

Answers: The Sign of Four

Answers to the AQA exam-style and practice questions are indicative only and highlight the key things that should be included in your response. You may cover other points. It's how your answer is written and how it fits with the mark scheme that will determine the quality of your answer.

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

Chapter 1

p.13 Do it!



Holmes' physical/emotional state is implied: his eyes show his careful consideration; 'sinewy forearm' shows strength; 'thrust' shows purposefulness; 'sank back...satisfaction' shows he wants to achieve a state of fulfilment through the drugs or his cases. Conan Doyle creates the extended noun phrase 'long, white, nervous fingers' to place Holmes as a gentleman, with signs of elegance and possibly as artistic.

p.13 Do it!



Holmes' expressions and movements are calm. He speaks formally and at length to give his opinion. In contrast, Watson could be seen as agitated ('brusquely') or complaining (about his injury preventing him from doing this). Thus, Holmes is the character seen as most interesting and probably to be respected at the start of the novel.

p.14 Stretch it!



Holmes is explaining that the effect of the drug is to surpass ordinary experience and help simplify his thoughts, making them less confused and more comprehensible. These 'positive' effects, to Holmes, outweigh any damage it may be doing. Conan Doyle may want to portray Holmes to be of superior intellect, or he may just seem pompous. The reader may enjoy his eccentric behaviour.

p.16 Do it!



Holmes: slender hands, relaxed body-language, takes cocaine and morphine, smokes, published author, has solved crimes before

Watson: has a limp, doctor, fought in Afghan battles, father and brother are dead, published author of account of Holmes solving a crime

| Method | Quotation relating to Holmes | Reader's response |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Dialogue – statement | 'I claim no credit in such cases. My name figures in no newspaper.' | Reader may think he is modest, not seeking public attention. Contrasts to previous arrogance. |
| Description | '...leaning back luxuriously...and sending up thick blue wreaths from his pipe.' | Reader may think he is affected or pretentious... or perhaps stylish. |
| Dialogue – interaction | 'My dear doctor,' he said kindly, 'pray accept my apologies.' | Reader may think he is apologetic, considerate, willing to accept responsibility for hurting Watson. |

p.16 Stretch it!



For example: Watson clearly admires Holmes as he speaks of his 'marvellous faculty' for solving crimes. He does, however, find him a little 'dogmatic' in his opinions which could suggest arrogance. He is hurt by some of Holmes' remarks but Holmes does apologise when he realises this.

p.17 REVIEW IT!



- 1 Watson
- 2 Injecting cocaine
- 3 He is bored.
- 4 Watson is concerned for his health. Watson takes a more maternal/onlooker role.
- 5 Policeman
- 6 The police
- 7 For example: doctor/previously in the army/served in Afghanistan/bullet in the leg/uses a stick.
- 8 A written study of something very specific.
- 9 Holmes. He has an aptitude for studying the smallest details.
- 10 Deduction is, or ought to be, an exact science.
- 11 The dirt on his shoe was from outside the post office. Observation
- 12 Because Watson had not written a letter at his desk. To send a telegram (wire) is the only other reason Watson would go there.
- 13 Watson challenges Holmes to tell him about the previous owner of his watch.
- 14 Watson's brother
- 15 Watson is upset and annoyed.
- 16 It is used to demonstrate Holmes' methods and how clever he is, and to establish the relationship between Holmes and Watson.
- 17 This test demonstrates that Holmes does care for Watson as he is sorry that Watson is upset by the information he deduces.
- 18 The landlady
- 19 Mary Morstan
- 20 Your choice: you may prefer Holmes for his eccentricity and slick style, or Watson as a more 'human' character.

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

Chapter 2

p.18 Do it!



- 1 Holmes' aphorisms make him seem confident, possibly arrogant. They are the product of his observations, making him seem intelligent and worldly-wise because he pronounces about the world in general rather than just himself.
- 2 He often smiles in response to Watson/he apologises for upsetting Watson/he helps the police and expects no credit for it/he is courteous to Mary/he only smiles when Watson criticises him/ he gives Watson a book to read to take his mind off Mary.

p.18 Stretch it!



Maybe: he is willing to help Mary (though it may just be for his own entertainment); he knows and possibly admires the unpleasant looking person who helps others, suggesting that he holds values that include helping those less fortunate in society.

p.19 Do it!



She is presented through Watson's male gaze which focuses on her appearance and agitation. She is asking for help, not solving the problem herself. She shows emotions that would be stereotypical of women at the time, but she is also in command of herself and is keen to participate in the solving of the mystery. Her dependence upon the men is because this was a requirement of the time, not because she is an innately helpless woman.

p.19 Stretch it!



Holmes' emotional detachment is confirmed (in contrast to Watson). It makes him seem more idiosyncratic (individual and perhaps a little odd), which will interest the reader. It is another of Holmes' statements of principle (his aphorisms). Here, we get the impression that his comment would apply to both men and women so he is not sexist at this point.

p.22 Do it!



Holmes: analytical/ assertive/eager (takes the lead in asking questions); considerate (behaves courteously to Mary); critical/detached/independent (does not respond to her on an emotional level, just to the case).

Watson: considerate/romantic/eager (he responds emotionally to Mary); critical/regretful (he is self-disparaging in relation to his prospects with Mary).

Mary: independent/assertive (she has come to meet a stranger to resolve her problem); analytical/eager (she has considered the mystery and wants to resolve it); considerate (she appreciates her benefactor); regretful (she is unable to locate her father/she mourns his death).

p.23 REVIEW IT!



- 1 a, b, d
- 2 Watson sets himself up as a man of the world to suggest that he is not swayed by every woman. He wants Mary to stand out from the crowd.
- 3 Holmes had previously helped her employer.
- 4 They are used to show Holmes' kindness.
- 5 A hawk has excellent sight (implying Holmes' observational skills); it is a hunter; it can move swiftly and purposefully.
- 6 died
- 7 England/Indian
- 8 17/12/England [or London]
- 9 London/out/previous
- 10 one/the police/newspaper
- 11 Holmes asks her a question.
- 12 He is businesslike/unemotional/detached.
- 13 Because she is asked to give her address by the advertisement targeted at her.
- 14 Pearls
- 15 Because she has received a strange letter asking her to meet an unknown person.
- 16 It allows anonymity and foreshadows a meeting which will direct the plot. It allows for mystery.
- 17 Because he is not in a financial position to conduct a romance.
- 18 Watson is sentimental about Mary and assesses her in relation to his own desires. Holmes focuses on the purpose of her visit.
- 19 Conan Doyle presents her as purposeful and confident through her walk.
- 20 Conan Doyle could be presenting Watson's admiration of Holmes or Watson's attempt to control his affections as they may be fruitless.

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

Chapter 3

p.24 Stretch it!



Conan Doyle uses a didactic technique, that is, he often ‘tells’ the reader about his characters, presenting us with information that we can then interpret for connotations. Because *The Sign of Four* was originally published as a series, Conan Doyle restates information to remind the reader; this works like the quick-flash summaries we see at the start of TV series’ episodes.

In addition, Watson’s perspective means that we have his commentary on events. He names qualities of character as we might do when talking to friends, for example, ‘X is so intelligent...’(followed by an anecdote). This helps to give the novel a personal, collaborative feel, as Watson is actually communicating directly with the reader.

p.25 Do it!



| Quotation | Which character? | What is implied by this information? | New or old information? If old, give a previous reference to this. |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---|---|
| has ‘fits of the blackest depression’ | Holmes | Holmes has mood swings and is not a naturally positive character. The superlative ‘blackest’ indicates a severe state. | Old: Watson complained of how drug use gave Holmes mood swings into a ‘black reaction’. |
| ‘said...pensively’ | Holmes | This implies that he is thoughtful and considers carefully. He is not an impulsive character. | New: we haven’t seen him other than confident so far. |
| ‘nervous and depressed’ | Watson | Watson is also vulnerable. He is not a natural optimist and, like Holmes, he may have a bleak view of life at the moment. | Old: he has been agitated before (when discussing Holmes’ drug use or Holmes’ description of his brother). He was low in spirits when considering that he had nothing to offer Mary as a possible partner. |
| ‘as resolute and collected as ever’ | Mary | She is a purposeful and decisive character. | Old: she behaved like this at the first meeting with Holmes. |
| ‘never at fault’ | Holmes | Watson’s admiration of Holmes runs through the novel. | Old: Watson’s admiration for Holmes was shown after the test of the watch. |

p. 26 Do it!



1 Holmes is presented as unemotional, for example, his lack of consideration when discussing Watson’s brother/referring to Mary as a ‘mere unit’.

2 Overall, the light is subdued, just like Watson’s mood.

p.26 Stretch it!



Watson’s metaphor about light and darkness could be seen as an analogy of his emotional attachment as he seems to move between hope and despondency about his potential relationship with Mary.

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

Chapter 4

p.27 Do it!



monologue: Thaddueus’ uninterrupted narration

dialogue: conversation between the characters

reflective commentary: Thaddeus comments upon his father’s and brother’s behaviours

description: the room and its furnishings

change of direction: the progress of the investigation is interrupted by the story of Major Sholto

comedy: Thaddeus is described with mockery of his appearance by Watson

enigmatic information: the note and footprint

action sequence: the tussle between Sholto and Morstan

p.28 Do it!



Thaddeus is generally presented as a weak, vulnerable character but he does behave justly. He is 'rewarded' for this as he does not face a horrible death, or have to live with guilt. Thaddeus receives justice from Holmes but not from Athelney Jones, who arrests him based on his appearance and merely being at the site of the crime. Thaddeus represents benevolence, through his treatment of Mary. This is in contrast to his father and brother, who represent greed – and are punished for this.

p.28 Stretch it!



Sholto is a 'repellent' person to look at or be with, but Holmes always treats him with courtesy and kindness because he, Sholto, is in some sense, a victim, or, at least, vulnerable. Holmes shows justice when the law does not. This is re-iterated in his treatment of Jonathan Small.

p.29 Do it!



Adjectives such as 'dull' and 'coarse', create a sense of negativity. The lights from the 'public-houses' are 'tawdry' suggesting that the light is ineffective in diluting the gloom. The houses are 'interminable' and 'staring' which shows Watson's disapproval of them, crowned by his use of a metaphor comparing the city to a 'monster' with huge 'tentacles'. This makes the city seem a silently menacing place, like an octopus which could overwhelm and devour them.

p.30 Do it!



'a bristle of red hair all-round the fringe of it, and a bald, shining scalp which shot out from among it like a mountain-peak from fir-trees' THADDEUS

He is quick to anger and has a bad temper. BARTHOLOMEW

He is driven by greed. MAJOR BARTHOLOMEW

In death he has 'a horrible smile, a fixed and unnatural grin'. BARTHOLOMEW

He is 'a little inclined to my father's fault'. BARTHOLOMEW

He is called 'villain' and 'scoundrel'. BARTHOLOMEW

He claims to be 'a great sufferer' and he avoids 'the rough crowd' 'had the helpless appealing expression of a terrified child' THADDEUS

He is benevolent and accepts moral responsibility for Mary's future. THADDEUS

He feels a 'cursed greed which has been my besetting sin through life'. MAJOR

'An oasis... in the howling desert of... London.' THADDEUS

'We were your trustees' THADDEUS

'He writhed his hands together as he stood' THADDEUS

p.30 REVIEW IT!



Chapter 3

- 1 Holmes' moods are either 'bright' or 'blackest depression' – he is never temperate.
- 2 This characterisation adds to Holmes' eccentricities and extremes, making him different to ordinary people.
- 3 Holmes has been going through a newspaper archive looking for information about those named in Mary's account of events.
- 4 He has found information about Major Sholto's death.
- 5 A horse and carriage
- 6 A heavy walking stick and a revolver
- 7 The details add an element of danger which would allow the reader to enjoy a sense of anticipation.
- 8 At this point in the novel it seems that Mary is being presented as a relatively independent female.
- 9 India and the Andaman Islands
- 10 The author controls the delivery of clues so that the reader can enjoy considering the importance of each element and savour Holmes' treatment of each new piece of evidence.

p.30 REVIEW IT!



Chapter 3

- 11 Unlike popular stereotypes of Holmes always being correct, he is shown to re-evaluate; he is not right every time, and through this Conan Doyle gives him more humanity.
- 12 The dreary scene with dim lights and 'eerie...ghostlike faces' is well-suited to potentially sinister events.
- 13 Watson and Mary feel 'nervous and depressed'. Holmes, in contrast, is calmly considering his notes.
- 14 The meeting with the coachman may seem very artificial to a modern reader – it may also have done so to a Victorian reader as it seems too easily achieved.
- 15 The coach is driven rapidly – the horses are 'whipped up' and 'plunged away'. Like a car chase in films today, speed offers excitement to the reader.
- 16 Naming the streets could offer familiarity to a London readership, a sense of how big the city is to a provincial readership and a background of English names for the American reader.
- 17 Holmes indicates that they are moving into the less wealthy and elegant parts of London.
- 18 London was undergoing expansion as an industrial and commercial centre of both England and the Empire.
- 19 A Hindu servant clad in yellow and white Indian clothing
- 20 The narrative is enlivened by the description: the reader is now entering a more exotic world which will raise curiosity and provide entertainment.

p.31 REVIEW IT!



Chapter 4

- 1 For example: balding, pendulous lip, yellow teeth, nervous and agitated. Conan Doyle presents him as feeble, irritating and ugly.
- 2 It is exotic, with glossy curtains, a beautiful lamp, tiger skins. The reader may feel curious and transported to a different lifestyle.
- 3 A hookah is a smoking instrument traditionally used in Arab countries. It adds to the exoticism and presentation of Thaddeus as eccentric and odd.
- 4 Thaddeus asks Watson to check his heart. It makes Thaddeus seem even odder and it eliminates any medical condition as a source of his agitation.
- 5 Watson could have hit Thaddeus for his insensitivity to Mary when describing her father's death.
- 6 The repetition of Bartholomew's name creates anticipation for the reader, and also gives his character a sense of menace and power.
- 7 The detail of the art collection places Thaddeus as vain but wealthy. Conan Doyle is perhaps mocking such people.
- 8 We know little about Bartholomew so the fact that he is angry is magnified. It encourages the reader to anticipate approaching conflict...which Conan Doyle then does not fulfil.
- 9 Conan Doyle stalls the action to draw out the anticipation of arrival, and also to allow development of the characters of the Sholto family through the recap of the story of the treasure.
- 10 John/11/two
- 11 Heart attack and banging his head.
- 12 Sholto thought he would not be believed.
- 13 Lal Chowdar assumes that Sholto has killed Morstan and immediately offers to dispose of the body. This makes him seem unethical and inhuman, but a loyal servant. It dehumanises him as a character.
- 14 A face at the window stops him in his tracks.
- 15 He stops before telling the hiding place/the face at the window/the single footprint/the note.
- 16 Mary turned white at hearing of her father's death – a natural reaction. After the tale, she also turns white and looks about to faint. Conan Doyle is perhaps presenting her as a feeble female. Chauvinism is suggested but can't yet be confirmed.
- 17 Mary's comments about Thaddeus focus on his goodness rather than his appearance.
- 18 Conan Doyle again mocks Thaddeus in his preparations to leave, emphasising his feebleness. Perhaps this is to contrast the capable natures of Holmes and Watson.
- 19 Watson is concerned because inequality of finances would make it inappropriate for him to attempt a relationship with Mary. This demonstrates the strict social codes of the Victorian era.
- 20 Both chapters end with arrival at a new location. Writing for serialisation, Conan Doyle needed to leave his readers with a sense of expectation at the end of an episode – just as TV series do today.

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

Chapter 5

p.32 Do it!



- 1 McMurdo. He tells Holmes that he has ‘wasted his gifts’ in not being a prize-fighter, which would not be suitable or intellectually demanding enough for a gentleman. McMurdo also speaks in a vernacular way which may have entertained a Victorian reader.
- 2 The comic moment in this paragraph is that Watson is overcome by his feelings for Mary which causes him to mix up his medical advice, including recommending taking strychnine, a poison.

p.32 Stretch it!



The body is described as ‘ghastly, inscrutable’ giving a sense of the supernatural. The **consonance** of ‘twisted, turned, fantastic’ uses sharp, hard sounds which suggest the body being painfully contorted. **Precision** is used to describe the stick and comparison to a hammer suggests that it could stave in a skull so even though it hasn’t been used for this purpose, a sense of potential horror remains.

p.33 Do it!



- 1 Underline: slowly, peered, keenly
- 2 Readers are often charmed and excited by being ‘on the edge’ of society’s conventions – but would not want to be pushed over into what might be considered pornographic. Conan Doyle pushes boundaries but not to the limits.
- 3 Mary seeks comfort and protection from Watson. These gender roles may seem outdated to us as being only related to men, not men and women, but they would have been valued at the time.
- 4 There is nothing to be criticised/they are behaving innocently and without sexual motives.

**p. 33 AQA exam-style question**

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents romance in the novel.[

- Explore how Conan Doyle, through Watson as narrator, uses language to describe the romance in the extract.
- Consider how the relationship between Mary and Watson is developed throughout the novel – including Watson’s preoccupation with financial issues.
- Compare Holmes’ and Watson’s attitudes to romance –especially from the first and last chapters.
- Explore how the main plot and the romantic subplot support one another.
- Does Conan Doyle convincingly portray a romantic relationship?

p.34 Do it! (top)



The night is initially ‘fairly fine’ with a ‘warm wind’, suggesting a neutral or positive atmosphere. The moon is ‘peeping’, which is a playful description. Visibility is good so there is no sense of threat from unseen eventualities. By the time the group arrive at Pondicherry Lodge, the house is ‘plunged in shadow’, ‘gloom and deathly silence’. The atmosphere is decidedly more Gothic. A ‘moonbeam struck’ one corner. The verbs ‘plunged’ and ‘struck’ are notable – suggesting force or violence in contrast to ‘peeping’. Conan Doyle uses the swiftness of the change to clearly associate menace with Pondicherry Lodge.

p.34 Do it! (bottom)



Eerie lighting – ‘vague and shifty radiance’ – creates a spectral, ghostly atmosphere
 Thoughts and feelings – ‘recoiled in horror’ – dramatic emotions evoke similar response in the reader
 Supernatural connotations – ‘as if suspended in the air...there hung a face’ – provokes uncertainty in the reader/ enjoyment of a ‘safe’ vicarious fear
 Horrific ugliness – ‘bloodless countenance’/‘unnatural grin’ – typical Gothic elements for the reader to enjoy

p.35 REVIEW IT!



- 1 McMurdo. He has previously fought with Holmes in a prizefighting match.
- 2 McMurdo thinks Holmes could have had success in the ring as a fighter. The reader appreciates the irony that this would not be an improved career for Holmes.
- 3 Agree: Thaddeus allows the narrative to be told as an account from his father. It is a naturalistic method of adding this narrative.
Agree: The reader has direct interaction with the character through dialogue (although this is an illusion because it all falls under Watson's narration).
Agree: the back and forth method of presenting the discovery allows a reader to follow in more of a 'real time' experience than a longer exposition would do.
- 4 The housekeeper of Pondicherry Lodge
- 5 A cry from Mrs Bernstone
- 6 Mary seizes Watson's wrist.
- 7 This section focuses on the romantic sub-plot.
- 8 End of Chapter One when Watson dreamily thinks about Mary/Chapter Two when he watches her walk down the street/Chapter Four when he is concerned about her becoming an heiress.
- 9 To try to find the treasure.
- 10 Mary remains to comfort the housekeeper. This removes her from the discovery of the body scene, which needs to be the domain of Holmes and Watson.
- 11 Holmes, Watson and Thaddeus

12

| Reaction | Name of the character | What it shows about the character |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| has a sharp intake of breath | Holmes | capable of surprise – moderate response in comparison to others |
| recoils in horror | Watson | dramatic, emotional response – his role is to encourage the reader to share this emotion |
| wrings his hands and moans in terror | Thaddeus | a pitiable response to show his vulnerability |

- 13 'The door must come down,' he answered, and, springing against it, he put all his weight upon the lock. It creaked and groaned, but did not yield. Together we flung ourselves upon it once more, and this time it gave way with a sudden snap, and we found ourselves within Bartholomew Sholto's chamber. Conan Doyle has introduced Holmes as a 'thinking man'. However, he wants Holmes to be an 'all-round' hero figure so he creates action sequences to allow strength and conventional masculinity to be shown.
- 14 For example: 'bloodless countenance'/'unnatural grin'. The reader can respond with enjoyable horror. This is the point of Gothic descriptions in a light-hearted novel such as this.
- 15 'The sign of the four'. Previously, it was found on Mary's paper belonging to her father.
- 16 On Captain Morstan's note
- 17 A dart. The exoticism and unusualness would interest – just as 'novel' methods of murder surprise and interest readers and film viewers today.
- 18 Holmes is sympathetic to an extent. Conan Doyle ensures that Holmes is not a stock, stereotypical figure but a developed character.
- 19 Mary began the chapter as a daring woman – attending a mysterious meeting with an unknown person, trusting in Holmes and Watson, whom she had not met before. However, Conan Doyle chooses to place her in a supportive role with the housekeeper and refers to her 'turning white' and faint several times. But, it must not be forgotten that the narration is from Watson's perspective and he may present her like this to fulfil his own views of women and himself.
- 20 Holmes' consideration for others and physical capacities have been developed in this chapter.

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

Chapter 6

p.37 Do it!



- 1 'rubbing his hands' indicates Holmes' enjoyment and sense of purpose/'air of a clinical professor' emphasises Holmes' confidence and expertise, but also perhaps that he is patronising to Watson/ 'muttering...' adds to the reader's impression of Holmes as eccentric and obsessive.

- 2 For example: Jones immediately decides that Thaddeus is guilty, despite evidence to the contrary.
- 3 Rhetorical – Holmes is self-sufficient and doesn't need Watson's help.
- 4 Short, snappy sentences focused on facts here/extended sentences in Chapter One when he is elaborating about his boredom.



p. 37 AQA exam-style question

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents Holmes in the novel.

- Explore Conan Doyle's presentation of Holmes as a detective in the extract, referring to language choices.
- Compare Holmes' presentation as a detective in contrasting scenes (Chapter One, Chapter Ten) – intellect and action.
- Evaluate Holmes' personal qualities beyond his detective role – humour, kindness, generosity.
- Explore Holmes' relations with others – Watson, Jones.
- How does Conan Doyle ensure that Holmes has broad appeal to a readership?

p.38 Stretch it!



Holmes is polite on the surface though he 'smiles' at Jones' pride and mistakes. He does not openly disagree with the policeman, but criticism is implicit in his smiles and silences. Holmes plans the arrest and insists on being 'master of the situation', which is probably a good idea given that Jones has not been shown as successful. However, Holmes invites Jones for supper and Watson describes enjoying his company, possibly implying that Holmes does too.

p.38 Do it!



All of the adjectives could be applied to Jones.

p.39 REVIEW IT!



- 1 The mark of the wooden stump
- 2 Holmes records his thoughts aloud in 'note form'. The utterances are either very short sentences, or merely phrases.
- 3 In Chapter One, Holmes spoke at length, using complex sentences and elevated vocabulary. Conan Doyle is demonstrating a different aspect of Holmes' character.
- 4 window/roof/blood/slid/cut
- 5 That Holmes is 'international' and extremely well-informed; that nothing can confound him
- 6 Again, we have a presentation of Holmes' physical strength and ability. For example, when Holmes climbs down from the roof.
- 7 He is surprised by the size of the footprint. He had also been surprised when he saw Bartholomew's face through the keyhole in the previous chapter. Holmes is rarely presented as 'confused' but the fact that he sometimes is makes him appear more human, more 'realistic'.
- 8 Watson believes the footprint to be a child's and he is shocked that a child may be involved in a murder.
- 9 Holmes is compared to an eagle and a hawk – both fine hunters with intense concentration.
- 10 The police. Holmes is gently mocking.
- 11 The police are presented in contrast to Holmes' quietness and discretion.
- 12 Jones is heavy, stout, swollen, puffy but with 'twinkling eyes'. Conan Doyle avoids one-sided characterisations; he helps the reader to expect something good from Jones which Conan Doyle reveals later in the novel when he has dinner with and helps Holmes.
- 13 A theorist
- 14 Jones is rather dismissive of Holmes, suggesting he was 'lucky' in a previous case.
- 15 'pompously', 'snapped', 'sneering': the reader is likely to understand that Jones is somewhat irritating but it is Watson who is critical of these behaviours, not Holmes, who is detached from personal observations and responses.
- 16 Is small/is active/is sunburned/has his left leg
- 17 A dog. Track the creosote trail.
- 18 thorn, footprint, rope, note, stick, poison, blood, grimace on the face
- 19 Holmes is patient, lacking in arrogance, ironic, helpful.
- 20 Yes, he is a weak person who tries his best to help Mary and fulfil his moral duty.
No, he is unpleasant to look at and is a vain snob.

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

Chapters 7
and 8

p.43 Do it!



- 1 She continually calls him 'sir'.
- 2 Holmes turns the topic to the boat (steam launch). He suggests that Mordecai may have bought coals downriver to find out how much fuel he has. He repeats 'wooden-legged man' to invite her to talk further. He is able to communicate with all kinds of people. He uses situations to his advantage. He knows when to be patient and let Mrs Smith talk.

**p. 43 AQA exam-style question**

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents working class characters in the novel.

- Explore how Conan Doyle presents Mrs Smith in this extract, referring to language choices.
- Compare this presentation to that of Wiggins, McMurdo and Mr Sherman.
- Consider Holmes' attitudes towards working class characters.
- Consider why Conan Doyle has included this selection of 'portraits' of working class characters.
- Is the presentation of working class characters patronising or fair?

p.45 Do it!



Holmes is 'strategic' and gets on the right side of the child, and through him, his mother. He doesn't just give the child money, he draws him in to further conversation. The boy is lower working class. He is sharp witted but, as a gentleman, Holmes is smarter.

p.45 Stretch it!



The child is comically sharp – asking for more money; Watson's account refers to the child as a 'prodigy' which is an ironic way of describing the child's talent for making money.

p.45 REVIEW IT!

**Chapter 7**

- 1 She falls into a passion of weeping whereas she had been composed in public.
- 2 Watson repeats his fear that Mary's potential fortune will make her unattainable.
- 3 It is a comic scene to relieve previous tense scenes. It is similar to the interlude with McMurdo – part of Conan Doyle's expertise with structure for entertainment.
- 4 Thaddeus Sholto. The reader will probably enjoy this mockery of the police and await Holmes' solution.
- 5 Holmes follows the path taken by Tonga in order to check for further clues. He finds a dart. The reader will admire Holmes' 'derring-do'.
- 6 For example: bearded/sunburned/middle-aged/convict
- 7 Mention of the pistol suggests that they are close/increases tension through proximity to danger.
- 8 Toby has become confused by an even stronger trail of creosote from a timber yard.
- 9 Holmes' eyes are 'gleaming' because he is enthused and close to his goal.
- 10 They laugh 'uncontrollably'. Compared to Chapter One, when they were both very serious, this moment shows their humanity and increases their likability or affinity with the reader, who is likely to smiling at this moment too.

p.45 REVIEW IT!

**Chapter 8**

- 1 The location is close to the waterfront of the River Thames. Other locations so far include: Baker Street apartments/London's theatre district/suburbs/Pondicherry Lodge. Conan Doyle maintains variety by using different locations and also creates a real sense of place with London locations through street names and inserted descriptions of street life.
- 2 Holmes complimented her son.
- 3 Watson is incorrect three times – a plot device to allow Holmes to expand on his own ideas without using a monologue.
- 4 For example: Jones' 'trained and experienced faculties'/'well-known technical knowledge'
- 5 A group of children who operate as a gang
- 6 Holmes is universally liked and respected. He is at ease with people from all walks of life.
- 7 The Victorian public was ill-informed about the wider world and considered people outside of England to be 'alien' to them. They held a superior attitude, as centre of the British Empire. They also feared the influx of other races or behaviours associated with them.
- 8 They are said to be vicious and cannibalistic. Victorian readers may have enjoyed and approved of this depiction of other races. A modern reader is likely to feel that it is racist and disparaging.
- 9 Playing the violin.
- 10 This chapter ends with Watson thinking about Mary – as did Chapter One. Conan Doyle keeps the romantic sub-plot in the reader's mind as it hasn't been mentioned during this chapter.

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION**Chapter 9**

p.46 Do it!



Protagonists: Holmes/Watson/Mary

Antagonists: Jonathan Small

Good: Thaddeus Sholto

Evil: Jonathan Small/Brother Bartholomew

No, not at this point because Thaddeus is arrested and Small is still at large.

p.47 Do it!



Holmes understands the relationship between Watson and Mary and offers Watson the opportunity to make Mary happy by delivering the treasure. Although Holmes may be initially presented as emotionally detached, he is clearly perceptive enough to comprehend this relationship.

p.47 Stretch it!



- 1 Jones sometimes uses colloquial language, for example, 'wink at it', though he is often more formal. It is assumed that Holmes is a gentleman whereas Jones is of the working class.
- 2 Grammatically, Holmes is making a statement, but he is actually requesting permission from Jones. It is a less assertive tone of voice from Holmes, although it still sounds commanding because it is presented as statement rather than question. This tone is polite and acknowledges that the power to agree or disagree lies with Jones.

**p. 47 AQA exam-style question**

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents Holmes' relationship with the police in the novel.

- Explore how the relationship between Holmes and Jones is presented in this extract, referring to Conan Doyle's language choices.
- Compare the relationship presented in the events at Pondicherry Lodge in Chapter Six 'Sherlock Holmes gives a demonstration'.
- Compare the relationship presented when Jones visits Baker Street in Chapter 9 'A break in the chain'.
- Does Conan Doyle criticise the police through the presentation of the relationship between Holmes and the police?

p.48 Do it!

- 1 The possibility of treasure (the original mystery of the plot)/the relationship between Watson and Mary/Thaddeus Sholto (a reminder of his role as benefactor to Mary).
- 2 There is little excitement in this chapter. It serves as a 'regrouping' of information before the climax occurs in the next chapter. This allows the reader's emotions to vary in intensity throughout the novel; the tension of the chase will be all the greater for a moment of calm beforehand.

p.49 REVIEW IT!

- 1 He doesn't have a lead for the case.
- 2 To present Holmes as a chauvinist; to create controversy amongst his readers; perhaps, to make them laugh at the outrageousness of the opinion
- 3 A story with 'fairy tale' elements such as knights and dragons
- 4 Mary seems to lack interest in the money. This offers hope to Watson. It could also be a comment on the traditional Victorian concern that marriages should be of equal financial background, or that women would marry to advance their status.
- 5 They are worried because he is exhausted and 'haggard'. It makes him seem vulnerable – another likeable quality.
- 6 Imperfect characters are more multi-dimensional and have more appeal to a reader because they are more realistic – even if the complete character is not!
- 7 Experiments
- 8 A sailor. Because criminals recognise him since Watson has published some of his cases. To the river
- 9 A report about the case. An advertisement seeking Mordecai Smith
- 10 That Holmes may be wrong
- 11 'I had never known him to be wrong.'
- 12 Athelney Jones. Holmes had sent him a note.
- 13 He is apologetic and not arrogant.
- 14 He says he is hot! The reader may smile at his excuse/criticise him.
- 15 Through the presentation of Jones, the police are characterised as bumbling and arrogant to start with. However, this scene shows Jones to be more appreciative of Holmes (which the reader will like) even though he finds it hard to do so consistently. Nonetheless, it is Holmes who will manage the capture so the police are seen as less capable than he is.
- 16 When McMurdo says he could have been a prizefighter
- 17 The sailor's argument with Watson. The slapstick of Jones preventing him from leaving. Holmes' asking for a cigar in his own voice
- 18 boat/two/treasure/Small
- 19 He is generous, doesn't hold a grudge, courteous, enjoys the company of a range of people.
- 20 Arrangements are made for seizing the treasure. 7
Holmes disguises himself. 4
Watson visits Mary and returns Toby. 2
Watson is concerned about Holmes. 1
Watson converses with Jones. 6
Holmes carries out some experiments. 3
Watson reads the newspaper. 5

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

Chapter 10

p.51 Do it!



| | | What is implied about Small? |
|--------------|--|---|
| Chapter Four | 'a bearded hairy face, with wild, cruel eyes and an expression of concentrated malevolence' | This is a stereotype of a villain. He appears savage and uncivilised. |
| This chapter | He is said to have 'delicate finesse...that is usually the product of higher education.' 'This man Small is a pretty shrewd fellow.' | He is presented as intelligent and a worthy adversary to Holmes. |

Conan Doyle has changed his presentation of Small to justify Holmes' difficulty in tracking him down. Also, with the intention of describing Small's life in the final chapter, he must appear more 'human' than a stereotype of evil to gain reader credibility.

p.52 Do it!



- increase pace 'Full speed ahead, engineer'
 - increase urgency 'We MUST catch her!'
 - imply possible failure: 'She is very fast,' he said. 'I doubt if we shall catch her.'
- 'engine throbbed'/'voices hailed'/'Holmes' shouting'
- The personification of the engines suggests that they too are on Holmes' side and striving to catch Small.
- He uses sentences that contain lots of phrases broken by commas, which gives a sense of panting, or breathlessness, as they are read.

**p. 52 AQA exam-style question**

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle creates tension in the novel.

- Explore the techniques used to create tension in this chase sequence, referring to language choices.
- Explore techniques used in other situations such as:
 - the arrival at Pondicherry Lodge – pathetic fallacy and Gothic conventions
 - the discovery of Bartholomew's body – development of horror
 - Watson and Mary at the opening of the box – understatement
 - Small's description of the guard duties at Agra fort – conflict and isolation.
- Is Conan Doyle a master of tension?

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

Chapter 11

p.54 Do it!



Small is captured. There is usual satisfaction with an evil-doer getting his appropriate punishment. Watson and Mary declare their love. This is a suitable ending to the romantic interest – conventionally predictable. Holmes resolves the case. Satisfaction that Holmes has triumphed, as the reader probably likes this character and would want to see him succeed.

p.55 Do it! (top)



description of beauty: 'rich coils of her luxuriant hair'
 dimmed lighting: 'The soft light of a shaded lamp'
 an air of sadness: 'an absorbing melancholy'
 increased heart-rate: 'a bright flush of surprise and of pleasure colored her pale cheeks'
 moments of uncertainty: 'though my heart was heavy within me'
 sense of expectation: 'What news have you brought me?'

p.55 Do it! (bottom)



Grey outfit with a white feather in the hat. She is presented as tasteful but not over-dressed or showy; she embodies modesty – a Victorian female virtue.

**p. 55 AQA exam-style question**

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents Watson in the novel.

- Explore the techniques used to create tension in this chase sequence, referring to language choices.
- Explore techniques used in other situations such as:
- the arrival at Pondicherry Lodge – pathetic fallacy and Gothic conventions
- the discovery of Bartholomew's body – development of horror
- Watson and Mary at the opening of the box – understatement
- Small's description of the guard duties at Agra fort – conflict and isolation.
- Is Conan Doyle a master of tension?

p.55 Stretch it!



The irony of Watson's comment about 'treasure' is that the novel has been constructed around a search for physical, financially valuable treasure which has only brought unhappiness whereas his metaphorical treasure, love, is available to all and brings its own joy.

p.56 Do it!



- 1 'misshapen head', 'dishevelled hair', 'smallest I have ever seen', 'savage, distorted creature', 'bestiality and cruelty': Watson is vehemently against the Islander here. If he represents Victorians, he has a sense of superiority...but also of fear.
- 2 Yes, there is a sadness in the 'strange visitor' as it is unthreatening (unlike the other references to the Islander). A 'visitor' should be cared for and this clearly has not happened for Tonga.

p.57 Do it!



Watson uses the metaphor of 'a golden barrier' to convey the difficulty of a relationship between him and Mary. It is 'golden' because the barrier is financial, but also because it is a valuable opportunity for Mary's future. Agree: Although Holmes makes no direct moral comments upon goodness or evil, Conan Doyle rewards and punishes through the events of the plot.
 Disagree: The novel presents a stereotypical 'quest for treasure' plot and the outcomes for the characters are just the typical outcomes for those types of characters.

p.58 REVIEW IT!

**Chapter 10**

- 1 He can be very sociable/can talk on a host of topics.
- 2 He too can be very good company.
- 3 So that the reader can enjoy the anticipation of the chase sequence.
- 4 America or colonies/port/repairers
- 5 Small is shrewd and has formulated a good plan.
- 6 Jones would have placed police in the boat yard to catch Small.
- 7 Watson would have followed Mordecai Smith.
- 8 Holmes and Watson discuss humanity and philosophy. Conan Doyle continually adds details to reassert Holmes' intelligence and breadth of knowledge.

p.58 REVIEW IT!



Chapter 10

- 9 Tension is created by: the speed of the chase/the noises/the sentence structures/the anticipation of capture/Holmes' excitement, etc.
- 10 Holmes, who is usually in command of himself, is very excited and shouting instructions. The fact that he does urge them on also raises the possibility that they won't catch up as they may be too slow.
- 11 Conan Doyle delays discovery until the last possible moment to pace the chase and discovery with exactitude.
- 12 Watson has referred to his travels and world experience before when talking about women. He makes a 'worldly' reference now to emphasise how exciting this chase is.
- 13 Watson, in this instance, presents the Victorian viewpoint on other cultures: ignorance, fear and superiority. The person is dehumanised into 'the savage'. The reader is expected to empathise with Watson at this point.
- 14 'I caught one glimpse of his venomous, menacing eyes amid the white swirl of the waters.' To the last, through Watson, the Islander is presented more like animal than human, dangerous. The reader may enjoy the death of the 'baddie' as is usual in detective or action-adventure books and films.
- 15 The chase ends in mud in order to comically capture Small, who becomes trapped there. The marshlands were familiar parts of London and Essex, probably known to Conan Doyle's local readership. The quality of the place, 'desolate, decaying' is a fitting location for capture, and this is what has happened to Small's life.
- 16 The reader may be relieved that 'the savage' is no longer a threat. Or, there may be some pity in response to the pathos of lying in the 'dark ooze' and having been a 'visitor' which should have implied hospitality, not death.
- 17 Holmes is unperturbed. Watson is 'sick with worry'.
- 18 Tension is created with the preparations for the chase/the account of the chase/the close-up descriptions of the Islander. Conan Doyle varies the intensity or focus of each section.
- 19 Holmes' daring, decisiveness, bravery and ability to lead/collaborate are shown in this chapter.
- 20 Yes is a likely answer: the chapter includes many reader-pleasing features such as action sequences, humour, climax of the plot, irony.

p.58 REVIEW IT!



Chapter 11

- 1 For example; 'his face...not...unpleasing', 'twinkling eyes', 'more sorrow than anger in his... countenance', 'gleam of something like humour'
- 2 Small needs to move beyond stereotype to justify Holmes' exploration of his character in the next chapter.
- 3 Conan Doyle presents Holmes as having a social conscience – he believes in justice and fairness.
- 4 'little devil'/'hell-hound'. This presentation is in keeping with Victorian attitudes to the more distant people they came in to contact with during Empire expansion. For the reader at home, there was a thrill and horror of the 'other' as we have today – though we apply it to science fiction or fantasy rather than race.
- 5 Holmes is a product of his time: Victorian attitudes were racist. We could blame it on ignorance – but it is still racist in origin.
- 6 The major had stolen from Small. Bartholomew was innocent.
- 7 He is ensuring that any threads of the investigation are tied up – as any good detective fiction writer would do.
- 8 Small smiles in this way because he realises the irony of having spent his life in 'slavery' as a convict. Even though the treasure was meant to have changed his circumstances, he will still be 'digging' as a convict after his arrest.
- 9 death/fear and guilt/slavery
- 10 Small has thrown away the key.
- 11 Jones wants a drink (there would be alcohol in the flask). He is presented as lower-class, less self-controlled than Holmes.
- 12 Jones is already starting to take credit.
- 13 At the window so that Watson can observe and admire her from his narrative perspective.
- 14 For example, 'sweet, grave face' 'luxuriant hair'. He is biased towards both Mary and Holmes.
- 15 Social conventions mean that he would not attempt to marry Mary if she were rich.
- 16 At the start, Mary did seem more independent. Towards the end, she is only known to cry or respond in alarm to Watson's stories. She does seem more of a stereotype, but we could question whether Watson's narration presents her as more dependent upon him because that is how he would like her to be.

p.58 REVIEW IT!



Chapter 11

- 17 The detail of the visual description pauses the action. Then, verbs 'thrust', 'twist', 'sprang', 'flung' increase the pace of action. Watson's emotion is injected 'with trembling fingers' and the whole scene builds to the discovery in a contrasting short exclamation 'The box was empty!'
- 18 The barrier of wealth that might have prevented him marrying her.
- 19 'The good guy getting his girl' is a universal narrative resolution. The response is more due to the individual than the period of time as to whether this is an enjoyable ending.
- 20 For example: What does Holmes want to know from Small? Why did Small have the treasure? How will Holmes react to the news about Watson and Mary? Will they marry?

CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION

Chapter 12

p.60 Do it!



Conan Doyle includes the long narrative from Small as background to the origin of the treasure and the greed that has 'cursed' it. This account adds some reality to the treasure and the novel; the events and characters are linked to a recent historical tragedy known as the Indian Mutiny. Small is presented as a developed character and his actions can be understood, though probably not approved. Through Small's narrative Conan Doyle exposes the abuse of power by the company when Mahomet Singh persuades Small to murder and steal the jewels by claiming that the company would do the same.

p.61 Do it!



- 1 Khan and Singh do not speak to Small and they stand together, away from him.
- 2 Conan Doyle creates an image of chaos by describing the sounds of the night, 'yells, howls, beating of drums'. He uses his characteristic pairing technique, 'opium and bhang', to intensify the thought of the rebels being completely out of control. The listing effect within the sentence makes the reader feel assaulted by all these different elements. He then reminds us how close this chaos is.

p.63 REVIEW IT!



- 1 Small tipped the treasure in the River Thames. He tipped it out of the box so it could not be recovered.
- 2 Small is angered and gives his opinion about justice.
- 3 It means joining the army.
- 4 A crocodile bit it off in the River Ganges.
- 5 Small becomes a plantation worker. The colonel recommended him, which shows that Small has made a good impression upon him.
- 6 Noun phrases: Dawson's wife, all cut to ribbons.../swarm of bees. Adjectives: dead/empty (revolver), thick (smoke), little (bands). For example, Dawson's wife's throat was cut. Conan Doyle describes the violence graphically to recreate the chaos and slaughter which some of his readers may have read about in newspapers from the time. It shows the circumstances, so different from England, in which Small had to make his choices so a fairer impression is given.
- 7 Conan Doyle uses a simple list to convey how busy the fort was, 'women, children, stores...' He also uses longer noun phrases: 'long corridors twisting in and out...' to guide a reader about the 'winding passages'. The longer phrases give a sense of moving deeper into the fort, as if you are going through the rooms.
- 8 If a reader focuses on what is being described (rather than seeing Small as Holmes' target) it is hard not to sympathise with the terrible war-torn circumstances he is in.
- 9 Small has elements of honour: he is truthful to Holmes, he stood by his oath, he has a sense of justice (albeit this may seem misguided). The Victorian reader may condemn or criticise him (as Watson does) particularly as he is of a different class and background. The modern reader may have more sympathy, which is actually closer in similarity to Holmes' detachment (Holmes does not comment on or criticise Small's behaviour in the war).
- 10 Conan Doyle implies that those working on behalf of the British government were not completely honest in these wartime situations. He is critical but moves swiftly on to another point and doesn't develop this.
- 11 A 'romance'

p.63 REVIEW IT!



- 12 Nature is in excess or turmoil with the onset of the wet season. The rain changes the landscape and creates an added sense of chaos as the travellers have to 'scramble' and 'splash' towards the fort.
- 13 There is an almost cartoon quality about the small fat man escaping from a huge man with a knife. Conan Doyle varies the tone across this extended monologue.
- 14 Conan Doyle pauses the narrative to give the reader a moment to digest all the events in Small's recount, but also to remind the reader that Holmes, Watson and Jones are present in this moment.
- 15 Sholto is presented as greedy, bad-tempered and sly.
- 16 Morstan is a colleague of Small's who is invited to help with the plot to escape and share in the treasure.
- 17 Morstan escapes blame from Small but the reader may disapprove of his actions.
- 18 Humour is added by Jones referring to not being attacked by Small's wooden leg – as he had done with his previous gaoler.
- 19 Holmes groans on hearing that Watson will marry, though he calls Mary a 'genius'. Holmes disapproves of marriage as a distraction that could bias his judgement.
- 20 Holmes is taking cocaine at both points. For example: Yes – there is a note of irony and it has a symmetry with the opening. Holmes' boredom, unless investigating, is emphasised, and it also leaves the opportunity for another story to awaken Holmes from this state of boredom.
No – it seems a waste/inappropriate.

CHARACTERS SECTION

p.64 Do it!



The five points will be of your choice but your answers may look like the example below:

| Point about Conan Doyle's presentation of Sherlock Holmes | Quotation | Conan Doyle's style |
|---|---|--|
| Sense of humour | 'the dead man considerably locked the door from the inside' | The tone is understated and undramatic. It is typical of Holmes' wry comments and his gentle mockery of the police force. |
| Pushing the boundaries of convention | 'I abhor dull routine' | Conan Doyle met and was impressed by Oscar Wilde. Holmes is given an element of Wilde's unconventionality. |
| Daring | 'I am going to do a little climbing' | Conan Doyle uses understatement in Holmes' language to describe climbing down from a high roof with no thought for his own safety. |
| Popularly respected | 'Got your message, sir...' | Wiggins and others show liking and respect for Holmes. Conan Doyle uses these examples to give Holmes a classlessness, despite his obvious upper middle class manners. |

p.65 Do it!



- 1 It could be argued either way that Holmes is being critical of the working class people being 'dirty-looking' but the word 'rascal' is playful and it was previously applied to a child.
- 2 Holmes interacts personally with all other characters. This phrase suggests that he recognises the basic equality of Christianity – that all are equal before God.
- 3 The word 'enigma' means a puzzle: Holmes loves a puzzle so it could be inferred that he enjoys the curiosity that humankind presents – just as he first said that he 'could not live without brainwork'.

p.67 Do it!



arrogant/patronising: in his attitudes to Holmes' detective work.
 bumbling/misguided/stubborn: his appearance at Pondicherry Lodge and the series of mistakes he makes.
 acquiescent: he allows Holmes to take over for the final chase.
 charming/good-humoured: his behaviour at the supper he shares with Holmes and Watson.

p.68 Do it!



- She has come to ask Holmes' advice. purposeful/sensible/inquisitive
- She states her case clearly and without emotion. direct/logical/self-controlled
- She attempts to find her father after his disappearance. purposeful/determined/self-possessed
- She is prepared – bringing the pearls, and then the Agra note. logical/shows forethought/intelligent
- She goes to an unknown house, Pondicherry Lodge, late at night. bold/determined/brave
- She seems to lack interest in the possibility of money and is more interested in the mystery. unmaterialistic/has her own value system/curious
- She thanks Thaddeus when she meets him (and later, is concerned for him after his arrest).

p.69 Do it!



All of the adjectives could apply to Athelney Jones. Some example answers include:
 arrogant/patronising: in his attitudes to Holmes' detective work; bumbling/misguided/stubborn: his appearance at Pondicherry Lodge and the series of mistakes he makes; acquiescent: he allows Holmes to take over for the final chase; charming/good-humoured: his behaviour at the supper he shares with Holmes and Watson.

p.71 REVIEW IT!



- 1 It presents Holmes in a dramatic fashion, perhaps even more so to a modern reader than a Victorian one.
- 2 Holmes compares a handsome-looking person and an ugly one and shows how looks do not demonstrate how good you are.
- 3 A booklet on a serious matter. Holmes has published some.
- 4 Holmes is presented as eccentric or 'different' from ordinary people. He could be seen as superior, perhaps even as arrogant.
- 5 Holmes is definitely presented as intellectual in Chapter One and this continues throughout with his analysis of clues. He is also very much an action figure, climbing on the roof and down the walls, taking part in the pursuit of Small by boat.
- 6 Holmes is very respectful of Watson: he apologises for upsetting him about his brother, he is considerate about the length of the walk (with Toby) and encourages Watson to rest. Holmes comprehends Watson's relationship with Mary and aims to assist this (sending Watson to open the box with her). Although he sometimes uses orders, it is not in a way that is demeaning to Watson.
- 7 Watson is a well-travelled, former army surgeon with a wound to his leg and some trouble with his nerves. His brother has recently died.
- 8 Having a companion allows Holmes to sound out ideas in dialogue and means he has help in tasks.
- 9 A foil is a character used to emphasise the traits of another character. Watson is a foil to Holmes' detachment, lack of emotion and calmness.
- 10 Watson is more sentimental than Holmes, but also more biased and critical of others.
- 11 Mary is attractive, behaves in a feminine way, defers to the men's decisions and appreciates all the efforts made for her. She is also unmaterialistic.
- 12 Mary has respect for Sholto whereas Watson seems to disapprove of or even dislike him.
- 13 Mary is pleased that the treasure will not complicate her life – especially the relationship with Watson.
- 14 Major Sholto and Bartholomew Sholto. Thaddeus had moved out.
- 15 Sholto's greed is prompted by his excessive gambling. He cheats others and maintains his greed almost until his death. Small is forced into his actions to steal the treasure, and he keeps his word to those he has promised. He is less motivated by greed than by a misplaced sense of honour.
- 16 Holmes wants to understand Small and to close any gaps in his investigation.
- 17 Conan Doyle mocks Jones, but also allows him to have 'twinkling eyes' and be a fun dinner guest. The author is critical of Jones but redeems him through his cooperation with Holmes when asked.
- 18 For example: Wiggins, McMurdo, Mr Sherman, the Smith family

p.71 **REVIEW IT!**

- 19** The Baker Street Irregulars line up (badly) as a police force might do.
- 20** For example: While the characters are unrealistic, they do have elements of reality that make them believable. None of the characters is presented in only one dimension; each of them has features which show some variety in their characterisation and makes them seem more realistic within the terms of the novel.

THEMES AND CONTEXTS SECTION

p.72 Do it!



- 1 'carpet...as a bed of moss' – the luxury and workmanship available through the overseas colonies 'two great tiger-skins' – danger, hunting, strange beasts 'lamp....burned with aromatic odour' – exotic and sensual
A modern reader takes all these items in their stride as we are more familiar with objects from around the world – either in reality, or through television/the internet, etc.
- 2 The Agra treasure is described in extended detail so that the reader can see the host of colours, shapes and quantity listed as they appear from the box.

p.74 Do it!



For example: fingerprinting, ash analysis. The Victorian reader may have viewed them with surprise and enjoyment of 'new inventions' in the same way that we may enjoy science-fiction creations.

p.74 Stretch it!



For example: The novel does have a moral dimension but is clearly created to be mainly an entertaining detective fiction. The morality is not foregrounded whereas the detection, romantic relationship and action sequences are.

| | |
|---|--|
| Morally just behaviour | Consequence Is this action rewarded? Add your evidence here: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holmes assists Mary Morstan (for no stated personal gain). • Thaddeus Sholto sends pearls to Mary. Holmes will prove Thaddeus Sholto did not steal the treasure. • Mary is not greedy for money. • Watson is not a fortune-hunter. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal satisfaction of intellectual activity. He is rewarded with Holmes' loyalty and Mary's appreciation. • Moral and intellectual satisfaction. Their marriage should bring them happiness. |
| Injustices | Consequence Is this action punished? Add your evidence here: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Sholto has illicit treasure. Bartholomew Sholto does not want to share the treasure with Mary. • Thaddeus Sholto is arrested. Tonga murders Bartholomew Sholto. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He suffers guilt and fear and an unpleasant death. • He is punished by death. Jones suffers the public embarrassment of his mistake. • Tonga is shot and drowned. |

p.75 REVIEW IT!



- 1 The countries of the world ruled by Britain during the Victorian era
- 2 For example: trade, land, population and power, new products
- 3 Fear of 'others' considered to be different, less civilised ('savage') and of ideas that might challenge or corrupt the accepted values of their society and religion
- 4 Through newspapers, books (like the gazetteer) and from talking to those who had been overseas – and, of course, rumour
- 5 As less than themselves – inferior, dirty, dangerous
- 6 Tonga
- 7 It is significant that he is not seen as a person, more as a creature.
- 8 They could all be accused of racism. Conan Doyle – through the presentation of all of the non-British characters. Holmes and Watson through their references to Tonga.
- 9 Mary is not consistently presented as a damsel in distress but there are significant sections when this is so. However, Holmes admiration of her, and her initial presentation suggest that she is more than just a stock figure.
- 10 Personal choice
- 11 Victorian readers may have enjoyed the fascination of new forensic techniques – as we may do certain elements of fantasy or science-fiction.
- 12 A modern reader treats the techniques as a matter of course, but we probably still enjoy them as a convention of the detection process.
- 13 For example: Mary is presented, from Watson's perspective, as wholly good: her appearance and conduct are both exemplary – she is above worldly thoughts (such as money, appearance) and sees the true 'treasure' of life: love. Major Sholto is presented as misguided and greedy rather than 'evil' as he attempts to redeem himself by passing Mary her inheritance. Tonga is presented as evil, but in Small's account, he is loyal and helpful.
- 14 Small is a complex character and Conan Doyle offers the reader time to understand and judge him as more than a stock 'villain' figure. The final chapter offers him a platform to justify his choices, and for the reader to judge him without the intervention of other characters.
- 15 For example: Conan Doyle does seem to believe in social justice, through the character of Holmes who treats all with equal dignity and actually tends to see the best in people rather than defining them by a class. However, he does stereotype the presentation of the working classes.
- 16 Holmes has the qualities and habits of a gentleman but is not a snob, as is shown through his wide range of associates.
- 17 Conan Doyle mocks the police force. It is your personal opinion as to whether this is fair in our time, or in the Victorian era.
- 18 The Indian Mutiny provides a dramatic and probably known backdrop. It gives the treasure a realistic history and places Small as a more realistic character. It also opens the question of the morality of war.
- 19 The novel follows a conventional detective fiction structure with strong central and supporting characterisation; Conan Doyle's techniques are echoed by other writers across the years – he has a mastery of the form.
- 20 Yes, it deals with issues which are relevant and interesting today: morality, love, ingenuity, detection, humour, action and drama.

LANGUAGE, STRUCTURE AND FORM SECTION

p.77 Do it! (top)



The long convoluted final sentence reflects Watson's increasing sense of distraction and dismay. He becomes 'dreamily conscious' of Thaddeus Sholto's 'interminable trains of symptoms'; Sholto talks on and on but Watson is only half listening.

p.77 Do it! (bottom)



- 1 a1, b2, c4, d3
- 2 In these examples, Holmes sounds highly intellectual or perhaps pretentious by saying things in an overly dramatic way.

p.78 Do it!



1

| Technique | Examples in the novel | Intended effect on the reader |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Mystery | Mary's first visit, reference to the notes signed with 'Sign of the Four' | To awaken curiosity, engage the imagination, create predictions |
| Suspense | The discovery of Bartholomew's body, the opening of the box of treasure | To create anticipation and finally horror with the body/anticipation and irony with the box |
| Pursuit sequences | First with Toby the dog and then the boat chase | To create the enjoyment of excitement, increased adrenalin shared with the characters |

2 Victorian – excited, perhaps enjoyably shocked. It presents Watson as a desirable character and adds to the interest in how events are resolved for him.

Modern – it may seem a little too sweet or twee for modern tastes that have much more overt sexuality in media content.

Both – it also opens a question as to how the relationship with Mary will affect Watson's friendship with Sherlock, which could pique reader curiosity. "So swift, silent, and furtive were his movements, like those of a trained blood-hound picking out a scent."

"In God's name, what does it all mean?' I asked."

"One white arm and hand drooped over the side of the chair, and her whole pose and figure spoke of an absorbing melancholy."

"The yellow glare from the shop-windows streamed out into the steamy, vaporous air, and threw a murky, shifting radiance across the crowded thoroughfare."

"His small eyes glowed and burned with a sombre light, and his thick lips were writhed back from his teeth, which grinned and chattered at us with a half animal fury."

"Nature had given him a pendulous lip, and a too visible line of yellow and irregular teeth, which he strove feebly to conceal..."

p.82 Do it!



The answers are your personal choice. Some possible answers are shown below:

| Example from the text | Possible answers |
|---|---|
| <p>'Crime is commonplace, existence is commonplace, and <u>no qualities save those which are commonplace have any function upon earth.</u>'</p> <p>'Women are never to be entirely trusted, — not the best of them.'</p> | Holmes could appear knowledgeable and intelligent or arrogant. |
| <p>'Schade dass die Natur nur EINEN Mensch aus Dir schuf. Denn zum wuerdigen Mann war und zum Schelmen der Stoff.'</p> | His sophistication and knowledge are demonstrated. |
| <p>'The date?'... 'His luggage?'</p> <p>'No water-pipe near. Roof quite out of reach.'</p> | He appears business-like, thorough, analytical. |
| <p>'Of course as to his personal appearance <u>he must be middle-aged, and must be sunburned</u> after serving his time in such an oven as the Andamans.'</p> <p>'Stockwell Place. Robert Street. Cold Harbour Lane.'</p> | He deduces and is logical – it is what the readers love about Holmes. |
| <p>'Fire if he raises his hand,' <u>said Holmes, quietly.</u></p> | He is measured, self-controlled, unemotional. |
| <p>'On which <u>the dead man very considerably got up and locked the door</u> on the inside.'</p> <p>'Isn't it gorgeous!' said Holmes, grinning over his coffee-cup.</p> | He can be ironic and humorous. |
| <p>'Oh, this is hardly a case for me to theorize over,' said Holmes, <u>dryly.</u></p> | He can be sarcastic but he doesn't belittle others. |

p.83 REVIEW IT!



| | Literary term | Example from the novel | |
|---|---------------------|---|---|
| 1 | Rhetorical question | Holmes is explaining his thinking to Watson: 'Now, what could Jonathan Small do? He could only continue...' | Holmes occasionally uses this device to deliver background information. It makes him sound authoritative and logical. Overuse would make him seem arrogant. |
| 2 | Aphorism | 'Women are never to be entirely trusted...' | The audience may be shocked, find it comic or agree, depending upon personal perspective. |
| 3 | Juxtaposition | 'There are in me the makings of a very fine loafer...' | Holmes' irony and arrogance are demonstrated in that he will excel (very fine) even if it is a negative characteristic (loafer). |
| 4 | Humour | 'Holmes smiled ruefully.' | Holmes does not openly criticise and humour is used to demonstrate his ironic responses to Athelney Jones. |
| 5 | Irony | 'Athelney Jones...with all his well-known energy and sagacity...' | Conan Doyle does not openly criticise Jones either but he includes irony in the newspaper report because the audience clearly know that Jones is not energetic or sagacious (wise). |
| 6 | Sentimentality | 'She listened with parted lips and shining eyes...' | Mary is presented by Watson in conventional sentimental terms such as this description. |

p.83 REVIEW IT!



| | Literary term | Example from the novel | |
|----|---------------------------|---|--|
| 7 | Precision | '...siney forearm and wrist, all dotted and scarred...' | Conan Doyle, through Watson, often uses sharp visual details, particularly in relation to Holmes, to enable the reader to imagine him in sharper relief than other characters. However, Mary, Thaddeus and Tonga also receive this visual attention. |
| 8 | Economy | 'The date?' 'His luggage?' | Holmes sometimes uses terse language to indicate his urgency, in contrast to his more extensive elaboration, especially when he is pursuing a case. |
| 9 | Imperative | 'Pile it on, men, pile it on.' | Holmes' use of imperatives here conveys his authority and urgency. |
| 10 | Pathetic fallacy | 'A moonbeam struck one corner and glimmered in a garret window.' | Here, a sense of beauty and mystery is conveyed, which is soon changed to a more urgent atmosphere. |
| 11 | Alliteration | 'He tried to speak in a cool, careless way...' | Here, the alliteration steadies the pace of the sentence, mirroring the tone of voice used by the character. |
| 12 | Simile | '...like a golden barrier...' | This simile is used to symbolise the social difference between Watson and Mary should she become an heiress of fortune. |
| 13 | Adjectives | '...wild cannibal natives...' | Conan Doyle intensifies the adjectives aiming to make the people seem fearsome – especially to a Victorian audience. |
| 14 | Adverbials | '... all cut to ribbons and half-eaten by jackals...' | This adverbial, like others that Conan Doyle uses, extends and elaborates a description; here, it intensifies the violence and degradation of the attack. |
| 15 | Listing within a sentence | '...full of great, deserted halls, and winding passages, and long corridors twisting...' | Here, the list echoes the movement as each element makes it seem like the character is moving into a new part of the building. |
| 16 | Long sentence for effect | Watson tells Holmes: 'Your brain may...be roused and excited... morbid process which involves increased tissue change... permanent weakness.' | Watson is giving an extended medical explanation, in keeping with his profession; it makes Watson seem well-informed and concerned, though it may also make him see lecturing and dull in contrast to Holmes. |
| 17 | Short sentence for effect | 'In vain, he struggled and writhed.' | The extended description of action that precedes this sentence means that this example works to punctuate and intensify the scene. |
| 18 | Dialect | 'I'd like a shillin' | Dialect is used to differentiate lower class characters from those of Holmes and Watson's status. Here it conveys humour through a cheeky child. |

p.83 REVIEW IT!



| | | | |
|----|-------------------|--|--|
| 19 | Exclamation | 'I am frightened! My nerves cannot stand it!' | Thaddeus and Watson exclaim more than Holmes; it conveys panic in contrast to Holmes' coolness. |
| 20 | Elevated language | 'I find it...transcendentally stimulating and clarifying to the mind...' | Holmes sometimes gives pronouncements on life using elevated language; this presents him with a sense of authority, intellect and, perhaps, arrogant confidence in his own opinions. |

DOING WELL IN YOUR AQA EXAM

p.88 Do it!



Student A's answer is better because it opens a discussion of what heroism might be and how this applies to the novel. Student B's answer does begin to discuss what heroism is – doing good things – but it is quite simple. There is no need to explain that you are going to write about two sides 'and make a judgement'.

p.91 REVIEW IT!



- 1 Read the question.
- 2 So that you read the extract with the question focus in mind.
- 3 10–15 minutes
- 4 Key, relevant ideas; the content of each of four or five paragraphs; the order of the paragraphs.
- 5 To make sure you don't get stuck on one point and fail to cover the question focus in enough breadth.
- 6 Four or five
- 7 So that you know what the examiner is looking out for and you can plan your answer knowing where the marks will be allocated.
- 8 Not necessarily. If you do, they need to be useful and help you to answer the question.
- 9 No – if you feel confident about it, compare the extract with other parts of the book throughout your answer. However, you can begin with the extract and then make connections with other parts of the play. This way you know you will be giving the extract enough attention.
- 10 A subtopic of the main focus of the question.
- 11 Yes. This is called direct evidence, and should support your answer and show you know how to handle quotations.
- 12 Supporting your ideas with references to the book, either directly (quotations), or indirectly (brief mentions of an event in the play or what a character says or does).
- 13 Planning and writing answers to exam questions
- 14 Relevant (closely connected) to the main focus of the exam question
- 15 RIPE: ripe, insightful, precise, exploratory
- 16 It is your choice. A good introduction is worthwhile. An introduction that just repeats the question is not.
- 17 An introduction gives your reader (examiner) a signpost as to how you are going to treat the question.
- 18 A conclusion may give a summary of your main points or address an overarching question. It does not have to be decisive; you can leave it as a balanced response.
- 19 This conclusion refers to the characters as people; it offers no summary or interesting point with which to end the essay; the last sentence is unnecessary.
- 20 This conclusion is better because it offers a summary of points made in the essay; it includes an overview of the question; it gives an interesting opinion.

AQA EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

**p. 92 Practice question 1**

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents the theme of justice in the novel.

- Explore the theme and comment on the language techniques used to present it for one of the forms of justice referred to in the extract, making links to the presentation of this theme throughout the novel: for example, justice as applied by the police force.
- Explore the theme and comment on the language techniques used to present it for one of the forms of justice referred to in the extract, making links to the presentation of this theme throughout the novel: for example, justice as applied by Holmes.
- Explore the theme and comment on the language techniques used to present it for one of the forms of justice referred to in the extract, making links to the presentation of this theme throughout the novel: for example, moral justice as represented by the punishment of wrong-doers.
- Evaluate the presentation of the theme of justice in the novel as a whole and consider how far the novel should be seen as a moral fable or purely as entertainment.

**p. 93 Practice question 2**

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents attitudes to women in the novel.

- Assess how attitudes to women are presented in the novel: for example, through the presentation of Mary Morstan and the comments of male characters.
- Explore the presentation of Mary in the extract, commenting upon language techniques used.
- Compare the presentation of Mary's character here with that during her interview with Holmes and across the second half of the novel.
- Comment upon the attitudes shown by Holmes and Watson to women/Mary across the novel.
- Consider how far the attitudes to women in *The Sign of Four* are determined by the historical period in which the novel was written.