



Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle (1859-1930) was a **British writer and physician**, best known for creating Sherlock Holmes, one of literature's most enduring detectives. His works include four Holmes novels and 56 short stories, as well as historical fiction, plays, poetry, and the Professor Challenger series. Knighted in 1902 for his Boer War service, he also championed spiritualism, investigated miscarriages of justice, and wrote influential non-fiction. His creations shaped modern detective fiction and remain widely adapted.

If you enjoyed reading short stories from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, try *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, *The Wolf Wilder* by Katherine Rundell, *The London Eye Mystery* by Siobhan Dowd and *Murder Most Unladylike* by Robin Stevens.

Year 8 Autumn One Knowledge Organiser



During the 19th century, London experienced unprecedented growth, becoming the largest city in the world by the 1820s and a global hub for finance, trade, and politics. Its population surged from just over 1 million in 1801 to more than 5.5 million by 1891, with Greater London reaching over 6 million by 1897. This rapid expansion led to overcrowded slums, particularly in the East End, where poor sanitation and dense housing created harsh living conditions.

Victorian society had a clear class hierarchy. While the middle and upper classes enjoyed wealth and comfort, the working class faced long hours, low wages, and poor living conditions. Public health crises, such as cholera outbreaks, were common.

The era also saw the establishment of the Metropolitan Police in 1829, which professionalized law enforcement and helped maintain order in the rapidly growing city.

'The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes': Knowledge Organiser

Scandal in Bohemia – plot overview

- The King of Bohemia plans to marry a Norwegian princess. However, he previously had a relationship with a woman called Irene Adler. Adler is threatening to ruin his engagement with a picture she has of herself and the king together.
- Holmes tricks Adler into revealing where she keeps the photograph, but she outsmarts Holmes and escapes with it. Adler decides not to use the picture against the king. She leaves a picture of herself in its place, which Holmes keeps as a reminder of her.

The Red-Headed League – plot overview

- Jabez Wilson gets a job with the mysterious 'Red-Headed League' because of his 'flame' coloured hair.
- One day, he is mysteriously told that he is no longer needed by the league so visits Holmes to ask him to investigate.
- Holmes discovers that his story reveals a plot to steal from a bank vault which is successfully prevented.

The Blue Carbuncle – plot overview

- A policeman named Peterson is left with a man's hat and Christmas goose.
- He takes the goose home to eat and discovers a blue carbuncle (a rare, and very valuable jewel) inside the goose!
- Holmes recognises the jewel as the one that was stolen from The Countess of Morcar. Using the hat as a clue, Holmes and Watson set off to discover how the blue carbuncle was stolen and how it ended up in a goose.

Key words

enlighten – to provide someone with information and understanding. People come to Holmes so that they can be enlightened on a crime.

deduction – the process of reaching a decision by looking at the facts that are known. Holmes is able to use his skills of deduction to solve crimes.

scandal – a scandal is something that shocks people because they think it is morally wrong. The King of Bohemia fears that scandal of his relationship with Irene Adler being exposed.

periodical/serial – books, magazines or other entertainment that are released on a regular basis. *The Strand Magazine* was a periodical that published the Sherlock Holmes stories.

introspective – when you examine your own thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Sherlock Holmes can be **introspective**. This makes him a better detective.

dual nature – Holmes has a dual nature: his quiet introspective side, and his manic detecting side.

Background information

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was the author of the Sherlock Holmes stories.

Sherlock Holmes' fictional home was 221B Baker Street, which is now a museum of Doyle's life and work.

Doyle's short stories were published individually in *The Strand Magazine* periodical and then collected to form *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* short story collection in 1892.

Before he became a writer, Doyle studied medicine.

Characters

Sherlock Holmes – a fictional consulting detective created by Arthur Conan Doyle. He is known for his intelligence, introspection and dual nature. He is described as an 'observing machine' because of his ability to capture the essence of people with seemingly very little evidence.

Dr Watson – Holmes' former flatmate, a doctor and his closest companion. The stories are told from his perspective, working as Holmes' assistant.

Irene Adler – a famous American opera singer who had a relationship with the future King of Bohemia. To Holmes, she is 'the woman' who outsmarted him.

King of Bohemia – in the Victorian era, Bohemia was an area of central Europe; today it is a region of the Czech Republic. The King is engaged to a Scandinavian princess but five years previously was madly in love with Irene Adler. Because of his status, he was unable to marry her at the time, which he regrets. The King still respects Adler.

James Ryder – head attendant of the hotel where the Blue Carbuncle goes missing. He works with his accomplice **Catherine Cusack** (the countess' maid) to steal the jewel and frame **John Horner** for the crime. He is racked with guilt and confesses when Holmes questions him.

Jabez Wilson – a London pawnbroker who has distinctively red hair. His business is struggling so he takes the job working for The Red-Headed League. Wilson was tricked by his assistant Vincent Spaulding who worked alongside another criminal to use his shop to rob the bank next door.

Vincent Spaulding/John Clay – Jabez Wilson's assistant. This is actually a disguise for John Clay who attempts a bank robbery using Wilson's shop as an easy passage.