WHAT'S THE PLAY ABOUT? (ONLY FOR TEACHERS)

Sherlock's First Case, is a comedic and adventurous play that reimagines Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson's early days as detectives. It blends mystery, humor, and action, showcasing Holmes' deductive brilliance and Watson's loyal but often exasperated companionship.

The story unfolds as Holmes and Watson tackle a series of interconnected cases involving disguises, deception, and danger, ultimately leading them to confront the enigmatic villain Moriarty, who may not be who they initially expect.

The narrative begins with Holmes and Watson chasing a disguised nun. This sets the tone for a series of thrilling encounters, including cryptic notes, coded messages, and perilous confrontations. The duo travels across England, Belgium, and Scotland, encountering eccentric characters like Mevrouw Van Damned, her twin sister Mevrouw Goossens, and the sinister McMackenzies, who run a restaurant-hotel-butcher shop with a dark secret. The play is filled with physical comedy, and dramatic twists.

The story culminates in a revelation that challenges Holmes' assumptions about Moriarty.

Overall, it is a playful homage to the Sherlock Holmes canon, blending classic detective tropes with modern humor and theatrical flair. It explores themes of identity, loyalty, and the pursuit of truth, all while keeping the audience entertained with its fast-paced action and witty exchanges.

ACTIVITY 1: WHO IS SHERLOCK HOLMES?

On the board, write:

“Sherlock Holmes is...”

“Sherlock Holmes does...”

“Sherlock Holmes usually...”

“Sherlock Holmes never...”

Ask students to brainstorm words or ideas that come to mind (e.g., detective, pipe, London, mystery, Watson, logic, etc.).

Show a few short images or clips from Holmes adaptations (BBC’s Sherlock, Elementary, or a classic film).

Discuss briefly:

- What makes Sherlock Holmes unique as a detective?
- Why do you think his stories are still popular today?
- What do you expect from a modern stage adaptation?

ACTIVITY 2: HOLMES & DOYLE

PREPARATION FOR THE ACTIVITY:

First brainstorm what the students know about Sherlock Holmes.

Either ask them and write their suggestions on the board; or hand round pens and they write them on the board themselves.

If they don't know the specific word (e.g. deerstalker hat) let them draw it on the board.

Check everyone knows everything that is on the board.

Hand out the brief passage on Holmes (on the following page) and ask the students to complete the missing words.

You can either supply them with the list of words or not.

ANSWERS:

Sherlock Holmes is a fictional detective created by Scottish author and physician Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. A brilliant London-based "consulting detective", Holmes is famous for his astute logical reasoning, his ability to take almost any disguise, and his forensic science skills to solve difficult cases.

Holmes, who first appeared in publication in 1887, was featured in four novels and 56 short stories. The first story, A Study in Scarlet, appeared in Beeton's Christmas Annual in 1887. The character grew tremendously in popularity with the beginning of the first series of short stories in Strand Magazine in 1891. The stories cover a period from around 1880 up to 1914.

All but four stories are narrated by Holmes's friend and biographer, Dr. John H. Watson.

SHERLOCK HOLMES IS A FICTIONAL DETECTIVE [REDACTED] BY SCOTTISH AUTHOR AND PHYSICIAN SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE. A [REDACTED] LONDON-BASED "CONSULTING DETECTIVE", HOLMES IS FAMOUS [REDACTED] HIS ASTUTE LOGICAL REASONING, HIS ABILITY [REDACTED] TAKE ALMOST ANY DISGUISE, AND [REDACTED] FORENSIC SCIENCE SKILLS TO SOLVE DIFFICULT CASES.

HOLMES, [REDACTED] FIRST APPEARED IN PUBLICATION IN 1887, [REDACTED] FEATURED IN FOUR NOVELS AND 56 SHORT STORIES. THE FIRST STORY, A STUDY IN SCARLET, APPEARED [REDACTED] *BEETON'S CHRISTMAS ANNUAL* IN 1887. THE CHARACTER GREW [REDACTED] IN POPULARITY WITH THE BEGINNING OF [REDACTED] FIRST SERIES OF SHORT STORIES IN *STRAND MAGAZINE* IN 1891. THE STORIES COVER A PERIOD FROM [REDACTED] 1880 UP TO 1914.

ALL BUT FOUR STORIES ARE NARRATED [REDACTED] HOLMES'S FRIEND AND BIOGRAPHER, DR. JOHN H. WATSON.

WHO	TREMENDOUSLY	CREATED	HIS
WAS	THE	BRILLIANT	BY
TO	IN	FOR	AROUND

ACTIVITY 3: ARE THESE RIGHT?

Have your students decide if the following questions are true or not, individually or in pairs.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Sherlock Holmes' first novel was a huge success and was printed in a magazine called The Strand.

No, it's false. It was a huge flop

2. There would be no Sherlock Holmes books if Oscar Wilde hadn't been a fan and encouraged Doyle to continue with him.

Yes, most probably true as Wilde encouraged Doyle after the failure of his first novel

3. Sherlock Holmes even made the ridiculous hat, the Deerstalker", popular.

Yes and no. The character never wore one but the illustrator drew him in one.

4. He is the most filmed fictional character in the world.

Yes the most purely human character but no not the most fictionalised one; that is Dracula.

5. Holmes didn't deduct, he observed.

He did observe more and technically his reasoning is called abductive reasoning but, basically it's true. He did both.

6. The Sherlock Holmes Museum is at his fictional address in 221B Baker Street in London.

Yes and no. The address is given as 221B Baker Street but this is between numbers 237 and 241.

7. There probably wouldn't have been the Jurassic Park films without Conan Doyle.

True, they come from Doyle's book The Lost World originally

Then let them check their answers on the website they come from, Interesting Literature

<https://interestingliterature.com/2013/05/ten-facts-about-sherlock-holmes/>

*** Who is the first in the class to get all the questions right?**

TEXT FROM THE WEBSITE:

1. The first Sherlock Holmes novel was something of a flop. The detective made his debut in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), written by a twenty-seven-year-old Doyle in just three weeks. Famously, Doyle was inspired by a real-life lecturer of his at the University of Edinburgh, Dr Joseph Bell, who could diagnose patients simply by looking at them when they walked into his surgery; the other important influence on the creation of Sherlock Holmes was Edgar Allan Poe's fictional detective, C. Auguste Dupin, two of whose adventures we include in our pick of Poe's best short stories. Doyle wrote the book while he was running a struggling doctor's surgery down in Portsmouth. The novel was rejected by many publishers and eventually published in Beeton's Christmas Annual (named after the husband of Mrs Beeton, of the book of cookery and household management). It didn't sell well, and more or less sank without trace.

2. The second Sherlock Holmes novel was the result of a dinner party with Oscar Wilde. One person who had admired the first novel was the editor Joseph Stoddart, who edited Lippincott's Monthly Magazine. He convinced Doyle, at a dinner party in 1889, to write a second novel featuring the detective, for serialisation in the magazine. Wilde, who was also present, also agreed to write a novel for the magazine – his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which appeared in 1890, the same year as *The Sign of the Four*, Doyle's novel.

3. Sherlock Holmes didn't wear a deerstalker. Much. The famous image of Holmes wearing a deerstalker hat is a product of the celebrated images which accompanied the short stories, which appeared in the Strand magazine from 1891 (beginning with the wonderful story 'A Scandal in Bohemia'). It is when the stories began to appear that Sherlock Holmes became a worldwide sensation. Sidney Paget, who drew the illustrations, had Holmes wearing a deerstalker when the detective went into the country to investigate mysteries at country houses and in small rural villages, but most people think of the detective as always donning the hat when off to investigate a case.

4. Sherlock Holmes is the most-filmed fictional character. According to IMDb, Holmes has appeared in 226 films and been played by dozens of different actors since the advent of cinema in the late nineteenth century. It's hardly surprising that the sleuth's popularity inspired a raft of other writers to create rivals to Sherlock Holmes.

Sherlock Holmes is not the most-filmed fictional character. That is, not if you include non-humans (or partial humans). Dracula has been filmed more times than the great sleuth, at 239 times, but since Dracula is part-man, part-vampire, Holmes is the most-filmed fully human character.

5. Sherlock Holmes didn't make deductions. At least, not most of the time. Instead, and if we want to be technically accurate, he used the logical process known as abduction. The difference between deductive and abductive reasoning is that the latter is based more on inference from observation, where the conclusion drawn may not always necessarily be true. However, in deduction, the conclusion drawn from the available data is always necessarily true. But then again, since Holmes's reasoning always seems to be correct, perhaps it is deduction after all!

6. The Sherlock Holmes Museum both is and isn't at 221B Baker Street. Although the museum in London bears the official address '221B', in line with the celebrated address from the stories, the museum's building lies between 237 and 241 Baker Street, making it physically – if not officially – at number 239.

7. There's more to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle than Sherlock Holmes. Much more, in fact. Among other achievements, his legal campaigning led to the establishment of the Court of Criminal Appeal. He was knighted for his journalistic work during the Second Boer War, not for his achievements in fiction, law, or medicine. He wrote historical novels (such as *The White Company* and *Sir Nigel*, set during the fourteenth century) which he prized more highly than his detective fiction. Winston Churchill agreed, and was a devoted fan of the historical novels. Doyle also wrote science fiction romances, such as *The Lost World* (1912), which would inspire Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park*, and, subsequently, Steven Spielberg's film (the sequel to the novel and film being named, in homage to Doyle, *The Lost World*). Doyle also took up legal causes himself: read Julian Barnes's novel *Arthur and George* for his most famous real-life case.

ACTIVITY 4: THE MAIN CHARACTERS.

THE STUDENTS HAVE

1. A LIST OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN OUR PLAY.
2. THE CHARACTER'S OCCUPATION OR SITUATION IN LIFE.
3. A SENTENCE FROM THE PLAY THAT EACH CHARACTER SAYS.

The students have to put the sentence, occupation and the description with the right character.

ANSWERS:

SHERLOCK HOLMES

The world's first consulting detective: great powers of observation.

"We must strike quickly.

There is no time to lose.

We must go and find this brewery.

And the house.

That's where our adventure begins."

DR. JOHN WATSON

The friend and colleague of Sherlock Holmes. He writes about their adventures for a magazine.

"Not quite yet, Sherlock

Remind me. What are we looking for again?"

ANGUS MCMACKENZIE

The Scottish co-owner of the McMackenzie and Todd Hotel – Restaurant – Butchers shop

"Restaurant isn't open yet.

I've brought you a wee whisky.

Just need to mix in our...special herbs".

MORIARTY

Sherlock Holmes' dangerous antagonist who is as intelligent as Sherlock is.

"No, it isn't fair.

Thing is I don't want to play.

I want to win.

So, bye -bye Sherlock.

So sorry. Such a pity"

MW VAN DAMMED

A socialite from Belgium who is Holmes first real case

"Well, it all started a month ago.

We were at our house in the country.

It was a beautiful evening; I was wearing my new spring outfit; it had some gorgeous, green ribbands with two bows...here..."

MRS HUDSON

The landlady of Sherlock and Watson; an opinionated but loyal friend

"I'm not their servant...who do they think they are? Tea. They want it, they don't ..."

MW GOOSENS

Mw Van Damned's partner in the incident.

"Mevrouw Goossens, I'm Godelieve's sister.

Her twin sister. You can probably see the resemblance".

EILIDH MCMACKENZIE

The Scottish co-owner of the McMackenzie and Todd Hotel – Restaurant – Butchers shop

"Of course. It's been years and years now since we had...an overnight visitor.

Now it's just the restaurant and the shop...and our special pies.

You should try a pie. Really...tasty they are".

MARY HARDY

A major threat to Sherlock Holmes who reminds him of someone else

"I'm just a simple Belfast girl at bottom".

ACTIVITY:

Here you have: The name of the main characters, a brief description of who they are and a sentence they say in the play.

Put the the description and the speech with the right character:

MAIN CHARACTER	WHO THEY ARE	WHAT THEY SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sherlock Holmes• Dr. John Watson• Angus McMackenzie• Moriarty• Mw Van Damned• Mrs Hudson• Mw Goossens• Eilidh McMackenzie• Mary Hardy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Scottish co-owner of the McMackenzie and Todd Hotel – Restaurant – Butchers shop• Sherlock Holmes' dangerous antagonist who is as intelligent as Sherlock is.• A socialite from Belgium who is Holmes first real case• The landlady of Sherlock and Watson; an opinionated but loyal friend• A major threat to Sherlock Holmes who reminds him of someone else• The world's first consulting detective: great powers of observation.• The Scottish co-owner of the McMackenzie and Todd Hotel – Restaurant – Butchers shop• Mw Van Damned's partner in the incident.• The friend and colleague of Sherlock Holmes. He writes about their adventures for a magazine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Restaurant isn't open yet. I've brought you a wee whisky. Just need to mix in our...special herbs".• "I'm not their servant...who do they think they are? Tea. They want it, they don't ..."• "Well, it all started a month ago. We were at our house in the country. It was a beautiful evening; I was wearing my new spring outfit; it had some gorgeous, green ribbands with two bows...here..."• "I'm just a simple Belfast girl at bottom".• "Not quite yet, Sherlock. Remind me. What are we looking for again?"• "You! Who are you looking at? Well? What? Want me to do something really clever? A deduction?"• "Of course. It's been years and years now since we had...an overnight visitor. Now it's just the restaurant and the shop...and our special pies. You should try a pie. Really...tasty they are".• "We must strike quickly. There is no time to lose. We must go and find this brewery. And the house. That's where our adventure begins."• "No, it isn't fair. Thing is I don't want to play. I want to win. So, bye - bye Sherlock. So sorry. Such a pity"• "Mevrouw Goossens, I'm Godelieve's sister. Her twin sister. You can probably see the resemblance".

ACTIVITY 5: OUT OF CURIOSITY.

THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS 1908

A FEW THINGS THAT WERE GOING ON AT THE TIME THE PLAY'S OPENING SCENE IS SET

Jan 12th - A long-distance radio message is sent from the Eiffel Tower for the first time.

Jan 13th - French pilot Henry Farman is 1st European to fly roundtrip

Jan 21st - New York City regulation makes it illegal for a woman to smoke in public

Jan 24th - General Baden-Powell starts Boy-Scouts

Feb 1st - King Carlos I of Portugal and his son, Prince Luis Filipe are killed in Terreiro do Paco, Lisbon.

Feb 12th - New York to Paris car race (via Alaska & Siberia) begins in New York City.

George Schuster wins after 88 days behind the wheel

Feb 27th - Oklahoma became the 46th star on the USA flag

Feb 29th - Dutch scientists produce solid helium

Mar 9th - Inter Milan is founded.

Apr 20th - 12th Boston Marathon won by Tom Morrissey of NY in 2:25:43.2

Apr 24th - Mr & Mrs Jacob Murdock become 1st to travel across US by car, they leave

Los Angeles in a Packard & arrive in New York City in 32days -5hours -25minutes

Apr 27th - 4th modern Olympic games opens in London

May 10th - 1st Mother's Day observed (Philadelphia)

May 12th - Wireless Radio Broadcasting is patented by Nathan B. Stubblefield

May 14th - 1st passenger flight in an airplane

May 21st - 1st horror movie (Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde) premieres in Chicago

May 31st - Miss Pottelsberghe de la Pottery is 1st airplane passenger (Belgium)

Jun 10th - 1st flying club, Aeronautical Society of New York, opens

Jun 12th - Lusitania crosses Atlantic in record 4 days 15 hours

Jun 15th - World congress for Woman's rights opens in Amsterdam

Jul 9th - CHU (Christian Historic Union) Dutch political party forms

Jul 10th - H Kamerlingh Onnes makes helium liquid (-269°C)

Jul 19th - Feyenoord soccer team forms in Rotterdam

Jul 26th - Predecessor of the FBI is created by the Department of Justice

Jul 30th - Around the World Automobile Race ends in Paris

Aug 12th - Ford builds the first Model T.

Aug 14th - The first beauty contest is held in Folkestone, England.

Aug 17th - Projection in Paris of the very first cartoon, Fantasmagorie realized by Émile Cohl.

Aug 22nd - Henri Cartier-Bresson, France, photographer born.

Sep 16th - Carriage-maker, William Durant, founded General Motors Corp

Sep 19th - Gustav Mahler's 7th Symphony, premieres in Prague

Oct 1st - 1st Dutch electric railway in use (Rotterdam-The Hague)

Oct 3rd - The Pravda newspaper founded by Leon Trotsky, Adolph Joffe, Matvey Skobelev in Vienna.

Oct 6th - Austria annexes Bosnia & Herzegovina

Oct 18th - Belgium annexes Congo Free State

Oct 20th - King Leopold II sells Congo to Belgium

Nov 14th - Albert Einstein presents quantum theory of light

Dec 5th - 1st football uniform numerals used (University of Pittsburgh)

Dec 28th - Earthquake strikes Messina, Italy (nearly 80,000 died)

Dec 29th - Patent granted for a 4-wheel automobile brake, Clintonville, Wisconsin

WHICH EVENT SURPRISES YOU MOST? WHY?

WHAT WERE THE 3 MAIN NEWS STORIES IN YOUR COUNTRY; AREA; TOWN IN 1908?

ACTIVITY 6: SHERLOCK AND WATSON HAVE “LOST” SOME OF THEIR LINES.

Students look at and listen to a conversation between Holmes and Watson, taken from the play. They answer the questions on the students’ page.

Then ask the class if they have “learned” anything or not about what might happen in the play? General thoughts and feedback.

ANSWERS:

Conversation between Holmes and Watson

Sherlock

And that last case you wrote about.
I didn’t even solve it. It wasn’t interesting.
Why?

Watson

This is the most popular story yet, Holmes!

Sherlock

Do you think I want to be popular?

Watson

Yes! Because you like all the work it brings with it.
Don’t deny it!

Sherlock

And this?

Watson

Now I didn’t do that.
You wore it yourself!

Sherlock

Once!
I put it on one time because it was so cold.
And now there are drawings in every single story!
Of me. Always in this coat!

Watson

The people like the coat.
And anyway. It makes you look romantic.
It’s...dashing.

Sherlock

It’s hot, it’s uncomfortable, it’s ridiculous!
Oh, hang it up, John.
Out of my sight.

ACTIVITY 7: WORD SOUPS

Below are three word soups. Give students a certain time limit and see how many words they can find in that time. Check that they know what they mean. You can ask them as a further activity use the words in a sentence.

SHERLOCK HOLMES WORD SOUP – CEFR B1 (INTERMEDIATE)

Step into foggy London — can you find the clues before Holmes does? Words may go across, down, or diagonally, forwards or backwards!

Find these words: **detective, mystery, London, Watson, clue, suspect, evidence, hat, street, solve, foggy, police, smart, case, friend**

D E T E C T I V E R M Y
L O N D O N W A T S O N
F O G G Y C L U E F R I
S T R E E T P O L I C E
S M A R T V S O L V E Q
E V I D E N C E S U S P
H A T F R I E N D C A S

SHERLOCK HOLMES WORD SOUP – CEFR B2 (UPPER INTERMEDIATE)

At 221B Baker Street, the smallest clue could solve the greatest mystery. Words may go in any direction! Find these words: **deduction, evidence, investigation, culprit, disguise, motive, crime, genius, violin, BakerStreet, clue, logic, mystery, partner, adventure, observation**

B A K E R S T R E E T M
D E D U C T I O N O B S
A D V E N T U R E L O G
V I O L I N M O T I V E
E V I D E N C E G E N I
S C R I M E D I S G U I
N V E S T I G A T I O N
P A R T N E R C L U E R

ACTIVITY 7: WORD SOUPS

SHERLOCK HOLMES WORD SOUP – CEFR C1 (ADVANCED)

Only the sharpest minds can spot every clue in this grid of mystery and logic. Words may go forwards, backwards, vertically, or diagonally.

Find these words: ***deduction, observation, analysis, hypothesis, intellect, forensic, disguise, narrative, ScotlandYard, intuition, chemistry, deception, resolution, adversary, enigma, ratiocination***

R	A	T	I	O	C	I	N	A	T	I	O
D	E	D	U	C	T	I	O	N	H	Y	P
I	N	T	U	I	T	I	O	N	C	H	E
S	C	O	T	L	A	N	D	Y	A	R	D
A	N	A	L	Y	S	I	S	F	O	R	E
N	A	R	R	A	T	I	V	E	D	E	C
E	N	I	G	M	A	R	E	S	O	L	U
I	N	T	E	L	L	E	C	T	A	D	V

ACTIVITY 8: SHERLOCK'S CLIENT

FOR LEVEL: CEFR C1 (ADVANCED)

This is a role-play exercise. It enhances their creativity, speaking skills, and understanding of Holmes' world.

Put your class in pairs. One student will be Sherlock and the other will be the client. Then they will swap roles.

OBJECTIVE:

- Practise creative speaking and storytelling.
- Use vocabulary from detective fiction.
- Develop questioning and deduction skills.
- Encourage students to use: Past tenses (for recounting events), Modal verbs (must, might, could). Descriptive adjectives (mysterious, terrified, suspicious, elegant), Question forms (Who was there? What did you see? When did it happen?)

INTRODUCTION

It's London, 1895. You are standing nervously at 221B Baker Street. You have come to ask the world's greatest detective, Sherlock Holmes, to help you with a strange and worrying mystery.

INSTRUCTIONS

1) Form pairs: one student plays Sherlock Holmes, the other plays the client. (After 5–7 minutes, they can swap roles.)

2) The client must tell Holmes:

- Who they are (name, occupation, a few personal details)
- What strange or suspicious thing has happened
- What clues they have noticed
- Who they suspect or fear
- What they want Holmes to do

3) The detective (Holmes) must:

- Ask logical questions to gather details
- Take notes (optional)
- End with a short deduction or hypothesis about what might be happening

EXTRA (OPTIONAL)

After both partners play Holmes once, they can write a short "case report" (like Watson's journal):

"Today, a nervous Belgian baker named Mr. Dupont arrived at Baker Street. He reported strange footprints leading from his shop to the canal..."



+34 937682758



www.englishtheatrecompany.com/



info@englishtheatrecompany.com

