

FAVORITE SHERLOCKIAN POETRY

Poetry plays an important part in the world of Sherlock Holmes. In addition to the many books of Sherlockian poetry that have been written, toasts given at meetings are often done in verse. Some are serious; some are lighthearted. However, there are two quintessential poems that have become the cornerstone of the Sherlockian world: Vincent Starrett's "221B" written in 1942 and William Schweickert's "A Long Evening with Holmes" written in 1984. These poems are often recited at the beginning and/or end of a meeting and to Sherlockians, "it is always 1895." Vincent Starrett and William Schweickert were respected members of The Baker Street Irregulars.

Schweickert's poem ("A Long Evening with Holmes") is self-explanatory...we can leave our routine daily life behind and enter the exciting world of Holmes just by opening a book and transporting ourselves into the adventure. We climb those seventeen stairs with a spring in our step, and the game is afoot!

Starrett's immortal sonnet has the same theme: Holmes and Watson are our comfort in the most trying of times. And for Starrett and most of the world, 1942 was a time fraught with fear. It was World War II, and England was fighting for its very survival. Thus, lines like "That age before the world went all awry" and "England is England yet, for all our fears" acquire extra poignancy. They also resonate for today's reader. For example, just think about "though the world explode" and September 11th.

So many of Starrett's phrases are magical, remaining with the reader forever: "two men...who never lived and so can never die," "the game's afoot for those with ears attuned," and, of course, "it is always eighteen ninety-five." He also creates striking visual images with "a yellow fog swirls past the window-pane" and "the ghostly gas lamps fail at twenty feet."

For literature teachers, the poem also provides an excellent example of English (or Shakespearean) sonnet structure. The poem has 14 lines; each line is written in iambic pentameter. In other words, each line has 10 syllables with the stress on the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth syllables. A good question to ask students is which line does not totally follow this meter? Answer: "England is England yet, for all our fears" with the stress on the first syllable of the line, instead of the second.

The sonnet rhyme scheme is a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g. Thus, "note" and "remote" rhyme and "die" and "awry." The last two lines form a rhymed couplet with "survive" and "ninety-five."

A word search for each of the poems is provided, giving students an exercise to perform and helping them to look more closely at the poems. Students should have the poem in front of them as they work the puzzle, and we recommend not revealing the hidden words until after they have had a chance to find as many as possible. For each word search, students should try to find as many words of three or more letters that appear in the poem.

And since the two works treat the same theme in very different ways, another exercise would be to have students write a short essay about which poem they like best and why.

221B

Vincent Starrett, B.S.I.

Here dwell together still two men of note
Who never lived and so can never die:
How very near they seem, yet how remote
That age before the world went all awry.
But still the game's afoot for those with ears
Attuned to catch the distant view-haloo:
England is England yet, for all our fears—
Only those things the heart believes are true.

A yellow fog swirls past the window-pane
As night descends upon this fabled street:
A lonely hansom splashes through the rain,
The ghostly gas lamps fail at twenty feet.
Here, though the world explode, these two survive,
And it is always eighteen ninety-five.

A LONG EVENING WITH HOLMES

William P. Schweickert, B.S.I.

When the world closes in with its worries and cares
And my problems and headaches are coming in pairs
I just climb in my mind those seventeen stairs
And spend a long evening with Holmes.

The good Doctor greets me and motions me in
Holmes grasps my hand and lays down his violin
Then we sit by the fire and sip a tall gin
When I spend a long evening with Holmes.

And while we're discussing his cases galore
If I'm lucky there comes a loud knock on the door
In stumbles a client, head splattered with gore
When I spend a long evening with Holmes.

Watson binds up the client's poor face
While Holmes soon extracts all the facts of the case
Then off in a hansom to Brixton we race
When I spend a long evening with Holmes.

The Adventure is solved, Holmes makes it all right
So back to the lodgings by dawn's early light
And a breakfast by Hudson to wind up the night
When I spend a long evening with Holmes.

So the modern rat race can't keep me in a cage
I have a passport to a far better age
As close as my bookcase, as near as a page
I can spend a long evening with Holmes.

"221B" WORD SEARCH

G	P	S	D	E	N	U	T	T	A	L	E	A	Z	W
H	B	S	P	L	A	S	H	E	S	C	V	N	C	S
O	O	O	L	L	A	H	W	E	I	V	I	I	S	Y
S	D	E	L	B	A	F	G	D	D	E	V	N	E	A
T	H	G	I	N	Q	K	Z	O	V	R	R	E	V	W
L	J	K	S	L	P	T	B	L	B	Y	U	T	E	L
Y	Y	O	E	Y	R	W	A	P	S	D	S	Y	I	A
D	M	V	N	L	A	E	G	X	I	X	A	F	L	S
L	T	L	G	I	I	N	E	E	T	H	G	I	E	T
R	O	A	L	V	N	T	W	N	F	O	R	V	B	I
O	O	M	A	E	U	Y	V	U	F	N	P	E	O	L
W	F	P	N	D	Q	Z	D	W	E	L	L	B	W	L
D	A	S	D	Y	E	T	O	M	E	R	U	Q	T	Z

Words are placed horizontally, vertically and diagonally, both forwards and backwards. They may also overlap.

"221B" WORD SEARCH ANSWERS

33 words

AFOOT
AGE
ALWAYS
ATTUNED
AWRY
BELIEVES
DIE
DWELL
EIGHTEEN
ENGLAND
EXPLODE
FABLED
FOG
FOR
GAS
GHOSTLY
HANSOM
LAMPS
LIVED
MEN
NIGHT
NINETY FIVE
RAIN
REMOTE
SPLASHES
STILL
SURVIVE
TWENTY
TWO
VERY
VIEW HALLOO
WORLD
YET

"A LONG EVENING WITH HOLMES" WORD SEARCH

P	Q	W	O	R	R	I	E	S	R	I	A	T	S	D
A	E	A	R	S	E	M	L	O	H	U	D	S	O	N
Z	S	T	G	H	E	D	O	C	T	O	R	G	B	Z
K	E	S	P	A	S	S	P	O	R	T	D	N	A	H
X	H	O	C	N	B	E	A	N	O	T	X	I	R	B
K	C	N	G	S	K	C	G	C	Z	Q	W	G	F	R
N	A	O	D	O	Z	L	E	R	K	P	X	D	H	E
O	D	R	G	M	B	I	B	Q	Z	O	B	O	J	A
C	A	G	N	I	N	E	V	E	G	N	O	L	M	K
K	E	B	Q	I	N	N	U	V	W	O	E	B	N	F
V	H	Z	P	R	A	T	R	A	C	E	R	Z	W	A
V	I	O	L	I	N	Y	K	C	U	L	I	E	Q	S
F	J	L	N	P	S	P	S	T	C	A	F	B	Z	T

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“A Long Evening with Holmes” WORD SEARCH ANSWERS

29 words

AGE

BOOKCASE

BREAKFAST

BRIXTON

CASE

CLIENT

DOCTOR

FACTS

FIRE

GIN

GORE

HAND

HANSOM

HEAD

HEADACHES

HOLMES

HUDSON

KNOCK

LODGINGS

LONG EVENING

LUCKY

PAGE

PASSPORT

RAT RACE

SIP

STAIRS

VIOLIN

WATSON

WORRIES