

Reading comprehension

Sherlock Holmes, the world's best-known detective

By Moya Irvine, Read On July 2015, slightly adapted



(0) Sherlock Holmes fans are already looking forward to¹ 2016, because there's going to be a whole new season of the BBC's Sherlock series, which shows the master of detective transported into the 21st century. Although the BBC series is set in² the present day, the detective is still basically the Sherlock Holmes his fans love: an eccentric master of deduction³.

The original Holmes appeared⁴ in (1) 60 works – four novels and five volumes of short stories – written by Conan Doyle between 1887 and 1927. Although his detective lives in London, the author himself was a Scot, born in Edinburgh (2) in 1859.

(3) Arthur Conan Doyle trained as a doctor at Edinburgh University, where he met Joseph Bell, a doctor with an incredible ability⁵ to diagnose diseases⁶ by observing details. He also liked (4) to show off and guess a person's job by observing tiny⁷ details most people would miss. Bell was the inspiration for Holmes.

After training, Arthur Conan Doyle worked as a doctor on a ship before opening a practice in Portsmouth. He had completed⁸ his first stories as a medical student and carried on writing while trying to start his career in medicine.

He achieved⁹ his breakthrough as an author in 1886, with 'A study in Scarlet', the novel that introduced (5) Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson. The pair are a model for many later detective story characters. There is often one brilliant character who makes all the clever deductions, and a loyal, less intelligent partner.

He may not be as intelligent as Holmes, but Dr John Watson plays a very important role: he is the narrator. He is with Holmes all the time, sees the same clues and events, but unlike the detective, he can't make any deductions from them. Watson is like the reader. He is also a warmer, more human character than the logical and unemotional master detective.

Despite the success¹⁰ of Sherlock Homes, who shared¹¹ a flat with Dr Watson at 221b Baker Street, smoked a pipe, played the violin and took cocaine, Conan Doyle got bored of writing these stories and decided to kill his detective. In 'The Final Problem', written in 1893, Holmes dies in a fight with his arch-enemy Professor Moriarty at the Reichenbach Falls.

Fans were shocked. Some people wore black armbands; others wrote letters to the author, begging¹² him to bring Holmes back. But Arthur Conan Doyle stayed firm until

1901, when he produced 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'. Holmes went on to solve many more cases until 1927, three years before the author died.

The new Holmes is different in many ways. This Sherlock is (6) young, cool and good-looking. He rushes around London taking taxis instead of horse-drawn carriages¹³.

Dr Watson is thoroughly up-to-date as well: he tells us about his adventures in a blog.

The 21st-century Moriarty is younger, scarier and crazier.

If you want to appreciate the witty dialogue, try to watch the series in English on DVD or one of the streaming services.

Annotations: 1 **to look forward to** – sich auf etw. freuen; 2 **to be set in** – spielen in ; 3 **deduction** – Schlussfolgerung, Ableitung; 4 **to appear** – erscheinen; 5 **ability** – Fähigkeit; 6 **disease** – Krankheit; 7 **tiny** – winzig; 8 **to complete** – fertigstellen; 9 **to achieve** – erreichen; 10 **success** – Erfolg; 11 **to share** – teilen; 12 **to beg sb** – jmd anflehen; 13 **horse-drawn carriage** – Pferdekutsche.

**1. Are the following statements true, false or not given in the text?
Indicate your answers by using (+) / (-) / (?) and correct the wrong
statements in one English sentence each. [10 points]**

- a) A new Sherlock Holmes series can be seen on BBC this year.
.....
- b) Holmes lived in Edinburgh.
.....
- c) Holmes died in Switzerland.
.....
- d) Sir Arthur Conan Doyle died in 1924.
.....
- e) Most Sherlock Holmes stories are short stories.
.....
- f) Holmes died aged 68.
.....
- g) Conan Doyle was a doctor.
.....
- h) Sherlock Holmes drank lots of whisky.
.....

_____points

**2. Answer the questions about the text in complete English sentences.
[14 points]**

a) What is Sherlock Holmes' biggest strength? [1]

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.....

b) What are Holmes and Watson a role model for? [1]

.....
.....

c) Mention four differences between Holmes and Watson? [4]

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.....
.....

d) Why did Conan Doyle let Sherlock Holmes die? [1]

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.....

e) How did the readers react after Sherlock's death? [2]

.....
.....
.....

f) How long did it take Conan Doyle to revive Holmes? [1]

.....
.....

g) What is new in the modern BBC series? Mention four aspects. [4]

.....
.....
.....
.....

_____ **points**

Use of English

3. Ask for the underlined words in the text, forming complete English questions. [6 points]

Example: (0) Sherlock Holmes' fans ... → Who is looking forward to 2016?

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)
- (6)

4. Simple Present, Present Progressive, Present Perfect or Past Simple? Underline the correct verb forms. [12 points]

- a) Arthur Conan Doyle *writes/is writing/has written/wrote* four novels.
- b) *Do you see/Are you seeing/Have you seen/Did you see* Sherlock yesterday?
- c) Where are your parents? – They *watch/are watching/have watched/watched* TV in the living room. Can't you hear them?
- d) Listen! Somebody *plays/is playing/has played/played* the piano.
- e) 'Have you got my key?' – 'No, I *give/am giving/have given/gave* it back to you.'
- f) Bob isn't at home very often. He *goes/is going/has gone/went* out a lot.
- g) I *try/am trying/have tried/tried* to find a job at the moment. It's very difficult.
- h) She's very tired this morning. She *doesn't sleep/isn't sleeping/hasn't slept/didn't sleep* very well last night.
- i) 'What time *does Ann phone/is Ann phoning/has Ann phoned/did Ann phone?*' – 'About an hour ago.'
- j) 'Can you drive?' – 'No, I *never drive/am never driving/have never driven/never drove* a car but I want to learn.'
- k) I saw Dr Watson at the station when I was going to work this morning but he *doesn't see/isn't seeing/hasn't seen/didn't see* me.
- l) Where *are you/are you being/have you been/were you born?*

_____points

**5. Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verb in brackets.
Use either present, past, present perfect or future. [14 points]**

A Talking Frog

A long time ago an older gentleman (play) a round of golf when suddenly his ball (land) in a shallow pond. As he (try) to get the ball back, he (discover) a frog who, to his great surprise, (start) to speak! "Kiss me, and I (change) into a beautiful princess, and I (be) yours for a week." He (pick) up the frog and (put) it in his pocket. As he (continue) to play golf, the frog (repeat) its message. "Kiss me, and I (be) yours for a whole month!" Finally, the old man (turn) to the frog and (say), "At my age, I'd rather have a talking frog!"

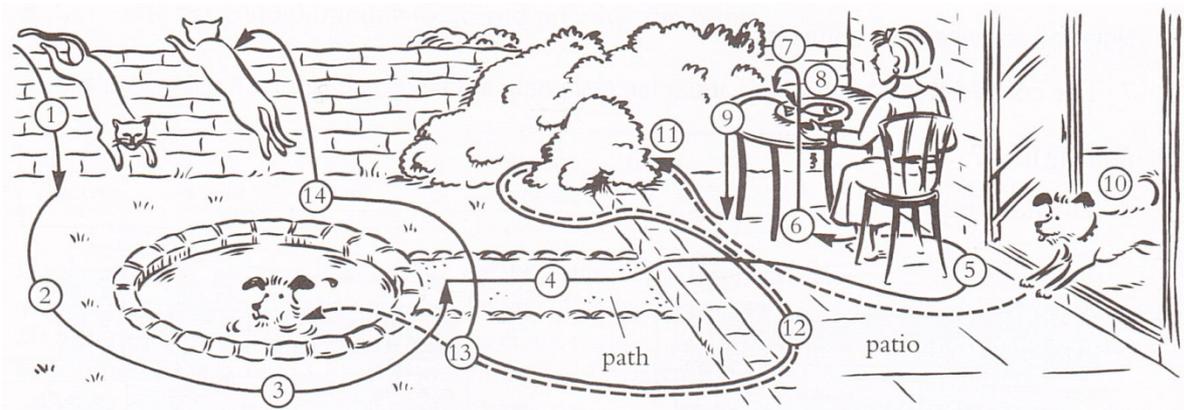
_____points

6. Complete the text about Antarctica. Put in much / many / a lot (of) / few / little. Each of them must be used at least once. [5 points]

Antarctica is a snow-covered continent. The average temperature at the South Pole is -51°C. plants or animals can live on the land – it is too cold for them. The animal life is found on and in the sea. There are scientists from different countries who live and work on special bases in Antarctica. On midsummer's day there is daylight for 24 hours and so during this period tourist ships and planes come to see this strange land. But in the winter is daylight for months which means that the sun cannot be seen It must be a terrible place during the winter.

_____points

7. Prepositions: Look at the journey of the neighbour's cat Felix and complete the story with some of the following prepositions (above / across / after / along / around / at / back / below / between / into / off / on / opposite / out of/ over / past / through / under / until / up).
[7 points]



Felix jumped (1)..... the wall and walked (2)..... the grass. Then he went (3)..... the pond and (4)..... the path. He walked (5)..... Sue's chair and (6)..... the table. Suddenly he jumped (7)..... the table and took the fish which was (8)..... Sue's plate. He jumped (9)..... the table with the fish. Then the dog, Rosie, came (10)..... the house and chased the cat. They both ran (11)..... the bushes and (12)..... the patio. Felix stopped suddenly but Rosie fell (13)..... the pond. Felix looked at her and then jumped (14)..... the wall again, still holding the fish.

_____ **points**

8. Mixed sentences. Underline and correct any mistakes in the following sentences or make a tick (✓) if the sentence is correct. [7 points]

- a) I have got a American passport.
- b) She hasn't any brothers or sisters.
- c) This are my books.
- d) Tony has got much more money as I have. I have only little.
- e) We needn't to go now, we can wait.
- f) She mustn't forgets the vocabulary for tomorrow.
- g) Watson is warmer, younger and intelligenter than Holmes.

_____ **points**

Total points: _____/75