

**MAYOR OF LONDON**

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**THE LONDON CURRICULUM  
ENGLISH KEY STAGE 3**

# **MYSTERIOUS METROPOLIS**



# THE LONDON CURRICULUM

## PLACING LONDON AT THE HEART OF LEARNING

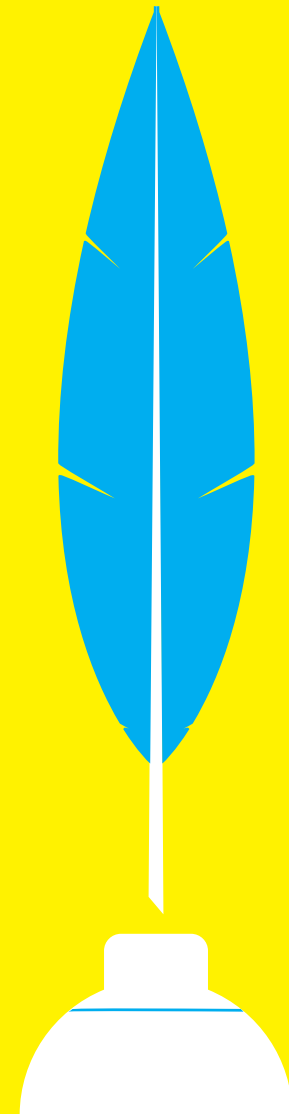
The capital is the home of innovations, events, institutions and great works that have extended the scope of every subject on the school curriculum. London lends itself to learning unlike anywhere else in the world. The London Curriculum aims to bring the national curriculum to life inspired by the city, its people, places and heritage.

To find out about the full range of free resources and events available to London secondary schools at key stage 3 please go to [www.london.gov.uk/london-curriculum](http://www.london.gov.uk/london-curriculum).

### English in the London Curriculum

London is one of the most written about cities in the world, has inspired countless authors and poets and has been a centre of innovation in theatre since Elizabethan times. London Curriculum teaching resources aim to support English teachers in helping their students:

- ♦ **DISCOVER** literature inspired by the city or central to the city's literary life
- ♦ **EXPLORE** the city known to the London writer and the London theatres where texts come to life
- ♦ **CONNECT** their learning inside and outside the classroom to develop their own descriptive and creative writing.



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## MYSTERIOUS LONDON OVERVIEW



Students will learn about London's rich 19th century tradition of Gothic and detective fiction. They will draw on this knowledge and their experience of visiting a relevant London site to inform their creative writing and comparisons with contemporary detective fiction.

ST PAULS FROM THE BREWERY BRIDGE, 1872  
Gustave Doré © Museum of London

## KEY STAGE 3 NATIONAL CURRICULUM

This unit addresses the requirements of the new key stage 3 national curriculum. It provides specific opportunities for students to:

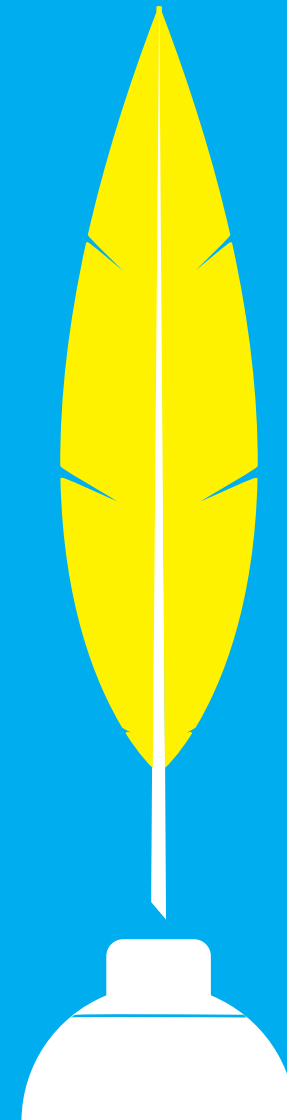
- ♦ develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently
- ♦ understand increasingly challenging texts through: learning new vocabulary; making inferences and referring to evidence in texts; and knowing and drawing on purpose, audience and context of writing to support comprehension
- ♦ read critically through: knowing how language, including figurative language, vocabulary choice, text structure and organisational features, presents meaning; studying setting, plot, and characterisation, and the effects of these; making critical comparisons across texts and studying a range of high quality authors.

In meeting some of the requirements of the national curriculum, this teaching unit contributes to the national curriculum's aims for key stage 3 students, which include aiming to ensure that all students:

- ♦ acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- ♦ appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage
- ♦ write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences.

# DISCOVER

In this section your students will read extracts from a range of 19th century Gothic and detective stories. Students will consider the importance of London as their chosen setting for their stories and understand the traditional conventions used in Gothic and detective fiction to shape the setting, characters and narrative.



## LESSON 1

# DECIPHERING GENRES



### THE BIG IDEA

The purpose of this lesson is to understand the basic conventions of Gothic and detective fiction, two genres that grew to prominence in the 19th century.



### LESSON OBJECTIVES

All students will understand that Gothic and detective fiction are two different genres that were popular in the 19th century. All students will be able to identify features of each.

Most students will be able to recognise some overlap between the traditional features of Gothic and detective fiction.



### RESOURCES

- ♦ **Resource 1.1:** Key words and explanations – matching exercise
- ♦ **Resource 1.2:** Extract 1
- ♦ **Resource 1.3:** Extract 2

### KEY LANGUAGE

Please refer to Resource 1.1 for a list of key language.

## LESSON 1: DECIPHERING GENRES

### SETTING THE SCENE



VARNEY THE VAMPIRE or  
THE FEAST OF BLOOD,  
1845-1847  
© Museum of London



HOLMES WAS  
WORKING HARD  
OVER A CHEMICAL  
INVESTIGATION, C 1895  
© Museum of London



VICTORIA  
EMBANKMENT, 1872  
© Museum of London

#### Gothic fiction

Gothic literature flourished in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, though its influence has been wide-reaching, especially in Victorian ghost stories and in contemporary mystery stories. Gothic writing is connected to Romanticism, a movement in art and literature, which aimed to provoke a strong emotional response and sense of awe. The features of traditional Gothic fiction are well known today. They are recognised for depicting decaying and ruined castles and graveyards, vampires and ghouls, superstitious characters and romantic lovers.

#### Detective fiction

Detective fiction became very popular in the 19th century. Although also concerned with mystery, in contrast to Gothic fiction, this genre was associated with a growth of interest in education, science and, in particular, advances in medicine. The crimes of the detective novel can be solved by logical deduction. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was one of many popular authors of the time, including also Edgar Allen Poe and Wilkie Collins.

#### Victorian London

London in the 19th century was growing rapidly and was a hub of international trade and Empire. Infamous crimes on its smog-shrouded streets, such as the attacks of 'Jack the Ripper', created a fascination and fear of the city's dark side. The era saw the emergence of forensic science and the Metropolitan Police Force. At the same time, a yearning for a romantic image of a bygone age was also generating a Gothic architectural revival and shaping the design of dramatic London landmarks such as the Palace of Westminster.



## LESSON 1: DECIPHERING GENRES

### ACTIVITIES

#### STARTER

Display the key words and explanations on Resource 1.1 (page 9). Read through each one. Give students ten minutes to match and jot down the key words with their explanations in their writing books.

#### Differentiation:

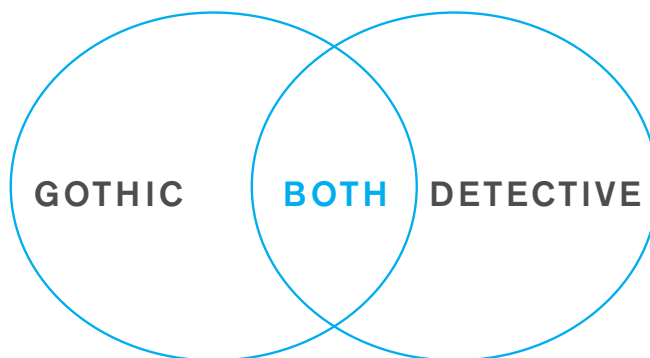
Teachers may decide to give students printed copies of the key words and explanations to stick into their books.

#### MAIN

Ask students to decide whether the key word is one that they associate with Gothic fiction or detective fiction. Are there any tricky key words? Are there any key words that may fit into both genres?

#### Differentiation:

Use your interactive whiteboard or a projector to display the words. You may want to use a Venn diagram to organise them.



As a class, read through the extracts of Resources 1.2 and 1.3 (pages 10 and 12). You may want to choose individuals to read aloud with you. Resource 1.2 is an extract from chapter two of the novel *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. Resource 1.3 is an extract from *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Don't reveal the sources of these extracts to students until the end of the activity.

In pairs, ask students to identify examples of the key words in each of the extracts or other words that they think are associated with Gothic or detective fiction. Encourage students to annotate their hand-outs with relevant key words and comments. Model this for the students, focusing in particular on highlighting short passages of text that provide examples of each of the key words. Share students' answers with the class.

With a show of hands, ask students to identify which extract belongs to the Gothic genre and which belongs to the detective fiction. Ask students to justify their answers, drawing on the vocabulary studied in the lesson's Starter. Do any students recognise where these extracts are from? Reveal their authors and ask students to share any knowledge they have of the authors or their famous protagonists, Count Dracula and Sherlock Holmes.

## PLENARY

Ask students to think about what the extracts have in common? Students may want to draw on the key words explored in the Starter. Also encourage students to think about the setting of each extract: London. Tell students that London will set the scene for the next two lessons.

### Homework idea/Assessment questions

#### 1 Define the basic features of Gothic fiction.

Gothic stories are commonly set in scary places, such as haunted castles, old houses that feature cobwebby staircases and quiet passages. The author usually creates an atmosphere of mystery or suspense and sometimes the characters have frightening and disturbing dreams. Gothic stories also commonly involve unexplainable – or supernatural – events.

#### 2 Define the basic features of detective fiction.

Detective stories have to feature a detective and he or she is typically very clever, interested in small details and is often thought of as rather odd, or 'eccentric'. A crime is committed, usually by a criminal who gives a great deal of thought to their plot. There are usually multiple suspects, sometimes including the person who reported the crime in the first place. The savvy detective solves the crime and presents his or her deductions logically. The reader, who has usually been usually baffled by the crime, realises the clues to solve the mystery were present all along.

#### 3 What are the similarities and differences between the two genres?

Both genres create an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. They also often include key characters who are fiercely intelligent. The main difference between the two is Gothic fiction typically focuses on supernatural events that cannot always be explained, whilst detective fiction presents logical and obvious explanations for the events that happen.

#### 4 Name characters from Gothic and detective stories.

Students to draw on their own background knowledge of Gothic and detective stories.

#### 5 Extended question: why do you think London is a favourite location for authors of Gothic and detective fiction?

Answers from students may include: London as an accessible destination for people – for example, Count Dracula – who may be drawn to the city's culture; London has many old buildings with dark histories; crime rates in London are high in the inner city.

## LESSON 1: DECIPHERING GENRES

### RESOURCE 1.1: KEY WORDS AND EXPLANATIONS



Match the word to its definition.

#### KEY WORD

#### EXPLANATION

**Superstitious**

Having a belief in the supernatural

**Supernatural**

An event or appearance thought to be to something beyond logical reason

**Gothic**

Strong and regular beats e.g. of pain

**Detective**

Someone whose job it is to investigate and solve crimes

**Curious**

Eager to know something / strange and unusual

**Vampire**

A fictional character – a corpse – who leaves its grave in the night to drink the blood of humans

**Shrewd**

To have sharp judgement

**Romance**

The feeling of excitement and mystery associated with love

**Curse**

An evil wish that intends to do harm

**Haunted**

A place where ghosts are believed to live

**Clue**

A piece of evidence used to solve a crime

**Perpetrator**

Someone who commits a crime

**Suspect**

Someone who is believed to have committed a crime

**Eccentric**

Someone who's behaviour is strange and unusual

**Crime**

An act that is illegal

**Decay**

To rot or decompose; to decline in quality

## LESSON 1: DECIPHERING GENRES

### RESOURCE 1.2: EXTRACT 1



‘Come,’ he said at last, ‘tell me of London and of the house which you have procured for me.’ With an apology for my remissness, I went into my own room to get the papers from my bag. Whilst I was placing them in order I heard a rattling of china and silver in the next room, and as I passed through, noticed that the table had been cleared and the lamp lit, for it was by this time deep into the dark. The lamps were also lit in the study or library, and I found the Count lying on the sofa, reading, of all things in the world, an English Bradshaw’s Guide. When I came in he cleared the books and papers from the table; and with him I went into plans and deeds and figures of all sorts. He was interested in everything, and asked me a myriad of questions about the place and its surroundings. He clearly had studied beforehand all he could get on the subject of the neighbourhood, for he evidently at the end knew very much more than I did. When I remarked this, he answered:—

‘Well, but, my friend, is it not needful that I should? When I go there I shall be all alone, and my friend Harker Jonathan—nay, pardon me, I fall into my country’s habit of putting your patronymic first—my friend Jonathan Harker will not be by my side to correct and aid me. He will be in Exeter, miles away, probably working at papers of the law with my other friend, Peter Hawkins. So!’

We went thoroughly into the business of the purchase of the estate at Purfleet. When I had told him the facts and got his signature to the necessary papers, and had written a letter with them ready to post to Mr. Hawkins, he began to ask me how I had come across so suitable a place. I read to him the notes which I had made at the time, and which I inscribe here:—

‘At Purfleet, on a by-road, I came across just such a place as seemed to be required, and where was displayed a dilapidated notice that the place was for sale. It is surrounded by a high wall, of ancient structure, built of heavy stones, and has not been repaired for a large number of years. The closed gates are of heavy old oak and iron, all eaten with rust.

## LESSON 1: DECIPHERING GENRES

### RESOURCE 1.2: EXTRACT 1 CONTINUED



'The estate is called Carfax, no doubt a corruption of the old Quatre Face, as the house is four-sided, agreeing with the cardinal points of the compass. It contains in all some twenty acres, quite surrounded by the solid stone wall above mentioned. There are many trees on it, which make it in places gloomy, and there is a deep, dark-looking pond or small lake, evidently fed by some springs, as the water is clear and flows away in a fair-sized stream. The house is very large and of all periods back, I should say, to mediæval times, for one part is of stone immensely thick, with only a few windows high up and heavily barred with iron. It looks like part of a keep, and is close to an old chapel or church. I could not enter it, as I had not the key of the door leading to it from the house, but I have taken with my kodak views of it from various points. The house has been added to, but in a very straggling way, and I can only guess at the amount of ground it covers, which must be very great. There are but few houses close at hand, one being a very large house only recently added to and formed into a private lunatic asylum. It is not, however, visible from the grounds.'

When I had finished, he said:—

'I am glad that it is old and big. I myself am of an old family, and to live in a new house would kill me. A house cannot be made habitable in a day; and, after all, how few days go to make up a century. I rejoice also that there is a chapel of old times. We Transylvanian nobles love not to think that our bones may lie amongst the common dead. I seek not gaiety nor mirth, not the bright voluptuousness of much sunshine and sparkling waters which please the young and gay. I am no longer young; and my heart, through weary years of mourning over the dead, is not attuned to mirth. Moreover, the walls of my castle are broken; the shadows are many, and the wind breathes cold through the broken battlements and casements. I love the shade and the shadow, and would be alone with my thoughts when I may.' Somehow his words and his look did not seem to accord, or else it was that his cast of face made his smile look malignant and saturnine.

## LESSON 1: DECIPHERING GENRES

### RESOURCE 1.3: EXTRACT 2



‘My experience of camp life in Afghanistan had at least had the effect of making me a prompt and ready traveller. My wants were few and simple, so that in less than the time stated I was in a cab with my valise, rattling away to Paddington Station. Sherlock Holmes was pacing up and down the platform, his tall, gaunt figure made even gaunter and taller by his long grey travelling-cloak and close-fitting cloth cap.

‘It is really very good of you to come, Watson,’ said he. ‘It makes a considerable difference to me, having someone with me on whom I can thoroughly rely. Local aid is always either worthless or else biassed. If you will keep the two corner seats I shall get the tickets.’

We had the carriage to ourselves save for an immense litter of papers which Holmes had brought with him. Among these he rummaged and read, with intervals of note-taking and of meditation, until we were past Reading. Then he suddenly rolled them all into a gigantic ball and tossed them up onto the rack.

‘Have you heard anything of the case?’ he asked.

‘Not a word. I have not seen a paper for some days.’

‘The London press has not had very full accounts. I have just been looking through all the recent papers in order to master the particulars. It seems, from what I gather, to be one of those simple cases which are so extremely difficult.’

‘That sounds a little paradoxical.’

‘But it is profoundly true. Singularity is almost invariably a clue. The more featureless and commonplace a crime is, the more difficult it is to bring it home. In this case, however, they have established a very serious case against the son of the murdered man.’

‘It is a murder, then?’

‘Well, it is conjectured to be so. I shall take nothing for granted until I have the opportunity of looking personally into it. I will explain the state of things to you, as far as I have been able to understand it, in a very few words.’

## LESSON 2

### A GOTHIC CITYSCAPE



#### THE BIG IDEA

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to a Gothic London, as represented in a series of extracts from famous Gothic novels. In doing so, students will understand the features of the Gothic genre and the attraction of the city as a favourite setting.



#### LESSON OBJECTIVES

All students will recognise words and phrases that describe effectively a traditional Gothic setting.

Most students will draw on this bank of words and phrases to create their own Gothic setting.

Some students will extend a description of their Gothic setting to include their own appropriate ideas and images.



#### RESOURCES

- ♦ **Resource 2.1:** Gothic London
- ♦ **Resource 2.2:** Descriptions of a Gothic cityscape 1
- ♦ **Resource 2.3:** Descriptions of a Gothic cityscape 2

## LESSON 2: A GOTHIC CITYSCAPE

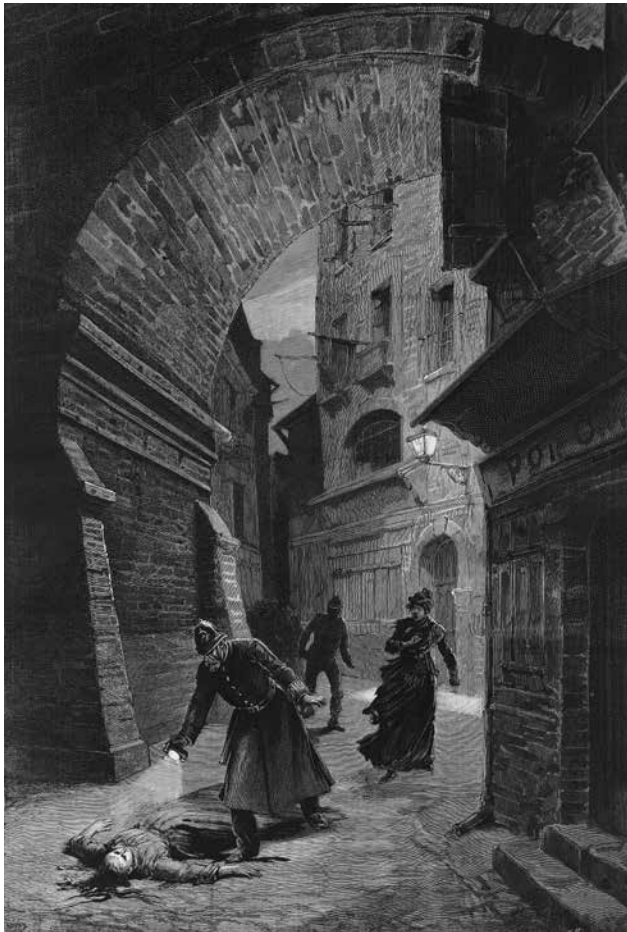
### KEY LANGUAGE

KEY WORD	EXPLANATION	SYNONYMS
<b>Draught</b>	Cool air blowing into a confined space	Breeze, light air
<b>Solemn</b>	Formal and sincere	Serious, grave, unsmiling
<b>Throb</b>	Strong and regular beats e.g. of pain	
<b>Sordid</b>	Dirty or squalid, or immoral	Dirty or squalid, or immoral
<b>Lunatic</b>	A mentally ill person	Maniac
<b>Audible</b>	Able to be heard	Clear, hearable
<b>Prophet</b>	A person who speaks in a visionary or inspired way about something	Oracle



## LESSON 2: A GOTHIC CITYSCAPE

### SETTING THE SCENE



ENGRAVING OF THE 'DISCOVERY OF THE 10th VICTIM' OF JACK THE RIPPER IN THE FRENCH MAGAZINE LE JOURNAL ILLUSTRÉ, 1893  
© Museum of London

#### London and the Gothic novel

Victorian London enjoyed a confidence based on its central place in a global Empire. But the rapidly growing city also had its dark side; poverty, crime, overcrowding and pollution created anxiety in its inhabitants. A growing number of Gothic novels, traditionally set in ruined castles in isolated places, began to tell tales of horror in the dark, foggy streets of the global metropolis.

Bram Stoker's vampire, in the Gothic novel *Count Dracula* (1897), is drawn to London as a centre of power, to prey upon and hide amongst its sprawling population. 'I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death and all that make it what it is.'

Robert Lewis Stevenson's novel, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), tells the story of a London doctor whose personality is split between good and evil. Like the central character, London in the book has contrasting sides. Dr Jekyll inhabits a city home of 'wealth and comfort', while Mr Hyde's London, so closely linked, is dark and dangerous, a place of crime and corruption.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) by Oscar Wilde also portrays very different views of the city. Dorian Gray sinks deeper and deeper into the capital's dark and vice-filled underworld while continuing to move in London's rich and privileged society. His sins show not on his own face, which stays young and beautiful, but on a hideous portrait hidden away in his attic.

## LESSON 2: A GOTHIC CITYSCAPE

### ACTIVITIES

#### STARTER

Display a range of images from Resource 2.1 (page 18) on the interactive whiteboard. Ask students to think about why these images present a Gothic picture of London. After a few minutes, ask students to share their ideas. Encourage students to draw on the vocabulary in the starter of the previous lesson.

#### MAIN

Explain to students that they will be reading short extracts from a range of Gothic novels. They will read extracts of works by Oscar Wilde, Bram Stoker and Robert Louis Stevenson. Give students some brief and relevant information about the work of these authors and their portrayal of 19th Century London, based on *Setting the Scene*. It is important for students to know that these authors were all writing in the 19th century and that all of them base at least some of their narratives in London.

Give students individual copies of Resource 2.2 (page 19). Read through the extracts as a class. This time students should just listen carefully. Give students a second opportunity to read through the extract by

themselves. This time they should highlight words and phrases that they believe capture and create Gothic images of the city. Later on, students will draw on these words and phrases to create their own Gothic city settings.

#### Differentiation:

Provide students who require additional challenge with Resource 2.3 (page 21), which contains further and more complex extracts.

Once students have read through the extracts and highlighted Gothic descriptions, students may have a go at creating their own Gothic settings. Encourage students to draw on these vocabulary and phrase banks in their writing. Students should not introduce a specific character, though they may like to include the noises and shadows created by an unknown character.

## PLENARY

Ask students to share their paragraphs with the class. If you can, draw the blinds to create a spooky atmosphere. Model reading with expression to encourage students to read their paragraphs effectively.

### Homework idea

Ask students to research one of the authors – Robert Louis Stevenson, Bram Stoker, Oscar Wilde – and focus in particular on what inspired their Gothic stories.

### Assessment questions

1. What century is associated with the popularity of Gothic fiction? 19th century
2. Name three famous authors who wrote Gothic novels.  
Answers may include: Bram Stoker, Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde
3. Elaborate on these stem words to create Gothic sentences:
  - a. castle
  - b. floorboard
  - c. shadow

## LESSON 1: DECIPHERING GENRES

### RESOURCE 2.1: IMAGES OF GOTHIC LONDON



WHITECHAPEL – A SHADY PLACE, 1872  
Gustave Doré © Museum of London



VARNEY THE VAMPIRE or THE FEAST OF BLOOD,  
1845-1847 © Thomas Pecket Prest © Museum of  
London



DARK STREET IN THE EAST END,  
C 1900 photographer unknown © Museum of London



## LESSON 2: A GOTHIC CITYSCAPE

### RESOURCE 2.2: DESCRIPTIONS OF A GOTHIC CITYSCAPE 1



#### Extract from *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Last Night*

The scud had banked over the moon, and it was now quite dark. The wind, which only broke in puffs and draughts into that deep well of building, tossed the light of the candle to and fro about their steps, until they came into the shelter of the theatre, where they sat down silently to wait. London hummed solemnly all around; but nearer at hand, the stillness was only broken by the sounds of a footfall moving to and fro along the cabinet floor.



VICTORIA EMBANKMENT, 1872,  
Gustave Doré © Museum of London

## LESSON 2: A GOTHIC CITYSCAPE

### RESOURCE 2.2: DESCRIPTIONS OF A GOTHIC CITYSCAPE 1 CONTINUED



#### Extract from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, Chapter 4

I will tell you, Harry, but you mustn't be unsympathetic about it. After all, it never would have happened if I had not met you. You filled me with a wild desire to know everything about life. For days after I met you, something seemed to throb in my veins. As I lounged in the park, or strolled down Piccadilly, I used to look at every one who passed me and wonder, with a mad curiosity, what sort of lives they led. Some of them fascinated me. Others filled me with terror. There was an exquisite poison in the air. I had a passion for sensations.... Well, one evening about seven o'clock, I determined to go out in search of some adventure. I felt that this grey monstrous London of ours, with its myriads of people, its sordid sinners, and its splendid sins, as you once phrased it, must have something in store for me. I fancied a thousand things. The mere danger gave me a sense of delight. I remembered what you had said to me on that wonderful evening when we first dined together, about the search for beauty being the real secret of life. I don't know what I expected, but I went out and wandered eastward, soon losing my way in a labyrinth of grimy streets and black grassless squares.

#### Extract from *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, Chapter 2

The estate is called Carfax, no doubt a corruption of the old Quatre Face, as the house is four-sided, agreeing with the cardinal points of the compass. It contains in all some twenty acres, quite surrounded by the solid stone wall above mentioned. There are many trees on it, which make it in places gloomy, and there is a deep, dark-looking pond or small lake, evidently fed by some springs, as the water is clear and flows away in a fair-sized stream. The house is very large and of all periods back, I should say, to mediæval times, for one part is of stone immensely thick, with only a few windows high up and heavily barred with iron. It looks like part of a keep, and is close to an old chapel or church. I could not enter it, as I had not the key of the door leading to it from the house, but I have taken with my kodak views of it from various points. The house has been added to, but in a very straggling way, and I can only guess at the amount of ground it covers, which must be very great. There are but few houses close at hand, one being a very large house only recently added to and formed into a private lunatic asylum. It is not, however, visible from the grounds.

## LESSON 2: A GOTHIC CITYSCAPE

## RESOURCE 2.3: DESCRIPTIONS OF A GOTHIC CITYSCAPE 2

**Extract from *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*  
by Robert Louis Stevenson *Search for Mr Hyde***

And at last his patience was rewarded. It was a fine dry night; frost in the air; the streets as clean as a ballroom floor; the lamps, unshaken, by any wind, drawing a regular pattern of light and shadow. By ten o'clock, when the shops were closed, the by-street was very solitary and, in spite of the low growl of London from all round, very silent. Small sounds carried far; domestic sounds out of the houses were clearly audible on either side of the roadway; and the rumour of the approach of any passenger preceded him by a long time. Mr. Utterson had been some minutes at his post, when he was aware of an odd, light footstep drawing near. In the course of his nightly patrols, he had long grown accustomed to the quaint effect with which the footfalls of a single person, while he is still a great way off, suddenly spring out distinct from the vast hum and clatter of the city. Yet his attention had never before been so sharply and decisively arrested; and it was with a strong, superstitious prevision of success that he withdrew into the entry of the court. The steps drew swiftly nearer, and swelled out suddenly louder as they turned the end of the street. The lawyer, looking forth from the entry, could soon see what manner of man he had to deal with. He was small and very plainly dressed, and the look of him, even at that distance, went somehow strongly against the watcher's inclination. But he made straight for the door, crossing the roadway to save time; and as he came, he drew a key from his pocket like one approaching home.

**Extract from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*  
by Oscar Wilde, Chapter 19**

'My dear fellow,' said Lord Henry, elevating his eyebrows in surprise, 'I asked you because I thought you might be able to give me an answer. That is all. I was going through the park last Sunday, and close by the Marble Arch there stood a little crowd of shabby-looking people listening to some vulgar street-preacher. As I passed by, I heard the man yelling out that question to his audience. It struck me as being rather dramatic. London is very rich in curious effects of that kind. A wet Sunday, an uncouth Christian in a mackintosh, a ring of sickly white faces under a broken roof of dripping umbrellas, and a wonderful phrase flung into the air by shrill hysterical lips--it was really very good in its way, quite a suggestion. I thought of telling the prophet that art had a soul, but that man had not. I am afraid, however, he would not have understood me.'

## LESSON 3

# SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE CONVENTIONS OF THE DETECTIVE STORY



### THE BIG IDEA

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the writing of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his famous London protagonist, Sherlock Holmes. Students will study the features of his writing and will create their own detective fiction checklist to inform and guide their reading of further detective stories.



### LESSON OBJECTIVES

All students will read about a Sherlock Holmes adventure and be able to recall the narrative.

Most students will recognise the traditional conventions of detective fiction.

Some students will be able to describe why these conventions are convincing and effective.



### RESOURCES

- ♦ **Resource 3.1:** *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



## LESSON 3: SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE CONVENTIONS OF THE DETECTIVE STORY

## KEY LANGUAGE

KEY WORD	EXPLANATION	SYNONYMS
<b>Commonplace</b>	Not unusual, ordinary	Ordinary, unexceptional, dull
<b>Metropolis</b>	Very large and busy city	Megalopolis, concrete jungle, conurbation
<b>Bewilderment</b>	A state of confusion; to not understand	Confusion, puzzlement, perplexity
<b>Defray</b>	To provide money to pay for something	Settle, cover, meet
<b>Manifold</b>	Many and various	Numerous, multiple, varied, assorted
<b>Ferocious</b>	Savagely fierce or violent	Savage, wild, powerful
<b>Impassable</b>	Impossible to travel along	Blocked, closed, impenetrable
<b>Insolence</b>	Very rude and disrespectful behaviour	Bad manners, discourteous, impertinence
<b>Acquaintance</b>	Someone you know slightly, but not a close friend	Contact, connection, colleague
<b>Perplexity</b>	Not able to understand something	Confusion, befuddlement
<b>Hoarse</b>	Rough and harsh sounding	Croaky, harsh, rough, gruff

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### SETTING THE SCENE

When Arthur Conan Doyle began writing detective stories in the 1890's the genre was in its infancy. The American author Edgar Allan Poe is credited with writing the first detective stories in the 1840s. Crime fiction quickly became popular but a great deal of it was of poor quality. Mirroring the primitive contemporary standards of crime detection, the mysteries were rarely solved by detection and the empirical methods. It was Doyle's intention to improve radically on much of the detective writing that came before him. 'I had been reading some detective stories, and it struck me what nonsense they were, to put it mildly, because for getting the solution of the mystery, the authors always depended on some coincidence. This struck me as not a fair way of playing the game, because the detective ought really to depend for his successes on something in his own mind and not by adventitious circumstances which do not, by any means, always occur in real life.' The Sherlock Holmes stories quickly became enormously popular. People queued around the block for new issues of *The Strand* magazine, in which the stories appeared. When Doyle first tried to 'kill off' Holmes in a story, many Londoners responded by wearing black funeral armbands. Doyle received hundreds of fan letters, many of which were addressed to the fictional detective rather than the real life author.



HOLMES WAS EXTREMELY PLEASED, 1895  
Sidney Paget © Museum of London

## LESSON 3: SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE CONVENTIONS OF THE DETECTIVE STORY

### ACTIVITIES

#### STARTER

Display the names of famous detectives to the class (for example, Poirot, Inspector Morse, Miss Marple, Sherlock Holmes). What do they, and the mysteries they solve, all have in common? Create a class list.

#### MAIN

Give each student a copy of Resource 3.1 (page 26). Read the story aloud, asking individuals to read passages.

Answer the comprehension questions. You may want to answer the first few questions as a class, modelling writing in full sentences and drawing on the text.

After reading *The Speckled Band* display these comprehension questions for students to answer.

- a. Describe the relationship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson.
- b. List the important things that Sherlock Holmes does to solve a crime?

#### PLENARY

Return and reflect on the list created at the beginning of the lesson. Use this list and students' knowledge of *The Speckled Band* to create a class rubric of the essential elements of a 19th century detective story.

#### Homework idea

Students could be provided with another story from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* to read at home.

#### Assessment questions

Draw on the questions within Resource 3.1 for assessment purposes.

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RESOURCE 3.1: *THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND**The Adventure of the Speckled Band from The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*

On glancing over my notes of the seventy odd cases in which I have during the last eight years studied the methods of my friend Sherlock Holmes, I find many tragic, some comic, a large number merely strange, but none commonplace; for, working as he did rather for the love of his art than for the acquirement of wealth, he refused to associate himself with any investigation which did not tend towards the unusual, and even the fantastic. Of all these varied cases, however, I cannot recall any which presented more singular features than that which was associated with the well-known Surrey family of the Roylotts of Stoke Moran. The events in question occurred in the early days of my association with Holmes, when we were sharing rooms as bachelors in Baker Street. It is possible that I might have placed them upon record before, but a promise of secrecy was made at the time, from which I have only been

freed during the last month by the untimely death of the lady to whom the pledge was given. It is perhaps as well that the facts should now come to light, for I have reasons to know that there are widespread rumours as to the death of Dr. Grimesby Roylott which tend to make the matter even more terrible than the truth.

It was early in April in the year '83 that I woke one morning to find Sherlock Holmes standing, fully dressed, by the side of my bed. He was a late riser, as a rule, and as the clock on the mantelpiece showed me that it was only a quarter-past seven, I blinked up at him in some surprise, and perhaps just a little resentment, for I was myself regular in my habits.

**Question A:** What can you deduce from Sherlock Holmes' actions? Sherlock Holmes is an eccentric and unpredictable character.

'Very sorry to knock you up, Watson,' said he, 'but it's the common lot this morning. Mrs. Hudson has been knocked up, she

retorted upon me, and I on you.'

'What is it, then—a fire?'

'No; a client. It seems that a young lady has arrived in a considerable state of excitement, who insists upon seeing me. She is waiting now in the sitting-room. Now, when young ladies wander about the metropolis at this hour of the morning, and knock sleepy people up out of their beds, I presume that it is something very pressing which they have to communicate. Should it prove to be an interesting case, you would, I am sure, wish to follow it from the outset. I thought, at any rate, that I should call you and give you the chance.'

'My dear fellow, I would not miss it for anything.'

I had no keener pleasure than in following Holmes in his professional investigations, and in admiring the rapid deductions, as swift as intuitions, and yet always founded on a logical basis with which he unravelled the problems which were submitted to him.

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I rapidly threw on my clothes and was ready in a few minutes to accompany my friend down to the sitting-room. A lady dressed in black and heavily veiled, who had been sitting in the window, rose as we entered.

**Question B:** What does this lady's black dress and heavy veil suggest about her situation? The lady's black dress and heavy veil suggest that she is in mourning because someone has disappeared or died.

'Good-morning, madam,' said Holmes cheerily. 'My name is Sherlock Holmes. This is my intimate friend and associate, Dr. Watson, before whom you can speak as freely as before myself. Ha! I am glad to see that Mrs. Hudson has had the good sense to light the fire. Pray draw up to it, and I shall order you a cup of hot coffee, for I observe that you are shivering.'

'It is not cold which makes me shiver,' said the woman in a low voice, changing her seat as requested.

'What, then?'

'It is fear, Mr. Holmes. It is terror.' She raised her veil as she spoke, and we could see that she was indeed in a pitiable state of agitation, her face all drawn and grey, with restless frightened eyes, like those of some hunted animal. Her features and figure were those of a woman of thirty, but her hair was shot with premature grey, and her expression was weary and haggard. Sherlock Holmes ran her over with one of his quick, all-comprehensive glances.

'You must not fear,' said he soothingly, bending forward and patting her forearm. 'We shall soon set matters right, I have no doubt. You have come in by train this morning, I see.'

'You know me, then?'

'No, but I observe the second half of a return ticket in the palm of your left glove. You must have started early, and yet you had a good drive in a dog-cart, along heavy roads, before you reached the station.'

The lady gave a violent start and stared in bewilderment at my companion.

**Question C:** What might suggest the lady travelled by train? The lady is holding the second half of a return ticket in the palm of her left glove, suggesting she used the first half to travel to see Sherlock Holmes.

'There is no mystery, my dear madam,' said he, smiling. 'The left arm of your jacket is spattered with mud in no less than seven places. The marks are perfectly fresh. There is no vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way, and then only when you sit on the left-hand side of the driver.'

'Whatever your reasons may be, you are perfectly correct,' said she. 'I started from home before six, reached Leatherhead at twenty past, and came in by the first train to Waterloo. Sir, I can stand this strain no longer; I shall go mad if it continues. I have no one to turn to—none, save only one, who cares for me, and he, poor fellow, can be of little aid. I have heard of you, Mr. Holmes; I have heard of you from Mrs. Farintosh, whom you helped in the hour of her sore need. It was from her that I had your address. Oh, sir, do you not think that

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you could help me, too, and at least throw a little light through the dense darkness which surrounds me? At present it is out of my power to reward you for your services, but in a month or six weeks I shall be married, with the control of my own income, and then at least you shall not find me ungrateful.'

Holmes turned to his desk and, unlocking it, drew out a small case-book, which he consulted.

'Farintosh,' said he. 'Ah yes, I recall the case; it was concerned with an opal tiara. I think it was before your time, Watson. I can only say, madam, that I shall be happy to devote the same care to your case as I did to that of your friend. As to reward, my profession is its own reward; but you are at liberty to defray whatever expenses I may be put to, at the time which suits you best. And now I beg that you will lay before us everything that may help us in forming an opinion upon the matter.'

**Question D:** Does Sherlock Holmes do his job for money? Explain your answer? (You

may want to reread the first paragraph of the story, too.) Whilst Sherlock Holmes asks his client to cover any expenses related to solving her mystery, Sherlock Holmes is not interested in making a profit from his detective skills. He pursues his career as a detective because he loves the work involved.

'Alas!' replied our visitor, 'the very horror of my situation lies in the fact that my fears are so vague, and my suspicions depend so entirely upon small points, which might seem trivial to another, that even he to whom of all others I have a right to look for help and advice looks upon all that I tell him about it as the fancies of a nervous woman. He does not say so, but I can read it from his soothing answers and averted eyes. But I have heard, Mr. Holmes, that you can see deeply into the manifold wickedness of the human heart. You may advise me how to walk amid the dangers which encompass me.'

'I am all attention, madam.'

'My name is Helen Stoner, and I am living

with my stepfather, who is the last survivor of one of the oldest Saxon families in England, the Roylotts of Stoke Moran, on the western border of Surrey.'

Holmes nodded his head. 'The name is familiar to me,' said he.

'The family was at one time among the richest in England, and the estates extended over the borders into Berkshire in the north, and Hampshire in the west. In the last century, however, four successive heirs were of a dissolute and wasteful disposition, and the family ruin was eventually completed by a gambler in the days of the Regency. Nothing was left save a few acres of ground, and the two-hundred-year-old house, which is itself crushed under a heavy mortgage. The last squire dragged out his existence there, living the horrible life of an aristocratic pauper; but his only son, my stepfather, seeing that he must adapt himself to the new conditions, obtained an advance from a relative, which enabled him to take a medical degree and went out to Calcutta, where, by his professional skill



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and his force of character, he established a large practice. In a fit of anger, however, caused by some robberies which had been perpetrated in the house, he beat his native butler to death and narrowly escaped a capital sentence. As it was, he suffered a long term of imprisonment and afterwards returned to England a morose and disappointed man.

‘When Dr. Roylott was in India he married my mother, Mrs. Stoner, the young widow of Major-General Stoner, of the Bengal Artillery. My sister Julia and I were twins, and we were only two years old at the time of my mother’s re-marriage. She had a considerable sum of money—not less than £1000 a year—and this she bequeathed to Dr. Roylott entirely while we resided with him, with a provision that a certain annual sum should be allowed to each of us in the event of our marriage. Shortly after our return to England my mother died—she was killed eight years ago in a railway accident near Crewe. Dr. Roylott then abandoned his attempts to establish himself in practice

in London and took us to live with him in the old ancestral house at Stoke Moran. The money which my mother had left was enough for all our wants, and there seemed to be no obstacle to our happiness.

‘But a terrible change came over our stepfather about this time. Instead of making friends and exchanging visits with our neighbours, who had at first been overjoyed to see a Roylott of Stoke Moran back in the old family seat, he shut himself up in his house and seldom came out save to indulge in ferocious quarrels with whoever might cross his path. Violence of temper approaching to mania has been hereditary in the men of the family, and in my stepfather’s case it had, I believe, been intensified by his long residence in the tropics. A series of disgraceful brawls took place, two of which ended in the police-court, until at last he became the terror of the village, and the folks would fly at his approach, for he is a man of immense strength, and absolutely uncontrollable in his anger.

‘Last week he hurled the local blacksmith over a parapet into a stream, and it was only by paying over all the money which I could gather together that I was able to avert another public exposure. He had no friends at all save the wandering gipsies, and he would give these vagabonds leave to encamp upon the few acres of bramble-covered land which represent the family estate, and would accept in return the hospitality of their tents, wandering away with them sometimes for weeks on end. He has a passion also for Indian animals, which are sent over to him by a correspondent, and he has at this moment a cheetah and a baboon, which wander freely over his grounds and are feared by the villagers almost as much as their master.

‘You can imagine from what I say that my poor sister Julia and I had no great pleasure in our lives. No servant would stay with us, and for a long time we did all the work of the house. She was but thirty at the time of her death, and yet her hair had already begun to whiten, even as mine has.’

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‘Your sister is dead, then?’

‘She died just two years ago, and it is of her death that I wish to speak to you. You can understand that, living the life which I have described, we were little likely to see anyone of our own age and position. We had, however, an aunt, my mother’s maiden sister, Miss Honoria Westphail, who lives near Harrow, and we were occasionally allowed to pay short visits at this lady’s house. Julia went there at Christmas two years ago, and met there a half-pay major of marines, to whom she became engaged. My stepfather learned of the engagement when my sister returned and offered no objection to the marriage; but within a fortnight of the day which had been fixed for the wedding, the terrible event occurred which has deprived me of my only companion.’

Sherlock Holmes had been leaning back in his chair with his eyes closed and his head sunk in a cushion, but he half opened his lids now and glanced across at his visitor.

‘Pray be precise as to details,’ said he.

‘It is easy for me to be so, for every event of that dreadful time is seared into my memory. The manor-house is, as I have already said, very old, and only one wing is now inhabited. The bedrooms in this wing are on the ground floor, the sitting-rooms being in the central block of the buildings. Of these bedrooms the first is Dr. Roylott’s, the second my sister’s, and the third my own. There is no communication between them, but they all open out into the same corridor. Do I make myself plain?’

‘Perfectly so.’

‘The windows of the three rooms open out upon the lawn. That fatal night Dr. Roylott had gone to his room early, though we knew that he had not retired to rest, for my sister was troubled by the smell of the strong Indian cigars which it was his custom to smoke. She left her room, therefore, and came into mine, where she sat for some time, chatting about her approaching wedding. At eleven o’clock she rose to

leave me, but she paused at the door and looked back.

‘Tell me, Helen,’ said she, ‘have you ever heard anyone whistle in the dead of the night?’

‘Never,’ said I.

‘I suppose that you could not possibly whistle, yourself, in your sleep?’

‘Certainly not. But why?’

‘Because during the last few nights I have always, about three in the morning, heard a low, clear whistle. I am a light sleeper, and it has awakened me. I cannot tell where it came from—perhaps from the next room, perhaps from the lawn. I thought that I would just ask you whether you had heard it.’

‘No, I have not. It must be those wretched gipsies in the plantation.’

‘Very likely. And yet if it were on the lawn, I wonder that you did not hear it also.’

‘Ah, but I sleep more heavily than you.’



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'Well, it is of no great consequence, at any rate.' She smiled back at me, closed my door, and a few moments later I heard her key turn in the lock.'

'Indeed,' said Holmes. 'Was it your custom always to lock yourselves in at night?'

'Always.'

'And why?'

'I think that I mentioned to you that the doctor kept a cheetah and a baboon. We had no feeling of security unless our doors were locked.'

'Quite so. Pray proceed with your statement.'

'I could not sleep that night. A vague feeling of impending misfortune impressed me. My sister and I, you will recollect, were twins, and you know how subtle are the links which bind two souls which are so closely allied. It was a wild night. The wind was howling outside, and the rain was beating and splashing against the windows. Suddenly, amid all the hubbub of

the gale, there burst forth the wild scream of a terrified woman. I knew that it was my sister's voice. I sprang from my bed, wrapped a shawl round me, and rushed into the corridor. As I opened my door I seemed to hear a low whistle, such as my sister described, and a few moments later a clanging sound, as if a mass of metal had fallen. As I ran down the passage, my sister's door was unlocked, and revolved slowly upon its hinges. I stared at it horror-stricken, not knowing what was about to issue from it. By the light of the corridor-lamp I saw my sister appear at the opening, her face blanched with terror, her hands groping for help, her whole figure swaying to and fro like that of a drunkard. I ran to her and threw my arms round her, but at that moment her knees seemed to give way and she fell to the ground. She writhed as one who is in terrible pain, and her limbs were dreadfully convulsed. At first I thought that she had not recognised me, but as I bent over her she suddenly shrieked out in a voice which I shall never forget, 'Oh, my God! Helen! It was the band! The speckled

band!' There was something else which she would fain have said, and she stabbed with her finger into the air in the direction of the doctor's room, but a fresh convulsion seized her and choked her words. I rushed out, calling loudly for my stepfather, and I met him hastening from his room in his dressing-gown. When he reached my sister's side she was unconscious, and though he poured brandy down her throat and sent for medical aid from the village, all efforts were in vain, for she slowly sank and died without having recovered her consciousness. Such was the dreadful end of my beloved sister.'

'One moment,' said Holmes, 'are you sure about this whistle and metallic sound? Could you swear to it?'

'That was what the county coroner asked me at the inquiry. It is my strong impression that I heard it, and yet, among the crash of the gale and the creaking of an old house, I may possibly have been deceived.'

'Was your sister dressed?'

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‘No, she was in her night-dress. In her right hand was found the charred stump of a match, and in her left a match-box.’

‘Showing that she had struck a light and looked about her when the alarm took place. That is important. And what conclusions did the coroner come to?’

‘He investigated the case with great care, for Dr. Roylott’s conduct had long been notorious in the county, but he was unable to find any satisfactory cause of death. My evidence showed that the door had been fastened upon the inner side, and the windows were blocked by old-fashioned shutters with broad iron bars, which were secured every night. The walls were carefully sounded, and were shown to be quite solid all round, and the flooring was also thoroughly examined, with the same result. The chimney is wide, but is barred up by four large staples. It is certain, therefore, that my sister was quite alone when she met her end. Besides, there were no marks of any violence upon her.’

‘How about poison?’

‘The doctors examined her for it, but without success.’

‘What do you think that this unfortunate lady died of, then?’

‘It is my belief that she died of pure fear and nervous shock, though what it was that frightened her I cannot imagine.’

‘Were there gipsies in the plantation at the time?’

‘Yes, there are nearly always some there.’

‘Ah, and what did you gather from this allusion to a band—a speckled band?’

‘Sometimes I have thought that it was merely the wild talk of delirium, sometimes that it may have referred to some band of people, perhaps to these very gipsies in the plantation. I do not know whether the spotted handkerchiefs which so many of them wear over their heads might have suggested the strange adjective which she used.’

Holmes shook his head like a man who is far from being satisfied.

‘These are very deep waters,’ said he; ‘pray go on with your narrative.’

‘Two years have passed since then, and my life has been until lately lonelier than ever. A month ago, however, a dear friend, whom I have known for many years, has done me the honour to ask my hand in marriage. His name is Armitage—Percy Armitage—the second son of Mr. Armitage, of Crane Water, near Reading. My stepfather has offered no opposition to the match, and we are to be married in the course of the spring. Two days ago some repairs were started in the west wing of the building, and my bedroom wall has been pierced, so that I have had to move into the chamber in which my sister died, and to sleep in the very bed in which she slept. Imagine, then, my thrill of terror when last night, as I lay awake, thinking over her terrible fate, I suddenly heard in the silence of the night the low whistle which had been the herald

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of her own death. I sprang up and lit the lamp, but nothing was to be seen in the room. I was too shaken to go to bed again, however, so I dressed, and as soon as it was daylight I slipped down, got a dog-cart at the Crown Inn, which is opposite, and drove to Leatherhead, from whence I have come on this morning with the one object of seeing you and asking your advice.'

**Question E:** What do you think may have caused the whistling sound? Students to attempt their own deduction using the facts available to them in the text, and a bit of imagination!

'You have done wisely,' said my friend.  
'But have you told me all?'

'Yes, all.'

'Miss Roylott, you have not. You are screening your stepfather.'

'Why, what do you mean?'

For answer Holmes pushed back the frill of black lace which fringed the hand that lay upon our visitor's knee. Five little livid spots,

the marks of four fingers and a thumb, were printed upon the white wrist.

'You have been cruelly used,' said Holmes.

The lady coloured deeply and covered over her injured wrist. 'He is a hard man,' she said, 'and perhaps he hardly knows his own strength.'

There was a long silence, during which Holmes leaned his chin upon his hands and stared into the crackling fire.

'This is a very deep business,' he said at last. 'There are a thousand details which I should desire to know before I decide upon our course of action. Yet we have not a moment to lose. If we were to come to Stoke Moran to-day, would it be possible for us to see over these rooms without the knowledge of your stepfather?'

'As it happens, he spoke of coming into town to-day upon some most important business. It is probable that he will be away all day, and that there would be nothing to disturb you. We have a housekeeper now,

but she is old and foolish, and I could easily get her out of the way.'

'Excellent. You are not averse to this trip, Watson?'

'By no means.'

'Then we shall both come. What are you going to do yourself?'

'I have one or two things which I would wish to do now that I am in town. But I shall return by the twelve o'clock train, so as to be there in time for your coming.'

'And you may expect us early in the afternoon. I have myself some small business matters to attend to. Will you not wait and breakfast?'

'No, I must go. My heart is lightened already since I have confided my trouble to you. I shall look forward to seeing you again this afternoon.' She dropped her thick black veil over her face and glided from the room.

'And what do you think of it all, Watson?' asked Sherlock Holmes, leaning back in his chair.

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‘It seems to me to be a most dark and sinister business.’

‘Dark enough and sinister enough.’

‘Yet if the lady is correct in saying that the flooring and walls are sound, and that the door, window, and chimney are impassable, then her sister must have been undoubtedly alone when she met her mysterious end.’

‘What becomes, then, of these nocturnal whistles, and what of the very peculiar words of the dying woman?’

‘I cannot think.’

‘When you combine the ideas of whistles at night, the presence of a band of gipsies who are on intimate terms with this old doctor, the fact that we have every reason to believe that the doctor has an interest in preventing his stepdaughter’s marriage, the dying allusion to a band, and, finally, the fact that Miss Helen Stoner heard a metallic clang, which might have been caused by one of those metal bars that secured the shutters falling back into its place, I think

that there is good ground to think that the mystery may be cleared along those lines.’

‘But what, then, did the gipsies do?’

‘I cannot imagine.’

‘I see many objections to any such theory.’

‘And so do I. It is precisely for that reason that we are going to Stoke Moran this day. I want to see whether the objections are fatal, or if they may be explained away. But what in the name of the devil!’

The ejaculation had been drawn from my companion by the fact that our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man had framed himself in the aperture. His costume was a peculiar mixture of the professional and of the agricultural, having a black top-hat, a long frock-coat, and a pair of high gaiters, with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand. So tall was he that his hat actually brushed the cross bar of the doorway, and his breadth seemed to span it across from side to side. A large face, seared with a thousand

wrinkles, burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion, was turned from one to the other of us, while his deep-set, bile-shot eyes, and his high, thin, fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey.

**Question F:** What does this man’s appearance suggest about him? The man’s appearance is confusing because he is dressed in both professional clothing (for example his top hat and long frock-coat) and agricultural wear (for example a pair of gaiters). This may suggest that he has changed outfits quickly and that he may have travelled to London from elsewhere.

‘Which of you is Holmes?’ asked this apparition.

‘My name, sir; but you have the advantage of me,’ said my companion quietly.

‘I am Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran.’

‘Indeed, Doctor,’ said Holmes blandly. ‘Pray take a seat.’

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'I will do nothing of the kind. My stepdaughter has been here. I have traced her. What has she been saying to you?'

'It is a little cold for the time of the year,' said Holmes.

'What has she been saying to you?' screamed the old man furiously.

'But I have heard that the crocuses promise well,' continued my companion imperturbably.

'Ha! You put me off, do you?' said our new visitor, taking a step forward and shaking his hunting-crop. 'I know you, you scoundrel! I have heard of you before. You are Holmes, the meddler.'

My friend smiled.

'Holmes, the busybody!'

His smile broadened.

'Holmes, the Scotland Yard Jack-in-office!'

Holmes chuckled heartily. 'Your conversation is most entertaining,' said he.

'When you go out close the door, for there is a decided draught.'

'I will go when I have said my say. Don't you dare to meddle with my affairs. I know that Miss Stoner has been here. I traced her! I am a dangerous man to fall foul of! See here.' He stepped swiftly forward, seized the poker, and bent it into a curve with his huge brown hands.

'See that you keep yourself out of my grip,' he snarled, and hurling the twisted poker into the fireplace he strode out of the room.

'He seems a very amiable person,' said Holmes, laughing. 'I am not quite so bulky, but if he had remained I might have shown him that my grip was not much more feeble than his own.' As he spoke he picked up the steel poker and, with a sudden effort, straightened it out again.

'Fancy his having the insolence to confound me with the official detective force! This incident gives zest to our investigation, however, and I only trust that our little friend will not suffer from her imprudence

in allowing this brute to trace her. And now, Watson, we shall order breakfast, and afterwards I shall walk down to Doctors' Commons, where I hope to get some data which may help us in this matter.'

**Question G:** Define these words and place them in your own sentences: 'aperture', 'imperturbably', 'amiable', 'insolence'  
Aperture: a hole or opening; imperturbably: calm, unexcited; amiable: a friendly and pleasant manner; insolence: rude and disrespectful behaviour.

It was nearly one o'clock when Sherlock Holmes returned from his excursion. He held in his hand a sheet of blue paper, scrawled over with notes and figures.

'I have seen the will of the deceased wife,' said he. 'To determine its exact meaning I have been obliged to work out the present prices of the investments with which it is concerned. The total income, which at the time of the wife's death was little short of £1100, is now, through the fall in agricultural prices, not more than £750.'

## LESSON 3: SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE CONVENTIONS OF THE DETECTIVE STORY

### RESOURCE 3.1: *THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND*



Each daughter can claim an income of £250, in case of marriage. It is evident, therefore, that if both girls had married, this beauty would have had a mere pittance, while even one of them would cripple him to a very serious extent. My morning's work has not been wasted, since it has proved that he has the very strongest motives for standing in the way of anything of the sort. And now, Watson, this is too serious for dawdling, especially as the old man is aware that we are interesting ourselves in his affairs; so if you are ready, we shall call a cab and drive to Waterloo. I should be very much obliged if you would slip your revolver into your pocket. An Eley's No. 2 is an excellent argument with gentlemen who can twist steel pokers into knots. That and a tooth-brush are, I think, all that we need.'

At Waterloo we were fortunate in catching a train for Leatherhead, where we hired a trap at the station inn and drove for four or five miles through the lovely Surrey lanes. It was a perfect day, with a bright sun and a few fleecy clouds in the heavens. The trees and wayside hedges were just throwing out their

first green shoots, and the air was full of the pleasant smell of the moist earth. To me at least there was a strange contrast between the sweet promise of the spring and this sinister quest upon which we were engaged. My companion sat in the front of the trap, his arms folded, his hat pulled down over his eyes, and his chin sunk upon his breast, buried in the deepest thought. Suddenly, however, he started, tapped me on the shoulder, and pointed over the meadows.

'Look there!' said he.

A heavily timbered park stretched up in a gentle slope, thickening into a grove at the highest point. From amid the branches there jutted out the grey gables and high roof-tree of a very old mansion.

'Stoke Moran?' said he.

'Yes, sir, that be the house of Dr. Grimesby Roylott,' remarked the driver.

'There is some building going on there,' said Holmes; 'that is where we are going.'

'There's the village,' said the driver, pointing

to a cluster of roofs some distance to the left; 'but if you want to get to the house, you'll find it shorter to get over this stile, and so by the foot-path over the fields. There it is, where the lady is walking.'

'And the lady, I fancy, is Miss Stoner,' observed Holmes, shading his eyes. 'Yes, I think we had better do as you suggest.'

We got off, paid our fare, and the trap rattled back on its way to Leatherhead.

'I thought it as well,' said Holmes as we climbed the stile, 'that this fellow should think we had come here as architects, or on some definite business. It may stop his gossip. Good-afternoon, Miss Stoner. You see that we have been as good as our word.'

Our client of the morning had hurried forward to meet us with a face which spoke her joy. 'I have been waiting so eagerly for you,' she cried, shaking hands with us warmly. 'All has turned out splendidly. Dr. Roylott has gone to town, and it is unlikely that he will be back before evening.'



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'We have had the pleasure of making the doctor's acquaintance,' said Holmes, and in a few words he sketched out what had occurred. Miss Stoner turned white to the lips as she listened.

'Good heavens!' she cried, 'he has followed me, then.'

'So it appears.'

'He is so cunning that I never know when I am safe from him. What will he say when he returns?'

'He must guard himself, for he may find that there is someone more cunning than himself upon his track. You must lock yourself up from him to-night. If he is violent, we shall take you away to your aunt's at Harrow. Now, we must make the best use of our time, so kindly take us at once to the rooms which we are to examine.'

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 on each side. In one of these

wings the windows were broken and blocked with wooden boards, while the roof was partly caved in, a picture of ruin. The central portion was in little better repair, but the right-hand block was comparatively modern, and the blinds in the windows, with the blue smoke curling up from the chimneys, showed that this was where the family resided. Some scaffolding had been erected against the end wall, and the stonework had been broken into, but there were no signs of any workmen at the moment of our visit. Holmes walked slowly up and down the ill-trimmed lawn and examined with deep attention the outsides of the windows.

'This, I take it, belongs to the room in which you used to sleep, the centre one to your sister's, and the one next to the main building to Dr. Roylott's chamber?'

'Exactly so. But I am now sleeping in the middle one.'

'Pending the alterations, as I understand. By the way, there does not seem to be any very pressing need for repairs at that end wall.'

'There were none. I believe that it was an excuse to move me from my room.'

'Ah! that is suggestive. Now, on the other side of this narrow wing runs the corridor from which these three rooms open. There are windows in it, of course?'

'Yes, but very small ones. Too narrow for anyone to pass through.'

'As you both locked your doors at night, your rooms were unapproachable from that side. Now, would you have the kindness to go into your room and bar your shutters?'

Miss Stoner did so, and Holmes, after a careful examination through the open window, endeavoured in every way to force the shutter open, but without success. There was no slit through which a knife could be passed to raise the bar. Then with his lens he tested the hinges, but they were of solid iron, built firmly into the massive masonry. 'Hum!' said he, scratching his chin in some perplexity, 'my theory certainly presents some difficulties. No one could pass these shutters if they were bolted.'

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Well, we shall see if the inside throws any light upon the matter.'

A small side door led into the whitewashed corridor from which the three bedrooms opened. Holmes refused to examine the third chamber, so we passed at once to the second, that in which Miss Stoner was now sleeping, and in which her sister had met with her fate. It was a homely little room, with a low ceiling and a gaping fireplace, after the fashion of old country-houses. A brown chest of drawers stood in one corner, a narrow white-counterpaned bed in another, and a dressing-table on the left-hand side of the window. These articles, with two small wicker-work chairs, made up all the furniture in the room save for a square of Wilton carpet in the centre. The boards round and the panelling of the walls were of brown, worm-eaten oak, so old and discoloured that it may have dated from the original building of the house. Holmes drew one of the chairs into a corner and sat silent, while his eyes travelled round and round and up and down, taking in every detail of the apartment.

'Where does that bell communicate with?' he asked at last pointing to a thick bell-rope which hung down beside the bed, the tassel actually lying upon the pillow.

'It goes to the housekeeper's room.'

'It looks newer than the other things?'

'Yes, it was only put there a couple of years ago.'

'Your sister asked for it, I suppose?'

'No, I never heard of her using it. We used always to get what we wanted for ourselves.'

'Indeed, it seemed unnecessary to put so nice a bell-pull there. You will excuse me for a few minutes while I satisfy myself as to this floor.' He threw himself down upon his face with his lens in his hand and crawled swiftly backward and forward, examining minutely the cracks between the boards. Then he did the same with the wood-work with which the chamber was panelled. Finally he walked over to the bed and spent some time in staring at it and in running his eye up and

down the wall. Finally he took the bell-rope in his hand and gave it a brisk tug.

**Question H:** What do Sherlock Holmes' actions suggest about his method of solving crimes? Sherlock Holmes pays very close attention to details that may, to others, seem very small and insignificant. He studies the objects around him with great precision.

'Why, it's a dummy,' said he.

'Won't it ring?'

'No, it is not even attached to a wire. This is very interesting. You can see now that it is fastened to a hook just above where the little opening for the ventilator is.'

'How very absurd! I never noticed that before.'

'Very strange!' muttered Holmes, pulling at the rope. 'There are one or two very singular points about this room. For example, what a fool a builder must be to open a ventilator into another room, when, with the same trouble, he might have communicated with



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the outside air!

‘That is also quite modern,’ said the lady.

‘Done about the same time as the bell-rope?’ remarked Holmes.

‘Yes, there were several little changes carried out about that time.’

‘They seem to have been of a most interesting character—dummy bell-ropes, and ventilators which do not ventilate. With your permission, Miss Stoner, we shall now carry our researches into the inner apartment.’

Dr. Grimesby Roylott’s chamber was larger than that of his step-daughter, but was as plainly furnished. A camp-bed, a small wooden shelf full of books, mostly of a technical character, an armchair beside the bed, a plain wooden chair against the wall, a round table, and a large iron safe were the principal things which met the eye. Holmes walked slowly round and examined each and all of them with the keenest interest.

‘What’s in here?’ he asked, tapping the safe.

‘My stepfather’s business papers.’

‘Oh! you have seen inside, then?’

‘Only once, some years ago. I remember that it was full of papers.’

‘There isn’t a cat in it, for example?’

‘No. What a strange idea!’

‘Well, look at this!’ He took up a small saucer of milk which stood on the top of it.

‘No; we don’t keep a cat. But there is a cheetah and a baboon.’

‘Ah, yes, of course! Well, a cheetah is just a big cat, and yet a saucer of milk does not go very far in satisfying its wants, I daresay. There is one point which I should wish to determine.’ He squatted down in front of the wooden chair and examined the seat of it with the greatest attention.

‘Thank you. That is quite settled,’ said he, rising and putting his lens in his pocket. ‘Hullo! Here is something interesting!’

The object which had caught his eye was a small dog lash hung on one corner of the bed. The lash, however, was curled upon itself and tied so as to make a loop of whipcord.

‘What do you make of that, Watson?’

‘It’s a common enough lash. But I don’t know why it should be tied.’

‘That is not quite so common, is it? Ah, me! it’s a wicked world, and when a clever man turns his brains to crime it is the worst of all. I think that I have seen enough now, Miss Stoner, and with your permission we shall walk out upon the lawn.’

I had never seen my friend’s face so grim or his brow so dark as it was when we turned from the scene of this investigation. We had walked several times up and down the lawn, neither Miss Stoner nor myself liking to break in upon his thoughts before he roused himself from his reverie.

‘It is very essential, Miss Stoner,’ said he, ‘that you should absolutely follow my advice

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in every respect.'

'I shall most certainly do so.'

'The matter is too serious for any hesitation. Your life may depend upon your compliance.'

'I assure you that I am in your hands.'

'In the first place, both my friend and I must spend the night in your room.'

Both Miss Stoner and I gazed at him in astonishment.

'Yes, it must be so. Let me explain. I believe that that is the village inn over there?'

'Yes, that is the Crown.'

'Very good. Your windows would be visible from there?'

'Certainly.'

'You must confine yourself to your room, on pretence of a headache, when your stepfather comes back. Then when you hear him retire for the night, you must open the shutters of your window, undo the hasp,

put your lamp there as a signal to us, and then withdraw quietly with everything which you are likely to want into the room which you used to occupy. I have no doubt that, in spite of the repairs, you could manage there for one night.'

'Oh, yes, easily.'

'The rest you will leave in our hands.'

'But what will you do?'

'We shall spend the night in your room, and we shall investigate the cause of this noise which has disturbed you.'

'I believe, Mr. Holmes, that you have already made up your mind,' said Miss Stoner, laying her hand upon my companion's sleeve.

'Perhaps I have.'

'Then, for pity's sake, tell me what was the cause of my sister's death.'

'I should prefer to have clearer proofs before I speak.'

'You can at least tell me whether my own

thought is correct, and if she died from some sudden fright.'

'No, I do not think so. I think that there was probably some more tangible cause. And now, Miss Stoner, we must leave you for if Dr. Roylott returned and saw us our journey would be in vain. Good-bye, and be brave, for if you will do what I have told you, you may rest assured that we shall soon drive away the dangers that threaten you.'

**Question 1:** What does Sherlock Holmes prioritise in his quest for the truth? Sherlock Holmes must have all the available facts revealed before he concludes a case.

Sherlock Holmes and I had no difficulty in engaging a bedroom and sitting-room at the Crown Inn. They were on the upper floor, and from our window we could command a view of the avenue gate, and of the inhabited wing of Stoke Moran Manor House. At dusk we saw Dr. Grimesby Roylott drive past, his huge form looming up beside the little figure of the lad who drove him. The boy had some

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slight difficulty in undoing the heavy iron gates, and we heard the hoarse roar of the doctor's voice and saw the fury with which he shook his clinched fists at him. The trap drove on, and a few minutes later we saw a sudden light spring up among the trees as the lamp was lit in one of the sitting-rooms.

'Do you know, Watson,' said Holmes as we sat together in the gathering darkness, 'I have really some scruples as to taking you to-night. There is a distinct element of danger.'

'Can I be of assistance?'

'Your presence might be invaluable.'

'Then I shall certainly come.'

'It is very kind of you.'

'You speak of danger. You have evidently seen more in these rooms than was visible to me.'

'No, but I fancy that I may have deduced

a little more. I imagine that you saw all that I did.'

'I saw nothing remarkable save the bell-rope, and what purpose that could answer I confess is more than I can imagine.'

'You saw the ventilator, too?'

'Yes, but I do not think that it is such a very unusual thing to have a small opening between two rooms. It was so small that a rat could hardly pass through.'

'I knew that we should find a ventilator before ever we came to Stoke Moran.'

'My dear Holmes!'

'Oh, yes, I did. You remember in her statement she said that her sister could smell Dr. Roylott's cigar. Now, of course that suggested at once that there must be a communication between the two rooms. It could only be a small one, or it would have been remarked upon at the coroner's inquiry. I deduced a ventilator.'

'But what harm can there be in that?'

'Well, there is at least a curious coincidence of dates. A ventilator is made, a cord is hung, and a lady who sleeps in the bed dies. Does not that strike you?'

'I cannot as yet see any connection.'

'Did you observe anything very peculiar about that bed?'

'No.'

'It was clamped to the floor. Did you ever see a bed fastened like that before?'

'I cannot say that I have.'

'The lady could not move her bed. It must always be in the same relative position to the ventilator and to the rope—or so we may call it, since it was clearly never meant for a bell-pull.'

'Holmes,' I cried, 'I seem to see dimly what you are hinting at. We are only just in time to prevent some subtle and horrible crime.'

'Subtle enough and horrible enough. When a doctor does go wrong he is the first

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of criminals. He has nerve and he has knowledge. Palmer and Pritchard were among the heads of their profession. This man strikes even deeper, but I think, Watson, that we shall be able to strike deeper still. But we shall have horrors enough before the night is over; for goodness' sake let us have a quiet pipe and turn our minds for a few hours to something more cheerful.'

**Question J:** What is the difference between Sherlock Holmes' and Dr Watson's observations, after all, they see the very same objects? Whilst Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson may see the same objects, Sherlock Holmes studies them for longer and asks more questions about their features, even if they initially seem very commonplace.

About nine o'clock the light among the trees was extinguished, and all was dark in the direction of the Manor House. Two hours passed slowly away, and then, suddenly, just at the stroke of eleven, a single bright light shone out right in front of us.

'That is our signal,' said Holmes, springing to his feet; 'it comes from the middle window.'

As we passed out he exchanged a few words with the landlord, explaining that we were going on a late visit to an acquaintance, and that it was possible that we might spend the night there. A moment later we were out on the dark road, a chill wind blowing in our faces, and one yellow light twinkling in front of us through the gloom to guide us on our sombre errand.

There was little difficulty in entering the grounds, for unrepaired breaches gaped in the old park wall. Making our way among the trees, we reached the lawn, crossed it, and were about to enter through the window when out from a clump of laurel bushes there darted what seemed to be a hideous and distorted child, who threw itself upon the grass with writhing limbs and then ran swiftly across the lawn into the darkness.

**Question K:** Define these words and place in your own sentences: 'acquaintance', 'sombre' Acquaintance: a person someone

knows only slightly; sombre: dull and dark in colour or atmosphere

'My God!' I whispered; 'did you see it?'

Holmes was for the moment as startled as I. His hand closed like a vice upon my wrist in his agitation. Then he broke into a low laugh and put his lips to my ear.

'It is a nice household,' he murmured. 'That is the baboon.'

I had forgotten the strange pets which the doctor affected. There was a cheetah, too; perhaps we might find it upon our shoulders at any moment. I confess that I felt easier in my mind when, after following Holmes' example and slipping off my shoes, I found myself inside the bedroom. My companion noiselessly closed the shutters, moved the lamp onto the table, and cast his eyes round the room. All was as we had seen it in the daytime. Then creeping up to me and making a trumpet of his hand, he whispered into my ear again so gently that it was all that I could do to distinguish the words:

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‘The least sound would be fatal to our plans.’

I nodded to show that I had heard.

‘We must sit without light. He would see it through the ventilator.’

I nodded again.

‘Do not go asleep; your very life may depend upon it. Have your pistol ready in case we should need it. I will sit on the side of the bed, and you in that chair.’

I took out my revolver and laid it on the corner of the table.

Holmes had brought up a long thin cane, and this he placed upon the bed beside him. By it he laid the box of matches and the stump of a candle. Then he turned down the lamp, and we were left in darkness.

How shall I ever forget that dreadful vigil? I could not hear a sound, not even the drawing of a breath, and yet I knew that my companion sat open-eyed, within a few feet of me, in the same state of nervous tension in which I was myself. The shutters cut

off the least ray of light, and we waited in absolute darkness.

From outside came the occasional cry of a night-bird, and once at our very window a long drawn catlike whine, which told us that the cheetah was indeed at liberty. Far away we could hear the deep tones of the parish clock, which boomed out every quarter of an hour. How long they seemed, those quarters! Twelve struck, and one and two and three, and still we sat waiting silently for whatever might befall.

Suddenly there was the momentary gleam of a light up in the direction of the ventilator, which vanished immediately, but was succeeded by a strong smell of burning oil and heated metal. Someone in the next room had lit a dark-lantern. I heard a gentle sound of movement, and then all was silent once more, though the smell grew stronger. For half an hour I sat with straining ears. Then suddenly another sound became audible—a very gentle, soothing sound, like that of a small jet of steam escaping continually from a kettle. The instant that

we heard it, Holmes sprang from the bed, struck a match, and lashed furiously with his cane at the bell-pull.

‘You see it, Watson?’ he yelled. ‘You see it?’

But I saw nothing. At the moment when Holmes struck the light I heard a low, clear whistle, but the sudden glare flashing into my weary eyes made it impossible for me to tell what it was at which my friend lashed so savagely. I could, however, see that his face was deadly pale and filled with horror and loathing. He had ceased to strike and was gazing up at the ventilator when suddenly there broke from the silence of the night the most horrible cry to which I have ever listened. It swelled up louder and louder, a hoarse yell of pain and fear and anger all mingled in the one dreadful shriek. They say that away down in the village, and even in the distant parsonage, that cry raised the sleepers from their beds. It struck cold to our hearts, and I stood gazing at Holmes, and he at me, until the last echoes of it had died away into the silence from which it rose.

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'What can it mean?' I gasped.

'It means that it is all over,' Holmes answered. 'And perhaps, after all, it is for the best. Take your pistol, and we will enter Dr. Roylott's room.'

With a grave face he lit the lamp and led the way down the corridor. Twice he struck at the chamber door without any reply from within. Then he turned the handle and entered, I at his heels, with the cocked pistol in my hand.

It was a singular sight which met our eyes. On the table stood a dark-lantern with the shutter half open, throwing a brilliant beam of light upon the iron safe, the door of which was ajar. Beside this table, on the wooden chair, sat Dr. Grimesby Roylott clad in a long grey dressing-gown, his bare ankles protruding beneath, and his feet thrust into red heelless Turkish slippers. Across his lap lay the short stock with the long lash which we had noticed during the day. His chin was cocked upward and his eyes were fixed in a dreadful, rigid stare at

the corner of the ceiling. Round his brow he had a peculiar yellow band, with brownish speckles, which seemed to be bound tightly round his head. As we entered he made neither sound nor motion.

'The band! the speckled band!' whispered Holmes.

I took a step forward. In an instant his strange headgear began to move, and there reared itself from among his hair the squat diamond-shaped head and puffed neck of a loathsome serpent.

'It is a swamp adder!' cried Holmes; 'the deadliest snake in India. He has died within ten seconds of being bitten. Violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another. Let us thrust this creature back into its den, and we can then remove Miss Stoner to some place of shelter and let the county police know what has happened.'

As he spoke he drew the dog-whip swiftly from the dead man's lap, and throwing the noose round the reptile's neck he drew

it from its horrid perch and, carrying it at arm's length, threw it into the iron safe, which he closed upon it.

**Question L:** What was the speckled band? The speckled band was a headpiece shaped as a snake with diamonds encrusted on the head.

Such are the true facts of the death of Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran. It is not necessary that I should prolong a narrative which has already run to too great a length by telling how we broke the sad news to the terrified girl, how we conveyed her by the morning train to the care of her good aunt at Harrow, or how the slow process of official inquiry came to the conclusion that the doctor met his fate while indiscreetly playing with a dangerous pet. The little which I had yet to learn of the case was told me by Sherlock Holmes as we travelled back next day.

'I had,' said he, 'come to an entirely erroneous conclusion which shows, my dear Watson, how dangerous it always is to



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reason from insufficient data. The presence of the gipsies, and the use of the word 'band,' which was used by the poor girl, no doubt, to explain the appearance which she had caught a hurried glimpse of by the light of her match, were sufficient to put me upon an entirely wrong scent. I can only claim the merit that I instantly reconsidered my position when, however, it became clear to me that whatever danger threatened an occupant of the room could not come either from the window or the door. My attention was speedily drawn, as I have already remarked to you, to this ventilator, and to the bell-rope which hung down to the bed. The discovery that this was a dummy, and that the bed was clamped to the floor, instantly gave rise to the suspicion that the rope was there as a bridge for something passing through the hole and coming to the bed. The idea of a snake instantly occurred to me, and when I coupled it with my knowledge that the doctor was furnished with a supply of creatures from India, I felt that I was probably on the right track. The idea of using a form of poison which could

not possibly be discovered by any chemical test was just such a one as would occur to a clever and ruthless man who had had an Eastern training. The rapidity with which such a poison would take effect would also, from his point of view, be an advantage. It would be a sharp-eyed coroner, indeed, who could distinguish the two little dark punctures which would show where the poison fangs had done their work. Then I thought of the whistle. Of course he must recall the snake before the morning light revealed it to the victim. He had trained it, probably by the use of the milk which we saw, to return to him when summoned. He would put it through this ventilator at the hour that he thought best, with the certainty that it would crawl down the rope and land on the bed. It might or might not bite the occupant, perhaps she might escape every night for a week, but sooner or later she must fall a victim.

'I had come to these conclusions before ever I had entered his room. An inspection of his chair showed me that he had been in

the habit of standing on it, which of course would be necessary in order that he should reach the ventilator. The sight of the safe, the saucer of milk, and the loop of whipcord were enough to finally dispel any doubts which may have remained. The metallic clang heard by Miss Stoner was obviously caused by her stepfather hastily closing the door of his safe upon its terrible occupant. Having once made up my mind, you know the steps which I took in order to put the matter to the proof. I heard the creature hiss as I have no doubt that you did also, and I instantly lit the light and attacked it.'

'With the result of driving it through the ventilator.'

'And also with the result of causing it to turn upon its master at the other side. Some of the blows of my cane came home and roused its snakish temper, so that it flew upon the first person it saw. In this way I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr. Grimesby Roylott's death, and I cannot say that it is likely to weigh very heavily upon my conscience.'

## LESSON 4

# THE CHARACTER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES



### THE BIG IDEA

The purpose of this lesson is to extend students' knowledge of Arthur Conan Doyle's protagonist, Sherlock Holmes. Students will study this character in a range of excerpts from a number of short detective stories.



### LESSON OBJECTIVES

All students will build a profile of Sherlock Holmes and include pertinent information about his character, including his personality, appearance and manner

Most students will make logical deductions from clues presented in excerpts from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and other tales of the great detective



### RESOURCES

- ♦ **Resource 4.1:** Extracts from Sherlock Holmes stories
- ♦ **Resource 4.2:** Further extracts from Sherlock Holmes stories

### SETTING THE SCENE

Teachers may want to revisit the *Setting the Scene* section of Lesson 3, which focuses on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

## LESSON 4: THE CHARACTER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

### LANGUAGE AND LANDMARKS

KEY WORD	EXPLANATION	SYNONYMS
<b>Reliable</b>	Consistently good or trustworthy	trustworthy
<b>Conjure</b>	To suggest or make something happen unexpectedly	Bring to mind, produce, evoke
<b>Inestimable</b>	Too great to calculate	Measureless, endless, unlimited
<b>Humble</b>	To have a low estimate of something, e.g. one's own performance	Meek, unassertive, lowly
<b>Malignant</b>	Having or showing a wish to do something evil	Malevolent
<b>Stethoscope</b>	A medical instrument to listen to someone's heartbeat or breathing	
<b>Successive</b>	One after another	In a row, sequential
<b>Unheeded</b>	Heard or noticed, but ignored	Ignored

## LESSON 4: THE CHARACTER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

### ACTIVITIES

#### STARTER

Write the word 'deduce' on the interactive whiteboard and ask students to first of all define it and place it in a sentence. Then, ask the class for synonyms. For example, 'infer' or 'reason'. Ensure all students have a secure understanding of the term, which will be used extensively throughout the lesson.

#### Differentiation

If the word is unfamiliar to students, model looking up the word in a dictionary and synonyms in a thesaurus.

#### MAIN

In pairs, student should choose three of the excerpts from Resource 4.1 (page 50) read together. Explain to students that these excerpts are all written from the point of view of Dr. Watson, Sherlock Holmes friend and colleague.

Students should make a note of:

- ♦ descriptions that interests them
- ♦ deductions they can make about the character of Sherlock Holmes
- ♦ questions they may have about the excerpts

As a class, encourage pairs to share their findings, cross-referencing these with others' contributions. Students should justify their deductions by drawing on excerpts and explaining their thinking. By the end of this activity, the class should have formed a comprehensive profile of Sherlock Holmes. Give students an opportunity to ask questions that may have arisen from their reading.

Following this activity, return to the word introduced in the starter 'deduce'. Tell students that Sherlock Holmes makes many deductions from what he carefully observes. Sometimes he observes people's actions,

but more often than not he observes objects they wear or carry with them. Students will find out more about Sherlock Holmes' skill in deduction in the following lesson. In this activity, students have an opportunity to make their own deductions from a series of clues.

In pairs, students should read Resource 4.2 (page 52) and make a note of their deductions. Once students have read all of the excerpts, ask students to feedback their ideas. How do their deductions compare to others?

#### Differentiation

Model making your own deductions to demonstrate using key words and information from the excerpts to inform your thinking.

## PLENARY

Give students an opportunity to dream up their own stories to explain strange and mysterious objects. Display some prompt objects on the interactive whiteboard, for example 'snapped candlestick', 'half-empty sealed bottle of cordial', 'book with a missing middle chapter'. Students may create their own objects if they wish. In pairs, encourage students to think of mysterious explanations to describe them.

### Assessment questions

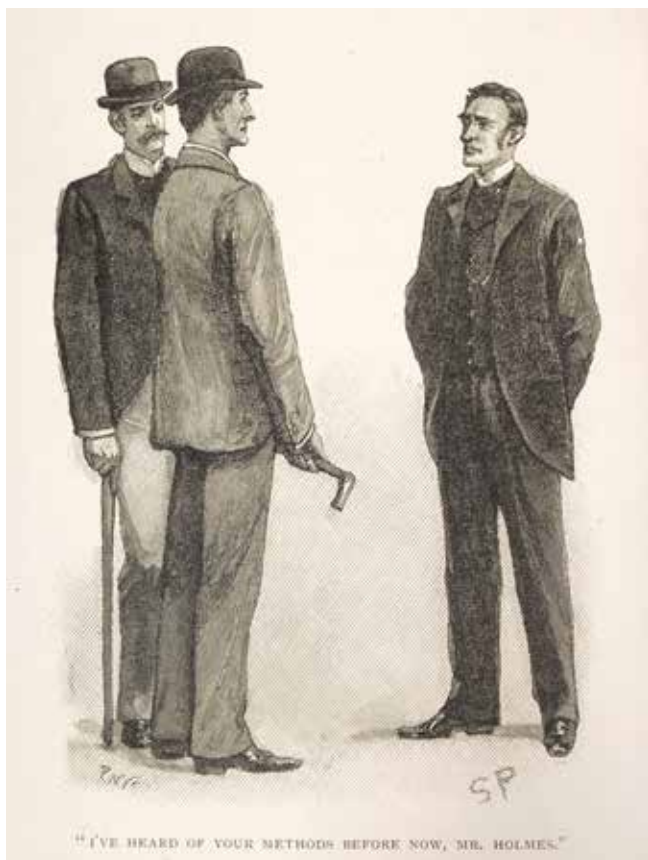
1. Define 'deduce' and place it in a sentence. Deduce: to make a logical conclusion based on the facts available.
2. Describe five features of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's protagonist, Sherlock Holmes. Include details about his personality, appearance and manner. Students' answers may include references to Sherlock Holmes' eccentric personality, his vivid imagination that is presented through his 'performances' (rather like an actor), lack of interest in money, bright and quick eyes, pride in simple and logical explanations of the world around him.



SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, 1927  
Henry L. Gates © National Portrait Gallery, London

## LESSON 4: THE CHARACTER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

## RESOURCE 4.1: EXTRACTS FROM SHERLOCK HOLMES STORIES



"I'VE HEARD OF YOUR METHODS BEFORE NOW, MR. HOLMES."  
MR HOLMES, 1895  
Sidney Paget © Museum of London

**Excerpt 1, from *A Study in Scarlet***

'A man is suspected of a crime months perhaps after it has been committed. His linen or clothes are examined, and brownish stains discovered upon them. Are they bloodstains, or mud stains, or rust stains, or fruit stains, or what are they? That is a question which has puzzled many an expert, and why? Because there was no reliable test. Now we have the Sherlock Holmes' test, and there will no longer be any difficulty.'

His eyes fairly glittered as he spoke, and he put his hand over his heart and bowed as if to some applauding crowd conjured up by his imagination.

**Excerpt 2, from *The Adventure of Black Peter***

Holmes, however, like all great artists, lived for his art's sake, and, save in the case of the Duke of Holderness, I have seldom known him claim any large reward for his inestimable services. So unworldly was he—

or so capricious—that he frequently refused his help to the powerful and wealthy where the problem made no appeal to his sympathies, while he would devote weeks of most intense application to the affairs of some humble client whose case presented those strange and dramatic qualities which appealed to his imagination and challenged his ingenuity.

**Excerpt 3, from *A Scandal in Bohemia***

'It is simplicity itself,' said he; 'my eyes tell me that on the inside of your left shoe, just where the firelight strikes it, the leather is scored by six almost parallel cuts. Obviously they have been caused by someone who has very carelessly scraped round the edges of the sole in order to remove crusted mud from it. Hence, you see, my double deduction that you had been out in vile weather, and that you had a particularly malignant boot-slitting specimen of the London slavey. As to your practice, if a gentleman walks into my rooms smelling of iodoform, with a black



## LESSON 4: THE CHARACTER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

### RESOURCE 4.1: EXTRACTS FROM SHERLOCK HOLMES STORIES CONTINUED



mark of nitrate of silver upon his right forefinger, and a bulge on the right side of his top-hat to show where he has secreted his stethoscope, I must be dull, indeed, if I do not pronounce him to be an active member of the medical profession.'

I could not help laughing at the ease with which he explained his process of deduction. 'When I hear you give your reasons,' I remarked, 'the thing always appears to me to be so ridiculously simple that I could easily do it myself, though at each successive instance of your reasoning I am baffled until you explain your process. And yet I believe that my eyes are as good as yours.'

'Quite so,' he answered, lighting a cigarette, and throwing himself down into an armchair. 'You see, but you do not observe. The distinction is clear.'

#### Excerpt 4, from *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*

Sherlock Holmes was transformed when he was hot upon such a scent as this. Men who had only known the quiet thinker and logician of Baker Street would have failed to recognise him. His face flushed and darkened. His brows were drawn into two hard black lines, while his eyes shone out from beneath them with a steely glitter. His face was bent downward, his shoulders bowed, his lips compressed, and the veins stood out like whipcord in his long, sinewy neck. His nostrils seemed to dilate with a purely animal lust for the chase, and his mind was so absolutely concentrated upon the matter before him that a question or remark fell unheeded upon his ears, or, at the most, only provoked a quick, impatient snarl in reply. Swiftly and silently he made his way along the track which ran through the meadows, and so by way of the woods to the Boscombe Pool. It was damp, marshy ground, as is all that district, and there were marks of many feet, both upon the path and

amid the short grass which bounded it on either side. Sometimes Holmes would hurry on, sometimes stop dead, and once he made quite a little detour into the meadow.

## LESSON 4: THE CHARACTER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

### RESOURCE 4.2: FURTHER EXTRACTS FROM SHERLOCK HOLMES STORIES



#### Excerpt 1, scene snapshot from *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*

Holmes spots some muddy ground and crouches down to look at it very carefully. He notices a set of footprints, which probably belong to the murderer. The footprints are set far apart from one another and the impression made by the right foot is much clearer than the impression made by the left foot. Holmes also knows that the murderer killed his victim with a heavy blow to the left side of the head from behind. Nearby, he observes a stone with grass growing underneath it.

#### Excerpt 2, from *A Case of Identity*

**Holmes describes his meeting with a woman who required his help.**

‘I was then much surprised and interested on glancing down to observe that, though the boots which she was wearing were not unlike each other, they were really odd ones; the one having a slightly decorated toe-cap, and the other a plain one. One was buttoned only in the two lower buttons out of five, and the other at the first, third, and fifth. Now, when you see that a young lady, otherwise neatly dressed, has come away from home with odd boots, half-buttoned, it is no great deduction to say that she came away in a hurry.’

#### Excerpt 3, from *The Speckled Band*

‘The left arm of your jacket is spattered with mud in no less than seven places. The marks are perfectly fresh.’

## LESSON 5

### A DIFFERENT KIND OF DETECTIVE



#### THE BIG IDEA

The purpose of this lesson is to broaden students' knowledge of detective fiction and recognise features of 19th century detective fiction in a contemporary mystery novel.



#### LESSON OBJECTIVES

All students will read the first three chapters of *The London Eye Mystery* and describe the character of Ted accurately.

Most students will accurately compare the character of Ted to Sherlock Holmes, drawing on descriptions in *The London Eye Mystery*.

Some students will draw on specific words, phrases or events in a Sherlock Holmes mystery to enrich their comparison to Ted.

#### YOU WILL NEED

Copies of *The London Eye Mystery*, Siobhan Dowd (first three chapters).

## LESSON 5

# KEY LANGUAGE

KEY WORD	EXPLANATION	SYNONYMS
<b>Cantilever</b>	A long projecting beam, attached at one end only	
<b>Anticyclone</b>	A type of weather system that is associated with calm and fine weather	
<b>Meteorology</b>	A part of science that is concerned with the atmosphere and, for example, the weather	

## LESSON 5

# SETTING THE SCENE

### Siobhan Dowd

Siobhan Dowd's parents were Irish, but she spent her youth growing up in London. She studied Classics at the University of Oxford and continued her higher education at the University of Greenwich. Dowd is interested in human rights and has served on prominent committees in the USA (she spent seven years in New York). When she returned to England, Dowd set up a programme that encourages authors to visit pupils in schools, prisons, young offender institutions and community projects. She wrote for a number of different audiences, including adults, but latterly turned her attention to children's fiction. *The London Eye Mystery* was published in 2007, the year that Dowd died. This story tells a tale about a boy with Asperger's Syndrome, Ted, who solves the mystery of how his cousin, Salim, disappeared from within a capsule on the London Eye.

### Further reading

*The London Eye Mystery*, Siobhan Dowd 1960 – 2007  
David Fickling Books



## LESSON 5

### ACTIVITIES

#### STARTER

Display the following paragraph on the interactive whiteboard. Give each student an answers list to fill the gaps. Students should copy the paragraph into their books and insert the relevant word from the list.

Differentiation: to challenge pupils only give students the first letter of each of the words on the answers list e.g. 'f..... w.....' for 'ferris wheel'.

The London Eye, a giant .....1....., was completed in .....2..... and is sometimes known as the .....3..... It stands on the .....4..... of the River Thames in .....5.....

Standing proudly at a height of .....6....., the wheel has .....7..... capsules, which take .....8..... to complete one full rotation. It is one of the most popular paid tourist attractions with approximately .....9..... visitors every year. It was the highest viewing point in the city until the .....10..... opened in February 2013.

<b>March 2000</b>	<b>ferris wheel</b>	<b>Millennium Wheel</b>
<b>South Bank</b>	<b>London</b>	<b>135 metres</b>
<b>32</b>	<b>30 minutes</b>	<b>3.5 million</b>
<b>Shard</b>		

#### MAIN

Give pairs of students a copy of the first three chapters of *The London Eye Mystery*.

Explain to students that this is a contemporary mystery story, written by Siobhan Dowd. It has won many book awards since it was published in 2007. The main character is a boy called Ted, who has Asperger syndrome. Explain that Asperger syndrome is a form of autism, which is a lifelong condition that affects how someone makes sense of the world around them, including how to process information and relate to other people. People with Asperger syndrome can find it difficult to read the signals that most of us take for granted. The story describes how Ted solves the mystery of his missing friend, Salim. Can students spot the similarities between Ted and Sherlock Holmes in the opening chapters?

Read the first three chapters of *The London Eye Mystery* a class, giving students an opportunity to read aloud. Explain tricky words to students, drawing on the Key Language and Landmarks prompt as necessary.

Display the following questions on the interactive whiteboard and ask students to write their answers in full sentences in their writing books.



1. What are the capsules made of?
2. How did Ted and Kat's friends know that they had been tracking Ted's capsule correctly?
3. What does the acronym AWOL stand for? Remember that an acronym is a short version of a name or phrase that uses the first letters – initials – of the name or phrase, for example BBC stands for British Broadcasting Corporation
4. Ted doesn't understand the phrase 'off the rails'. He thinks that it means the same as skiing school. What does the phrase 'off the rails' really mean?

Bring the class together to review answers to the questions. Ask students to self correct their answers to ensure they are correct and include as much relevant information as possible.

Recall students' knowledge of Sherlock Holmes. In particular, focus students on the processes by which he solves crimes. Ask students to offer words or phrases that describe his character.

Display the following questions on the interactive whiteboard and give students time to read and answer the questions in their books.

5. Reread the beginning of Chapter 2, until "Not now, Ted,' he said.' What does this exchange between Ted and his father tell you about Ted's personality?

6. Ted watches Kat and thinks the following:

'Kat was eating toast and standing up, wriggling. It wasn't that she was listening to her weirdo music on headphones. Which meant she wouldn't hear the weather and wouldn't wear a raincoat or bring her umbrella to school. Which meant that she would get wet and I wouldn't and this was good.'

Describe the similarities between Ted and Sherlock Holmes.

## PLENARY

Based on the first three chapters of *The London Eye Mystery*, students should produce a missing person report on Salim. They should reread relevant parts of the story and include as much relevant information about Salim as possible, include his appearance, personality and whereabouts.

## Homework idea

Students may write their own version of the next chapter – chapter four – of *The London Eye Mystery*. Students should use their knowledge of Ted's character and the turn of events in chapter three to move the story forwards.

## Assessment questions

Draw on questions one to six to create your own pop quiz for the lesson. You may also want to include knowledge learned in the starter relating to history of the London Eye.

# EXPLORE

Students can explore the mysterious artifacts in their local or central London museums, spooky details in the architecture or atmospheric locations to inspire their own creative writing in the form of a Gothic or detective story.



## EXPLORE



### THE BIG IDEA

Students explore the mysterious artifacts in their local or central London museums, spooky details in the architecture or atmospheric locations to inspire their own creative writing in the form of a Gothic or detective story.



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will draw upon a range of appropriate vocabulary to describing intriguing objects and settings.

Most students will be able to recognise aspects of the imagery used in the texts. Some students will extend the imagery found in the texts.



### RESOURCES

E1: Case Notes

## EXPLORE

### THE GOTHIC CITY

#### Visit 1: Find out about Sherlock's London at the Museum of London

Museum of London, 150 London Wall, EC2Y 5HN

The Museum of London's Victorian Walk uses original shop fronts and objects from the Museum's collection to capture the atmosphere of London life at the close of the 19th century.

The Museum of London is running an exhibition delving into the mind of the famous detective and recreating the atmosphere of Sherlock's London: *The man who never lived and will never die*, from 17 October – 12 April 2015.

[www.museumoflondon.org.uk/london-wall/whats-on/exhibitions-displays/sherlock-holmes/](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/london-wall/whats-on/exhibitions-displays/sherlock-holmes/)

#### Visit 2: Look for Gothic inspiration in a London museum

Museums, and in particular the British Museum, were a great source of inspiration for the writers (and sometimes the characters) of Victorian Gothic and detective novels. Fascination for ancient Egypt, inspired by archeological discoveries at the time, led a number of Victorian writers, including Conan Doyle and Bram Stoker, to weave tales of ancient curses and haunting mummies.

#### British Museum

Great Russell Street, WC1B 3DG

The British Museum has the largest collection of ancient Egyptian material outside Cairo.

[www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

#### Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology

Malet Place, Camden, London WC1E 6BT

The Petrie Museum houses an estimated 80,000 objects, making it one of the greatest collections of Egyptian and Sudanese archaeology in the world.

[www.ucl.ac.uk/museums/petrie](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums/petrie)

#### Hunterian Museum

Royal College of Surgeons, 35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC

Your local museum also is likely to have a variety of fascinating objects that might spark the imaginations of your students.

## EXPLORE

### THE GOTHIC CITY CONTINUED

#### Visit 3: Visit an atmospheric location for a story setting

You may wish to take your students to an atmospheric location close to your school, or further afield, combined with another London Curriculum trip. Suggestions include:

##### The 'magnificent seven cemeteries'

The rapid growth of the London population during the 19th century created burial grounds in the city that were so overcrowded they became a risk to health. In response the Victorians introduced the concept of Garden Cemeteries, in suburban areas, with beautifully landscaped gardens and strong Gothic influences. Known today as the 'magnificent seven cemeteries' they can be found in Kensal Green, Norwood, Highgate, Nunhead, Brompton, Abbey Park and Tower Hamlets.

##### Historical houses

One of many historical houses right across London could make an atmospheric setting of a mystery story. Some of them have provided film locations, for example Dr Johnson's House featured in the 1946 Sherlock Holmes film *Dressed to Kill*.

##### Dr Johnson's House

17 Gough Square, London EC4A 3DE

#### Visit 4: Explore the Gothic imagination at the British Library (until 20 January 2015)

The British Library, 96 Euston Road, NW1 2DB

From Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker to Stanley Kubrick and Alexander McQueen, via posters, books, film and even a vampire-slaying kit, your students can experience the dark shadow the Gothic imagination has cast across film, art, music, fashion, architecture and our daily lives.

[www.bl.uk/whatson/exhibitions/gothic/](http://www.bl.uk/whatson/exhibitions/gothic/)



THE BRITISH LIBRARY

EXPLORE

RESOURCE E1: CASE NOTES



City of: ..... Date: .....

Building: ..... Witness name: .....

DISCOVERED: OBJECT #1

Sketch a picture of the mysterious object

Word work: jot down words to describe the object

Curiouser and curiouser: make a note of your object's peculiar features

CREATE A CLUE

Jot down some ideas about how you might use the object in the beginning of your own detective or mystery story. Perhaps the object is the murder weapon? Or maybe it is something the murderer left behind? Did it belong to the victim? Why is it significant?

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



## EXPLORE

### RESOURCE E1: CASE NOTES CONTINUED



City of: ..... Date: .....

Building: ..... Witness name: .....

### DISCOVERED: SCENE OF THE CRIME

Sketch a picture of the scene

Word work: jot down words  
to describe the atmosphere

Curiouser and curiouser:  
make a note of the setting's  
particular sights, sounds and smells

### CREATE A SETTING

Jot down some ideas about how you might use the location in the beginning of your own detective or mystery story.

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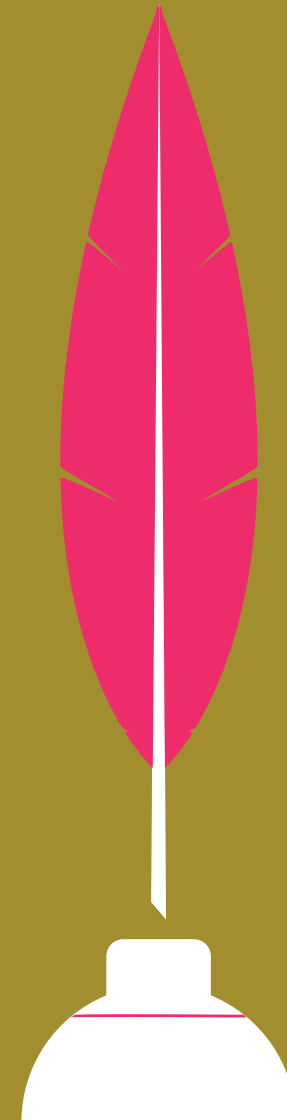
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# CONNECT

Students use their knowledge of detective and Gothic fiction and experience of studying mysterious objects or settings on their school trip to create the opening scene of their own mystery story.



## LESSON 6

### CREATING TALES OF MYSTERY



#### BIG IDEA

The purpose of this lesson is to give students an opportunity to use their knowledge of detective fiction and experience of studying mysterious objects on their school trip to create the opening scene of their own mystery story.



#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

All students will use their case notes about a mysterious object or atmospheric location studied on the school trip to develop the beginning of a mystery story.

Most students will consistently use effective vocabulary – drawn from their case notes and authors/works studied to date to set the scene – to inform and shape their writing.

Some students will create a plausible clue out of their mysterious object to set the scene of their mystery story.

## LESSON 5: CREATING TALES OF MYSTERY

### ACTIVITIES

#### STARTER

Display photographs of some of the objects and places students studied on their school trip. Ask students to recall their memories of the school trip. What did they see? What did it make them think of?

#### MAIN

Ask students to imagine that they are authors of detective fiction stories. They should use their *Case Notes* about the object or atmospheric location they studied to develop the beginning of a short mystery story. Students should draw on the vocabulary they jotted down on the school trip to inform their writing. They may decide to imagine that the object is an important clue to solve a terrible crime.

Model the task for students on the whiteboard, paying particular attention to the purpose and significance of the object in the opening scene and describe it accordingly, drawing attention to its strange features, hinting at the reasons why it was where it was.

#### PLENARY

Students may take it in turns to read aloud the beginning of their stories. Encourage students to read with expression and allow others to ask questions or hazard a guess at the significance or purpose of the strange object.

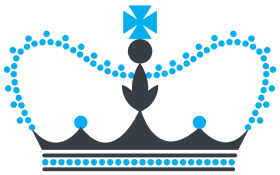
#### Homework idea

Having written the opening paragraphs of their mystery stories, students may develop these paragraphs into the opening chapter – or two – their story.

#### Assessment questions

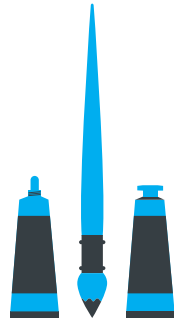
Steer students towards forming good questions to ask about their peers' work in the plenary. Make a note of these questions and students names to ensure they are asked similar questions during their turn reading aloud.

## LINKS TO OTHER LONDON CURRICULUM SUBJECTS



### HISTORY

**Social reform in Victorian London** explores some of the problems created in the city during a period of rapid growth and industrialization, providing context for writing featured this unit.



### ART AND DESIGN

**The art of walking** features the impact of Victorian Gothic revival on London's built environment. The art of walking tours all feature atmospheric buildings which could be used as a setting for a mysterious story.



### MUSIC

**City on the Move** sets students the task of creating a composition inspired by travel across London so could be combined with the visit of any unit.

## REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING

*In Darkest London: The Gothic Cityscape  
in Victorian Literature*, Ridenhou, Jamieson,  
Scarecrow Press Inc, 2013.



## CREDITS

The GLA would like to thank the following organisations for their contribution:

Our collaborators on  
the London Curriculum



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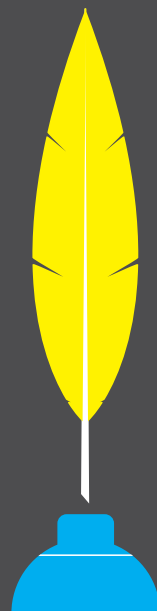
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'We're learning about London in English and History  
and it makes me feel proud to be a Londoner'

**key stage 3 student**

'The level is appropriate for KS3 students and will  
match the levels expected from the new national curriculum too'

**key stage 3 teacher**

'The idea of using London as a teaching resource has never been explored  
much before, so both students and teachers are excited about it'

**key stage 3 teacher**