



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

# THE VALLEY OF FEAR



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# Book brief

- 1 *The Valley of Fear* is the fourth and final Sherlock Holmes novel by British writer, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The story was first published in Strand Magazine in 1914.
- 2 The novel is written in two parts: in the first part, Dr Watson, as narrator, describes how Sherlock Holmes solves a murder in an English country manor. In the second part, there is the story behind the mystery and the explanation of past events.
- 3 The second part of the book is loosely based on the Molly Maguires, an Irish and American crime organisation, and is used to comment on the politics and union problems in Ireland and America at that time.
- 4 Sherlock Holmes only appears in the first part and in the epilogue at the end of the second part of the novel.
- 5 *The Valley of Fear* is one of the Sherlock Holmes novels completed after Conan Doyle tried to kill him off - along with his mortal enemy Professor Moriarty - in The Final Problem.

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## Main Characters

## PART 1



*Sherlock Holmes*

The great  
London detective



*Dr John Watson*

Holmes' assistant and  
narrator of the story



*Inspector Alec MacDonald*

An Inspector from  
Scotland Yard



*White Mason*

The police detective  
from Birlstone



*Cecil Barker*

John Douglas's friend  
and ex business partner



*Mrs Douglas*

John Douglas's  
wife



*Mr Douglas*

The owner of  
Birlstone Manor

## PART 2



*Jack McMurdo*  
The protagonist  
in part 2



*Ettie Shafter*  
Jack McMurdo's  
girlfriend



*Jacob Shafter*  
Owner of the boarding  
house and Ettie's father



*Bodymaster John McGinty*  
Head of the Vermissa Lodge  
and the Scowrs



*Ted Baldwin*  
A Scowrer



*Morris*  
A member of the  
Vermissa Lodge



*Mike Scarlan*  
A lodge member and  
McMurdo's friend

## Grammar

### 1 Fill the gaps with the correct preposition A, B, C or D.

This story (1) ..... Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is a classic Sherlock Holmes mystery, narrated (2) ..... Dr Watson. It starts (3) ..... the murder of a rich man called John Douglas, in a country house (4) ..... Sussex, England. Inspector MacDonald, from Scotland Yard, visits Holmes at his London apartment and asks him for help (5) ..... this difficult case. Holmes and Dr Watson go immediately with him (6) ..... the scene of the crime. It's a complicated case but, with his usual intelligence, Holmes manages to solve the mystery. This all takes place (7) ..... the first part of the novel. The second part takes place in the past and gives more details (8) ..... the reasons for the murder.

- |          |         |         |        |
|----------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1 A with | B by    | C about | D for  |
| 2 A by   | B at    | C about | D from |
| 3 A on   | B about | C for   | D with |
| 4 A from | B at    | C in    | D of   |
| 5 A at   | B to    | C of    | D with |
| 6 A on   | B for   | C to    | D at   |
| 7 A on   | B in    | C about | D at   |
| 8 A for  | B about | C in    | D with |

## Vocabulary

### 2 Make adjectives from the following nouns.

- |              |       |
|--------------|-------|
| 1 guilt      | ..... |
| 2 confidence | ..... |
| 3 amazement  | ..... |
| 4 respect    | ..... |
| 5 suspicion  | ..... |
| 6 value      | ..... |

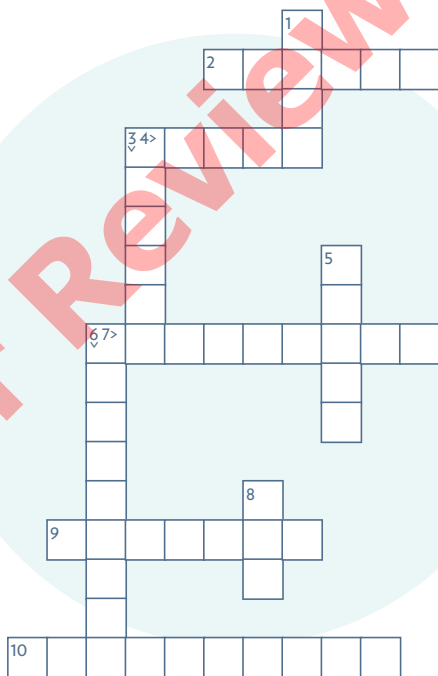


# Crossword

- 3** Complete the crossword, then read Chapter 1 and check your answers.

## Clues

- 1 Part of a chain; a connection
- 2 Opposite of innocent
- 3 Code used to solve a puzzle
- 4 Another name for a criminal
- 5 An illegal act
- 6 Sure about something
- 7 To say something bad about someone or something
- 8 To steal something from a person or place
- 9 One of many publications of the same book
- 10 Very surprised



# PART 1: THE TRAGEDY OF BIRLSTONE

## Chapter 1

# The Warning

- 2 Sherlock Holmes sat at the breakfast table, studying a letter.

‘It’s Porlock’s writing,’ he said thoughtfully. ‘So, it will be something very important.’

‘Who is Porlock?’ I asked.

‘It’s a false name, Watson. I don’t know him, but he is not important – it’s who he knows that’s important. Have you heard of Professor Moriarty?’

‘Yes, he’s a criminal who is famous among crooks\*, but unknown to the public.’

‘In the eyes of the law, Moriarty isn’t a criminal. He’s a genius but a devil. However, he’s never suspected or criticised. After all, he’s the famous mathematician who wrote the excellent book ‘The Dynamics of an Asteroid’. But I’m sure I’ll get him one day.’

‘That’s something I want to see!’ I exclaimed. ‘But you were speaking of this man Porlock.’

‘Ah yes, Porlock. He’s the only weak link\* I’ve been able to find in Moriarty’s chain. I sometimes pay him for valuable information. I’ll be able to read this message once I have the cipher\*.’

Holmes put the paper on the table and we both looked at the strange coded message on it.

‘I’ refers to Dr Watson, the narrator of the story.

Prof. Moriarty is a criminal mastermind and Sherlock’s arch enemy\*. He uses his intelligence to help other criminals but never gets caught. Conan Doyle based his character on a real-life criminal called Adam Worth.

**crook** a criminal  
**arch enemy** greatest/main enemy

**link** part of a chain, a connection  
**cipher** a secret message, code



## The Valley of Fear

534 C2 13 127 36 31 4 17 21 41  
DOUGLAS 109 293 5 37 BIRLSTONE  
26 BIRLSTONE 9 47 171

'It's clearly a reference to words on the pages of some book. I can do nothing till I know which book and which page.'

'But why are there the names 'Douglas' and 'Birlstone'?''

'Clearly because these words are not on the page of the book.'

'Then why has he not given the name of the book?'

'My dear Watson, it's better not to put the cipher and the message in the same envelope. Another letter will arrive soon with an explanation, and the name of the book.'

Holmes was right. A few minutes later, another letter with the same writing on it arrived, and this time it was signed. But when he read it, he said, 'Dear me, Watson! I hope that the man Porlock won't be in danger.'

'DEAR MR HOLMES (he says):

I will go no further in this matter. It is too dangerous. I can see that he suspects me. He came to me after I had addressed this envelope to you. He didn't see it but I saw he was suspicious\*. Please burn the other message, which can now be of no use to you.

FRED PORLOCK.'

**suspicious** showing no trust

Holmes sat with the letter in his hand. At last, he said:

‘Perhaps he just feels guilty and that’s why he saw suspicion in the other’s eyes.’

‘The other being, I suppose, Professor Moriarty.’

‘Of course. Porlock is clearly very afraid. I can see this from the writing on the second envelope.’

‘So, why did he write a second letter at all?’

‘Because he knew I wouldn’t forget the first one and that could cause problems for him.’

‘Of course,’ I said, and I picked up the original coded message. ‘I can’t believe that there may be an important secret on this paper, and we can’t read it.’

‘Let’s think about this,’ said Sherlock. ‘The message begins with a large number, 534. So, if that is a page number, that means it’s a large book. The next sign is C2. What do you think of that, Watson?’

‘The second chapter, no doubt.’

‘That can’t be it, Watson. You’ll agree, I’m sure, that if the page number is given, the number of the chapter isn’t necessary. Also, if page 534 is only in the second chapter, the first one would have to be very long.’

‘Column!’ I cried.

‘Brilliant, Watson. So now, you see, it must be a large book printed in long double columns, since one of the words is number 293. He was going to send me the clue to the book in his second letter, so it must be a very common book, which he imagines I would already have.’

‘The Bible!’ I cried.

Dr Watson is a loyal friend. Holmes admires him and often asks for his help with his cases. He’s a medical doctor and an intelligent man, but he doesn’t have the same talent that Holmes has for solving puzzles.





‘Good, Watson, good! But not, if I may say so, quite good enough! There are many editions of the Bible, I don’t think they would have the same page numbers. For the same reason, it can’t be the dictionary. So what else?’

‘An almanac!’

‘Excellent, Watson! Whitaker’s Almanac is in common use and has many pages with double columns.’

Holmes took the book from his desk and told me to write down the words that the coded message referred to. Afterwards, I looked at the strange message which said:

“There - is - danger - may - come - very - soon - one  
Douglas - rich - country - now - at - Birlstone - House -  
Birlstone - confidence - is - pressing”

‘What a strange way of showing what he means to say!’ I said.

‘On the contrary\*, he has done very well,’ said Holmes. ‘It’s difficult to find the words you want in the columns and you have to depend on the intelligence of the reader. It’s perfectly clear. Something bad is going to happen to someone called Douglas, a rich country gentleman. He’s written ‘confidence’ but I’m sure he means he’s confident that it’s pressing\*.’

Holmes was still enjoying his success when the door opened, and Inspector MacDonald of Scotland Yard came into the room. Those were the early days at the end of the 1880s, when Alec MacDonald was not yet famous, but still a young police detective. He liked and respected Holmes, and asked him for help with difficult cases.

An almanac is a book that is published annually, containing useful information, for the current year.

Scotland Yard which also refers to the Metropolitan Police Force, is the London police headquarters.

**on the contrary** in contrast  
(the opposite)

**pressing** urgent

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Holmes didn't have many friends but he liked the Scotsman, and smiled when he saw him.

'You're up early, Mr Mac,' said Holmes. 'I fear that means that something bad has happened.'

'Knowing you well, I suppose you mean 'hope' not 'fear', Mr Holmes,' the inspector answered with a smile. Then he looked at the table, in amazement, and saw the secret message.

'Douglas!' he said with surprise. 'Birlstone! What's this, Mr Holmes? Where on earth did you get those names?'

'It's a cipher Dr Watson and I had to solve. But why – what's wrong with those names?'

The inspector looked at both of us in astonishment and said, 'Mr Douglas of Birlstone Manor House was murdered last night!'

My friend, Sherlock, loved these dramatic moments but showed no emotion.

'You don't seem surprised,' said the inspector.

'Interested, Mr Mac, but not really surprised. I received an important letter warning me that a certain person is in danger. Now I learn that he's dead. I'm interested but, as you can see, not surprised.'

Holmes told him about Porlock and the letters.

'I was going to ask you and Dr Watson to come to Birlstone with me this morning,' explained the inspector. 'But perhaps it would be better to find this man Porlock.'

MacDonald examined the envelope containing the coded message.

'Posted in London - that doesn't help us much. You say Porlock is a false name, and that you sometimes send him money to a post office box. Have you ever gone to see who comes to get it?'

'On earth' added to what, where, when, how or why questions, gives emphasis and expresses surprise or disbelief.

Holmes is well-known for showing very little excitement, even when he is pleased about something.

People pay for a box at the post office, where they receive mail when they don't want the sender to know their address.

‘No,’ said Holmes. ‘because I promised not to look for him. I know there’s another person behind him.’

‘This professor you often talk about?’

‘Exactly!’

Inspector MacDonald smiled and looked quickly at me.

‘I must say, Mr Holmes, that at Scotland Yard, we think you’re wrong about this professor. He seems very respectable and intelligent. I, myself, went to talk to him.’

The police  
never suspect  
Prof. Moriarty  
of any wrong-  
doing.

Holmes laughed and said, ‘Great! Tell me, did you speak to the professor in his study?’

‘Yes, I sat in front of his writing desk.’

‘Did you notice a picture above the professor’s head?’

‘Yes, I saw the picture – a young woman with her head on her hands, looking to the side.’

‘That painting is worth more than forty thousand pounds and, may I remind you,’ said Holmes. ‘that the professor’s salary\* is about seven hundred pounds a year.’

‘Do you mean that he also earns his money illegally? That’s amazing!’ said the inspector.

‘I’ll tell you some things about Moriarty,’ continued Holmes. ‘He employs about a hundred different types of criminals, and he has many bank accounts, mostly in banks abroad.’

‘That’s very interesting, Holmes. But what is the connection between the professor and Birlstone, except for the warning from this man Porlock?’

**salary** money earned for work

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‘There may be two motives\*. First, this man Douglas may have done something to Moriarty, and the others have been told about his death so that they'll be too afraid to do the same. The other is that Moriarty organised the death of Mr Douglas for financial gain\*. Was there also a robbery?’

‘I haven't heard,’ confirmed the inspector. ‘We must go to Birlstone immediately then. I'll tell you and Dr Watson everything on the way there.’ 

**motive** reason for doing something

**gain** benefit



## After-Reading Activities • PART 1: Chapter 1

### Reading

1 Decide if the following sentences are True (T) or False (F).

|                                                                        | T                        | F                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Sherlock showed the letter to Dr Watson in the evening.              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Sherlock knew who had sent him the letter.                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Porlock's boss is Prof. Moriarty.                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Porlock sent Sherlock the cipher in the second letter.               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 The Inspector wasn't surprised to see Douglas's name in the message. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 The letter was posted in Birlstone.                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 Inspector MacDonald knows that Prof. Moriarty is a criminal.         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 The Inspector didn't know if there had also been a robbery.          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Grammar

B2 FIRST

2 Complete the text with one word for each space.

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson (1) ..... studying the letter when Inspector MacDonald arrived. He was a young Scotland Yard detective (2) ..... often asked Holmes' help with his difficult (3) ..... Holmes liked the young Scotsman and smiled (4) ..... him. When the inspector saw the cipher they were looking (5) ..... , he was shocked to see the names Douglas and Birlstone and asked (6) ..... they had got the message from. Then, he told them that Mr Douglas (7) ..... been murdered the night (8) .....

Holmes showed no emotion and said he was not surprised at (9) ..... They decided to go to Birlstone together and the inspector would give Holmes and Watson all the details (10) ..... the way.



# Grammar

**3 Change the sentences from Direct to Indirect Speech.**

- 1 “Who is Porlock?” asked Dr Watson.  
.....
- 2 “He’s the only weak link I’ve been able to find in Moriarty’s chain,”  
replied Holmes.  
.....
- 3 “I think you’re wrong about Prof. Moriarty,” said the Inspector to Holmes.  
.....
- 4 “What is the connection between the professor and Birlstone?”  
asked the Inspector.  
.....
- 5 “Was there also a robbery?” asked Holmes.  
.....

**Pre-Reading Activities • PART 1: Chapter 2**

# Listening

- 3 4 Listen to the start of Chapter 2 and write a description and some facts about the main characters next to their picture.**

- 1  .....
- 2  .....
- 3  .....

Focus on...

# Sherlock Holmes

The classic description of Sherlock Holmes, everyone would agree, is of a tall thin man with a long, pointed nose, wearing a cape and a deerstalker hat and carrying a magnifying glass. He plays the violin, often smokes a pipe, and behaves in an eccentric manner. In reality, Holmes only wore that type of hat once in the original stories. His famous catchphrases are "Elementary, my dear Watson" and "Come Watson, the game is afoot!". True Sherlock fans will know that, in the Conan Doyle stories, Holmes never said "Elementary" to Dr Watson or anyone else.



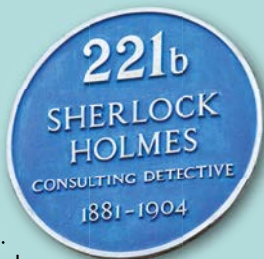
## *Holmes in film and on TV*

Over the years, the role of Sherlock Holmes has been played by many excellent actors and interpreted in different ways. From the earliest films with Basil Rathbone and Peter Cushing to later ones with Robert Downey Jr., and TV series from Jeremy Brett and Benedict Cumberbatch, who brought Holmes into the 21st century, to Jonny Lee Miller in *Elementary*, which took place in a modern-day New York City with a female Dr Watson. There have also been versions with young Sherlock and old Sherlock.



## 221b Baker Street, London

Fans of Sherlock Holmes will know that he lived in apartment B at 221 Baker Street in London. Now, visitors to London can visit his fictional home, which is now the Sherlock Holmes museum. When Conan Doyle introduced the residence in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* in 1887, this address did not even exist.



The numbers at that time actually stopped at no.85, and were only extended in the 1920s.

## Dr John H. Watson

Dr Watson is Holmes' best friend, assistant and flatmate. He returned to London from Afghanistan, after working as a surgeon in the British Army, and met Holmes when he was looking for a place to stay. He is described as a classic Victorian gentleman, unlike the more eccentric Holmes. He is intelligent but not as good at solving mysteries as Holmes is.

Watson is the narrator of almost all of the Sherlock Holmes stories and first appeared in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* (1887).



At the end of the book, Watson is annoyed that Scotland Yard has taken credit for solving the Holmes' case and exclaims, 'Your merits should be publicly recognised. You should publish an account of the case. If you won't, I will for you'. Holmes suavely responds: 'You may do what you like, Doctor'. Therefore, the story is presented as 'a reprint from the reminiscences of John H. Watson'.

## Task

How many different Sherlock Holmes films or TV series have you seen? Which Sherlock did you like best? Compare with a friend.

## Test Yourself

Complete the sentences about the novel with A, B or C.

### Part 1

- 1 Prof. Moriarty is a ...  
☐ A doctor.      ☐ B teacher.      ☐ C mathematician.
- 2 The clues to the cipher were in...  
☐ A a bible.      ☐ B an almanac.      ☐ C a dictionary.
- 3 Cecil Barker had first met John Douglas in ...  
☐ A California.      ☐ B London.      ☐ C Birlstone.
- 4 Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson were welcomed at Birlstone station by ...  
☐ A Sergeant Wilson.      ☐ B Inspector MacDonald.      ☐ C White Mason.
- 5 On the dead man's arm there was the design of...  
☐ A a triangle inside a circle.       ☐ B a circle inside a triangle.   
☐ C a circle inside a square. 
- 6 Sherlock Holmes found the second dumb-bell ...  
☐ A under the table      ☐ B behind the curtain      ☐ C in the moat.

### Part 2

- 1 At the start of Chapter 1, McMurdo met Scanlan on the train.  
He said he lived in ...  
☐ A Vermissa.      ☐ B Hobson's Patch.      ☐ C Chicago.
- 2 When Mr Shafter heard that McMurdo was a Freeman, he told him ...  
☐ A to go to the lodge.      ☐ B to speak to Boss McGinty.  
☐ C to find other lodgings.
- 3 As well as being the Bodymaster of the Lodge, McGinty was also ...  
☐ A the town councillor.      ☐ B the head of the police.  
☐ C a mine owner.
- 4 Mr Morris met McMurdo in the park ...  
☐ A to tell him he was leaving Vermissa.  
☐ B to warn him about the Scowrsers.  
☐ C to offer him a job in his shop.
- 5 Birdy Edwards was ...  
☐ A a reporter.      ☐ B a Scowrer.      ☐ C a detective.
- 6 Ted Baldwin got out of prison ...  
☐ A after 3 years.      ☐ B after 5 years.      ☐ C after 10 years.