

1. Context

Author: Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930)

Nationality: Scottish

Other notable works: *'The Hound of the Baskervilles'*, *'The Sign of Four'*, *'A Study in Scarlet'* (first story) *'The Lost World'*

Dates: *'Scandal in Bohemia'* published in 1891; *'The Speckled Band'* published in 1892.

Era: Victorian

Genre(s): Crime/Detective/Mystery Fiction

Set: London, England

Form: Short stories

Author biography

- Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was born on May 22, 1859, in Edinburgh, Scotland to a prosperous Irish-Catholic family.
- Attended a Jesuit boarding school in England from the age of nine.
- Despite his obvious creative flair, Doyle chose to study medicine at Edinburgh University.
- At university, he met one of the most influential figures in his life, Dr. Joseph Bell.
- Bell was a master at observation, logic, deduction, and diagnosis; qualities which were later to be found in the character of Sherlock Holmes.
- After medical school, he spent time travelling the world as a ship's surgeon on a whaling boat.
- In 1879, his first stories were published. In 1887, his first Sherlock Holmes story, *'A Study in Scarlet'*, was published in *Mrs. Beeton's Christmas Annual*.
- Sherlock Holmes stories were a huge success, making Doyle a household name and very rich.
- In 1893, Doyle killed off Holmes but a public outcry later made him bring him back to life.
- Knighted following the publication of a pamphlet he had written justifying Britain's involvement in the Boer War, a war that had killed his son, brother and two nephews.
- In his later life, he became very interested in spiritualism.
- Died on 7th July 1930.

Social, Historical & Literary context

Literary Context: Detective Fiction

- Edgar Allan Poe's *'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'* (1841) is considered the earliest origins of detective fiction in the English speaking world.
- Others have argued that the first true detective novel was Willkie Collins *'The Moonstone'* (1868).
- Conan Doyle cemented the popularity of the genre with Sherlock Holmes. Holmes appeared in 56 short stories and 4 novels.
- Common features of detective fiction:
 - A celebrated, skilled and professional detective*
 - Ineffective and bungling local police*
 - An 'inside' job*
 - Red herrings*
 - A large number of false suspects*
 - The "least likely suspect"*
 - A 'locked room' murder*
 - A reconstruction of the crime*
 - A final twist in the plot*

YEAR NINE-UNIT: 19th Century Text - SHERLOCK HOLMES TOPIC GUIDE

2. Key Characters - Scandal in Bohemia

Sherlock Holmes: *a consulting detective who resides at 221b Baker Street. Assisted in his cases by his friend Dr. Watson.*

Dr. Watson: *the narrator of the story. Sherlock Holmes' friend who assists him with his cases. Recently married to a woman named Mary.*

Irene Adler: *a central character who is respected for her intellect and integrity. (Scandal in Bohemia)*

Count Kramm/King of Bohemia: *a man of royal blood who hires Sherlock Holmes. (Scandal in Bohemia)*

Mr. Godfrey Norton: *a gentleman and a lawyer. (Scandal in Bohemia)*

3. Key Terminology

Detective fiction	A sub-genre of crime fiction and mystery fiction in which an investigator or a detective (professional, a amateur or retired) investigates a crime, often murder.
literary conventions	Defining features of particular genres such as novel, short story, ballad, sonnet, and play.
First person peripheral narrator	A type of narrative perspective in which the narrator is the another character n the story who witnesses the main character's story and conveys it to the reader.
protagonist	The central character or leading figure in a poem, narrative, novel or any other story. Sometimes can also be referred to as a "hero" by the audience or readers.
antagonist	A person who actively opposes or is hostile to someone or something; an adversary.
tone	The choice of writing style the writer employs to convey specific feelings, emotions or attitudes.
symbolism	The use of symbols to express ideas or qualities.
characterisation	A literary device in which in an author builds up a character in a narrative.
exposition	Refers to part of the story used to introduce background information about events, settings, characters etc. to the reader.
rising action	A related series of incidents in a literary plot that build toward the point of greatest excitement/interest.
climax	The point of highest tension in a narrative.
falling action	Occurs immediately after the climax, when the main problem of the story has been resolved.

4. Key Vocabulary

	Definition
deduce	Arrive at a fact or a conclusion by reasoning; draw as a logical conclusion.
deduction	The process of reaching a decision or answer by thinking about the known facts.
reasoning	The action of thinking about something in a sensible and logical way.
idiosyncratic	A word to describe behaviour which is considered to be distinctive or peculiar.
incorrigible	Not able to be changed or reformed.
temperament	A person's or a animal's nature/traits of personality, which have a permanent impact on their behaviour.
faculties	A natural physical or mental power/an aptitude for doing something.
introspective	To look inward to examine or observe one's own mental and emotional processes.
obstinacy	The quality or condition of being stubborn.
indiscretion	Behaviour that is indiscreet or lacks good judgement.
inextricable	Impossible to escape from, or separate from/ not capable of being solved.
disreputable	Not considered to be respectable in character or appearance.
preposterous	Utterly absurd or ridiculous; contrary to reason or sensible judgement.
perpetrator	A person who carries out an illegal, harmful or immoral act.
morose	Sullen and ill-tempered.
vagabonds	People who wander from place to place without a home or job.
convulse	To suffer violent involuntary contraction of the muscles, producing jerky movements of the body or limbs.
notorious	Famous or well known, typically for some bad quality or deed.
insolence	Rude and disrespectful.
imprudence	Lacking discretion, wisdom, or good judgment.
Angel in the House	Popular Victorian image of the ideal wife/woman.
Feminism	The belief that women should be allowed the same rights, opportunities and power as men.
The New Woman	A feminist ideal that became popular in the late 19 th century and influenced feminism in 20 th century.
Fin de siecle	The end of a century, especially the 19 th century.
Xenophobia	Dislike or prejudice against people from different countries.