



Meet Inspector Sherlock Holmes!

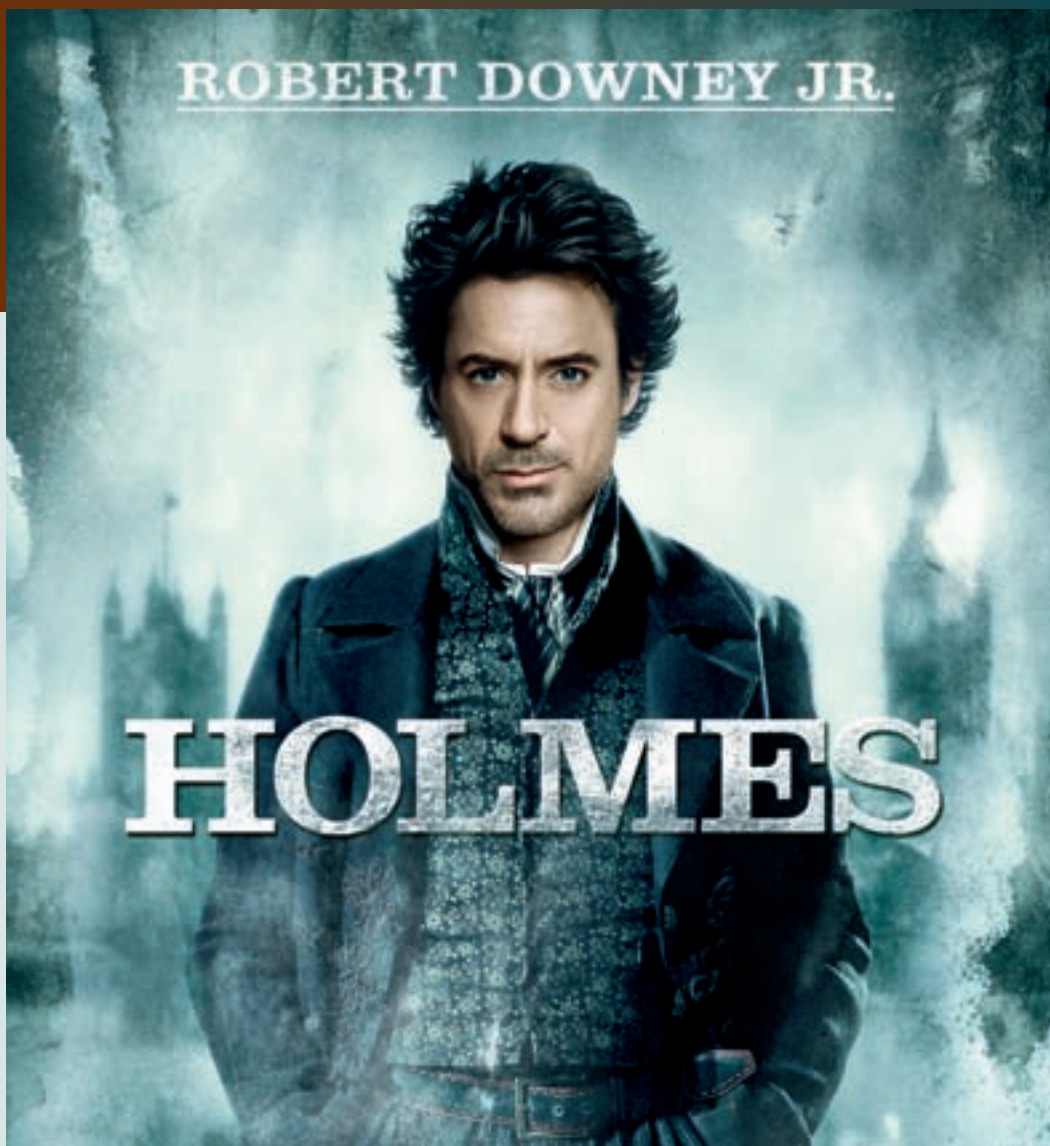
The legendary detective comes to movie screens this December.

“**T**omorrow, at midday, the world as you know it, will end.” A villain’s threat to destroy Britain launches the plot of this holiday season’s blockbuster movie mystery.

“Well then, I guess there isn’t any time to waste, is there?” So responds literature’s most unflappable – and famous – detective: Sherlock Holmes.

Author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s 19th century invention is the most-filmed character in cinema and TV history – with an estimated 200 productions. The latest effort comes from director Guy Ritchie (Madonna’s ex-husband), with a cast that includes actors Robert Downey Jr as Holmes and Jude Law as Holmes’ sidekick Dr Watson. And this version features something fans have never seen before – Holmes as a martial arts expert!

Sherlock Holmes appears in four novels and nearly 60 short stories by Conan Doyle. **CURRENT presents an excerpt from one story, *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* – can you solve it?**



The Boscombe Valley Mystery

Dr Watson receives an urgent telegram from Sherlock Holmes. It tells him to meet the detective for a train journey to Boscombe Valley in rural England. Watson is very helpful to Holmes since he’s a doctor, but he’s also fascinated by Holmes’ pioneering forensic methods of solving crimes. (Watson is the narrator who tells the stories from his point of view.) They meet at London’s Paddington Railway 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.

In the railway carriage to Boscombe Valley, Holmes briefs Watson.



The Boscombe Valley Mystery

▶▶▶ “Have you heard anything of the case?” Holmes 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 seems to be one of those simple cases which are so extremely difficult.”

“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.”

In many Holmes stories, the detective gives Watson a full version of the facts as he knows them, while thinking out loud. If you read closely, it identifies the murderer.

“Boscombe Valley is a country district not very far from Ross, in Herefordshire. The largest proprietor in that part is a Mr John Turner, who made his money in [Ballarat] Australia and returned some years ago. One of the farms which he held, that of Hatherley, was let to Mr Charles McCarthy, who was also an ex-Australian.



MURDER! Charles McCarthy's body is discovered.

“The men had known each other in the colonies, so that it was not unnatural that when they came to settle down they should do so as near each other as possible. Turner was apparently the richer man, so McCarthy became his tenant but still remained, it seems, upon terms of perfect equality, as they were frequently together. McCarthy had one son, a lad of eighteen, and Turner had an only daughter of the same age. Neither of them had wives [living].

“It is a murder, then?”

“On June 3rd, that is, on Monday last, McCarthy left his house at Hatherley about three in the afternoon and walked down to Boscombe Pool, which is a small lake formed by the spreading out of the stream which runs down the Boscombe Valley. He had been out with his serving-man[•] in the morning at Ross, and he had told the man that he must hurry, as he had an appointment of importance to keep at three. From that appointment he never came back alive.

“[McCarthy] had an appointment of importance to keep at three ... he never came back alive.”

“From Hatherley Farmhouse to Boscombe Pool is a quarter of a mile, and two people saw him as he passed over this ground. One was an old woman, whose name is not mentioned, and the other was William Crowder, a gamekeeper[•] in the employ of Mr Turner. Both these witnesses depose[•] that Mr McCarthy was walking alone. The gamekeeper adds that within a few minutes of his seeing Mr McCarthy pass he had seen his son, Mr James McCarthy, going the same way with a gun under his arm. To the best of his belief, the father was actually in sight at the time, and the son was following him. He thought no more of the matter until he heard in the evening of the tragedy that had occurred.” ■

Here are 6 clues that follow this excerpt in the mystery:

- 1** A girl claims she saw the father and son ‘quarrelling violently’ near the lake.
- 2** Charles McCarthy died from blows to the back of his head. His son’s gun was found near the body. But was it the murder weapon?
- 3** James claims he came upon his father by chance, when he overheard him calling ‘Cooley’ – a common greeting only Australians use when they meet.
- 4** James and his father did argue: Charles McCarthy wanted his son to marry John Turner’s daughter Alice for money – and James refused.
- 5** When James walked away from the argument he heard a violent cry. He returned to find his father dying in a pool of blood. His father muttered the words ‘a rat’.
- 6** Turner also opposed the marriage between Alice and James.

Whodunnit?

A James: He discovered his father Charles McCarthy had been the driver of a gold convoy in Ballarat, Australia. John Turner had robbed the gold at gunpoint and returned to England a rich man. McCarthy met up with Turner again and threatened to expose him unless he supported the McCarthys rent-free on his farm, and for his son to marry Alice. James did not want to marry Alice, so he beat his father with his gun.

B John Turner: He did rob McCarthy of gold in Australia, but back in England he made a new start. McCarthy threatened to expose the crime unless Turner’s daughter married his son. Turner arranged to meet McCarthy to refuse the demand. He overheard McCarthy insult his daughter while arguing with James, and became enraged. After James walked off he killed McCarthy with a large rock. ■



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930)

Arthur Conan Doyle grew up in Edinburgh, Scotland. He said his mother’s vivid storytelling – “sinking her voice to a horror-stricken whisper” at the end of a tale – inspired him to write. Conan Doyle trained at Edinburgh University as a medical doctor, and he modelled Sherlock Holmes on his teacher Dr Joseph Bell. He introduced the world to Sherlock Holmes in 1887 with *A Study in Scarlet* and became world-famous for his literary creation.

“The Boscombe Valley Mystery” appears in Doyle’s first volume, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in 1892. You can download the story free from www.sherlock-holmes.classic-literature.co.uk

*** WORDWISE**

- unflappable (adj):** not easily upset; calm and relaxed
- sidekick (n):** friend or assistant
- forensic (adj):** relating to the use of scientific methods to solve crimes
- gaunt (adj):** very thin, sometimes because you’re ill or worried
- to brief (v):** to give someone information on a situation, especially officially
- paradoxical (adj):** strange because of being the opposite of what you expect
- to take nothing for granted (exp):** to accept nothing as true without proof
- to let (v):** to rent a property for a fee
- servant-man (n):** a servant
- singularity (n):** the quality of being unusual
- conjecture (v):** to decide something is true or likely based on the information you have
- gamekeeper (n):** a job to protect wild animals on private land
- to depose (v):** to give information about something, usually in a court of law

See page 23 for the answer.