

A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

By William S. Dorn



The Adventures of Sherlock
Holmes
Adventure VI -- The Boscombe
Valley Mystery

THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY
DATE OF THE ADVENTURE*
(Date of McCarthy's death)

CLUES:

1. The story was published in October 1891
2. When the story starts, Watson is having breakfast with his wife (202)
3. Watson was married in late 1888 or early 1889
4. "On June 3d, that is, on Monday last, McCarthy left his house ... (and was killed)" (203)
5. June 3, 1889 was on Monday

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 implies it was before October 1891
- B. 2 implies Watson was married at the time
- C. B and 3 imply it was after September 1888
- D. A and C imply it was between October 1888 and September 1891
- E. 4 implies McCarthy was killed on June 3
- F. D and E imply it was June in 1889, 1890 or 1891
- G. F and 5 imply it was June 3, 1889

McCarthy was killed on Monday, June 3, 1889

*The story may contain other clues to the date of the adventure. However, use only the clues shown here. Your only goal should be to use logical reasoning to find a date based on the clues shown here.

THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY VOCABULARY WORDS

- valise (202) – **a case for clothes or toilet articles**
- paradoxical (202) – **apparently contradictory**
- singularity (202) – **something that is beyond what is ordinary or usual**
- conjectured (202) – **made a judgment based on inconclusive or incomplete evidence**
- serving-man (203) – **man servant**
- game-keeper (203, 206) – **person who protects and maintains game birds and animals, especially on an estate or a game preserve**
- depose (203) – **testify**
- lodge-keeper (203, 206, 212, 215) – **someone who maintains the entrance-gate to a large estate**
- Assizes (204, 215, 217) – **trial sessions, civil or criminal, held periodically in specific locations by a judge or court which moves from place to place**
- slovenly (204) – **untidy in dress or appearance**
- métier* (204) – **trade or profession**
- constabulary (204) – **armed police force organized like a military unit**
- deserts (204) – **something that is deserved or merited**
- filial (205) – **relating to a son or daughter**
- bandy (205) – **discuss in a casual or frivolous manner**
- contrition (205) – **sincere remorse for wrongdoing**
- groom (205) – **man or boy employed to take care of horses**
- trap (205) – **one-horse, two-wheeled, open carriage**
- rabbit-warren (205) – **area where rabbits live in burrows**
- ensued (205) – **followed as a consequence**

- singular (207, 211, 213) – **beyond what is ordinary or usual; remarkable**
- outré* (207) – **unusual, weird**
- Petrarch (207) – **Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374), Italian poet**
- ferret-like (207) – **looking like a ferret or weasel**
- furtive (207) – **shifty**
- leggings (207) – **laced lower leg wrappings**
- dustcoat (207) – **light knee-length coat**
- the glass (207) – **barometer**
- abomination (207) – **something that causes disgust**
- pikestaff (207) – **staff with a spike on the bottom to guard the user from slipping**
- yellow-backed novel (209) – **cheap, popular novel bound between illustrated yellow boards and intended for railway travelers**
- glade (209) – **open space in a forest**
- verbatim (209) – **corresponding word for word**
- left-parietal bone (209) – **cranial bone forming part of the side and top of the head**
- occipital bone (209) – **bone forming the back of the base of the cranium and which encloses the brain**
- cudgelled (209) – **beat**
- comely (210) – **pleasant to look at**
- boarding-school (210) – **school where the students reside while they study**
- registry office (210) – **office housing a district's registrar who is permitted to perform marriages**
- goading (210) – **driving or urging someone with a push or prod**
- George Meredith (210) – **(1828–1909) English novelist and poet**
- cocksure (211) – **overconfident**
- moonshine (211) – **nonsense**
- lichen (211) – **fungus that grows on rocks or stones**
- whipcord (211) – **catgut**

The Adventures

sinewy (211) – **lean and muscular**

dilate (211) – **become wider or larger**

reed-girt (212) – **encircled with a growth of reeds**

wallowed (212) – **moved in a clumsy or rolling manner;
floundered**

waterproof (212) – **raincoat**

highroad (212) – **main road**

shooting-boots (213) – **hunting boots**

nous verrons (213) – **French for “We shall see”**

the cloth (213) – **tablecloth**

craggy (215) – **rugged and uneven**

diabetes (215) – **a metabolic disorder marked by excessive
discharge of urine and persistent thirst;
before the discovery of insulin in 1921
diabetes was an extremely serious disease**

diggings (215) – **mines**

the bush (216) – **land remote from any settlements**

swag (216) – **loot; stolen property**

compunction (217) – **uneasiness caused by a sense of guilt**

Baxter (217) – **Richard Baxter (1615-1691); the phrase was first
used by John Bradford (1510-1555) when he
saw a criminal go by**

THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY OPEN QUESTIONS

1. Why did Holmes not think that the grace of God was available to John Turner as much as it was to Sherlock Holmes or anyone else for that matter?

N.B. Holmes incorrectly attributes the quote to Baxter. It is generally believed to have come from John Bradford, one of the Marian Protestant martyrs, who was referring to some criminals being led to execution.

This is a theological question. Modern Christian theology would say that the grace of God was available to anyone who would accept it.

2. There are several towns in Australia with names ending in ARAT, for example, the town of ARARAT. How could Holmes be sure that the town in this case was BALLARAT?

It was a lucky guess and a clear example of Holmes's use of retroduction and not deduction.

3. How could Lestrade, a Scotland Yard detective, be employed by a private individual like Miss Turner? Public officials usually are not allowed to accept private commissions that might produce a conflict of interest.

Lestrade was violating both the spirit and the letter of the law. The question is: Why didn't Holmes stop Lestrade. However, see 4 on the next page.

4. If Miss Turner had retained Lestrade to help free young McCarthy, why did he appear to be working against her commission by trying to convince Holmes that McCarthy was guilty?

Perhaps Lestrade wasn't really working on behalf of Miss Turner. Perhaps he was merely acceding to a plea from her that he try to see both sides of the case.

THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY SIMPLE QUIZ*

1. Charles McCarthy was killed by a
 - a. a blow to the head with a rock
 - b. a gun shot fired at close range
 - c. a stab with a knife
 - d. none of the above

2. James McCarthy could not marry the woman he loved because
 - a. he had a terminal disease
 - b. he was already married
 - c. he was in love with another woman
 - d. none of the above

3. The call that the two McCarthys used to attract each other's attention was
 - a. Halloa!
 - b. Cooee!
 - c. a loud distinctive whistle
 - 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. The Intermediate and Advanced Quizzes are more challenging.

THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY INTERMEDIATE QUIZ[#]

1. What color was the cloak that John Turner left at the scene of the crime?
 - a. black
 - b. brown
 - c. gray
 - d. none of the above
2. Which one of the following people did NOT see Charles McCarthy walk to Boscombe Pool?
 - a. William Crowder
 - b. Henry Martin
 - c. James McCarthy
 - d. Patience Moran
3. When Alice Turner was away for five years, where was she?
 - a. visiting her aunt
 - b. at boarding school
 - c. at university
 - d. none of the above
4. What was the name of the farm that Turner let to McCarthy?
 - a. Boscombe
 - b. Hatherley
 - c. Melbourne
 - 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 BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY ADVANCED QUIZ &

1. What kind of cigars did John Turner smoke?
 - a. Havana
 - b. Indian
 - c. Trichinopoly
 - d. none of the above

2. From what did John Turner suffer?
 - a. diabetes
 - b. a weak heart
 - c. liver disease
 - d. none of the above

3. How long was Alice Turner away at boarding school?
 - a. two years
 - b. three years
 - c. five years
 - d. none of the above

4. In what city did young McCarthy meet the barmaid whom he married at a registry office?
 - a. Bristol
 - b. Crewe
 - c. London
 - 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.

ANSWERS TO QUIZZES FOR THE ADVENTURES

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
A Scandal in Bohemia				
Simple	a	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	b	c
Advanced	b	a	b	b
The Red-Headed League				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	a	b
Advanced	b	c	b	a
A Case of Identity				
Simple	b	b	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	c	b
Advanced	c	b	d	c
The Boscombe Valley Mystery				
Simple	a	b	b	xx
Intermediate	c	b	b	b
Advanced	b	a	c	a
The Five Orange Pips				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	b	c
Advanced	c	a	b	a
The Man with the Twisted Lip				
Simple	b	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	c	b	a
Advanced	b	a	c	b
The Blue Carbuncle				
Simple	a	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	a	a
Advanced	b	b	c	c
The Speckled Band				
Simple	c	c	b	xx
Intermediate	c	a	a	b
Advanced	a	c	c	c

The Adventures

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
The Engineer's Thumb				
Simple	b	a	c	xx
Intermediate	a	b	c	b
Advanced	b	c	c	a
The Noble Bachelor				
Simple	b	b	c	xx
Intermediate	a	b	b	c
Advanced	a	a	c	c
The Beryl Coronet				
Simple	b	b	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	a
Advanced	b	c	b	c
The Copper Beeches				
Simple	a	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	a	c	b
Advanced	a	b	c	c