

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE

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Date of *The Adventure of The Red-Headed League*

Although the story may contain other clues as to the date of the adventure, use only the clues shown below. Your goal is to use only logical reasoning to find **the date of the attempted burglary at the bank.**

CLUES:

1. The story was published in August 1891.
2. It was “autumn of last year.”
3. The Red-Headed League was dissolved on October 9, 1890.
4. Holmes says “To-day (the day of the attempted burglary) is Saturday...”
5. October 9, 1890 was Thursday.

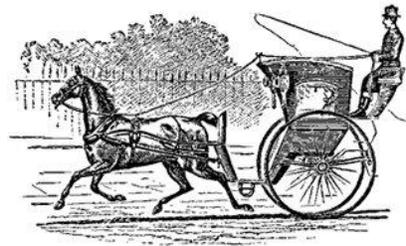
CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 and 2 imply it was autumn of 1890.
- B. A and 3 imply it was October 1890 shortly after the 9th.
- C. B, 4, and 5 imply it was Saturday, October 11, 1890.

**The attempted burglary of the bank was on
Saturday, October 11, 1890**

The Red-Headed League Vocabulary Words

acute	extremely sharp
Albert chain	a watch-chain made of heavy links, named for Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, who wore such a chain
aperture	opening
askance	with disapproval, suspicion, or distrust
barrow	wheelbarrow
billet	job
blotting paper	absorbent paper used to blot a surface by soaking up excess ink
bracelets	handcuffs
bullion	gold or silver in the form of bars or ingots
chagrin	disappointment or mental uneasiness
cobbler's wax	shoe polish
consequential	self-important
conundrums	riddles whose solution involves a play on words; puns
coster	short for costermonger which means fruit seller
crib	berth, job, bank
curt	using few words; terse
dank	disagreeably damp
dark lantern	lantern with a sliding door which, when shut, gives no light
deal	wooden
deference	courteously yielding to the wishes of another
derbies	handcuffs
embellish	to add ornamental or fictitious details to
ennui	listlessness from lack of interest; boredom
flags	flagstones
florid	flushed with rosy color; ruddy
foolscap	13" x 16" writing sheets with a fool's cap and bells as a watermark
footpaths	sidewalks
frock-coat	knee-length, double-breasted coat; a gentleman's ordinary daytime costume
George Sand	pen name of Amandine Aurore Lucie Dupin, Baroness Dudevant (1804-1876); she was a French writer whose novels, plays, and essays concern the freedom and independence of woman
gilt	resembling gold
greatcoat	large heavy overcoat
Gustave Flaubert	French writer considered a forerunner of naturalism and known for his precise literary style (1821-1880)
hansom	two-wheeled, one-horse carriage seating two with the driver mounted behind and reins going over the roof of the hood; invented by J.A. Hansom, a Yorkshire architect who patented the cab in 1834
hunting crop	short whip used to make a horse run faster
introspective	prone to self-examination



L'homme c'est rien – l'oeuvre c'est tout

French: "Man is nothing – work is everything" (The correct quotation is: *L'homme n'est rien, l'oeuvre tout* from a letter to George Sand from Gustave Flaubert.)

labyrinth	intricate structure of interconnecting passages through which it is difficult to find one's way
languid	showing little or no spirit; listless
languor	lack of physical or mental energy; listlessness
lithe	having effortless grace
loftily	arrogantly; haughtily
lurid	shining with the glare of fire through a haze
nocturnal	occurring in the night
obese	extremely fat; grossly overweight
<i>partie carrée</i>	party of four
pavement	sidewalk
poky	small and cramped
pompous	having excessive self-esteem or exaggerated dignity
portly	comfortably stout
press	a cupboard, usually with shelves and used to hold clothes, books, etc.

Omne ignotum pro magnifico

Latin for "Everything unknown passes for something splendid." – Publius Cornelius Tacitus

quill-pen	pen made from the hollow stem-like main shaft of a feather taken from a fowl
rending	violently splitting apart
rubber	series of three games to decide a winner
settee	an indoor seat with a back and arms for two or more persons; a sofa
shabby-genteel	striving to convey an appearance of refinement and respectability but starting to show signs of wear and tear
shepherd's check	woolen trousers with a black and white checked pattern
shutters	wooden coverings for the shop windows
singular	beyond what is ordinary or usual; remarkable
skirts	coattails
smasher	someone who passes counterfeit money
snigger	partly stifled laugh
solicitor	lawyer who practices law but is not permitted to appear as counsel in court
sovereign	gold coin worth one pound
stalls	seats in the front section of parquet (orchestra)
tenacious	holding on persistently
the City	financial district of London
waistcoat	vest

The Red-Headed League Open Questions

1. Would not Spaulding (the fourth smartest man in London) have recognized Holmes?

Perhaps he did but wanted to see if he could outwit Holmes.

2. Why didn't Clay just steal the keys from Merryweather rather than go to the trouble of digging a tunnel?

That would be too easy for Clay who wanted to show off his skill as a criminal.

3. Where did Clay put the dirt that he excavated?

Good question. There doesn't seem to be anywhere unless the basement was very large.

4. Why was the French gold not in the Bank of England or at least in the strong room of the bank's head office? After all, they "had several warnings."

Merryweather wasn't the brightest of bankers.

5. Why did Holmes knock at the door of the pawn shop, a shop that is open to the public?

If Holmes had entered the pawn shop, there was a good chance that Spaulding would be standing behind the counter. If so, Holmes would not have been able to see the knees of his trousers.

6. What became of Jabez Wilson? Is there a clue in Clay's remark, "I'll swing for it"?

"I'll swing for it" sounds like Clay expected to be hanged. This implies that they had killed Jabez Wilson.

7. Why was the League dissolved before the job was done? One more week at four pounds, and they would not have been caught.

It could be that the criminals ran out of money to pay Jabez Wilson.

The Red-Headed League Simple Quiz*

1. Jabez Wilson owned
 - a. a grocery store
 - b. a pawn shop
 - c. a print shop
 - d. none of the above

2. The criminals planned to
 - a. kidnap Jabez Wilson
 - b. rob a bank
 - c. destroy the underground (subway)
 - d. none of the above

3. Vincent Spaulding was also known as
 - a. John Clay
 - b. Merryweather
 - c. Athelney Jones
 - d. none of the above

*The Simple Quiz is designed to determine if the student has read the story. Anyone who has read the story through should have no trouble in completing this quiz. This Intermediate and Advanced Quizzes are more challenging.

The Red-Headed League Intermediate Quiz*

1. Holmes said that Vincent Spaulding was
 - a. the fourth most dangerous man in London
 - b. the fourth smartest man in London
 - c. the fourth vilest man in London
 - d. none of the above

2. What was Jabez Wilson's nautical occupation?
 - a. ship's captain
 - b. ship's carpenter
 - c. first mate
 - d. none of the above

3. What letter was Jabez Wilson about to start copying from the **Encyclopaedia Britannica** when the Red-Headed League was dissolved?
 - a. B
 - b. C
 - c. D
 - d. none of the above

4. The men awaiting an interview for the job with the Red-Headed League made the street look like
 - a. a barrel of red apples
 - b. a coster's orange barrow
 - c. a field of pink flowers
 - d. none of the above

*The Intermediate Quiz is designed to test whether the student has read the story with reasonable attention to detail. The Simple Quiz is an easier test while the Advanced Quiz is much more challenging.

The Red-Headed League Advanced Quiz*

1. Where did the founder of the Red-Headed League, Ezekiah Hopkins, live?
 - a. Kansas City, Missouri
 - b. Lebanon, Pennsylvania
 - c. San Francisco, California
 - d. none of the above

2. Where were the offices of the Red-Headed League?
 - a. 8 Fleet Street
 - b. 17 King Edward Street
 - c. 7 Pope's Court
 - d. none of the above

3. What hours did Jabez Wilson work each day for the Red-Headed League?
 - a. nine to three
 - b. ten to two
 - c. eleven to three
 - d. none of the above

4. What was on the breast pin that Jabez Wilson wore?
 - a. an arc-and-compass
 - b. a gold star
 - c. a pink fish
 - d. none of the above

*The Advanced Quiz is designed for *aficionados* of the Canon. The questions are quite challenging. The Intermediate and Simple Quizzes are designed for the more casual reader of the stories.

SIMPLE QUIZ ANSWERS: 1- b; 2- b; 3- a

INTERMEDIATE QUIZ ANSWERS: 1-b; 2-b; 3-a; 4-b

ADVANCED QUIZ ANSWERS: 1-b; 2-c; 3-b; 4-a