'The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes': Knowledge Organiser

Characters

Sherlock Holmes – a fictional consulting detective created by Arthur Conan Doyle. He is known for his intelligence, introspection and dual nature. He is described as an 'observing machine' because of his ability to capture the essence of people with seemingly very little evidence.

Dr Watson – Holmes' former flatmate, a doctor and his closest companion. The stories are told from his perspective, working as Holmes' assistant.

Irene Adler – a famous American opera singer who had a relationship with the future King of Bohemia. To Holmes, she is '*the* woman' who outsmarted him.

King of Bohemia – in the Victorian era, Bohemia was an area of central Europe; today it is a region of the Czech Republic. The King is engaged to a Scandinavian princess but five years previously was madly in love with Irene Adler. Because of his status, he was unable to marry her at the time, which he regrets. The King still respects Adler.

Dr Grimesby Roylott – A menacing figure and Helen Stoner's stepfather. He is a doctor who has spent time in India and is known for his violent temper and cruelty.

Helen Stoner – A vulnerable and sympathetic character who seeks Holmes's help after the mysterious death of her sister, Julia.

Julia Stoner – Helen's deceased sister, whose mysterious death sets the plot in motion. Her last words about the 'speckled band' are crucial to Holmes's investigation.

Key words

deduction – the process of reaching a decision by looking at the facts that are known. Holmes is able to use his skills of deduction to solve crimes.

scandal – a scandal is something that shocks people because they think it is morally wrong. The King of Bohemia fears that scandal of his relationship with Irene Adler being exposed.

tenacious – very determined and does not give up easily.

juxtaposition – when writers use very different things or people to highlight a contrast. E.g. Dickens uses juxtaposition to contrast the innocent Oliver with the cunning Dodger.

dual nature – Holmes has a dual nature: his quiet introspective side, and his manic detecting side.

stereotype – a widely held idea, image or belief about a particular person, group of people or thing. E.g. We see how in awe Holmes was when Irene Adler defied his expectations as he was judging her by the stereotype of the Victorian woman.

Background information

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was the author of the Sherlock Holmes stories.

Sherlock Holmes' fictional home was 221B Baker Street, which is now a museum of Doyle's life and work.

Doyle's short stories were published individually in *The Strand Magazine* periodical and then collected to form *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* short story collection in 1892.

Before he became a writer, Doyle studied medicine.

Scandal in Bohemia – plot overview

- The King of Bohemia plans to marry a Norwegian princess. However, he previously had a relationship with a woman called Irene Adler. Adler is threatening to ruin his engagement with a picture she has of herself and the king together.
- Holmes tricks Adler into revealing where she keeps the photograph, but she outsmarts Holmes and escapes with it. Adler decides not to use the picture against the king. She leaves a picture of herself in its place, which Holmes keeps as a reminder of her.

The Speckled Band – plot overview

- Sherlock Holmes is visited by Helen Stoner who fears for her life after the mysterious death of her sister, Julia.
- Julia's last words mentioned a 'speckled band'. Holmes investigates and discovers that Helen's stepfather, Dr Grimesby Roylott, is using a venomous snake to kill Helen to prevent her from inheriting her mother's wealth.
- Holmes and Watson thwart Roylott's plan and the snake ends up killing Roylott instead.

Crafting a short story

- Stories have four main elements: setting, time, character and action
- Writers use plot twists to create suspense and mystery
- Writers use setting as narrative device to reveal more details about a character
- Writers use setting to create atmosphere
- Creating a plan helps writers focus on revealing specific details about a character
- The Speckled Band is a locked-room mystery; Locked-room mysteries are exciting because they challenge the detective (and the reader) to figure out how the crime was done.