

**GREAT  
LAKES  
THEATER**

TEACHER PREPARATION GUIDE

*Ms.* **HOLMES** &  
*Ms.* **WATSON**

*Apt. 2B*

By KATE HAMILL

Directed by MAGGIE KETTERING

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Spring 2026

Dear Educator,

Thank you for reserving student matinee tickets for *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson - Apt. 2B* at Great Lakes Theater. This production will be presented in the Hanna Theatre at Playhouse Square from April 24—May 10, 2026.

We are excited to have your students attend our upcoming production of *Ms. Holmes and Ms. Watson, Apt. 2B*, a fun and witty modern reimagining of the Sherlock Holmes stories, written by Kate Hamill. This production promises to be an entertaining and unique experience for everyone involved, and we're confident that your students will enjoy the clever writing, humor, and fast-paced action.

We would like to take a moment to provide you with some context for the play, so that you can help prepare your students for what they will be experiencing.

*Ms. Holmes and Ms. Watson, Apt. 2B* includes a range of mature themes and content, which we believe contribute to the play's charm and wit. Please note the following elements: references to prostitution and a sex tape, two instances of pot smoking, attraction between two women that culminates in a kiss, as well as other flirtatious moments.

While the play is lighthearted and comedic in tone, these moments may be unexpected for some students. We wanted to make sure you are aware of these elements so that you can prepare your class accordingly, ensuring that all students feel comfortable and informed.

This guide includes essays, discussion questions, and classroom activities designed to introduce students to the world of the play and offer a meaningful entry point for personal exploration. At Great Lakes Theater, we're proud to share high-quality classic theater alongside resources that support your teaching. We're thrilled to welcome you and your students and always appreciate your feedback on how we can best support your classroom experience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Schaffer Florian".

Kelly Schaffer Florian  
Director of Educational Services  
[Kflorian@greatlakestheater.org](mailto:Kflorian@greatlakestheater.org)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Hansen".

David Hansen  
Education Programs Manager  
[dhansen@greatlakestheater.org](mailto:dhansen@greatlakestheater.org)



## A Note to Students: What to Expect at the Theater

You may or may not have attended a live theater performance before. To increase your enjoyment, it might be helpful to look at the unique qualities of this art form — because it is so different from movies or video.

The live theatrical performance not only involves the actors on the stage; it is meant to involve you, the audience, in ways that film and television cannot. In truth, although you are sitting in an auditorium and the actors are on stage, there is very little separating the audience from the performers. How you react to the play *deeply affects* the actors. Something as seemingly trivial as whispering or unwrapping a candy bar can distract them and disrupt the mood and tone of their performance. Due to the important relationship between actors and audience members, there are certain, perhaps obvious, provisions of live theater we wish to call to your attention.

In the Hanna Theatre, it is important to know that the taking of pictures, either with or without a flash, is strictly prohibited. Also, it is essential that all electronic equipment, including cell phones, music players (even with headphones), alarm watches, etc., be completely powered off once you have entered the theatre. Even the glow from a watch or a silent cell phone (used for checking the time, text messaging, or posting social network updates, for example) can be very distracting to fellow audience members, even if you try to mask it under your hand or an article of clothing. Our goal is to provide every person in the audience with the best possible theatrical experience, so we appreciate your respectful cooperation during the performance.

Other differences live theater provides: in film or video, the camera and editing define what we will see. In the theater, however, each of us works as our own camera and editor, choosing our own personal points of focus. And in the Hanna Theatre, you should know that often we do not use microphones. As audience members you'll need to actively listen and "tune in" to the sound of the unamplified human voice.

As for our lighting and scenery, it might surprise you to know that these are not necessarily meant to be realistic. In this production, for example, there may be design elements that are abstract or metaphorical.

The theater's ability to focus on human experience — distilled through the dialogue and behavior of people on stage and enhanced by the scenery, costumes, lighting, music and dance — is a centuries-old tradition. Being part of the communal magic when performer and audience connect — whether at a baseball game, music concert or theater performance — cannot be duplicated.

The performance you will see at Great Lakes Theater will happen only once. It is unique and personal. Though this play will be performed more than a dozen times, the performance you see belongs only to you.

We hope you enjoy it, and we'd like you to share your response with us.



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE *Maggie Kettering*

We return to Holmes again and again, why? (For a fictional character, we just can't seem to quit him.) Yes, of course he is incredibly bright, obnoxious, and entertaining, able to disappear and cavort with all types, recognizable fit and catchphrases, but I think it the well runs so deep because Holmes returns the world to right. Holmes's North Star is justice, and it appeals to our sense of moral reckoning. Holmes is not just a man of right angles. He happily swims in improbabilities and impossible scenarios. He manages to straighten out the tangle and clearly lay out the threads.

In this version, Kate Hamill takes the story prism and shifts it just a bit to reveal a female Holmes and Watson, in 2021 London. Remember 2021? Still in the grips of the Covid-19 pandemic, full of distrust, and isolated from each other. Nothing made sense, and the future seemed very murky. Into these circumstances we find Ms. Holmes and Ms. Watson, and we gleefully wait for Holmes to set the world back to rights.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

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Sherlock Holmes .....	Jodi Dominick*
Dr. Joan Watson .....	Yadira Correa*
Irene Adler/Mrs. Hudson/Mrs. Drebber .....	Emjoy Gavino*
Lestrade/Elliot Monk .....	Rex Young*

\* Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

## Playnotes: Hamill & Holmes

Kate Hamill (b. 1981) is one of today's most-produced contemporary American playwrights. Based in New York City, for the past decade she has written over fifteen full-length productions, both original and adaptations, and it is these adapted works which have brought her to the attention of audiences at home and abroad. In 2017, the Wall Street Journal named Hamill "Playwright of the Year."

**"A gift for condensing three-volume novels into galloping two-act plays." – The New York Times**

Her canon features original, feminist reimaginings of classics like *Dracula*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Vanity Fair*, *Little Women*, and several adaptations of the works of Jane Austen including *Emma*, *Pride & Prejudice* and *Sense & Sensibility* – that last produced at Great Lakes Theater in 2023, in a staging by Jaclyn Miller that a local critic said, "throbs with life and joy."

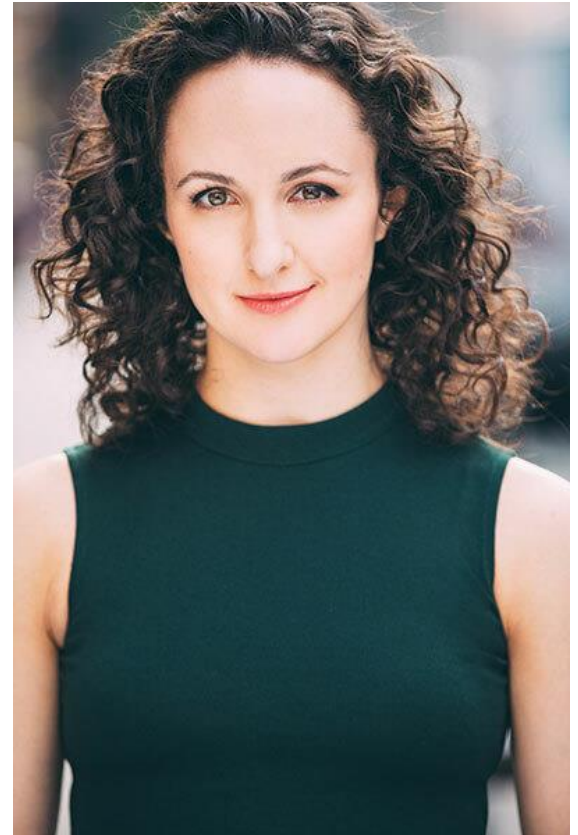
*Sense & Sensibility* was the first play Hamill wrote. Her father challenged her to do it, Hamill herself calls it a bet. Raised on a dairy farm in upstate New York, the Hamills are a highly literate family. "We grew up in a household that prized reading and literature," Hamill once said. "I used to get in trouble for reading under my desk."

*Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson – Apt. 2b* was commissioned by and received its world premiere from Kansas City Rep in 2022. Like *Sense and Sensibility*, and so many of her adaptations, *Holmes & Watson* is an example of **meta-fiction**, a genre which draws attention to the artificiality of the form, usually for comedic or satiric effect.

For example, a character may "break the fourth wall" by addressing the audience directly – which is nothing unusual, characters in Shakespeare do that. But then another character may notice and ask who they are talking to, that's what we mean by "meta." This shared self-awareness between audience and character has (to take one recent example) made the *Deadpool* franchise billions of dollars worldwide.

Hamill's adaptations of classic works are meant to be frenetic, broad, even silly. However, she has approached each of these classic works with a clear point of view, and that is to center and empower female characters, or as the New York Times put it, "to grant women their full personhood — not lesser than, but equal to." This is true for the way Hamill has drawn Jo in *Little Women*, Mina Harker in *Dracula*, or Emma in *Emma*.

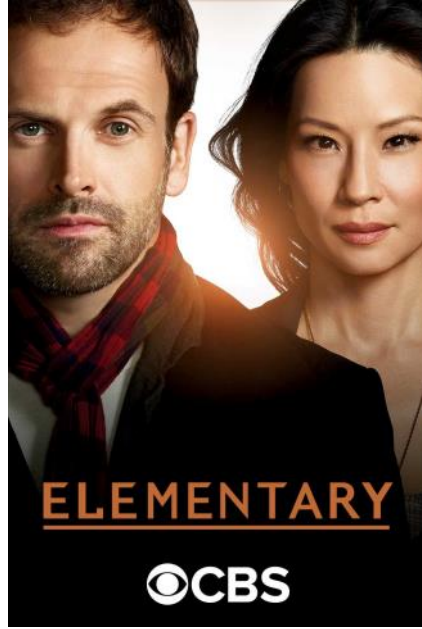
But how to solve a mystery like Sherlock Holmes? All the major characters in the official canon of novels by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle are men. Even the mysterious Irene Adler was featured in



Kate Hamill



Ryan Reynolds as Wade Wilson / Deadpool in *Deadpool* (2016)



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1914

Jonny Lee Miller and Lucy Liu in *Elementary*

Pencil/watercolor sketch of Jane Austen by her sister Cassandra Austen, c. 1810

only Holmes mystery, and that was a short story.

Easily solved, Hamill made both Holmes and Watson women. It's not like it hasn't been done before, during the 2010s, CBS produced a Sherlock Holmes program called *Elementary* (2012-2019) featuring its own female Dr. Watson, played by Lucy Liu.

While her "Austen plays" (she has announced plans to eventually adapt all seven of Jane Austen's novels) are set in Regency Era England – around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – Hamill has no problem including anachronisms which are meant to be obvious to the audience. In the case of *Holmes & Watson*, however, she has entirely cast off period pretensions and brought Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Edwardian Era characters up to present-day London, creating a free-wheeling farce of a modern mystery replete with pop culture references that tumble one after the other.

The results speak for themselves, as *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson – Apt. 2b* is currently one of the most produced plays in the United States.

- "Witty & relevant. Hamill pays homage to Doyle's mysteries while using a feminist lens to tackle contemporary issues of gender, revenge porn, the dark web economy, and the pandemic's toll—and she does so with incredible care and wit. Sharp, playful, and moves at a rapid-fire pace... hilarious." —Portland Monthly
- "Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson – Apt. 2b' simultaneously plays homage to and flips on its

head the detective story tropes to show what happens when women are in charge... Delightful and entertaining." —BroadwayWorld

- "Witty dialogue, brisk physical comedy, and a female-centered spin on time-honored characters... Hamill's work reflects an interest in creating varied theatrical roles for femme characters beyond what the "classics" have afforded us, and injecting a modern sensibility that helps us notice points of view that haven't been given space to breathe... delightful." —ArtsWatch

Sources:

"Outdoor Stages: A Madcap 'Pride & Prejudice' in the Hudson Valley" by Mary Jo Murphy, New York Times (June 29, 2017)

"Review: In This 'Pride and Prejudice,' Love Is a Zero-Sum Game" by Alexis Soloski, New York Times (November 19, 2017)

"The Best Theater of 2017: On Stage, Vitality in Every Way—But One" by Terry Teachout, Wall Street Journal (December 13, 2017)

"Kate Hamill: From Stage to Page and Back Again" by Allison Considine, American Theatre (December 2017)

"No Lack of Chemistry, Onstage or Off" by Vincent M. Mallozzi, New York Times (January 27, 2020)

"In a Battle for Female Personhood, These Plays Are on the Front Lines" by Laura Collins-Hughes, New York Times (February 27, 2020)

"Great Lakes Theater's Production of 'Sense and Sensibility' Throbs with Life, and Heartache" by Christine Howey, Cleveland Scene (February 14, 2023)

## The Great Detective in the 21st Century

Arthur Conan Doyle's creation has remained popular since the beginning, the character of Sherlock Holmes having also been adapted into other media since the first believed play adaptation, "Under the Clock" by Seymour Hicks in 1893. Since that time, his tales have been told and retold, on stage, over the radio, at movie theaters, in comic books, and on television.

The very first film adaptation was shorter than one minute, the bizarre silent picture *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* (1900) but over the 20th century, Holmes was performed on the big screen by a host of notable men, including John Barrymore, Basil Rathbone, Peter Cushing, Christopher Plummer, Michael Caine and even Gene Wilder.

Twenty-first century adaptations of Sherlock Holmes span film, television, and streaming services, often reimagining the character in modern settings.

- **Sherlock** (BBC, 2010–2017) Starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman and set in modern-day London, this television series emphasizes technology and fast-paced storytelling.



Benedict Cumberbatch as Holmes and Martin Freeman as Watson in the BBC's *Sherlock*

- **Elementary** (CBS, 2012–2019) Featuring Jonny Lee Miller as Holmes and Lucy Liu as Watson, this modern television series adaptation presents a British Holmes in 2010s New York City.
- **Enola Holmes** and its sequel, **Enola Holmes 2** (Netflix, 2020, 2022) Adapted from the popular YA book series by Nancy Springer, these films focus on Holmes's younger sister, played by Millie Bobby Brown, with Henry Cavill as Sherlock.

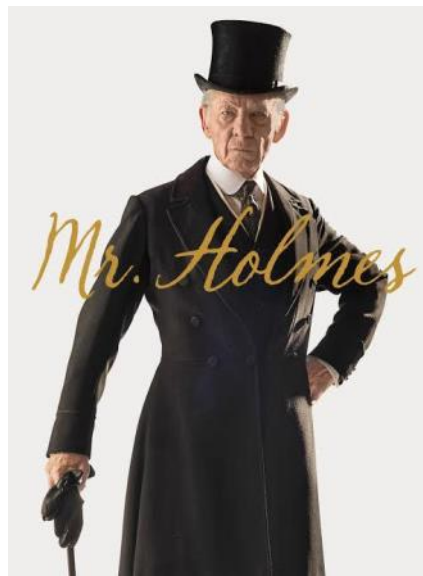


Jonny Lee Miller as Holmes and Lucy Liu as Watson in *Elementary*



Millie Bobby Brown in *Enola Holmes*, Sherlock's younger sister

- **Mr. Holmes** (2015) A reflective portrayal of an aging detective in mental decline, directed by Bill Condon and starring Ian McKellen.
- **Holmes & Watson** (2018) Starring the beloved comedy duo of Will Ferrell and John C. Reilly, this film parody has a 10% critics rating on Rotten Tomatoes.
- **Sherlock Holmes** and its sequel, **Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows** (2009, 2011) Directed by Guy Ritchie and starring Robert Downey Jr. as the titular sleuth, these are high-octane action films set in Edwardian England.
- **Watson** (CBS, 2025–2026) Set in modern-day Pittsburgh, this medical drama follows Dr. John Watson following the death of his colleague, Sherlock Holmes.



Ian McKellen as an older Sherlock Holmes in *Mr. Holmes*



Will Ferrell as Sherlock Holmes and John C. Reilly as Dr. Watson in *Holmes & Watson*



Robert Downey Jr. as Holmes and Jude Law as Dr. Watson in *Sherlock Holmes*



Morris Chestnut as Dr. Watson in a modern medical mystery series



Donal Finn as Moriarty and Hero Fiennes Tiffin as Holmes in *Young Sherlock*

- **Young Sherlock** (Amazon Prime, 2026-present) Adapted from Andrew Lane's popular series of YA thrillers, this new television program depicts Holmes as a young man at Oxford University.
- Finally, **Sherlock Holmes Meets the Bully of Baker Street** (2020) A playful Holmes pastiche with a mission to inspire empathy in elementary school aged children, this short play, commissioned by Great Lakes Theater for an educational outreach tour was written by Education Programs Manager David Hansen.



Nicholas Chokan (seated) as Sir Arthur Dean Cloony, Joshua McElroy as Sherlock Holmes and Chennelle Bryant-Harris as Vicky in the GLT production of *Sherlock Holmes Meets the Bully of Baker Street*

## Who's Who in the Original Sherlock Holmes

A parody is a creative work that is meant to imitate, mock, or even comment upon an original work. A work of parody can be enjoyable entirely on its own terms, but one is often more successfully appreciated when one is aware of what is being parodied, satirized or “sent up.”

Here is a brief description of some of the original personalities that are parodied in *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson - Apt. 2b*.

**Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** (1859-1930) was a British writer and physician. He studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh, where he began writing. Though trained as a doctor, he struggled to build a practice and turned to fiction. Doyle created Sherlock Holmes in 1887. Holmes's popularity soared with *The Strand Magazine* stories, making Doyle one of the highest-paid writers of his time. Doyle also wrote historical works and later embraced spiritualism and paranormal inquiry.

The character **Sherlock Holmes** was inspired by Joseph Bell, a surgeon at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, whom Conan Doyle met in 1877 and worked for as a clerk. Holmes reflects Bell's skill in drawing broad conclusions from minute observations. Holmes first appeared in the story “A Study in Scarlet” and was famously killed off seven years later at the Reichenbach Falls with Professor Moriarty, but was revived after public outcry. Renowned for observation, deduction, and forensic reasoning, Holmes solves complex cases for diverse clients, including Scotland Yard, and remains one of literature's most enduring and influential characters.

Often the narrator of the Holmes stories **Dr. John Watson** is a trained surgeon who served in Afghanistan with the 5th Regiment. Wounded in action, he returns to England to recover and meets Holmes through a medical school acquaintance. Intelligent but less perceptive than Holmes, Watson serves as a loyal companion and foil—the archetypal gentleman contrasted with Holmes's detached intellect. He is also regarded as a capable and respected doctor.

**Inspector Lestrade** is a Scotland Yard detective. Practical, persistent, and loyal, he is often outmatched by Holmes's brilliance. Initially skeptical, he grows to respect Holmes's methods and frequently seeks his help. Lestrade represents official law enforcement, serving as a contrast to Holmes's unconventional genius and investigative insight.

**Irene Adler** is an adventuress, former opera singer, and actress, who appears in “A Scandal in Bohemia” (1891). Though featured in only one story, she is among the most notable women in the Holmes canon. Not a criminal, she outwits Holmes and earns his lasting respect as one he refers to afterward (respectfully) as “the Woman.”

Holmes refers to **Professor James Moriarty** as “the Napoleon of Crime.” Moriarty is a brilliant former mathematics professor turned criminal mastermind. He organizes and advises criminals for profit, often shielding them from the law. Though appearing only twice in Doyle's stories, later works elevate him to Holmes's primary archenemy.



Holmes (right) and Watson in a Sidney Paget illustration for “The Adventure of Silver Blaze”

# Glossary of Words & Phrases used in *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson*

**15 stone** “Stone” is a British Imperial system unit of mass. 15 stone = 20 lbs.

**221 Baker Street** North of the Thames, in Marylebone and near Regent’s Park

**911** Universal American emergency phone code

**999** Universal British emergency phone code

**Adios** Spanish; “good-bye”

**Advance** The basic forward movement in fencing

**Anarchism** Political philosophy of ending all hierarchical and/or authoritarian rule

**Angry 11s** Frown lines or the two vertical lines that form between the eyebrows.

**Arsenic** Naturally occurring mineral, poisonous

**ASD** Autism Spectrum Disorder

**Ask Jeeves** A 1990s search engine, rebranded simply “Ask” in 2005

**Baker Street Irregulars** A group of street urchins led by a boy called Wiggins

**BBC 1** British Broadcasting Company 1, Britain’s primary, government owned and operated television network

**BCE** Before Common Era. Used interchangeably with BC (Before Christ), but without the religious referent.

**Black Widow** A woman who seduces and marries rich men and then murders them for their wealth

**Blarney Stone** A block of limestone built into a castle in Blarney, Ireland; if you kiss it, you become a talented storyteller

**Bloodhounds** Breed of dog often used by detectives because of their powerful sense of smell

**Bling Crash** A fictional gaming app

**Bloody** a British intensifier, considered inappropriate in polite society

**Blue screen** Indicative of a crashed computer

**Bobby-socked boobie** A snarky reference to the bobby-sock wearing Nancy Drew (see: Nancy Drew)

**Bravo** Italian; interjection of high praise, e.g. “well done!”

**Breadcrumbing** Stringing someone along without providing commitment

**Bubbelah** Yiddish term of endearment

**Bupkis** Yiddish; nothing

**Cadaver** a dead human body

**Celibate** Abstaining from sexual relations

**Circa** (c. or ca.) around, pertaining to time

**Chip shop** British; takeaway restaurant specializing in fried fish and chips (or “fries”)

**Chore wheel** A device for the fair and even distribution of household tasks among the occupants of that space

**Chutzpah** Yiddish; audacity

**Class warrior** A person who argues or fights for the interests of the working class

**Cold War** A period of geopolitical tension between the United States and the Soviet Union (ca. 1945-1991)

**Commie** Pejorative term for a Communist

**Communism** Economic and social philosophy for a classless society, with communal ownership in all public and private spheres

**Confucian** A philosophical system named after the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius

**Consummation** Simply put; to bring to completion

**Control** When conducting an experiment, a control is an element that remains unchanged or unaffected by other variables

**Cosmo** Short for “cosmopolitan,” a popular juice-and-vodka based cocktail

**Covid-19 Pandemic in NYC** One of the most deadly public health disasters in the history of New York City

**Curio shop** A shop that sells: curios rare, unusual, or intriguing objects

**Divorcee** Somewhat dated term for a divorced person

**Dire Straits** To be in desperate trouble or impending danger.

**Doc Martens** brand of British footwear

**Doctor-patient confidentiality** The ethical responsibility of medical professionals not to disclose the health condition of their patients

**Doritos** The world’s greatest snack chip (b. 1964)

**Dressed to the nines** An idiom meaning dressed very smartly or for a grand occasion

**driving on the left** Folks in Britain drive on the left

**Elementary** basic

**En Garde** On guard

**Erin Go Bragh** From the Irish “Éirinn go Brách”; “Ireland forever”

**Exorcism** The act of casting out demons

**Faith and begorrah** Stereotypical Irish exclamation of surprise

**Falafel** Deep fried balls made from seasoned chickpeas

**Femme-fatale** Trope; a seductive woman who causes trouble for the (traditionally) male protagonist. Literally, French; “deadly woman.”

**Film noir** A cinematic term used primarily to describe stylish but cynical Hollywood crime dramas

**Filthy lucre** Lucre is money obtained dishonorably, and it is nearly always described as filthy.

**Finalmente** Spanish; finally

**The finger** an obscene hand gesture, used to communicate anger or disrespect

**Flapjacks** Britain; chewy oat bar (as opposed to an American synonym for pancake)

**Flat** British; apartment

**flatmate** British: roommate

**Foil** One of the three weapons used in the sport of fencing

**Forensics** The application of scientific methodology to support evidence

**Frig** Interjection; from the Middle English fryggen, meaning to wriggle

**Free Workers Union** Freie Arbeiterinnen-und Arbeiter-Union (FAU) is a German anarcho-syndicalist union

**The Fuzz** A slang term for the police

**Google** Look it up.

**The Guardian** Daily, center-left, British news paper and website

**guns in Britain** Most British police officers do not carry firearms.

**Hashtag** A word or subject added to a social media post so others can easily find it

**Hector** correct, lecture

**Hooker** Pejorative term for a sex worker

**Iconoclast** One who attacks widely accepted beliefs.

**Il culmine** Italian; “summit, peak”

**Ivy League** Eight prestigious (and expensive) private American universities

**Kebab** Describes a variety of Middle Eastern seasoned meat dishes

**Kenyon Junction Station** A closed railway station in Culcheth, Warrington England, about a three hour train ride from London

**Lactose Intolerance** The inability to digest the sugar in milk

**Landline** A telephone connected by physical wires and not cellular

**Latter-day** The Church of Jesus Christ of the latter-day Saints is commonly referred to as LDS or the Mormon church

**Mani-pedi** Getting the nails of your hands and feet done by a professional

**Mainsplain** It does not surprise me that you do not know this, but I am kind of an expert about this and more than happy to tell you that “to mansplain” is the process of a man who loves to hear himself talk, (or write) describing in tedious detail something that probably does not require any explanation at all, to a female, and with a condescending tone, honey.

**Marinara** Traditional Italian sauce made with tomatoes and herbs

**Marxism** Named for British economic and social theorist Karl Marx, a philosophy which calls for worker-led revolution and the creation of a Communist state (see: Communism)

**Microchip** integrated circuit necessary for countless electronic devices

**Mother Superior** The female superior of a community of Catholic nuns in an abbey

**Mousy** nervous, timid, shy, unassuming

**Mumbo jumbo** Nonsense

**Nada** Spanish; nothing

**Niche** Originally a recess in a wall especially for a statue

**Niente** Italian; nothing

**Nimbus** A luminous cloud or a halo surrounding a supernatural being or a saint

**Parlor** British; living room

**Parlor trick** A simple trick or demonstration that is used to entertain or amuse guests

**Parry** A simple defensive action designed to deflect an attack

**The Party** The Communist Party

**Patek Philippe 480 Chronograph** A ridiculously expensive wristwatch

**Peacocking** A social behavior in which a person uses ostentatious clothing and behavior to attract attention and to stand out

**Pinko** Pejorative term for one to the Left of the political spectrum

**Pizza parlors** Referring to the debunked conspiracy theory known as “Pizzagate”

**Plebian** Ancient Rome; commoner

**Poncy** British; pretentious or affected

**Pornography** Sexually explicit imagery

**Post-Soviet** Pertaining to former Soviet Bloc countries; that period following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union

**PPE** Personal Protective Equipment, medical

**Prank phone call** A phone call placed that is some manner a practical joke on the one who answers

**Prince Charming** A fictional, idealized, male romantic partner

**Pro-whatever-choice** Reference to the feminist, reproductive freedom movement

**Pro-bono** Latin, “for the public good.” Professional work freely offered

**Pseudonymous** Writing or written under a false name

**Pulsometer** A monitoring device to measure heart or pulse rate

**The Quarantine** Unlike the United States, Great Britain instituted a mandatory quarantine during the Covid-19 outbreak of 2020, one which carried with it penalties for non-compliance

**Queso** Spanish; “cheese”

**Quotidian** Of or occurring every day; daily

**Rabbitting on** To talk incessantly

**Reboot** Have you tried turning it off and back on again?

**Red** In this case, pertaining to Communism

**Red herring** A(n often intentional) misleading detail

**Red menace** The promotion of a widespread fear of a potential rise of Communism, Anarchism, or other leftist ideologies

**Red Tide** A harmful algae bloom...but probably referring to the belief that if Communism-Marxist-Leninism succeeded in one country, it would inevitably take over the world

**Rigamortale** A long and complicated procedure.

**The Ritz** From the five-star Ritz Hotel (London), used colloquially to mean a fancy place to stay

**Salute** Prior to starting a bout, fencers must salute each other

**Seven pressure points** Bogus; there is little evidence to suggest that any pressure point could actually lead to death

**Sex work** The consensual exchange of sexual services for profit

**Siberia** A vast region of northeast Asia, to which Soviet dissidents were often relocated

**Sidekick** A companion or colleague who is generally regarded as subordinate or inferior to those whom they accompany

**Smorgasbord** A wide range of something; a variety.

**Social media app** A computer program for communicating with others

**Socialism** Social and economic theory of the communal ownership of production

**Socialite** A prominent person in society, usually a woman

**Scotland Yard** Officially New Scotland Yard, headquarters for the London Metropolitan Police

**Scrubs** hospital overgarments

**Smell you, Nancy Drew.** A belittling insult (see: Nancy Drew)

**Spic-and-span** Spotlessly clean and neat, new and fresh

**Spleen** rage, ire

**Squatter’s rights** The right to protection from eviction following a period of continual occupancy

**Steampunk** A subgenre of science fiction that incorporates retro-futuristic technology and aesthetics inspired by 19th-century industrial steam-powered machinery

**Stethoscope** Medical device for auscultation or listening to internal sounds of an animal or human body

**Ta-Ta** Goodbye

**Tart** Pejorative term for a sexually active woman

**Ten-gallon** Iconic, high-crowned cowboy hat.

**Tex** Nickname for someone from Texas

**Thames** A river that flows through London

**Thrust** An attack in swordplay

**TikTok** Social media platform (est. 2016)

**Timex** American brand of reasonably priced wristwatches

**Top O' The Mornin'** Irish; "good morning"

**Topeka** The capital of Kansas

**Toxicology** A field that focuses on studying exposure to unhealthy elements (toxins)

**Tweet** Social media post on social media site formerly known as Twitter

**Type A** Personality trait described as ambitious, impatient and driven to perfection

**USB** Universal Serial Bus; industry standard for connecting and communicating between devices and a host computer

**Victorian (Era)** England; period that corresponds roughly to that of Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901)

**Video tape** A magnetic storage medium used to record and play back sound and visual imagery, popularized in the 1970s and 80s

**Viral** When something gains a lot of attention of social media

**The Vows Column** A *New York Times* column dedicated to marriage announcements deemed (by the paper) to be socially significant

**Yonkers** Inner suburb of New York City

## Literary and Pop Culture references in *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson*

"**A touch, a touch, I do confess.**" Hamlet V.ii

**The Adventure of the Blue Goose** Sherlock Holmes story (The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle?) (1862)

"**Alexander wept...**" Spoken by the villain Hans Gruber (Alan Rickman) in *Die Hard* (See: Die Hard)

"**All work and no play makes Holmes a dull girl!**" Original quote; "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy (ad infinitum)" "The Shining" (film, 1980)

**Angela's Ashes** Pulitzer Prize winning memoir by Irish writer Frank McCourt (1996)

**The Art of War** Chinese military treatise, attributed to Sun Tzu (ca. 5th century BCE)

"**By Jove!**" Interjection; Jove is the supreme Roman deity

**The Case of the Speckled Band** Sherlock Holmes story (1892)

"**Cheez it ... it's the fuzz!**" 1950s-60s, "Let's get out of here, the police are coming!"

**Chicken Soup for the Confucian Soul** Reference to the numerous "Chicken Soup for the Soul" titles originally edited by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen

**Danny Boy** A popular Irish ballad, written by the English Frederic Weatherly (1913)

**Die Hard** Action film (1988)

**Nancy Drew** Fictional, young woman detective created by publisher Edward Stratemeyer (1930)

**Eat, Pray, Love** American dramatic film based on the book by Elizabeth Gilbert and starring Julia Roberts (2010)

"**Ecco un artiste!**" Italian; What an artist!

"**Eliminate the impossible**" This is a popular quote from Sherlock Holmes.

"**Et tu, Sherlock?**" Latin; "And you, Sherlock?" Original quote; "Et tu, Brute?" Julius Caesar III.i

**Dr. Frankenstein** A fictional character and the main protagonist and title character in Mary Shelley's 1818 novel, "Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus"

"**The game is afoot.**" "It's on!" Henry V.iii, a phrase used by Sherlock Holmes in "The Adventure of the Abbey"

Grange" (1904)

**Tobias Gregson** An Inspector of Scotland Yard and consults Holmes in "A Study in Scarlet"

**Hamlet** Play by William Shakespeare (ca. 1599-1601)

**Harriet the Spy** Children's novel by Louise Fitzhugh (1964)

**"Hello, gorgeous."** Quote; "Funny Girl" (musical, 1964)

**"Help me, Sherlock Holmes-Kenobi, you're my only hope!"** Original quote; "Star Wars" (film, 1977)

**The Hound of the Baskervilles** Sherlock Holmes novel (1902)

**Laverne & Shirley** American TV sit-com about two women roommates (1976-1983)

**"... the mercy that droppeth ..."** The Merchant of Venice IV.i

**Messiah** English-language oratorio composed by George Frideric Handel (1741)

**Elliot Monk** Named in reference to billionaire Elon Musk

**Mrs. Warren's Profession** A play by George Bernard Shaw (1902) and a euphemism for sex work

**"No man is an island"** From "Meditation 17" by John Donne (1623)

**"No more secrets"** Quote; "Sneakers" (film, 1992)

**"O Dolce Mani"** An aria from the opera "Tosca" (See: Tosca)

**"The pals we made along the way."** Original quote; "Maybe the real treasure was the friends we made along the way." Source: no one knows

**"The plot thickens."** Origin; The play "The Rehearsal" by George Villiers (1671), later popularized by the character of Sherlock Holmes

**"Preparation may lie within our joined hands"** An approximation of a quote from Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" (See: The Art of War)

**Psycho Killer** Song by the Talking Heads (1977)

**"Put on a Happy Face"**: A song from the 1960 musical Bye Bye Birdie, notably sung by Dick Van Dyke

**"Qu'est que c'est."** Lyric; French for "What is it?"(see: Psycho Killer)

**Rache** From Doyle's "A Study in Scarlet"

**A Scandal in Bohemia** The first short story Doyle wrote involving Homes and Watson, and the only story that included Irene Adler (1891)

**"Shall not pass"** "They shall not pass" (French; Ils ne passeront pas) most notably used by France in World War I, see also: Gandalf

**Sister Act 2** 1993 sequel to the 1992 film "Sister Act"

**The Sopranos** An HBO crime drama (1999-2007)

**Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants** American dramatic film based on the book by Ann Brashares and featuring America Ferrera (2005)

**"Snakes! Why did it have to be snakes!"** Quote; "Raider of the Lost Ark" (film, 1981)

**"The spirit I have seen (through) I'll catch the conscience of the king."** Hamlet [II.ii](#)

**Spy vs. Spy** A wordless comic strip published in Mad magazine

**Star Spangled Banner** The national anthem of the United States

**Star Wars** A space epic created by George Lucas (1977)

**"There is a scarlet thread of chaos shot through the skein of life, and our duty is to unravel every inch of it."** From "A Study in Scarlet" by Arthur Conan Doyle (1887)

**"They're always after me Lucky Charms"** Advertising slogan for the breakfast cereal "Lucky Charms", featuring a cartoon Leprechaun

“...the tide of time.” Julius Caesar III.i.

“To be, or not to be ...” Hamlet III.i

“... to take (arms) against ...” Hamlet III.i

**Tosca** Italian opera by Giacomo Puccini (1900)

“**Turtles all the way down.**” Allusion to a myth that the world is supported on the back of a great turtle, also the title of a YA novel by John Green (2017)

“**What’s in the box?**” Quote; “Seven” (film, 1995)

**Yankee Doodle** Traditional song and nursery rhyme

## Historic and fictional individuals mentioned in *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson*

**Alexander the Great** Conqueror of the ancient world (356-323 BCE)

**Encyclopedia Brown** Boy detective featured in stories by Donald J. Sobol (1963)

**Anton Chekhov** Russian playwright (1860-1904)

**Tom Clancy** American author of popular espionage thrillers (1947-2013)

**Dubai’s Royal Family** The House of Maktoum is the ruling royal family of the Emirate of Dubai, and very wealthy and powerful

**America Ferrera** American TV and film actress (b. 1984)

**I. P. Freely** A pun name often used in prank phone calls (say it, you’ll get it)

**Emma Goldman** Russian-born Anarchist (1869-1940)

**Sally Kimball** Friend, business partner and bodyguard to Encyclopedia Brown

**Vladimir Lenin** Russian revolutionary, theorist and politician (1870-1924)

**Chairman Mao** Mao Zedong, Chinese revolutionary, writer and politician (1893-1976)

**Mario** Italian video game avatar (est.1983)

**Michelangelo** Italian sculptor and painter (1475-1564)

**Pablo Picasso** Spanish painter and sculptor (1881-1973)

**Sergei Rachmaninoff** Russian composer (1873-1943)

**Julia Roberts** American film actress (b. 1967)

**Sacco & Vanzetti** Italian; Nicola Sacco (1891-1927) and Bartolomeo Vanzetti (1888-1927) Anarchists who were tried, convicted and executed, for murder.

**Doctor Seuss** American author, illustrator, animator, and cartoonist (1904 -1991)

**Dmitri Shostakovich** Russian composer (1906-1975)

**Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky** Russian composer (1882-1971)

**Meryl Streep** American actress (b. 1949)

**Piotr Ilych Tchaikovsky** Russian composer (1840-1893)

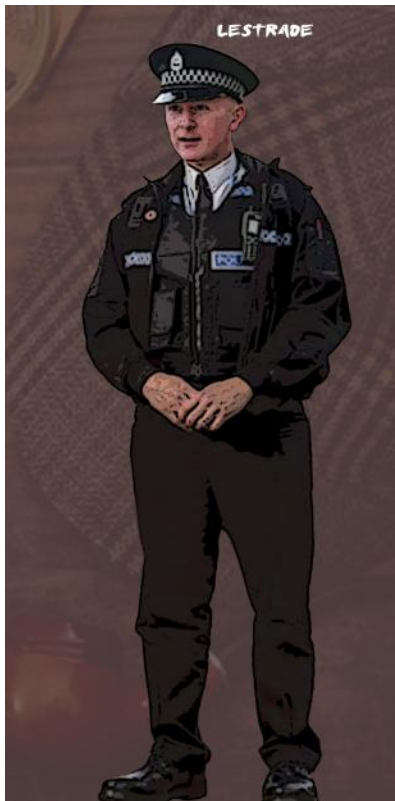
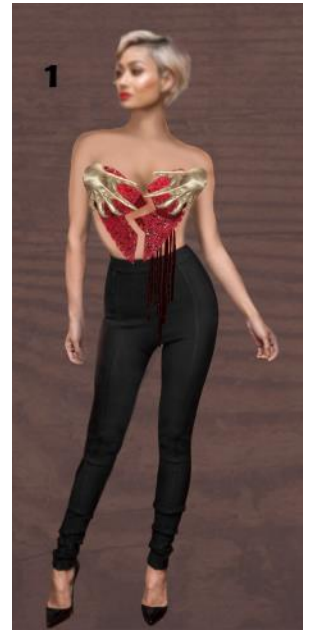
**Margaret Thatcher** British Prime Minister, Conservative Party (1925-2013)

**Donald Trump** The 45th and 47th President of the United States (b. 1946)

**Sun Tzu** Chinese general and strategist (544-496 BCE)

**Vincent Van Gogh** Dutch painter (1853-1890)



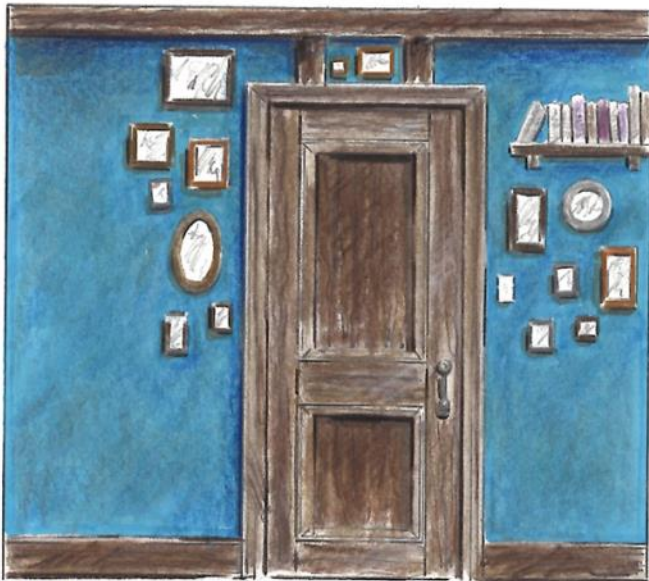




Scenic renderings by Jeff Herrmann



SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson-Apt. 2B  
Interior Wall Rendering  
GLT/ISF 2026

S.D. 6935  
SCENIC DESIGNER  
SIGNATURE *J. Sarman*  
1-12-2025



Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson-Apt. 2B  
Exterior Wall  
GLT/ISF 2026

S.D. 6935  
SCENIC DESIGNER  
SIGNATURE *J. Sarman*  
1-12-2026

# Discussion Questions

## Discussion Questions about Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes

1. How does Sherlock Holmes's method of deduction differ from ordinary logical reasoning? What role does observation play in Holmes's success as a detective? How does Holmes's character challenge or reinforce stereotypes about intelligence? How does author Arthur Conan Doyle balance logic and creativity in solving mysteries?
2. What recurring themes appear throughout the Sherlock Holmes stories? Why do you think Sherlock Holmes has remained popular for over a century?
3. How does Holmes's personality affect his relationships with others? In what ways does Dr. Watson serve as a foil to Holmes? What role does friendship play in the partnership between Holmes and Watson? How does Watson's narration influence the reader's perception of Holmes?
4. What ethical boundaries does Holmes cross, if any, in solving cases? How important is forensic science in Holmes's investigations compared to intuition? How does Holmes handle failure or uncertainty in his cases? What is the significance of Holmes's use of disguise?
5. How are villains portrayed, and what makes them compelling adversaries? What makes a Sherlock Holmes mystery satisfying to readers?
6. How does Conan Doyle use setting (especially Victorian London) to enhance the stories? In what ways is Holmes a product of his time period? How does Arthur Conan Doyle build suspense in the Holmes stories? How might Sherlock Holmes operate differently if he lived in today's world?

## Discussion Questions Prior to attending the performance

1. What elements are needed to create a good mystery? A good comedy? What role does suspense and surprise play in good story telling? Why would you combine those two different genres together?
2. What is a parody? Is there a show, movie, or internet artist you watch that parodies other stories? What draws you to those types of performances? Why do parodies exist? What makes a story able to be parodied? In what ways might they add to or take away from the original work?
3. Sherlock Holmes has been adapted to almost every different media, from comics to video games, and in a variety of genres since Arthur Conan Doyle first created this character in 1887. What is an adaptation? What is your favorite adaptation? Why? Why do you think books are adapted for movies or plays? Why do you think the character of Sherlock Holmes has transcended to so many different ways of telling a story?
4. *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson - Apt. 2b* is an adaptation of classic, literary characters into a different time and place. This is a common practice in popular culture; *The Lion King* (1994) is an adaptation of *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, *Clueless* (1995) is an adaptation of *Emma* by Jane Austen, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000) is an adaptation of *The Odyssey* by Homer. What is your favorite adaptation? Why?
5. *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson* is set in that period right after the worst effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Why do you think the playwright chose that time period to set her comedy? What was unique to that period that lends itself to the story of a detective, or a doctor? If you had to update a Sherlock Holmes story, when would you set it and why?

6. For this play, the playwright chose to make the characters of the great detective Sherlock Holmes and his loyal companion Dr. John Watson women. Why do you believe she made the decision to “regender” these classic characters in this way? What are the challenges presented by making Holmes and Watson women? What are the opportunities in doing so? What classic character from literature would you be intrigued to “regender”? How would that change the story, how it is told, and what it means? What if Atticus Finch or Jean Valjean were women? What if Anne Shirley (of “Green Gables” fame) or Mathilda Wormwood were boys?
7. Look over “10 Rules for Writing a Sherlockian Pastiche” by Derrick Belanger (page 26). Try your hand at writing an outline for your own, original Sherlockian Pastiche using these rules as your guide.

# Activities

## MYSTERY POWDER!

Using your detective skills, analyze four mystery powders and reveal their true identities! Use your deductive reasoning, experimenting with chemical reactions and your senses, but be careful — no tasting! These could be poisonous!

**Ingredients:** baking soda (A), cornstarch (B), granulated sugar (C), table salt (D)

Students can work in partnerships or individuals sharing materials at each table.

### Materials needed:

- Small paper bowls: 4 bowls per group
- Paper plates: 1 for each student
- Small paper cups: For water, vinegar, and iodine
- Markers: Dark colored, 1 for each student
- Container of water
- White vinegar
- Iodine solution (optional, does stain skin)
- Pipettes: 10-15 per table (or similar tool)
- Disposable gloves (optional)
- Paper to write down observations and guesses on ingredients.

**Set Up:** (For easier clean up, place newspaper/other material on tables before beginning activity.)

- Place 4 paper bowls labeled A-D on each table.
- Place a small amount of the mystery ingredients into each bowl, making sure each bowl is properly labeled and set in order clearly marked A-D.(1 powder per bowl)
- Place a paper plate and a dark-colored marker on tables for each student.
- Place a cup or two with water at each table (Have cups with vinegar and iodine readily accessible)
- Have roughly 3 pipettes per student on the tables.

### Activity:

- The students should use the marker to split the plate into quarters and label each quarter A-D (This can be part of prep as well!)
- The students should use a plastic spoon to scoop a small amount of each powder onto their plates into the correct sections.
- Have students make observations of each powder. (What does it feel like? Look like? Smell like?) Have the students write down their observations.
- Have students take a pipette and place a small drop of water onto each powder. What happens to the powder? Does it dissolve? Become creamy? Have the students record their observations.
- Repeat the same steps with vinegar and iodine (optional). Does the powder fizz with vinegar causing a chemical reaction? Does it change colors with the iodine? Use these observations to reveal which powder is which!

### HINTS:

- Baking Soda: Dissolves with water, chemical reaction to vinegar!
- Cornstarch: Creamy with water, turns purple with iodine!
- Salt: Dissolves with water, dissolves with vinegar!
- Sugar: Shiny crystals, becomes syrupy with liquid.

## **CAPTURE THE SECRET FILE!**

**Set-up:** Split your class into two “detective squads”. Each squad has a confidential file that contains high-profile information containing the secrets between England and the USA. You will need an open area for “territories”. The bigger the better, cafeterias, common rooms with obstacles such as furniture and shelves is helpful. Weather permitting, large open fields or playgrounds are also sufficient.

**Materials:** 2 large Manilla envelopes marked “CONFIDENTIAL” on the front, preferably written in two different colored markers to establish the difference between detective squads. **\*\***(As an added bonus, have each student write down a creative confidential secret message on a slip of paper and add them to the envelopes prior to the activity beginning. Once the activity has ended, feel free to reveal those secret messages out loud!)\*\*

The goal of each detective squad is to steal the secret file from the other squad and bring it back to their side without getting tagged! Anyone who is on the other squad’s side, and is tagged by a member of that squad, **MUST** go immediately to the holding area. To be saved from the holding area, someone from your detective squad must make it all the way to you without being tagged, and then must walk you back with one arm raised in the air to your own detective squad’s side.

You can only save one person from the holding area at a time, and both saver and the one saved must walk back to their own side before getting back in the game (no breaking away to steal the file!). Each time a squad successfully steals the file and brings it back to their side, have the squads switch sides.

Use different strategies to distract the other detectives, and make sure to practice safe tagging!

## **REVEAL THE SECRET MESSAGE!**

### **Materials:**

- Watercolor paint set (one per table)
- Paintbrushes (One per student)
- White crayons (One per student)
- White blank paper

Have the students use a white crayon to write a secret message to another classmate. Then have students swap papers and use the watercolor to paint the paper and reveal the secret message! The watercolor paint will stick to the paper and resist the white crayon marks!

## 10 Rules for Writing a Sherlock Pastiche

By Derrick Belanger

A Sherlock Holmes “pastiche” is a short story written in a similar style to the Sherlock Holmes stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. To write your own pastiche, there are 10 rules you should follow:

- 1. You are writing a mystery.** Your story needs a full plot with a client bringing Sherlock Holmes a problem to solve. You need to have clues along the way as Holmes investigates. You need to have a resolution where Holmes solves the mystery. You can't do that in a few paragraphs. Take your time to tell your tale.
- 2. You need to read the original Sherlock Holmes stories.** You can't write a pastiche if you don't know who you are imitating. Pay attention to how Doyle introduces Holmes, how the mystery begins, how his characters interact. Note that Watson calls Sherlock Holmes by his last name, “Holmes” not “Sherlock”. The closer you are to Doyle, the better.
- 3. Sherlock Holmes is The Great Detective.** Sherlock Holmes is the world's greatest detective. You must show the reader that Holmes is great, don't just tell us. Have Holmes look at a client and tell their life story simply from their clothing. Have Holmes solve a mystery that does not seem solvable. Prove to the reader that Holmes is the best.
- 4. Dr. Watson is Holmes's biographer.** Almost all of Doyle's stories are told by Dr. Watson. It is through his eyes that we see Holmes at work; it is through his ears that we hear the client's story. While you don't necessarily have to tell the story from Watson's point of view, he should, at the very least, be an important part of your narrative.
- 5. The setting of your story is vitally important.** Sherlock Holmes lives at 221b Baker Street with Dr. Watson. They reside in Victorian (late 19th Century) London. Show us the setting. Have them dine at the Criterion, visit the Strand, stroll through Westminster, hear the chimes of Big Ben. The more we are immersed in the Victorian time period, the better.
- 6. Characters make the story fun.** Part of the fun of reading Sherlock Holmes stories is the rich, diverse characters. You have the Baker Street Irregulars, the children who help gather information for Sherlock Holmes. You have the landlady, Mrs. Hudson, who not only delivers tea to Holmes and Watson but helps them catch a dangerous criminal in “The Empty House”. You have Jabez Wilson, the pawn shop owner tricked into joining the Red Headed League. These side characters are unique; they are memorable and make the story more interesting to read.
- 7. We learn much from dialogue in a Sherlock Holmes story.** Use dialogue both to move the plot forward and to let us get to know the personalities of the characters. The client always tells Holmes the problem they need him to solve. Holmes asks questions of the client and we learn about the mystery. We also learn much about the client from how they approach Holmes. From her dialogue, we learn that Mary Stoner is nervous and fearing for her life in “The Speckled Band”. In “The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor,” we learn of Lord St. Simon's befuddlement at the disappearance of his fiancé from his story. Make sure we learn about the characters in your story from their dialogue.
- 8. Know your ending.** You have created a client who has brought Holmes a mystery to solve. You must have Holmes solve the mystery to bring your story to a conclusion, and the ending must be believable. I find that authors who don't know the ending to their story in advance tend to get lost in the plot and often abandon their story. My advice is to know your ending before you write your story. If you know how the story will end then you can set up the clues along the way to help you reach your conclusion and make it satisfying to your readers.

- 9. Know your Facts.** Even though you are writing a fictional story, you still need to do a lot of research. No one writing a pastiche today lived in Victorian London. You need to make certain you don't have Holmes chase a suspect down a street that did not exist until 1921 or say a modern slang expression. Holmes never said, "Yo, Watson, What up!" Get to know the history of Victorian London. Know the fashion of the day (Watson would never wear jeans and a t-shirt). Know the train routes. Use an etymology guide to make sure your language matches the time period. Fortunately, you have the internet to help you along the way.
- 10. Writing a Pastiche is Hard Work.** Don't be intimidated by writing a Sherlock Holmes story. You will probably need to revise your story several times before it is complete. Have your friends, a teacher, a sibling and/or a parent read your drafts along the way. Have them tell you parts that they like and parts that need improvement. Don't be upset if they find a big mistake in your text. When you make the correction, your story will be better. In the end, you want your story to be the best Sherlock Holmes story it possibly can be.

*Derrick Belanger is an award-winning author, publisher, and educator most noted for his books and lectures on Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Used by permission.*

## How to Write A Review

### MORE HOW AND LESS WHAT

A theater review is not a book review, you do not need to summarize what happens. Provide the necessary background so the reader knows the name of the play and the basics of what kind of play it is, and then move into your commentary. You do not need to explain WHAT the play is, instead write about HOW successfully it was presented.

### THE ACTOR NOT THE CHARACTER

You can disapprove of the decisions a character makes, but how well did the ACTOR perform the role? Was their behavior appropriate to the part as written? Feel free to share your opinions, comparing or contrasting their work with other actors with whom you are familiar.

### WHAT IS DIRECTION?

Maybe you have heard of a “director” in theater or film, but do you know what they do? It is not a director’s job to tell the actors how to say every line, but they are the person responsible for creating the general mood and concept for the production. What was your impression of the production as a whole? Was it too funny for a serious play? Or not amusing enough for a comic play? Use words to reflect back to the director how successful the production is as a whole.

### DON'T FORGET THE DESIGN

The set you see and the sounds you hear are also unique to this one production of this play. Describe what you see and hear, but also be sure to make clear how successful these designs are in telling the story of the play.

### IN CONCLUSION ...

While it is not necessary to give a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” your concluding sentence should summarize your impression of the production as a whole.

### THEATER REVIEWS IN THE NEW MEDIA

Reviews in news websites may be 1000 words, they may be as brief as 300 words. Can you write a one-page review? Can you write a 100 word review, to post on Facebook? Do you think you could create a 140-character review that sums up the production for posting on Twitter?

A sample review written by a student follows this page.

## A Sample Review Written by a Student

### **"Gambit": More Poetry Than History** — Mark Wood

If Aristotle was correct when he said that poetry "is a higher thing than history," then "Royal Gambit," which opened Friday night at Pentacle Theater, is, I suppose, on the right track.

For those who were expecting a representational treatment of the life of England's Henry VIII, "Royal Gambit" was a shock, if not a disappointment. Those who sought poetry got it, although of a very dogmatic and simplistic sort.

This unusual, highly presentational play by Hermann Gressieker, directed by Ed Classen, is an indictment of modern man as a ruthless opportunist. The Tudor king is a representative of a rationalizing, shifty society which has become "superior to the highest" while "wallowing in the depths."

As Henry uses the banners of "reason" and "humanism" to obtain then dispose of his six wives, so modern man uses them for his own pleasure and glorification, uses them to wage war in the name of peace, to hate in the name of love.

Such is the grim theme pleasingly presented by a company of seven actors, who performed their roles energetically, if unevenly. The presentational acting style employed here is difficult to perfect. It should be theatrical, yet believable; aimed at the head, yet acceptable to the heart.

Louise Larsen was a standout as Catherine of Aragon, Largely because she utilized this presentational approach and was not afraid of open theatricality. Her flamboyant stage presence, which needed to be toned down in her recent role in "Last of the Red Hot Lovers," found full vent here.

Henry's fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, was portrayed by Gale Rieder, who quickly became an audience favorite. Her thick accent was letter-perfect and her direct humor was a welcome contrast to the bitter satire of the rest of the play.

The other four actresses—Kathy Stratton, Marcia Engblom, Polly Bond and Patricia Sloan—each had their exceptional moments. However, they generally seemed tied to more conventional, representational acting styles.

Ron Fox was superb in the role of Henry. Tuxedoed, leering with the look of a demonic marionette, the vacant stare of a deranged orator, Fox dominated the stage fully, commanding both in voice and stage presence.

The technical elements of the play were more than adequate. Musical accompaniment was appropriately sparse and simple.

At one point the play, King Henry roared, "In my realm I decide what constitutes tragedy!" Ironically, Gressieker strips modern man not only of his possibilities as a tragic figure worthy of any sympathies at all. In the final moments of the play, Catherine of Aragon announces the death of modern man and the birth of a new era. It is a scene of great hope, but it is not as profound as her earlier pronouncement to her husband that "the ways of the world are not so cut and dried!"

For my own part, I wish that "Royal Gambit's" statement were not so cut and dried. By making man out to be such a simple monster the play defeats its own purposes and turns poetry into scathing dogma, which is probably even less interesting than, say, history.

<http://faculty.chemeketa.edu/jrupert3/eng105/Annrev.html>

## Discussion Questions

### After Attending the Performance

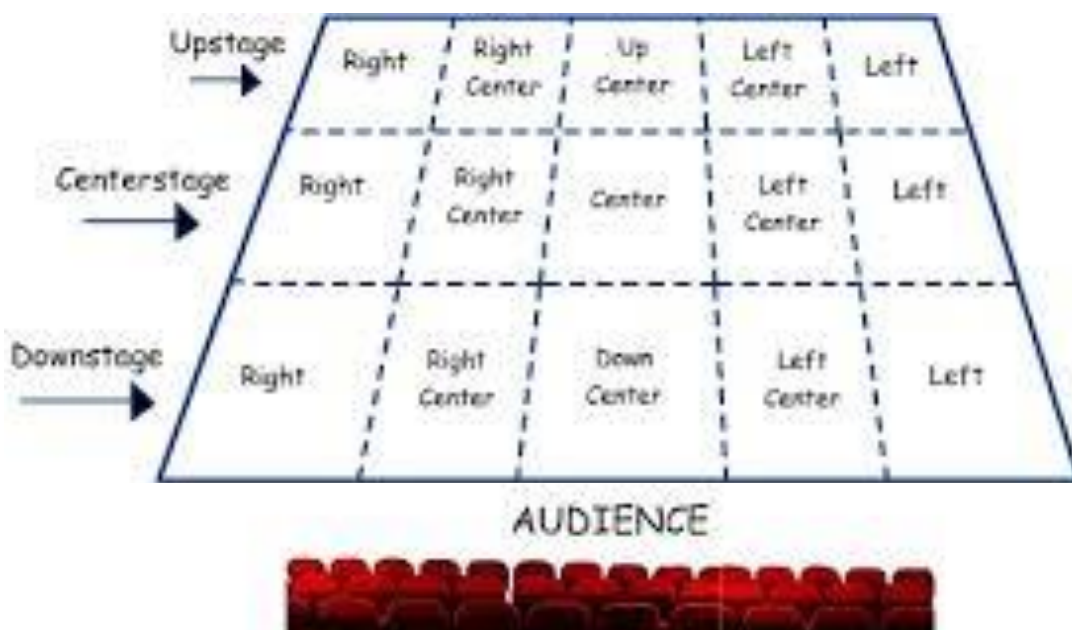
1. Apart from time period and the gender of the main characters, how does this version of Holmes and Watson differ from traditional portrayals? What role does the mystery play in driving the story forward? Which moments were confusing for you, or surprising, and why? How do the different cases connect to the main storyline?
2. How would you describe Ms. Holmes as a character? What motivates her? In what ways does Ms. Watson challenge or support Holmes? Which character changed the most over the course of the play? Which character did you relate to the most, and why?
3. The play deals with mental health and addiction. How are these portrayed? What does the play suggest about friendship and partnership? How does the play explore identity and self-worth? What message do you think the playwright is trying to communicate about these issues?
4. How did pop culture references add to the comedy of the performance? Why is “getting” a reference so satisfying?
5. In what ways is Professor Moriarty the perfect foil for Sherlock Holmes? Create your own perfect villain character; what traits, talents, and abilities would they have? What would be their evil plan? What is their motivation and how would they achieve it? Who would be the perfect hero to foil this villain’s plans? How would your hero stop the villain?
6. Look over “10 Rules for Writing a Sherlockian Pastiche” by Derrick Belanger. The playwright did not cleave to all of these rules in creating this work, did she? Which “rules” (see page 26) did she stick to? Which ones did she stray from? Defend each of these choices on behalf of the playwright.
7. How did the set design help tell the story? What choices did the actors make that stood out to you? How did lighting, sound, or costumes contribute to the mood? In what ways did this production’s use of costumes and props help you follow the action and characters? If you could change one aspect of the production, what would it be?
8. Many action and crime stories have a character that is a romantic partner for the main protagonist. Why do you think they are usually added? Arthur Conan Doyle created the character of Irene Adler for only one of his short stories, and not as a figure of romantic attraction for Holmes. Why have so many writers creating their Holmes stories choose to include the Irene Adler character? If this “shipping” element were removed from *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson*, how might that affect the outcome of the mystery? Would this be a satisfactory tale without it? Why or why not?
9. Is Ms. Holmes a hero? Discuss.

# A Brief Glossary of Theater Terms

<b>Apron</b>	The part of the stage in front of the curtain
<b>Auditorium or House</b>	Where the audience sits
<b>Beam Spread</b>	The area a single light covers
<b>Blackout</b>	Turning off all the lights in the theatre at once
<b>Board</b>	The control center for lights, sound, or both
<b>Book (The)</b>	A copy of the script containing all notes and blocking
<b>Box Office</b>	Where the audience buys tickets
<b>Box Set</b>	A set in a proscenium with three walls
<b>Call</b>	The time certain members of the production need to be at the theatre
<b>Cheat</b>	When an actor takes a realistic action and modifies it for the audience to see
<b>Cloth</b>	Scenery painted on fabric
<b>Cue</b>	A line or action that immediately leads to another action by the actor (for them to speak) designer or stage manager (to change the lights or sound)
<b>Curtain Call</b>	The bows at the end of the show
<b>Dimmer</b>	Equipment that controls the brightness of a light
<b>Director</b>	The creative head of a production. They create a vision for the show and work with actors, designers, and crew to bring that vision to life
<b>Flat</b>	A frame covered with canvas, cardboard, or some other light material which is then painted as part of the set
<b>Floodlight</b>	A light that has a wide unfocused beam covering most of the stage
<b>Fly</b>	A system used to raise set backgrounds, set pieces, or potentially actors
<b>Follow-spot</b>	A spotlight that can follow an actor as they move across around the stage
<b>Footlights</b>	Floodlights on the floor at the front of the stage.
<b>Gel</b>	A piece of plastic placed over the light to change its color
<b>Greenroom</b>	A room where the company can relax, eat, or potentially watch the show if a TV and a camera has been rigged
<b>Notes</b>	The director's notes on the performance or rehearsal
<b>Pit</b>	An area between the stage and the audience where an orchestra can sit (typically below audience level)
<b>Producer</b>	The person responsible for all logistical and financial aspects of a production (as opposed to the creative head, the director).
<b>Properties or Props</b>	Items used by actors in a show (such as swords, plates, watches, etc.)

<b>Proscenium</b>	A type of stage defined by a proscenium arch. Proscenium theatres typically distinctly separate the audience and stage by a window (defined by the proscenium arch). The stage typically will not go far past the proscenium arch (the Ohio Theatre, for example).
<b>Raked Stage</b>	A stage that is angled (upstage is the top of the hill and downstage the bottom) so that the audience can see the action more clearly
<b>Set</b>	The scenery used in a scene or throughout the play
<b>Set Dressing</b>	Parts of the set that don't serve a practical function but make the set look realistic.
<b>Spotlight</b>	A type of light that is focused so that it can light a very specific area
<b>Strike</b>	Taking apart and removing a set from the theatre
<b>Thrust</b>	A stage that goes beyond the proscenium arch so that the audience is sitting on three sides of the set - in front, and on either side (the Hanna Theatre, for example).
<b>Tracks</b>	The rails on which curtains (tabs) run.
<b>Trap</b>	A hole in the stage covered by a door where actors or set pieces can exit or enter
<b>Understudy</b>	An actor who learns all of the lines and blocking of another actor (typically one of the actors in a lead role) who can perform in case the main actor cannot go on
<b>Upstage</b>	The rear of the stage
<b>Wings</b>	The sides of the stage typically blocked off by curtains where actors and crew can stand and wait for their cues

## STAGE DIRECTIONS



# Learning Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7

Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.A

Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.1.A

Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.A

Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.5.B

Analyze nuances in the meaning of words

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).



# Student Matinee Series 2026-2027 Season

**The Winter's Tale** by William Shakespeare

**Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street**

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## **Deep Dive: *Hamlet* + Shakespeare Performance**

Friday, October 9, 2026 | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, *plus evening performance*

COST: \$175, Includes *The Winter's Tale* performance & Director's Night discussion, Receive certificate with 11 contact hours

PLACE: Playhouse Square



1-DAY WORKSHOP

## **Deep Dive: *Julius Caesar* + Shakespeare Performance**

Friday, February 5, 2027 | 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, *plus evening performance*

COST: \$175, Includes *The Comedy of Errors* performance & Director's Night discussion, Receive certificate with 11 contact hours

PLACE: Playhouse Square



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# School Residency Program

Bring the Classics to Your Classroom!

Launched in 1981, Great Lakes Theater's in-school residency program is now one of the most successful artist-in-residence programs in the country. Each year over 16,000 students in over 100 schools experience the pleasure, power and relevance of classic literature brought to life in their own classrooms.



From *The Sneetches* to *Romeo and Juliet* (and so many more in between!) each week-long residency uses an interactive, hands-on approach, and is designed to meet the common core education standards. We visit your school with scripts, props, costumes—and for high schools, swords, daggers and stage blood—to explore classic literature in an unforgettable way!

For more information contact Lisa Ortenzi at 216.453.4446

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**Sara Bruner, Producing Artistic Director**

The mission of Great Lakes Theater, through its main stage productions and its education programs, is to bring the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience.

Since the company's inception in 1962, programming has been rooted in Shakespeare, but the company's commitment to great plays spans the breadth of all cultures, forms of theater and time periods including the 20th century, and provides for the occasional mounting of new works that complement the classical repertoire.

Classic theater holds the capacity to illuminate truth and enduring values, celebrate and challenge human nature and actions, revel in eloquent language, preserve the traditions of diverse cultures and generate communal spirit. On its mainstage and through its education program, the company seeks to create visceral, immediate experiences for participants, asserting theater's historic role as a vehicle for advancing the common good, and helping people make the most joyful and meaningful connections between classic plays and their own lives. This Cleveland theater company wishes to share such vibrant experiences with people across all age groups, creeds, racial and ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

The company's commitment to classic theater is magnified in the educational programs (for both adults and students) that surround its productions. Great Lakes Theater has a strong presence in area schools, bringing students to the theater for matinee performances and sending specially trained actor-teachers to the schools for weeklong residencies developed to explore classic drama from a theatrical point of view. GLT is equally dedicated to enhancing the theater experience for adult audiences. To this end, GLT regularly serves as the catalyst for community events and programs in the arts and humanities that illuminate the plays on its stage.

Great Lakes Theater is one of only a handful of American theaters that have stayed the course as a classic theater. As GLT celebrates over a decade in its permanent home at the Hanna Theatre, the company reaffirms its belief in the power of partnership, its determination to make this community a better place in which to live, and its commitment to ensure the legacy of classic theater in Cleveland.

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