

# The Sign of the Four

By Arthur Conan Doyle



## Yr 11 REVISION GUIDE

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- Plot
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PLOT RECAP

Chapter	Summary	Links to context and theme
<p><b>1 The Science of Deduction</b>  <b>Characters:</b>                      Sherlock Holmes, Dr Watson</p>	<p>Introduction of Holmes and Dr Watson. We discover <b>Holmes' incredible skills and knowledge</b> but also his <b>flaws of addiction</b> "wrist all dotted and scarred with innumerable puncture marks" and <b>constant need for mental stimulation</b> "give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram" as well as <b>his arrogance</b> "I am the last and highest court of appeal in detection", but also his <b>lack of empathy</b> towards Watson and his tragic brother, "Pray accept my apologies, viewing the matter as an abstract problem, I had forgotten how personal and painful a thing it might be to you." Watson seems <b>to deeply admire</b> Holmes, "his great powers, his masterly manner." but also <b>cares and worries</b> about his addictions, "my conscience swelled nightly within me". Watson is <b>a far more sensitive</b> character in comparison to Holmes and serves as a <b>sharp contrast to emphasise Holmes' unique qualities</b>.</p>	<p>First fictional detective-Victorian readers fascinated by Holmes' eccentric character.</p> <p><b>AO3 Victorian opiate use</b>- more common and could be sourced from pharmacies. Watson, ahead of his time, knowing the dangers</p>
<p><b>2 The Statement of the Case</b>  <b>Characters:</b>                      Holmes, Watson, Miss Morstan</p>	<p><b>Miss Morstan</b> is introduced, she is a <b>sweet woman</b>, "her large blue eyes were singularly spiritual and sympathetic." that is clearly <b>very agitated</b>, "her lip trembled, her hand quivered, she showed every sign of intense inward agitation." <b>but she also comes across as very sensible and reasoned</b> as she provides Holmes with all of the details that he may need of her case. Holmes is <b>immediately intrigued</b> when she describes her case as "inexplicable", "Holmes rubbed his hands, and his eyes glistened...he leaned forward in his chair with an expression of extraordinary concentration on his clear-cut, hawk-like features." Her father went missing 10 years before, and for the last 6 years she has been receiving pearls. Recently, the sender of the pearls wants to meet with her. Watson immediately finds her <b>very attractive</b>, "What an attractive woman! I exclaimed" but Holmes doesn't notice as he sees her as a "mere factor in a problem" again we see his almost <b>robotic approach</b> "you are an automaton-a calculating machine!" to cases and the people that feature in them. Watson tries not to fall too deeply for her as he feels that he is not worthy as an injured army surgeon without much money showing his <b>humility and insecurity</b>. "What was I, an army surgeon with a weak leg and a weaker banking account, that I should dare to think of such things?"</p>	<p><b>Views of women-</b> Watson takes note of the way she dresses and carries herself- she is "sweet and amiable" – considered important qualities in a woman.</p> <p><b>Victorian fear of social inequality</b></p>
<p><b>3 In Quest of a Solution</b>  <b>Characters:</b>                      Holmes, Watson, Miss Morstan, Hindoo servant of Thaddeus Sholto-Khitmutgar</p>	<p>Miss Morstan, Holmes and Watson all travel to the location sent by the mysterious messenger. The dreary, gloomy atmosphere and use of pathetic fallacy mirror the mysterious errand that the characters are on, "dense, drizzly fog" and "mud coloured-clouds drooped sadly." <b>This reflects the moods of both Watson and Miss Morstan</b>, but <b>not Holmes who remains focused</b>, "He could rise superior to petty influences." On the journey, the reader sees a sharp contrast between a <b>confused and disorientated Watson</b> with his long, complex sentences, "Soon, what with our pace, the fog, and my own limited knowledge of London, I lost my bearings, and knew nothing save that we seemed to be going a very long way." In contrast to <b>Holmes' precise knowledge</b> reflected by the short and minor sentences, "Rochester Row, "said he, Now Vincent Square. Now we come out on the Vauxhall Bridhe Road."- This also adds to the fast pace of the narrative.</p>	<p><b>Gothic Genre</b>                      Victorians <b>fearing the dark</b> and unknown. Action often happens at night-adds to mystery  <b>Imperialism</b>                      We see that the Hindoo is described as</p>

	<p>They arrive at their destination which is too described in a way that builds atmosphere and tension, <i>“Long lines of dull brick houses.” “interminable lines of new staring brick buildings –the monster tentacles which the giant city was throwing out into the country.”</i> The description of the hindoo servant Khitmurgar introduces the contextual element of <b>imperialism</b> into the text.</p>	<p>incongruous. Victorian readers often feared “others”</p>
<p><b>4 The Story of the Bald-headed man</b> <b>Characters:</b> Holmes, Watson, Miss Morstan, Thaddeus Sholto,</p>	<p><b>Thaddeus Sholto</b> is presented as a <b>very nervous and uneasy man</b>. He also seems to be a <b>hypochondriac</b> who claims that he has very <b>poor health</b>. His house is described as most-unusual as he lives in quite an unattractive area of London however; the interior of his house is decorated with incredibly fine furnishings and Eastern luxury, <i>“The richest and glossiest of curtains and tapestries...richly mounted paintings, oriental vase...two great tiger skins”</i>. Sholto tells Miss Morstan early in this chapter that her father died of heart attack, <b>Watson is defensive</b> over Thaddeus’ insensitivity. <i>“I could have struck the man across the face, so hot was I”</i> Thaddeus then tells the story of his father’s argument about some treasure with Captain Morstan which led to this heart attack and the fact that the reason he didn’t tell anyone was because it looked suspicious. Thaddeus mentions that a dark mystery had hung over his father and he had a fear of men with wooden legs, he received a letter months before his death that terrified him. On his death bed, he told his twin sons Bartholomew and Thaddeus that they should give Miss Morstan the pearls. Then he mentioned the treasure, but before he could say where it was, he saw a bearded face at the window which caused his immediate death the next morning they found a note “the sign of the four” on his body. Bartholomew has since spent 6 years looking for the treasure and has finally found it; Thaddeus had contacted Miss Morstan who should be given half of the treasure “worth half a million sterling” <b>Watson is deeply affected by this as he feels that if Miss Morstan becomes rich, he will have no chance of being with her, “I stammered out some few halting words of congratulation, and then sat downcast, with my head drooped”</b>. They all leave to go to Pondicherry Lodge which is where the treasure is.</p>	<p><b>Imperialism –</b> For a Victorian reader, the exotic treasures would only add to the air of mystery and excitement in the story. Victorians would have been less well-travelled</p> <p><b>Fear of Social Inequality-</b> Watson believes that if Miss Morstan comes into this enormous sum of money that his chance with her will disappear as she will no longer think he is a suitable choice for her.</p>
<p><b>5 The Tragedy of Pondicherry Lodge:</b> <b>Characters:</b> Thaddeus Holmes Watson Miss Morstan McMurdo Mrs Bernstone Bartholomew</p>	<p>Doyle creates tension at the beginning of this chapter in his description of the house and grounds, <i>“a gravel path wound through desolate grounds to a huge clump of a house, square and prosaic (simple), all plunged in shadow save where one moon beam struck one corner and glimmered...the vast size of the building with its gloom and deathly silence, struck a chill into the heart.”</i> On the arrival of Holmes, Watson, Miss Morstan and T.Sholto, they are not allowed access as Thaddeus had agreed with his brother the night before, not only this, but his brother hasn’t left his room all day. Holmes talks the guard (Prize fighter McMurdo) down as he has fought him before. They see that Bartholomew’s light is not on and hear a scream of his housekeeper-Mrs Bernstone, <i>“the shrill broken whimpering of a frightened woman.”</i> When they go to discover what has happened, even Holmes is shocked as he looks through the key hole of Bartholomew’s room to find him grinning wildly. <i>“the features were set in a horrible smile, a fixed and unnatural grin...in that moonlit room.”</i> The reader is made to feel tense and uneasy at <b>Holmes’ almost irrational reaction</b> which suggests that the sight it particularly frightening, <i>“instantly rose with a sharp intake of breath, “there is something devilish in this Watson” said he , more moved than I had ever seen him before.”</i> Watson and Holmes force entry through the locked door and describe the crime scene, an opening in the ceiling, a set of steps, a long coil of rope. Holmes finds a thorn behind Bartholomew’s ear</p>	<p><b>Gothic Genre</b> Spooky, eerie night time setting continues to add to the tension and mystery.</p> <p><b>Fear of otherness-</b> Already we can see that the murder weapon is</p>

	and discovers he’s probably been poisoned. He also <b>finds a stick with a stone head-like a hammer, “rudely lashed with coarse twine.”</b> They also find a note on the body-The Sign of the Four.	something exotic and unusual.
<p><b>6 Sherlock Gives a Demonstration</b></p> <p><b>Characters:</b> Holmes, Watson, Miss Morstan, Athelney Jones, Thaddeus</p>	<p>Sherlock effectively <b>tells Watson to sit to one side</b> as he goes to work, doing what he does best, <b>inferring and deducing, “Just sit in the corner there, that your footprints may not complicate matters. Now to work!”</b> <i>He is most scientific and pragmatic in his work, “Framework is solid. No hinges at the side. Let us open it. No water-pipe near. Roof quite out of reach. Yet a man has mounted by the window. It rained a little last night.”</i> He concludes that there were two men involved in the murder and the stealing of the treasure, one with a wooden leg, the other being a very excellent climber who was able to climb up the wall of the house and enter through a trap door in the roof, then pass a rope down to a second man (the one with the wooden leg). The wooden legged man’s hand has been badly injured on the rope which will also help them to find him. Holmes continues his work...<i>“Measuring, comparing, examining, with his long thin nose only a few inches from the planks, and his beady eyes gleaming and deep-set like those of a bird. So swift, silent, and furtive were his movements, like those of a trained blood-hound picking out a scent”</i> They find that the second man is very unusually small as his footprints are like those of a child. He also notices that one of the men has trodden in creosote (a strong-smelling chemical) Holmes decides to send Watson for a sniffer dog “Toby” to follow this scent. The police arrive and <b>Athelney Jones is presented as entirely the opposite to Holmes a clumsy oaf that rushes to conclusions, “Heavy steps and the clamour of loud voices were audible from below, and the hall door shut with a loud crash... and a very stout, portly man in a gray suit strode heavily into the room. He was red-faced, burly and plethoric, with a pair of very small twinkling eyes which looked keenly out from between swollen and puffy pouches.”</b> He draws wrong conclusions and immediately places the blame on Thaddeus Sholto. Holmes promises to free Thaddeus and is even able to name who he suspects did the crime a man called Jonathan Small which makes Athelney Jones look completely incompetent. Watson decides that Miss Morstan must be taken home after a night of such drama <i>“It is not right that Miss Morstan should remain in this stricken house”</i> and so Watson accompanies her and agrees to pick up Toby the sniffer dog on his way back.</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> <p>AO3 – Viewing women as the “weaker sex”?</p> </div>
<p><b>7 The Episode of the Barrel</b></p> <p><b>Characters:</b> Watson Miss Morstan Mrs Cecil Forrester Mr Sherman Toby Holmes</p>	<p>In the carriage on the way to her home, Watson discovers that Miss Morstan was very upset by the events of the evening, <i>“she first turned faint, and then burst into a passion of weeping,—so sorely had she been tried by the adventures of the night.”</i>; Watson struggles to comfort her as he does not want to come across as someone that is only interested in the fortune that will gain if her treasure is found, <i>“She was weak and helpless, shaken in mind and nerve. It was to take her at a disadvantage to obtrude (impose) love upon her at such a time. Worse still, she was rich. If Holmes’s researches were successful, she would be an heiress. Was it fair, was it honorable, that a half-pay surgeon should take such advantage of an intimacy which chance had brought about? Might she not look upon me as a mere vulgar fortune seeker?”</i> Watson leaves her at 2am with Mrs Cecil Forrester and his comforted by her warmth towards Mary. He then goes to pick up Toby from a questionable area of London, at first Mr Sherman (the owner of the dog) is very aggressive and hostile, <i>“Go on, you drunken vagabone,” said the face. “If you kick up any more row I’ll open the kennels and let out forty-three dogs upon you.”</i> but soon changes his tone when Watson mentions Holmes’ name (not the first time this is to happen-McMurdo). Watson takes Toby and heads back to Pondicherry lodge. When</p>	

	<p>he arrives, Holmes informs him that Athelney Jones has arrested almost the entire household, the gate-keeper, house-keeper and the servant as well as Thaddeus. Holmes demonstrated that he has inspected the small footprint further and that the toes are all separated which he thinks is significant, Holmes then decides to follow the path of the criminals and climbs down out of the house to trace their route, on the way down he finds a bag of poisoned thorns which must have belonged to the smaller man. Watson and Holmes then get to work following Toby's nose through London after the scent of the creosote that one of the men had trodden in. Whilst on this path Holmes tells Watson how he came up with the name "<i>Jonathan Small</i>"-he had been a convict in the charge of Captain Morstan and Major Sholto, Jonathan Small, along with 3 other men that were both Muslim and Hindu had this treasure and Small decided to tell Major Sholto and Morstan where it was buried so they could bring it to England. However, Major Sholto hid the treasure and when he found out about Small's release knew he would be after his treasure which is why he always feared men with wooden legs. Still on the route of the creosote, Toby eventually leads the men to ....a barrel of creosote...both Holmes and Watson burst out laughing.</p>	
<p><b>8 The Baker Street Irregulars</b>  <b>Characters:</b>  Holmes  Watson  Toby  Mrs Smith  Jack  The Baker Street Irregulars</p>	<p>Sherlock and Watson rediscover the main trail and Toby leads them in the right direction this time, he leads them to a dock by the river Thames, Holmes and Watson discover that they have taken a boat from the water's edge, they question a woman by the water's edge whose husband owns the boat. <b>Holmes cleverly asks if he can borrow a specific type of boat called a "Steam Launch"</b> knowing that this is likely the one that the men have taken, it turns out that Mordecai Smith had gone along with the men but that the steam launch didn't have enough coal to take it particularly far. <b>Mrs Smith and her son are presented as quite common, their speech is markedly different to Holmes, "shillin" and "He's been away since yesterday mornin', sir,"</b> and, truth to tell, I am beginnin' also revealed that he was with a wooden-legged man; Holmes also tricks her into giving the name of the boat and a full description. <b>Holmes reveals that he is a little prejudiced here and calls Mrs Smith a "person of that sort."</b> <b>Watson suggests next steps that Holmes disregards and then goes back to giving Watson clear instructions to go home and have some breakfast and sleep, Watson comments on being very weary after the excitements of the night and that he doesn't have the energy that drives Holmes on.</b> Holmes telegraphs the leader of the "<i>Baker Street Irregulars</i>" who is called Wiggins, he is the leader of a group of street children that Holmes uses to gain information as they are able to get everywhere in London, he asks the irregulars to search for the Aurora along the banks of the river and gave them a shilling each in advanced and promised a guinea to the boy that finds the boat. Holmes and Watson then discuss Jonathan Small's accomplice, <b>Watson first describes him as a "savage" revealing the British imperial view of exotic people.</b> Holmes finds that he is likely to be an aborigine from the Andaman islands "<i>they are fierce, morose and intractable people...they are naturally hideous, having large misshapen heads, small, fierce eyes, and distorted features</i>" –revealing western attitudes towards those that are different to them, they describe these people as almost terrifying monsters that should be distrusted and feared. Watson then falls asleep to Holmes' violin playing.</p>	<div data-bbox="1241 958 1412 1238" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>AO3-Class Divide.  The lower classes are stereotyped by Doyle.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1257 1458 1412 1697" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Imperialism And fear of otherness</p> </div>

<p><b>9 A Break in the Chain</b> Holmes Mrs Hudson Watson Miss Morstan Mrs Cecil Forrester Athelney Jones</p>	<p>Holmes is <b>very frustrated</b> at having no response from the irregulars, they could not spot the Aurora anywhere, Holmes is presented as <b>incredibly restless</b> at the beginning of this chapter, he had not slept at all, <i>“his face was dark and troubled.”</i> As there has been no news, Watson decides to pay Miss Morstan and Mrs Cecil Forrester a visit although when he only mentions Mrs Cecil Forrester Holmes has <i>“the twinkle of a smile in his eyes.”</i> <b>Holmes cautions him about giving the women too much information</b>, <i>“Women are never to be entirely trusted,-not the best of them.”</i> Watson does not reply but acknowledges to the reader that this is an <i>“atrocious sentiment.”</i> Miss Morstan shows her affection for Watson when she describes him and Holmes as <i>“two knight errants to the rescue.” With a bright glance.”</i> And then Miss Morstan to go on to show little interest in the treasure but great sympathy for Thaddeus Sholto, <i>“I think he has behaved most kindly and honourably...it is our duty to clear him of this dreadful and unfounded charge.”</i> This reveals that <b>Miss Morstan is a thoroughly pure and sweet young woman</b>. When Watson returns, Mrs Hudson (the landlady) <b>is very concerned about Holmes who has been pacing up and down</b> and has gone into his room. The next morning it is also clear that <b>he hasn't slept, he looks, “worn and haggard.”</b> Holmes says that <b>he hasn't slept as the, “Infernal problem is consuming (him)”</b> showing how much he detests not being in full control. Holmes even becomes, <i>“dejected and somewhat morose”</i> and took to some chemical analysis to occupy and distract his mind. After this Holmes goes out and decides to try different tactics to find the boat. He puts an advert in the newspaper saying that Modecai Smith is lost and a reward will be given to anyone that finds him. Whilst Holmes is out <b>Athelney Jones comes to see him to ask for help, this sharply contrasts to how he appeared previously, he is humble “his expression was downcast, and his bearing meek and even apologetic.”</b> He goes on to acknowledge that <i>“Sherlock Homes is a wonderful man.”</i> At this point an old man, who looks like an old sailor arrives, the description firmly throws the reader off the scent but this turns out to be Sherlock Holmes. Holmes then gives Athelney Jones clear and direct instructions that he wants two strong men and a fast steam launch boat to meet him at Westminster at 7 o'clock. He says that once they get the men they will get the treasure and he wants Miss Morstan to be there to claim her share. <b>Athelney Jones effectively gives up all power to Holmes, “Well, you are master of the situation.”</b></p>	
<p><b>10 The End of the Islander</b> Holmes Watson Athelney Jones Tonga Jonathan Small</p>	<p><b>Holmes' mood is greatly improved at the beginning of this chapter in comparison to the way he began the previous one, “his bright humour marked the reaction from his black depression of preceding days.”</b> Holmes, Watson, and Athelney Jones have dinner together before heading out at 7 to solve the case, which shows <b>how temperamental he is and how cases take over his mind entirely, “he appeared to be in a state of nervous exaltation. I have never known him so brilliant.”</b> <b>Watson marvels at his intellect</b> and knowledge of different subjects, <i>“on miracle plays, on medieval pottery, on Stradivarius violins, on the Buddhism of Ceylon, and on the war-ships of the future.”</i> Holmes asks Watson if he has his pistol which foreshadows the danger of their night's errand. The men get into the boat and make sure they take off the lamp which marks it as a police boat. The head towards the tower. Holmes explains that when he couldn't find the Aurora he thought about how Jonathan Small may have concealed the boat and decided that he may have falsely claimed that there was a fault with the boat so that work men would take the boat from the river and would conceal it to fix it. Holmes had dressed like a fisherman to find out of this theory was correct by enquiring at all of the boat menders he could and he was right, he had seen the owner Mordecai Smith who was asking for the boat back at 8pm that evening and so Holmes wanted a fast boat to ensure</p>	<p><b>Imperialism</b>  <b>Class divide</b></p>

	<p>that they would catch Jonathan Small and his accomplice. Holmes has asked one of the Baker Street irregulars to stand guard by the river and give them a signal when the boat heads out. When they see the boat she is going very fast, <b>Holmes is incredibly animated and excited</b>, <i>“We must catch her!”</i> cried Holmes between his teeth. <i>“Heap it on stokers!”</i> <i>Make her do all she can! If we burn the boat we must have them!”</i> Conan Doyle then gives a great description of the boat chase-building atmosphere and tension for the reader who is desperate for the Aurora to be caught. When they finally get up close they see Jonathan Small with his wooden leg and his accomplice who is described as a wild animal, evil and grotesque-looking, <i>“savage, distorted creatures...the 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 half animal fury.”</i> When it looks as though he may harm Holmes and Watson they open fire and he falls into the river. Jonathan Small then re-routes the boat towards the shore but when he tries to run, his wooden leg sinks into the mud. The men then use a rope to throw over his shoulders and haul him into their boat, <i>“to drag him, like some evil fish.”</i> They see an iron chest on board the aurora which is still locked but very heavy which must contain the treasure.</p>	<div data-bbox="1246 241 1398 439" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">         Imperialism and fear of otherness       </div>
<p><b>11 The Great Agra Treasure</b> Jonathan Small Holmes Watson Athelney Jones Miss Morstan</p>	<p>Small is captured and taken on board the police boat where his is encouraged to tell his story by Holmes, he looks like a man that has had a very hard life, <i>“he was a sunburned, reckless-eyed fellow, with a network of lines and wrinkles all over his mahogany features.”</i> He confesses that he didn’t want to kill Bartholomew Sholto and it was Tonga, who shot him with a dart, <i>“I welted the little devil with the slack end of the rope for it.”</i> <b>Athelney Jones begins to lose the humility he had previously had</b>, <i>“if we are pretty quick in catching our men, we are not so quick in condemning them”</i> (use of “we” suggests he had a much bigger part in it than he did) and Watson points out, <i>“It was amusing to notice how consequential Jones was already beginning to give himself airs on the strength of the capture.”</i> Watson is entrusted to take the box of treasure to Miss Morstan who is waiting for news, he described her in detail again revealing to the reader his great attraction to her, <i>“the soft light of a shaded lamp fell upon her as she leaned back in the basket chair, playing over her sweet, grave face.”</i> Watson finds Miss Morstan alone and presents her with the box taken from Small and his accomplice. He tries to act as though he is really pleased but really he sees this as a barrier to his relationship with her, <i>“speaking jovially and boisterously, though my heart was heavy within me.”</i> After Watson forces the lock, it is with complete shock that both Watson and Miss Morstan find the box empty, <i>she doesn’t seem particularly upset by this.</i> Realising that Miss Morstan is no longer a woman above his social station, <b>Watson declares his love for Miss Morstan.</b></p>	<div data-bbox="1246 1167 1398 1451" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">         Presentation of women-Angels in the house       </div> <div data-bbox="1246 1487 1398 1720" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">         Fear of social inequality       </div>
<p><b>12 The Strange Story of Jonathan Small</b> Holmes Jonathan Small Athelney Jones Watson Captain Morstan</p>	<p>Upon returning to Baker street, Holmes, Athelney Jones and Jonathan Small are there. He says that he disposed of the treasure and wanted to make sure that no relatives of Sholto or Morstan would ever lay their hands on the treasure, <i>“it is my treasure; and if I can’t have the loot I’ll take darned good care that no one else does.”</i> He goes on to say that what he did, he did for the three men that are in the Andamann</p>	<div data-bbox="1246 1749 1398 1883" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <b>Imperialism &amp; Fear of otherness</b> </div>

<p>Major Sholto Tonga Achmet</p>	<p>convict-barracks and himself. He explains that he didn't throw the whole iron box in as it would have been easier to find if he threw the scattered treasure in. Jonathan seems very angry, <i>"Justice!" Snarled the ex-convict. "A pretty justice! Whose loot is this, if it is not ours? Where is the justice that I should give it up to those who have never earned it?...twenty years long in that fever-ridden swamp, all day at work under the mangrove tree, all night chained up in the filthy convict-huts, bitten by mosquitoes, racked with ague, bullied by every cursed black-faced policeman who loved to take it out of a white man."</i> Jonathan Small is very animated at this point, <i>"all this came out in a wild whirl of words, while his eyes blazed and the handcuffs clanked together with the impassioned movement of his hands."</i> Jonathan Small acknowledges that Holmes speaks to him justly and fairly despite the fact that he is the reason he has been caught. Jonathan then explains his story in full, saying he had grown up in Worcestershire and at 18 <i>"got into a mess over a girl"</i> and joined the army and travelled to India. Whilst swimming in the Ganges, he got attacked by a crocodile and lost half of his leg. After 5 months in hospital, he had no job as he could not serve in the army. He got a job working for a man called Mr Abelwhite, he was an overseer at a plantation and could do his work on horseback so he was happy. Very soon there was lots of unrest and there was a mutiny, a lot of the native people rose up against those trying to rule them, <i>"there were two hundred thousand <u>black devils</u> let loose, and the country was a perfect hell."</i> He describes how his employer and his family were then murdered brutally by the natives. After fleeing, he found some people to fight with against the rebels in a place called Agra, where he describes the <i>"Old fort"</i> he describes it as an enormous abandoned place that no one dares to enter. Whilst standing guard with two Sikh soldiers, he put his gun down to light a pipe and the 2 Sikhs that were meant to be on his side, held a knife to his throat and said that he must work with them or he will die. They ask him to promise to be rich with them and to swear an oath that he will help them to retrieve treasure with them that he can too own, as long as he remains on their side. They say that there is a fourth person with whom they must share the treasure. The treasure belonged to a Raj (Indian royalty) that had chosen to stow it in the old fort, they want to claim this treasure by killing the servant "Achmet" who had been sent to hide it for him and stealing his treasure from him. After, nearly failing at killing the man, they managed to do this and then have the treasure to themselves. There were diamonds, pearls, rubies, emeralds...They hid the treasure in the old fort and made a map with its whereabouts. However, shortly after this, all of</p>	<p>Justice</p> <p>Good vs Evil</p> <p>Fear of otherness</p>
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	<p>the men are arrested for the murder of Achmet as a spy for the Raj had seen them do this. No one else knew about the treasure, but all men were then imprisoned for their crime. After several years he was moved to the Andaman islands and found himself in a more privileged position although he was worked hard. This is where he met Captain Morstan and Major Sholto, he noticed that they played a lot of cards and often lost, Major Sholto in particular lost a lot of money and was complaining about being a ruined man. Small speaks to Major Sholto about the treasure he gives him some details but not exactly all of them and pretends he wants to hand the treasure over to the government, he knew that Major Sholto would be interested in coming up with a deal to get the treasure and he involved Morstan in the plan. He asks for the men to free him and his four friends and say that they can have a fifth of the treasure each. They agree and swear to one another that they will uphold their bargain. They give Sholto the paper with the treasure map on so he can check where the treasure is. Sholto however, never returned and stole the treasure even though his uncle had died and left him with a serious amount of wealth! Small then promised to get vengeance. He met his small friend Tonga at this time who proved to be loyal after Small nursed him to health after sickness and Tonga helped him to escape after he killed a guard with his wooden leg. Eventually they got back to England and began pursuing the treasure and Major Sholto. <i>"We earned a living at this time by my exhibiting poor Tonga at fairs and other such places as the black cannibal."</i> After describing the last parts of his story which Holmes had already made the reader aware of, Athelney Jones leads him to the police station.</p> <p>Watson declares that he is marrying Miss Morstan to which <i>Holmes replies, He gave a most dismal groan." I feared as much, I really cannot congratulate you."</i></p> <p><i>"I think she is one of the most charming young ladies I ever met, and might have been most useful in such work as we have been doing. She had a decided genius that way: witness the way in which she preserved that Agra plan from all other papers of her father. But love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true, cold reason which I place above all things. I should never marry myself, lest I bias my judgement."</i></p> <p>Holmes also reminded Watson that there had been a spy in the Sholto's house, <i>"Lal Rao" which Athelney Jones did happen</i></p>	<div data-bbox="1236 1093 1414 1182" data-label="Text"> <p>Imperialism</p> </div>
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	<p><i>to arrest, “so Jones actually has the undivided honour of having caught one fish in his great haul.”</i></p> <p><i>Watson end the story with acknowledging that everyone else has benefitted from this case with the exception of Sherlock Holmes, “you have done all of the work, I get a wife out of this business, Jones gets the credit, pray what remains for you?”</i></p> <p><i>Holmes responds, “there still remains the cocaine bottle.”</i></p>	
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### **Characters you NEED TO KNOW**

1. **Sherlock Holmes**—The novel’s protagonist, a genius detective who hates the “dull routine of existence” and loves to be challenged. Sherlock takes a cold and unemotional approach to his work.
2. **Dr. John Watson**—The novel’s narrator, an ex-army surgeon and Sherlock Holmes’s close friend colleague. He helps the reader to see Holmes’s powers of observation from a close perspective.
3. **Mary Morstan**—She is a ‘damsel in distress’ character who brings the case of the Sign of the Four to Holmes and Watson.
4. **Thaddeus Sholto**—An eccentric art collector and son of Major Sholto. He leads Holmes on the first steps to finding the treasure.
5. **Jonathan Small**—The antagonist of the novel. He is a soldier who had his leg bitten off and became a thief. One of the original ‘four’.
6. **Major Sholto**—The villain of the novel. He leaves India with the treasure but dies with it.
7. **Captain Morstan**—Mary’s father, who dies of a heart attack during a dispute with Major Sholto.
8. **Tonga**—Jonathan Small’s sidekick, who represents savagery.

**AO1** Sherlock is a **work ADDICT**:

**AO1-“Innumerable puncture marks” AO2-**  
“Innumerable” adjective suggesting he is a regular user, he needs constant stimulation.

**AO1“I abhor the dull routine of existence” AO2-**  
“Abhor” strong verb suggesting he has a hatred for anything ordinary, **he is unable of finding pleasure in normal existence. Adjective “dull”**

**AO1-“Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram”- AO2** Repetition of “give me” suggests he craves and is completely addicted and desperate for puzzles and problems to solve.

**AO1- CH 2** Holmes rubbed his hands, his eyes glistened... concentration on his clear-cut, hawk-like features.”

**AO1-CH9** “Infernal problem is consuming (him)” Holmes even becomes, “dejected and somewhat morose”

Sherlock is **unemotional and insensitive**:

**AO1-Ch1-** Pray accept my apologies, viewing the matter as an abstract problem, I had forgotten how personal and painful a thing it might be to you.”

**AO1-Ch2-** Miss Morstan gives an emotional account of her father’s disappearance- he replies, “The date?” “His luggage?”

**AO1 Ch2-** He views clients as a “mere factor in a problem”

**AO1 Ch2** “you really are an automaton-a calculating machine!”

Sherlock is **arrogant**: (heavy use of sarcasm when referring to the police force)

**AO1-Ch1** “ I am the last and highest court of appeal in detection, When Gregson or Lestrade or Athelney Jones are out of their depths—which, by the way, is their normal state—the matter is laid before me. I examine the data, as an expert, and pronounce a specialist’s opinion.”

**AO1-Ch1** “I had observed that a **small vanity** underlay my companion’s quiet and **didactic (instructive)** manner.

**AO1- Ch7** “We have had an immense display of energy since you left. He has arrested not only friend Thaddeus, but the gatekeeper, the housekeeper, and the Indian servant.” –**Sarcastic tone to describe Athelney Jones**

**AO1-Sherlock is demanding and controlling:**

**AO1- CH6** -Just sit in the corner there, that your footprints may not complicate matters.

**AO1- CH7**-to Watson “Not at all. Look here!” “smell the edge of the wood-work?” “Now run down-stairs, loose the dog, and look out for Blondin.”

**AO1- “I want to find the** whereabouts of a steam launch ...**I want one boy to be at** Mordecai Smith’s landing-stage...**You must divide it out among yourselves,** and do both banks thoroughly. **Let me know the moment** you have news. **Is that all clear?”**

**AO1- CH 10** Athelney Jones to Holmes- “ Well, you are master of the situation.”

Sherlock is **extraordinarily knowledgeable on a variety of subjects**:

**AO1-CH1** “I was able to refer him to two parallel cases, the one at Riga in 1857, and the other at St. Louis in 1871, which have suggested to him the true solution.”

**AO1 CH3-** Holmes’ precise knowledge reflected by the short and minor sentences, “Rochester Row, “said he, Now Vincent Square. Now we come out on the Vauxhall Bridge Road.”

**AO1 – CH 10** “I have never known him so brilliant.”, “on miracle plays, on medieval pottery, on Stradivarius violins, on the Buddhism of Ceylon, and on the war-ships of the future.”

Sherlock is **methodical, pragmatic and observant**:

**AO1 Ch6-** “Framework is solid. No hinges at the side. Let us open it. No water-pipe near. Roof quite out of reach. Yet a man has mounted by the window.”

**AO1 Ch6-...“Measuring, comparing, examining,** with his long thin nose only a few inches from the planks, and his **beady eyes gleaming and deep-set like those of a bird. So swift, silent,** and furtive were his movements, **like those of a trained blood-hound picking out a scent”**

Holmes’ comparison to animals suggests that his powers are instinctive and come naturally to him. Birds are inquisitive and very precise and graceful as they move. Blood hounds are determined and stick strongly to a scent.

**AO1-Dr John Watson is the narrator and is therefore biased, especially in his view of Mary Morstan-we have a real insight into how he feels about her.**

**AO1-**“Honestly, I cannot congratulate you upon it. Detection is, or ought to be, an exact science, and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner. You have attempted to tinge it with romanticism, which produces much the same effect as if you worked a love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid.”

**AO1-** “her large blue eyes were singularly spiritual and sympathetic.” “What an attractive woman!” I exclaimed. “the soft light of a shaded lamp fell upon her as she leaned back in the basket chair, playing over her sweet, grave face.”

**AO1- Watson takes some pleasure in the possibility of Holmes’ defeat.**

**Ch 1-** “I handed him over the watch with **some slight feeling of amusement in my heart, for the test was, as I thought, an impossible one**, and I intended it as a lesson against the somewhat dogmatic tone which he occasionally assumed.”

**Ch1** –“**I often thought a small vanity underlay his quiet and didactic manner.**”

**AO1-Watson is loyal and principled**

**AO1-** Ch8 “While there was a chance of recovering it I was ready to devote my life to the one object. True, if I found it it would probably put her forever beyond my reach. Yet it would be a petty and selfish love which would be influenced by such a thought as that. If Holmes could work to find the criminals, I had a tenfold stronger reason to urge me on to find the treasure.”

Despite Watson’s fear that Mary Morstan will not be interested in him if he finds the treasure for her, he is keen to deliver to her what is rightfully hers. He puts her needs over his own.

**AO1-**Watson shows loyalty to Holmes when he suggests that Athelney Jones is taking too much credit for solving the case- “you have done all of the work, I get a wife out of this business, Jones gets the credit, pray what remains for you?”

**AO1-Watson is “ordinary” and serves as a CONTRAST to Holmes to emphasise Holmes’ brilliance and lack of humanity. However, he admires Holmes’ “masterly manner”**

**HOLMES CH7: “Apart from their size, though. Is there nothing else?”**  
**WATSON: “They appear to be much as other footmarks.”** **HOLMES: “Not at all. Look here!”**-Watson is a doctor and an educated man but in comparison to Holmes, he looks foolish. Doyle may have used this contrast in his two main characters to further exaggerate Holmes’ unique gifts.

**Chapter 8-**Holmes asks for Watson’s opinion on what to do next- when Watson suggests hiring a steam boat to follow the Aurora or get the police involved-Sherlock is highly critical of the idea and comes up with a better one. This again makes Watson look foolish.

**AO1-Watson is caring, compassionate and sensitive**

**AO1-Caring-Ch1-** Describing his reaction to Holmes’ cocaine addiction. “My conscience swelled nightly within me.”

**AO1-Sensitive Ch1** “I sprang from my chair and limped impatiently about the room with considerable bitterness in my heart. “This is unworthy of you, Holmes,” I said”

**AO1-** Sholto tells Miss Morstan early in this chapter that her father died of heart attack, Watson is defensive over Thaddeus’ insensitivity. “I could have struck the man across the face, so hot was I”

**AO1-Watson has a fear of social inequality**

**Ch 2-** “What was I, an army surgeon with a weak leg and a weaker banking account, that I should dare to think of such things?”

**Ch 2-** Yet there were two thoughts which sealed the words of affection upon my lips. She was weak and helpless, shaken in mind and nerve. It was to take her at a disadvantage to obtrude love upon her at such a time. Worse still, she was rich. If Holmes’s researches were successful, she would be an heiress. Was it fair, was it honorable, that a half-pay surgeon should take such advantage of an intimacy which chance had brought about? Might she not look upon me as a mere vulgar fortune seeker?

**CH 11-** A great shadow seemed to pass from my soul. I did not know how this Agra treasure had weighed me down, until now that it was finally removed. It was selfish, no doubt, disloyal, wrong, but I could realize nothing save that the golden barrier was gone from between us. “Thank God!” ejaculated from my very heart.

<p><b>Miss Morstan is a “damsel in distress”-a Victorian stereotype perhaps?</b></p> <p><b>AO1- Ch2-</b> “her lip trembled, her hand quivered, she showed every sign of intense inward agitation.”</p> <p><b>AO1-Ch 2-</b>“He came home with his heart full of hope, to find some peace, some comfort, and instead—” She put her hand to her throat, and a choking sob cut short the sentence.”</p> <p><b>AO1-Ch 5-</b>“ Miss Morstan and I stood together, and her hand was in mine.”</p> <p><b>AO1-Ch 7 “CH7-</b> “After the angelic fashion of women, she had borne trouble with a calm face as long as there was some one weaker than herself to support. In the cab, however, she first turned faint, and then burst into a passion of weeping,”</p> <p><b>AO1-Ch 9-</b> “And two knight-errants to the rescue,” added Miss Morstan, with a bright glance at me.”</p>	<p><b>Miss Morstan is principled and <u>caring</u></b></p> <p>It sent a little thrill of joy to my heart to notice that she showed no sign of elation at the prospect. On the contrary, she gave a toss of her proud head, as though the matter were one in which she tooksmall interest.</p> <p>“It is for Mr. Thaddeus Sholto that I am anxious,” she said. “Nothing else is of any consequence; but I think that he has behaved most kindly and honourably throughout. It is our duty to clear him of this dreadful and unfounded charge.”</p>
<p><b>Miss Morstan is bright, intelligent and reasoned</b></p> <p><b>CH2-</b> Miss Morstan has collected relevant evidence to bring-“I have them here,” she answered, producing half a dozen pieces of paper. <u>HOLMES</u>: “You are certainly a model client. You have the correct intuition. <b>Let us see, now.</b>”</p> <p><b>CH 12-Holmes-</b> “I think she is one of the most charming young ladies I ever met, and might have been most useful in such work as we have been doing. She had a decided genius that way: witness the way in which she preserved that Agra plan from all other papers of her father.”</p>	<p><b>Miss Morstan is not concerned with wealth and status</b></p> <p>She glanced at iron box. “Is that the treasure,then?” she asked, coolly enough.</p> <p>“It would be of the greatest interest to me,” she said. There was no eagerness in her voice, however. It had struck her, doubtless, that it might seem ungracious upon her part to be indifferent to a prize which had cost so much to win.</p> <p>“The treasure is lost,” said Miss Morstan, calmly.”</p>

**Thaddeus Sholto - An eccentric art collector and son of Major Sholto. He leads Holmes on the first steps to finding the treasure. He is overall, kind, nervous, a hypochondriac that isn't used to company.**

<p><b><u>Nervous and odd-looking -Adds to the mysterious atmosphere</u></b></p> <p>Ch 4-“A blaze of yellow light streamed out upon us, and in the centre of the glare there stood a small man with a very high head, a <b>bristle of red hair all-round the fringe of it</b>, and a <b>bald, shining scalp which shot out from among it like a mountain-peak from fir-trees.</b>”</p> <p>“He <b>writhed</b> his hands together as he stood, and his features were in a <b>perpetual jerk</b>, now smiling, now scowling, but <b>never for an instant in repose.</b>”</p>	<p><b><u>Kind and principled Ch4-</u></b>“It was all that I could <b>do to persuade him to let me find out Miss Morstan’s address</b> and send her a detached pearl at fixed intervals, so that at least <b>she might never feel destitute.</b>”</p> <p>The little man waved his hand deprecatingly. “<b>We were your trustees,</b>” he said. “That was the view which I took of it.”</p>
<p><b><u>Reclusive, uneasy in company</u></b></p> <p>Ch 4-“I <b>seldom (rarely)</b> come in contact with the <b>rough crowd.</b>”</p> <p>“too visible line of yellow and irregular teeth, which he strove feebly to conceal by constantly passing his hand over the lower part of his face.”</p>	<p><b><u>Cultured and proud of his art work</u></b></p> <p>Ch 4-“I have a natural shrinking from all forms of rough materialism. I seldom come in contact with <b>the rough crowd</b>. I live, as you see, with some little atmosphere of elegance around me. I <b>may call myself a patron of the arts.</b>”</p> <p>He calls his home- “An oasis in the howling desert of London.”</p> <p>“The richest and glossiest of curtains and tapestries...richly mounted paintings, oriental vase...two great tiger skins”.</p>
<p><b><u>A weak hypochondriac</u></b></p> <p>Ch 4-“You will excuse my anxiety, Miss Morstan,” he remarked, airily. “I <b>am a great sufferer</b>, and I have long had suspicions as to that valve.”</p> <p>“My <b>health is somewhat fragile,</b>” he remarked, as he led the way down the passage. “I am compelled to be a <b>valetudinarian.</b>” (<b>Hypochondriac</b>)</p>	<p><b><u>Vulnerable Victim</u></b></p> <p>Ch 5-“half blubbering with fear, and his twitching feeble face peeping out from the great Astrakhan collar had the helpless appealing expression of a terrified child.”</p>
<p><b><u>Bartholomew Sholto</u></b>-Brother of Thaddeus Sholto</p> <p>Bartholomew is presented as been greedier than Thaddeus –“my brother was himself a little inclined to my father’s fault (greed). He thought, too, that if we parted with the chaplet it might give rise to gossip and finally bring us into trouble.”</p> <p>Bartholomew is murdered by Tonga in <b>chapter 5-The Tragedy of Pondicherry Lodge</b> –his face is unnerving and adds to the air of mystery and tension- “The features were set, however, in a horrible smile, a fixed and unnatural grin, which in that still and moonlit room was more jarring to the nerves than any scowl or contortion.”</p>	

**Athelney Jones- A Police Officer who is CONTRASTED to Holmes in chapter 6, he is made to look foolish and incompetent.**

**AO1- Athelney Jones is presented as clumsy and boisterous:**

**Ch 6- “Heavy steps and the clamour of loud voices were audible from below, and the hall door shut with a loud crash.”- Sharp contrast to Holmes’ “Swift” and birdlike movements.**

“As he spoke, the steps which had been coming nearer **sounded loudly** on the passage, and a very **stout, portly** man in a grey suit strode heavily into the room. He was **red-faced, burly and plethoric (fluid-filled)**, with a pair of very **small twinkling eyes** which looked keenly out from between **swollen and puffy pouches.**”

Athelney Jones is presented as **patronising:**

**Ch 6-“It’s Mr. Sherlock Holmes, the theorist.**

Remember you! I’ll never forget how you lectured us all on causes and inferences and effects in the Bishopgate jewel case. It’s true you set us on the right track; **but you’ll own now that it was more by good luck than good guidance.**”

Athelney Jones is **quick to claim the credit:**

**Ch 12- Athelney Jones begins to lose the humility he had previously had, “if we are pretty quick in catching our men, we are not so quick in condemning them” (use of “we” suggests he had a much bigger part in it than he did) and Watson points out, “It was amusing to notice how consequential Jones was already beginning to give himself airs on the strength of the capture.”**

Ao1 Athelney Jones is presented as **over-confident and foolish:**

Ch 6-“This Thaddeus Sholto was with his brother; there was a quarrel; so much we know. The brother is dead and the jewels are gone. So much also we know. No one saw the brother from the time Thaddeus left him. His bed had not been slept in. Thaddeus is evidently in a most disturbed state of mind. His appearance is—well, not attractive. **You see that I am weaving my web round Thaddeus. The net begins to close upon him.**”

Doyle purposely brings in Jones after Holmes has already inspected the crime scene and come up with his own theory. This contrasts to Jones’ theory and makes his look rushed and simplistic based on no facts or reason whatsoever.

**Athelney Jones is presented as humble and desperate (Ch 9)**

“Very different was he, however, from the brusque and masterful professor of common sense who had taken over the case so confidently at Upper Norwood. **His expression was downcast, and his bearing meek and even apologetic.**”

“Your friend Mr. **Sherlock Holmes is a wonderful man, sir,**” said he, in a **husky and confidential voice.** “**He’s a man who is not to be beat.** I have known that young man go into a good many cases, but I never saw the case yet that he could not throw a light upon.”

“You are the **master of the situation**”- To Holmes at the end of chapter 9.

**Jonathan Small**—"he was a sunburned, reckless-eyed fellow, with a network of lines and wrinkles all over his mahogany features." –He looks as though he's had a difficult life (In chapter 12 we do empathise with the troubled life he has led. **Jonathan small is a weather-beaten, wooden legged man who steals his treasure back from Bartholomew with his accomplice Tonga. Until the final chapter he is presented as a real criminal but is has in fact been wronged by Major Sholto who tricked him and his comrades and stole all of the treasure for himself. Small did not kill Bartholomew Sholto and feels terrible about his death-it was Tonga that killed him.**

Jonathan Small is **presented as cunning.**

**Ch10- When Holmes is discussing his plans to catch Jonathan Small with Jones and Watson:** "Which would have been never. **This man Small is a pretty shrewd fellow.** He would send a scout on ahead, and if anything made him suspicious lie snug for another week."

Jonathan Small is **a fair and principled man:** " 'Not so fast,' said I, growing colder as he got hot. 'I must have the consent of my three comrades. I tell you that it is four or none with us.'

He wants vengeance for himself and the others who lost their treasure.

He confesses that he didn't want to kill Bartholomew Sholto and it was Tonga, who shot him with a dart... **Ch 12- "I welted the little devil with the slack end of the rope for it."**

**Ch12**—"Tonga thought he had done something very clever in killing him I **cursed him for a little blood-thirsty imp."**

**Jonathan Small is presented as a man who will use violence if he deems it 'just'**-Ch 4-T.Sholto describes Small's face at his father's window-" with wild cruel eyes and an expression of concentrated malevolence."

**Ch12-Small describes killing a guard with his wooden leg.**

I sat down in the darkness and unstrapped my wooden leg. With three long hops I was on him. He put his carbine to his shoulder, but **I struck him full,**

**Jonathan Small finally recognises the Agra Treasure's negative impact on all of the lives it touched.**

"It was an evil day for me when first I clapped eyes upon the merchant Achmet and had to do with the Agra treasure, which **never brought anything but a curse yet upon the man who owned it. To him it brought murder, to Major Sholto it brought fear and guilt, to me it has meant slavery for life."**

Jonathan Small is **an angry, wronged man seeking justice:**

**Ch 11:** He says that he disposed of the treasure and wanted to make sure that no relatives of Sholto or Morstan would ever lay their hands on the treasure, "*it is my treasure; and if I can't have the loot I'll take darned good care that no one else does.*"

**Ch 12-** He goes on to say that what he did, he did for the three men that are in the Andaman Justice!" Snarled the ex-convict. "A pretty justice! Whose loot is this, if it is not ours? **Where is the justice that I should give it up to those who have never earned it?...twenty years long in that fever-ridden swamp, all day at work under the mangrove tree, all night chained up in the filthy convict-huts, bitten by mosquitoes, racked with ague, bullied by every cursed black-faced policeman who loved to take it out of a white man."**

"The scoundrel had stolen it all... From that day I **lived only for vengeance. I thought of it by day and I nursed it by night.** It became an **overpowering, absorbing passion** with me."

Small **shows empathy** towards Tonga: **Ch12- Describing how he met Tonga**-He was sick to death, and had gone to a lonely place to die. I took him in hand, though he was as venomous as a young snake, and after a couple of months I got him all right and able to walk.

**Ch 12**-"He was stanch and true, was little Tonga. No man ever had a more faithful mate...he was a fine boatman." –*The only character that doesn't refer to him as a "savage" but as a person.*

**Ch 12-Describing how they made money in England.** "my exhibiting **poor Tonga** at fairs and other such places as the black cannibal."



**Tonga- Jonathan Small's accomplice who represents savagery.**

Small met Tonga when he was in prison on the Andaman Islands, he found Tonga was sick and nursed him back to health. Ever since, Tonga was fiercely loyal and devoted to Small and proved a powerful ally. He is an aborigine of the Andaman Islands. He adds to the mysterious and exotic atmosphere.

Tonga- Is presented as a **violent and wild animal**

**Ch 12-** "He was sick to death, and had gone to a lonely place to die. I took him in hand, though he was **as venomous as a young snake**, and after a couple of months I got him all right and able to walk."

**Ch 12-** "Tonga thought he had done something very clever in killing him **I cursed him for a little blood-thirsty imp.**" (elf)

**Ch 10-** It straightened itself into a little black man—the smallest I have ever seen—with a **great, misshapen head and a shock of tangled, dishevelled hair**. Holmes had already drawn his revolver, and I whipped out mine at the sight of this **savage, distorted creature**. He was wrapped in some sort of dark ulster or blanket, which left only his face exposed; but **that face was enough to give a man a sleepless night**. Never have I seen features so deeply **marked with all bestiality and cruelty**. 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**.

Tonga is from the Andaman islands and his "people" are presented as **fierce, vicious and savage**.

**Ch8- Holmes' description from a book:**

They are a **fierce, morose (gloomy)**, and **intractable (stubborn)** people.

'They are **naturally hideous**, having large, misshapen heads, small, **fierce eyes**, and distorted features.

So **intractable and fierce** are they that all the efforts of the British official have failed to win them over in any degree. They have always been a terror to shipwrecked crews, **braining the survivors with their stone-headed clubs, or shooting them with their poisoned arrows**. These massacres are invariably concluded by a **cannibal feast.**"

**AO3- Context and theme link- FEAR OF OTHERNESS**

At this time, Victorians would have travelled far less and the population was far less diverse. As a result, other peoples and cultures were often feared and misunderstood. Doyle's presentation of Tonga fits in with this fear of those who had very different cultures and appearances. The reader may well have some sympathy for Tonga and his portrayal as a grotesque and terrifying savage. The only character who seems to see past his race is Jonathan Small who recognises how loyal Tonga was.

This could also link to IMPERIALISM and the fact that the British were known for taking territories and believing that they had to "educate" and "tame" those that lived there. This arrogance and prejudice is communicated in Doyle's presentation of Tonga as "evil" and "animal-like."

## The “lower class” characters

### Chapter 7-Mr Sherman (Toby the dog’s owner)

Doyle presents him as suspicious, aggressive and unpleasant:

Go on, you drunken vagabone,” said the face. “If you kick up any more row I’ll open the kennels and **let out forty-three dogs upon you.**”

“Go on!” yelled the voice. “So help me gracious, I have a wiper in the bag, an’ I’ll **drop it on your ’ead if you don’t hook it.**”

AO2-Doyle’s use of ‘ead and colloquial language “hook it” are both uses of dialect in his speech-makes him sound rough, common and uneducated.

### Chapter 8-Mrs Smith and her son Jack

Doyle presents Jack as cheeky, naughty and a little impolite, asking Holmes for money.

The youth pondered for a moment. “I’d like a **shillin’**,” said he.

Use of dialect-sounds common, uneducated

“Nothing you would like better?”

“I’d like two **shillin’** better,” the **prodigy (genius)** answered, after some thought.

Could either be read as sarcastic or an acknowledgement of Jack being streetwise.

### The Baker Street Irregulars:

Almost animal?

As he spoke, there came a **swift pattering of naked feet upon the stairs**, a **clatter** of high voices, and in rushed a **dozen dirty and ragged little street- Arabs (scruffy children living on the streets)**. There was some show of discipline among them, despite their **tumultuous** (*loud and chaotic*) entry, for they instantly drew up in line and stood facing us with expectant faces. One of their number, taller and older than the others, stood forward with an **air of lounging superiority which was very funny** in such a **disreputable little scarecrow**.

Watson a little prejudiced and patronising here?

“Disreputable” suggests he is in some way dishonest-does Watson just “assume” this?

Metaphor- “Scarecrow” suggests he is scruffy, unkempt, unwashed and startling to look at.

“In future they can report to you, Wiggins, and you to me. I cannot have the house **invaded** in this way.”

Suggests they are unwanted, taking over-pests

**Mrs Smith-** More use of dialect when Doyle writes the speech, again portraying the lower classes in a similar way.

“Lor’ bless you, **sir**, he is that, and forward. He gets a’most too much for me to manage, ’specially when my man is away days at a time.”

Automatically sees Holmes as her superior perhaps due to his manner and dress.

Holmes prejudiced/stereotypes the lower classes:

“The main thing with **people of that sort**,” said Holmes, as we sat in the sheets of the wherry, “is never to let **them** think that their information can be of the slightest importance to you. If you do, **they** will instantly shut up like an oyster.”

**AO3-**The lower class characters and their presentations are similar throughout the novel. In many ways they are stereotyped and Holmes and Watson, although gaining their help in the case, have moments in which they appear to look down upon them.

At this time, class divides were very pronounced and the gap between privileged and poor was wide. London would have been a very difficult and dangerous place to live; these characters are presented as tough and streetwise but also lacking education and manners.

**Major Sholto –Thaddeus and Bartholomew’s father who stole the treasure from the four convicts. He is presented as a greedy man.**

**Major Sholto is presented as a fearful, remorseful victim:**

**Ch4-**We did know, however, that **some mystery—some positive danger—overhung our father**. He was **very fearful** of going out alone, and he always **employed two prize-fighters** to act as porters at Pondicherry Lodge

**Ch4- T.Sholto’s account of his father’s death—**“is my treatment of poor Morstan’s orphan. **The cursed greed which has been my besetting sin through life** has withheld from her the treasure, half at least of which should have been hers. And yet I have made no use of it myself, —**so blind and foolish a thing is avarice** (greed).”

**Major Sholto is presented as a greedy villain:**

**Ch12- When (deceptively) Small says he is going to hand the treasure to government-Small knows that Sholto was greedy and would want some part in the treasure.** “‘To government, Small,’ he stammered,—‘to government.’ But he said it in a halting fashion, and I knew in my heart that I had got him.”

“The villain Sholto went off to India, but he never came back again... The scoundrel had stolen it all, without carrying out one of the conditions on which we had sold him the secret.”

### Next Section: KEY THEMES-Overview

#### In The Sign of the Four the themes are:

- Evil and justice
- Victorian fear
- Empire and Imperialism
- Betrayal and greed

#### Key context:

- **Presentation of women**
- **Empire and Imperialism**

## Evil and Justice

The themes of evil and justice are closely related in this novel. Evil is present in the form of the murders and crimes that are committed. It is also **embodied by the character of Tonga who is depicted as inherently savage and malicious.**

Justice is sought on behalf of Miss Mary Morstan. Thaddeus Sholto feels that Miss Morstan has been treated unjustly by his father, Major John Sholto, who kept the Agra treasure, and kept the facts of her father's death a secret.

Jonathan Small is upset by the injustice that he will never enjoy the treasure that he believes is rightly his, despite the fact that he acquired it by murdering a man. Holmes is fair and insists that Small will not be accused of murdering Bartholomew Sholto.

### How is the theme of evil and justice shown in the novel?

In *The Sign of the Four*, Conan Doyle shows the theme of evil and justice through:

- Miss Mary Morstan and her missing father
- the character of Tonga
- the sense of injustice that Jonathan Small feels in losing the treasure

	How does Conan Doyle show this?	Evidence	Analysis
<b>Miss Mary Morstan</b>	Miss Mary Morstan shows Holmes a letter she has received that says she deserves justice.	<i>You are a wronged woman, and shall have justice.</i>	The mystery is established, and the reader is intrigued to discover what sort of justice she is owed. The safety of Miss Morstan's father is also in question.
<b>Tonga</b>	The character of Tonga is presented as the embodiment of evil in this novel.	<i>Never have I seen features so deeply marked with all bestiality and cruelty.</i>	When Watson sees the islander on the boat, he is struck with the savage appearance of the man.
<b>Major John Sholto</b>	On his deathbed, Sholto confessed to his greed.	<i>The cursed greed which has been my besetting sin through life has withheld from her the treasure.</i>	Sholto hides the death of Miss Morstan's father out of fear and hides her entitlement to the treasure out of greed. This greed can be seen as the source of evil.
<b>Holmes suggests he can help Small</b>	Even though Small has committed a crime, he is not guilty of the murder of Bartholomew Sholto.	<i>"I think I can prove that the poison acts so quickly that the man was dead before you ever reached the rooms."</i>	Holmes' sense of justice means that even though he has pursued Jonathan Small, he does not want him to be punished for a crime he did not commit.

## Victorian Fear

In this novel, a number of Victorian fears are presented. We see the **fear of 'the other' or 'foreignness'** presented through the character of Tonga, who is depicted as savage and inherently evil. Conan Doyle also **shows fear of darkness** - much of the novel is set at night-time when murder, theft and betrayal occur. The Victorian preoccupation with **social class and the fear of overstepping social boundaries** is also evident and is represented by Watson's concerns about Miss Morstan's potential inheritance.

### How important is fear to this novel?

- Sherlock Holmes is seen as the **antidote to fear**. He has a **scientific and rational** approach to solving mysteries.
- Fear drives Major John Sholto to go into hiding and to cover up the death of Captain Morstan.
- Watson's fear of appearing dishonourable prevents him from declaring his love to Miss Morstan sooner.

	How does Conan Doyle show this?	Evidence	Analysis
<b>Fear of otherness</b>	The character of Tonga represents a Victorian fear of otherness.	<i>This savage, distorted creature.</i>	Tonga is presented as less than human. He is 'savage', 'distorted' and murderous, supporting the Victorian belief that other races were somehow inferior and dangerous.
<b>Fear of the underclass</b>	Thaddeus Sholto keeps himself separate from other social classes and surrounds himself with elegance.	<i>"I have a natural shrinking from all forms of rough materialism. I seldom come in contact with the rough crowd."</i>	Thaddeus embodies the fear of mixing with uncivilised people and surrounds himself with art.
<b>Major John Sholto lives in fear of discovery</b>	Conan Doyle shows how greed leaves Sholto in a permanent state of fear.	<i>He was very fearful of going out along, and he always employed two prize-fighters to act as porters at Pondicherry Lodge.</i>	Sholto lives under a self-imposed house arrest as a result of his greed and fear of being discovered.
<b>Fear of social inequality</b>	When he discovers that there will be no suspicion of an ulterior motive, Watson admits his love for Miss Morstan.	<i>"Thank God!" I ejaculated from my very heart.</i>	Watson shouts out in joy and relief when he discovers that there is no inheritance and therefore no 'golden barrier' between him and Miss Morstan

# Empire and Imperialism

## Empire and imperialism

This novel is set against the backdrop of the Victorian Empire. The treasure that is stolen repeatedly through the novel comes from India, which at the time of the story was under British rule. Through the treasure and the luxurious decorations of Sholto's house, Conan Doyle associates luxury with the empire.

There is also a sense of threat to the empire that is conveyed through the mention of the uprising of 1857. In addition to this, the appearance in London of Tonga, the islander, could be perceived as threatening.

	How does Conan Doyle show this?	Evidence	Analysis
<b>A sense of luxury and wealth is associated with the idea of empire</b>	Sholto's apartment is lavishly decorated with items from the East.	<i>Two great tiger-skins thrown athwart it increased the suggestion of Eastern luxury.</i>	The empire was, for many Victorians, symbolic of wealth and power. Thaddeus' home encapsulates this idea.
<b>The people of imperialised countries are seen as 'savage'.</b>	The character of Tonga is presented as barely human.	<i>The savage instincts of his companion had broken out.</i>	The idea that his instincts would be murderous creates a crude image of the islander. This upholds the Victorian ideas of empire in which the colonised people were seen as savages.
<b>Small is patronising towards Tonga</b>	Small suggests that Tonga was devoted to him as if he were a god.	<i>"He was staunch and true, was little Tonga. No man ever had a more faithful mate."</i>	The devotion shown by Tonga seems naïve and reflects the attitudes of Victorian society towards the empire. The word 'little' is patronising and lacks empathy or respect for the islander.
<b>Imperialist attitudes</b>	Small explains that he made money by presenting Tonga as a fairground attraction.	<i>"We earned a living at this time by exhibiting poor Tonga at fairs and other such places as the black cannibal."</i>	This highlights the Victorian attitudes towards people from the imperialised lands.

### What elements of empire and imperialism does Conan Doyle highlight in this novel?

- A patronising and often ignorant attitude towards the imperialised people.
- The Indian uprising of 1857 forced Jonathan Small into hiding.
- The character of Tonga represents the common Victorian belief that savages and cannibals

### **Exam-Style Question**

Write about:

- how Conan Doyle presents Holmes in this extract
- how Conan Doyle presents Holmes later in the novel

#### **The extract**

"Why should you, for a mere passing pleasure, risk the loss of those great powers with which you have been endowed? Remember that I speak not only as one comrade to another, but as a medical man to one for whose constitution he is to some extent answerable."

He did not seem offended. On the contrary, he put his finger-tips together and leaned his elbows on the arms of his chair, like one who has a relish for conversation.

"My mind," he said, "rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession, - or rather created it, for I am the only one in the world."

"The only unofficial detective?" I said, raising my eyebrows.

"The only unofficial consulting detective," he answered. "I am the last and highest court of appeal in detection."

*From Chapter 1*

Before you go on to the next page, make some initial notes on the extract.

#### **Hints**

- What is Holmes like in this extract?
- Which words or phrases show us that he is an intelligent character?
- How does this portrayal of Holmes compare to the other times when we meet him in the story?

**This is an extract from chapter 2, after Miss Morstan has left.**

“Au revoir,” said our visitor, and, with a bright, kindly glance from one to the other of us, she replaced her pearl-box in her bosom and hurried away. Standing at the window, I watched her walking briskly down the street, until the gray turban and white feather were but a speck in the sombre crowd.

“What a very attractive woman!” I exclaimed, turning to my companion.

He had lit his pipe again, and was leaning back with drooping eyelids. “Is she?” he said, languidly. “I did not observe.”

“You really are an automaton,—a calculating machine!”

I cried. “There is something positively inhuman in you at times.”

He smiled gently. “It is of the first importance,” he said, “not to allow your judgment to be biased by personal qualities. A client is to me a mere unit,—a factor in a problem. The emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning.

**How are Holmes and Watson presented in this extract?**

**Include:**

- How are they presented in this extract?
- How are they presented in the whole novel?

**See model response on the next two pages.**



### **Model response-The Sign of the Four**

Within the extract, Watson and Holmes are presented as two very contrasting characters which is highlighted especially by their differing reactions to Miss Mary Morstan. Watson begins the extract by describing Miss Morstan and her departure in great detail, "With a bright, kindly glance...she replaced her pearl box and hurried away." The positive description of the way she looked at both Watson and Holmes with the phrase "bright, kindly" suggests that Watson thinks very highly of her. Watson, as our narrator, presents Miss Morstan as a very sweet and friendly young woman. He almost biases the reader's impression of her in the way he describes her.

Watson then described how he, "watched her" as she walked away, following her with his eyes until "the gray turban and white feather were but a speck in the sombre crowd." This implies that he is longing for her and was entirely fixated with her. Watson's description of the "sombre" crowd is also significant as it suggests that all else in view was miserable apart from her. Watson's watching her as she walked away could show that he already feels extremely protective over her. In many ways, Miss Morstan represents the typical view of a Victorian woman, she is sweet, composed and is presented as someone that needs saving, in this way she could be seen to be representing the "weaker sex."

Watson's exclamation to Holmes, "What a very attractive woman!" implies that he almost cannot keep his feelings for her to himself, Doyle's use of an exclamation mark shows that Watson feels quite strongly about Miss Morstan despite having only just met her. Doyle also reveals more about Watson and Holmes' relationship here as Watson is happy to confide his feelings in Holmes' which communicates a trust between them despite their different views.

Holmes' reaction to Miss Morstan is one of complete indifference, "Is she?" he said, languidly. "I did not observe." This suggests that Holmes had barely noticed Miss Morstan at all. Doyle's use of the adverb "languidly" is particularly effective as it sharply contrasts to Watson's emotional response; this is a thoroughly unenergetic response which communicates to the reader that such talk utterly bores him.

Watson's emotional response appears to increase as he "cries" to Holmes "You really are an automaton-a calculating machine." This implies that Watson is incredibly shocked by Holmes' response and cannot comprehend how his mind works. Doyle's use of a metaphor here particularly highlights Watson's belief that Holmes truly has not emotional sensitivity whatsoever. The fact that he compares Holmes at first to a robot, who simply works on logic, fact and information without understanding of emotions, shows the real difference between them. The second metaphor is even more extreme, "a calculating machine" suggests that at least a robot would have had some human features whereas a "machine"

perhaps bears no resemblance or similarity to a human at all. The reader is convinced that Holmes has little or no real human feeling at all.

Holmes confirms Watson's judgment when he describes his client as "a mere unit,-a factor in a problem." This suggests that Holmes just sees his client as informants but does not allow himself to become in any way emotionally attached. Doyle's use of metaphor here reinforces the previous one of Holmes as a robot; this description of a person lacks emotion and sentiment entirely. The description of people as "units" is very disparaging and suggests that the people themselves are really quite insignificant and lack any special qualities whatsoever.

Throughout the novel Watson is presented as quite an emotional and sensitive character, we see this at the beginning when he reveals concerns about Holmes' addiction, "my conscience swelled nightly within me." This suggests that Watson greatly fears and worries for Holmes' health. Doyle's use of this metaphor gives the reader the impression that Watson is made to feel deeply uncomfortable and uneasy by Holmes' addiction that he almost feels it physically himself. The fact that this happened "nightly" suggests that it has worried him continuously and he has been deeply disturbed by Holmes' self-abuse.

Holmes' however, is shown to be really quite insensitive throughout the novel and this flaw is presented by Doyle in the very first chapter with Watson's watch, "viewing the problem as an abstract problem I had forgotten how personal and painful a thing it might be to you." Holmes' great intellect and knowledge comes at the cost of other character's feelings, he instinctively separates people's feelings from cases which is both his greatest strength and largest flaw. However, he is able to acknowledge this and will apologise when he has overlooked Watson's feelings.

Overall, Doyle presents Watson and Holmes as contrasting characters in order to highlight Holmes' unique gifts further to the reader. Watson is perhaps no more emotional than any other ordinary character would be but when compared to Holmes he seems emotional. Holmes' talents are further emphasised by Watson and how clueless he appears to be throughout the text, as a reader we are just as astounded by Holmes as Watson is and therefore have a greater understanding of Holmes abilities. Doyle created these characters as the first fictional detectives and despite Holmes' depiction as an insensitive and arrogant genius, like Watson, we are enthralled by his unique abilities and amazed by his immense intellect.

**The below extract is from chapter 10-The End of the Islander:**

“We must catch her!” cried Holmes, between his teeth. “Heap it on, stokers! Make her do all she can! If we burn the boat we must have them!”

We were fairly after her now. The furnaces roared, and the powerful engines whizzed and clanked, like a great metallic heart. Her sharp, steep prow cut through the river-water and sent two rolling waves to right and to left of us. With every throb of the engines we sprang and quivered like a living thing. One great yellow lantern in our bows threw a long, flickering funnel of light in front of us. Right ahead a dark blur upon the water showed where the Aurora lay, and the swirl of white foam behind her spoke of the pace at which she was going. We flashed past barges, steamers, merchant-vessels, in and out, behind this one and round the other. Voices hailed us out of the darkness, but still the Aurora thundered on, and still we followed close upon her track.

“Pile it on, men, pile it on!” cried Holmes, looking down into the engine-room, while the fierce glow from below beat upon his eager, aquiline face.

“Get every pound of steam you can.”

**How does Doyle build a tense and exciting atmosphere?**

**Refer to:**

- How Doyle builds tension and excitement in this extract
- How Doyle builds tension in the rest of the novel

