

Baker Street Elementary

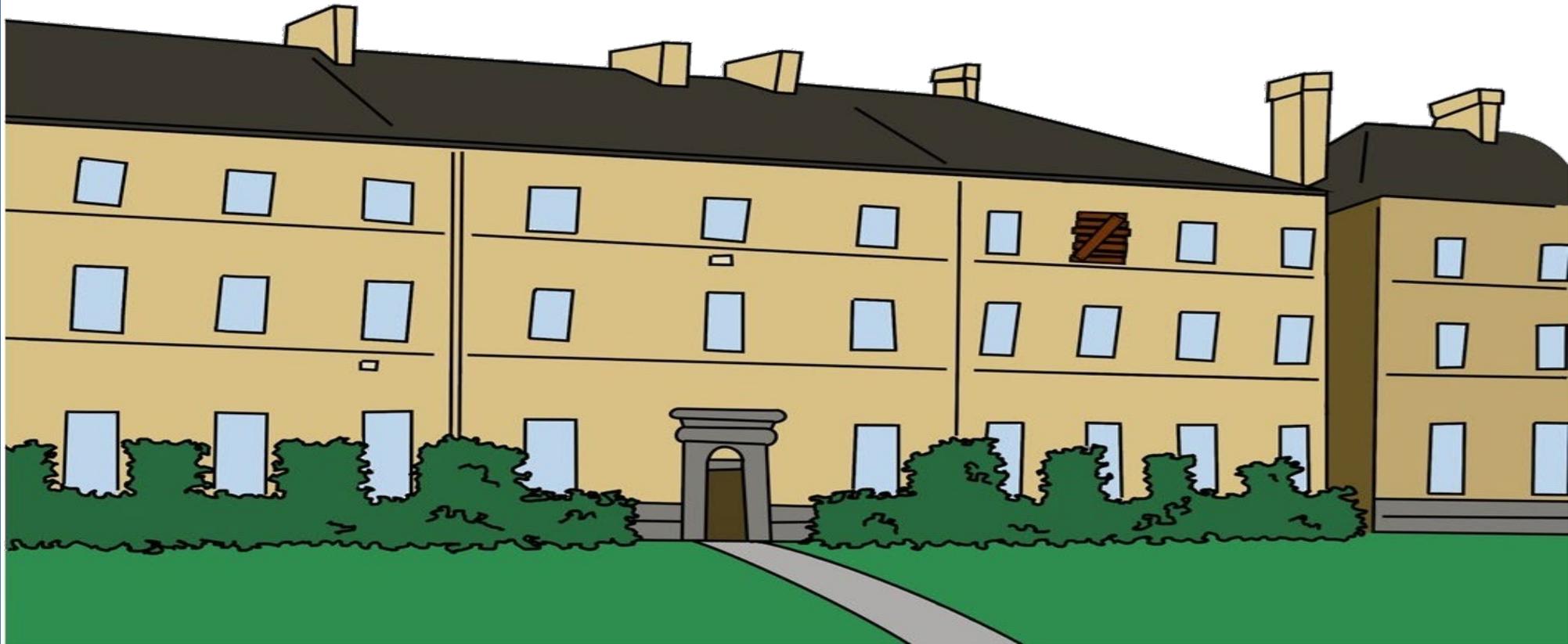
Presents

"The Life and Times in Victorian London"



Baker Street Elementary

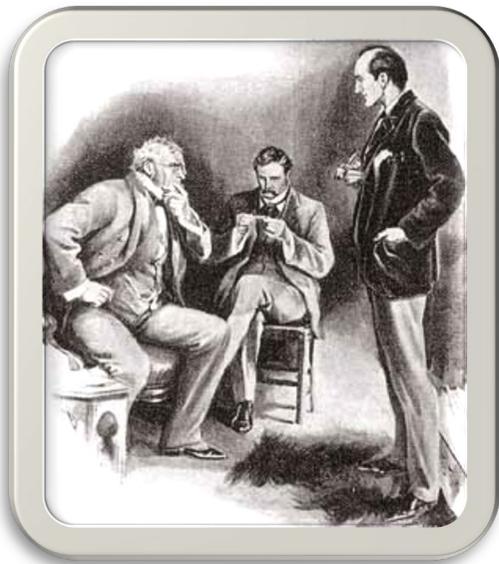
The Life and Times in Victorian London
080 -- Gossip -- Did You Hear ? -- February, 2022





Welcome to topic # 080... today we will be looking at how gossip was used during Victorian times.

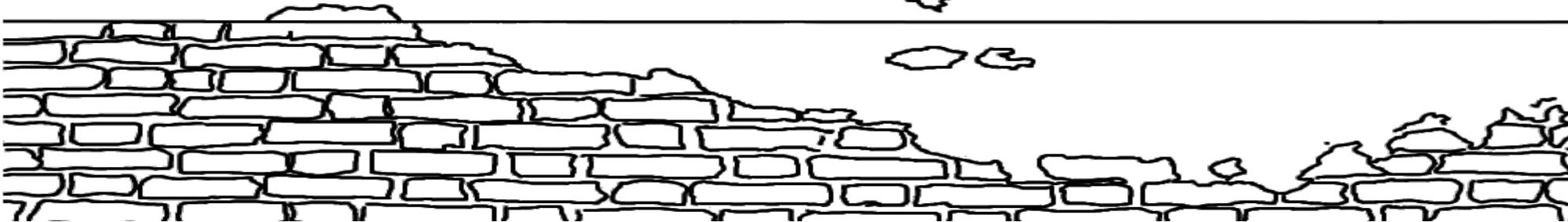
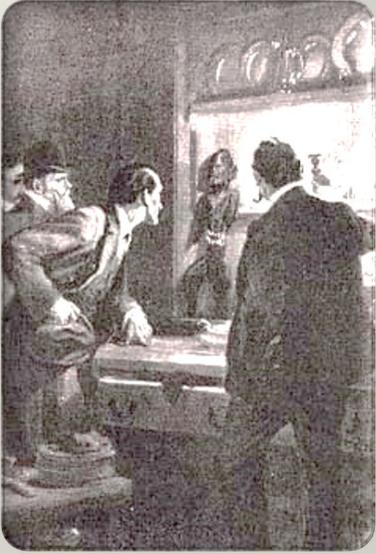


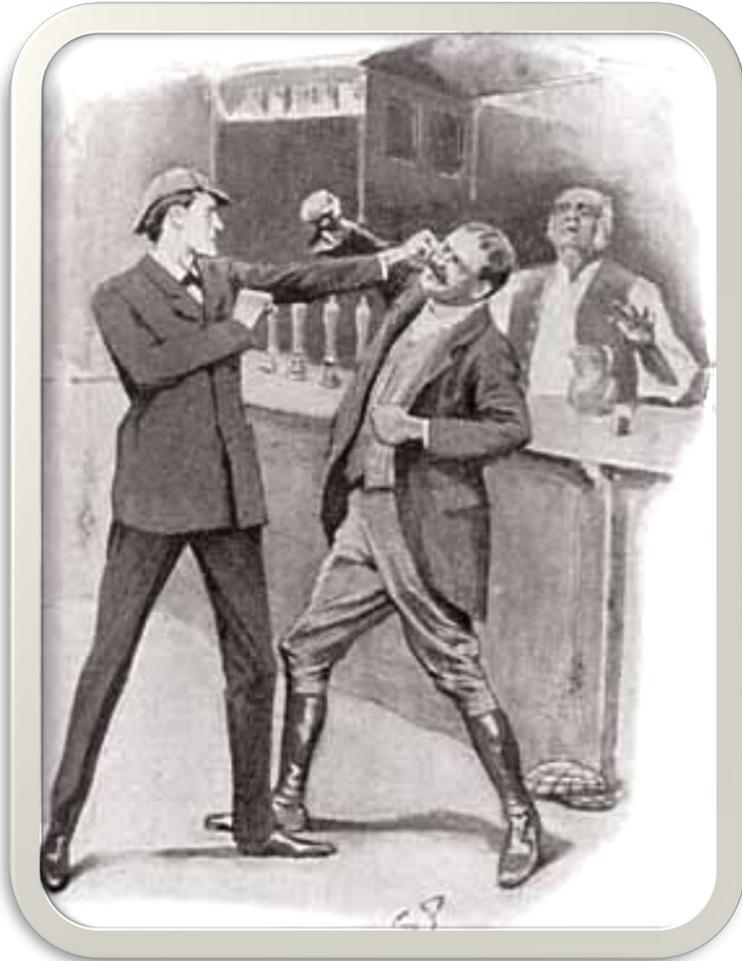


Sherlock Holmes was not above acquiring and using gossip for his own purposes.



In "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge," he spent time among the village gossips to collect information on Mr. Henderson of High Gable, collected similar information...





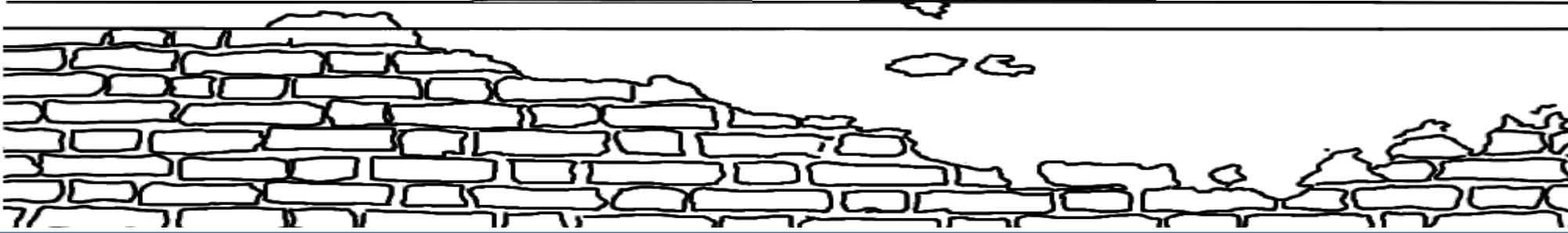
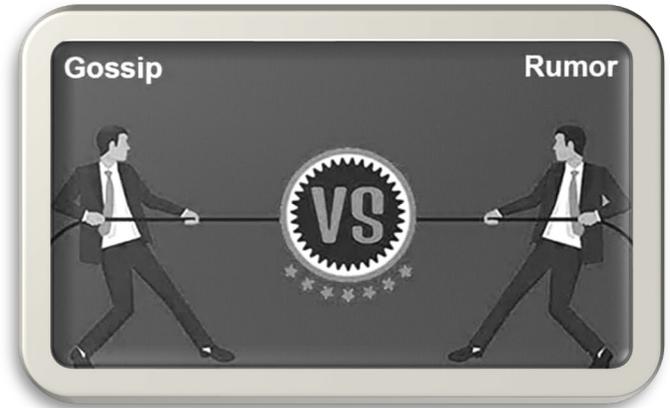
...from the publican in "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," and consulted with Langdale Pike, a gossip merchant, in "The Adventure of the Three Gables."



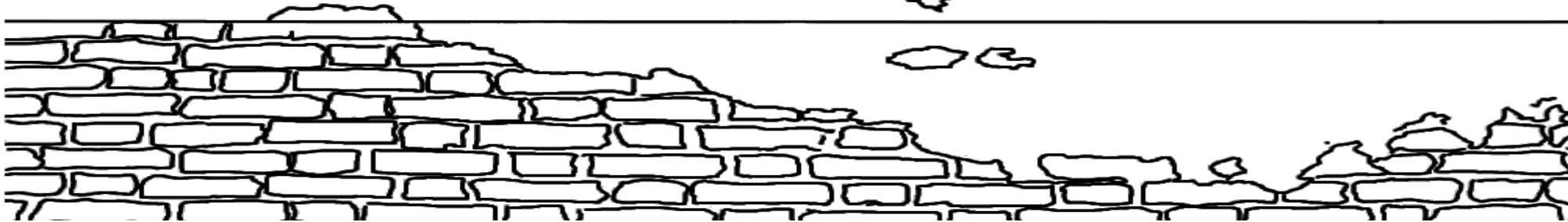
While gossip is often viewed negatively, beyond helping to solve cases, it has been found to be an important part of social interaction.



*Researchers distinguish
between rumors and gossip.*



Rumors are "public communications that are infused with private hypotheses about how the world works," which help individuals...



...(and societies) to make sense of what is occurring and assist in coping with anxieties and uncertainties.



These may involve hoped-for consequences (wish rumors) or feared consequences (dread rumors) and often spread faster when anxieties are intense.



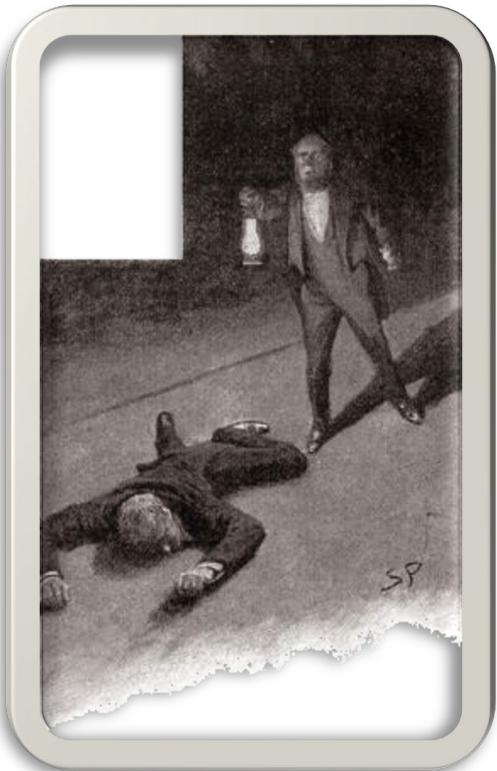
THE VIRULENCE OF DREAD RUMORS: A FIELD EXPERIMENT

CHARLES J. WALKER AND BRUCE BLAINE

A rumor is a proposition for belief in general circulation within a community without proof or evidence of its authenticity. Investigators have recently shown that rumor properties such as credulity and importance, and rumormonger characteristics such as anxiety and uncertainty play an essential role in the generation and transmission of rumors. When rumormongers are moderately anxious, credible rumors are passed more than incredible rumors (Jaeger *et al.*, 1980; Rosnow *et al.*, 1986) and important rumors are spread more than unimportant rumors (Rosnow *et al.*, 1987). Both chronic anxiety and situationally induced anxiety have been implicated in rumor transmission (Anthony, 1980; Walker and Beckerle, 1987). Anxious individuals are more likely to pass a rumor than individuals who are not anxious.

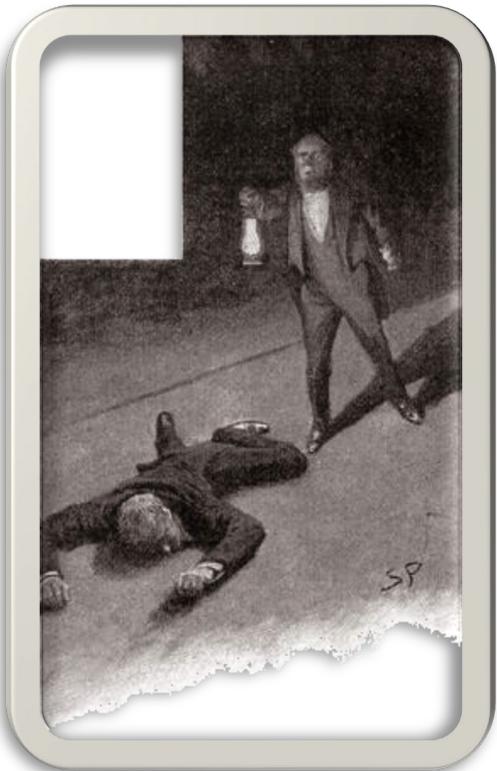
Walker and Beckerle (1987) had a confederate share an anxiety-enhancing and an anxiety-reducing rumor with students made to feel either apprehensive or calm. Consistent with the theory of Rosnow (1980), these investigators predicted that the apprehensive students would be more inclined to pass rumors and that these students would prefer to pass anxiety-reducing rumors. Their predictions were only partially supported. As expected, apprehensive students needed less prompting to pass a rumor; however, calm and apprehensive students passed both kinds of rumors with equal enthusiasm. It is surprising that the students passed an anxiety-enhancing rumor; however, except for information that arouses extreme emotional reactions, many other investigators have found that emotion laden communications do tend to be transmitted more than neutral communications (De Fleur

1975; Tesser and Rosen, 1975).



Holmes confronted such a situation in the investigation of the death of Sir Charles Baskerville...





...where villagers attributed the man's death to the superstition surrounding a hound and a curse on his family.





*Although in this case,
the rumor was not
without merit.*



Gossip, on the other hand, encompasses a major portion of human interaction.



While associated with sharing negative information about others, scientists define gossip...



...as "talking about people who aren't present," which can be positive, negative, or neutral.



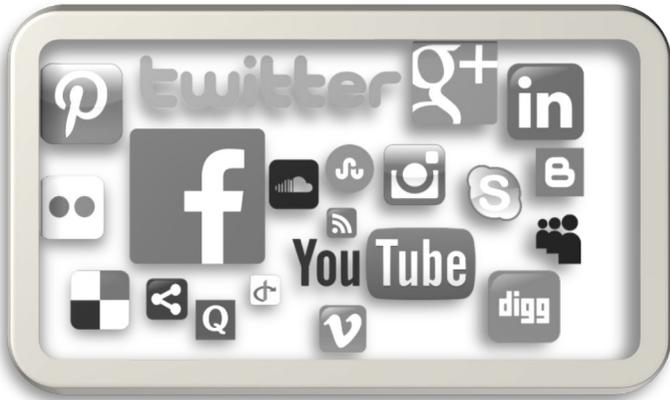
Studies have found that such talk breaks down into 76% neutral, 15% negative and 9% positive, and theories suggest that these conversations are what helped early man survive.



Gossiping is having casual conversations about other people. They aren't always negative.

*Such models suggest
language developed to
build social networks.*



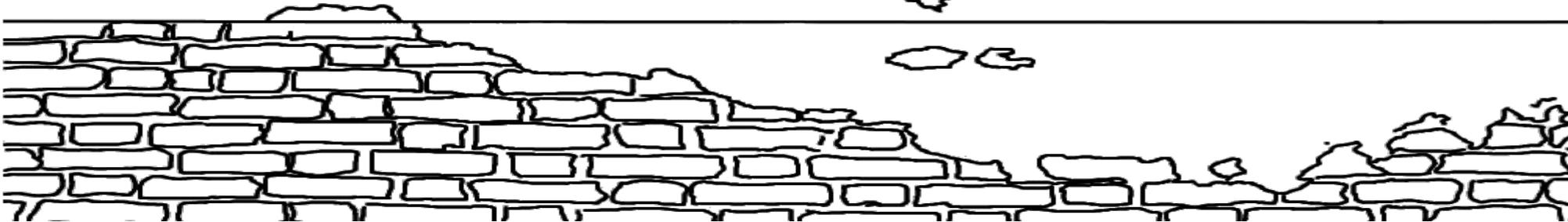


The basis of this and similar hypotheses is that language is a social behavior, sharing information on who did what among the network's members.





While such communications might be viewed as "idle chit-chat," a study conducted in India found using a village's recognized "gossips"...



...(identified by others in the community) was an effective means of diffusing important public health information and increasing others' positive actions.



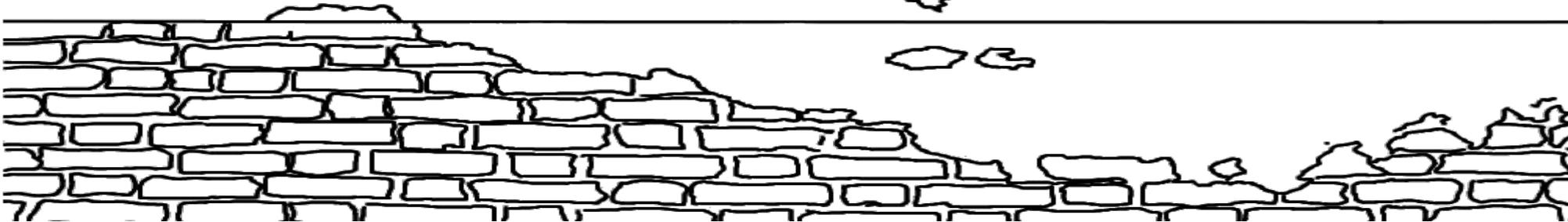
In addition to providing useful information, gossip has also been found to be an effective means of moderating social behavior.



In one study, participants played a game in which monetary rewards were divided at the end of each round of play.



*Over the course of several games,
players shared information about
participants who kept more of their
winnings for themselves.*



The others ostracized such stingy players and actually forced them to be more cooperative and generous than in earlier games.



When gossip involves a severe enough transgression — one involving a social norm that will result in the general public's rejection of the transgressor...

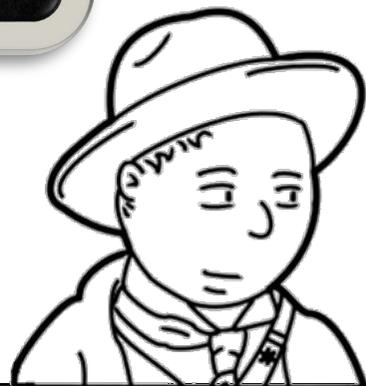


*...it plays a role in
creating a scandal through
publicizing the behavior.*



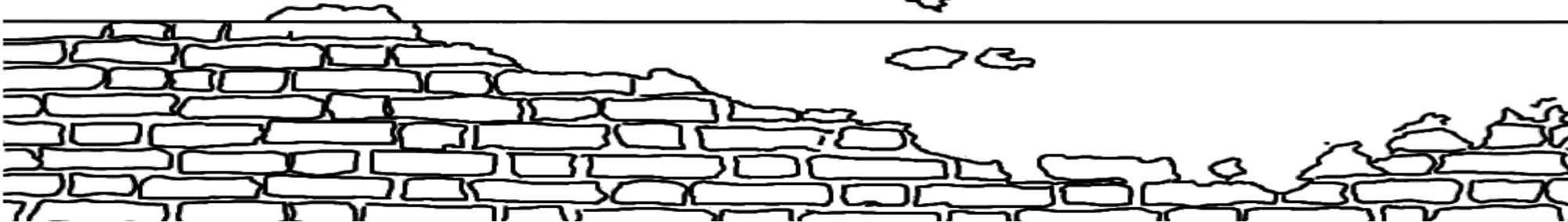


*Such information sharing can
be both by word of mouth as
well as through other media —
those papers...*





...that specialized in such information that Langdale Pike supplied as well as social media of today.



In several cases in the Sherlock Holmes cases, perpetrators committed a crime to prevent the spread of such information and, thus, avoid a scandal.

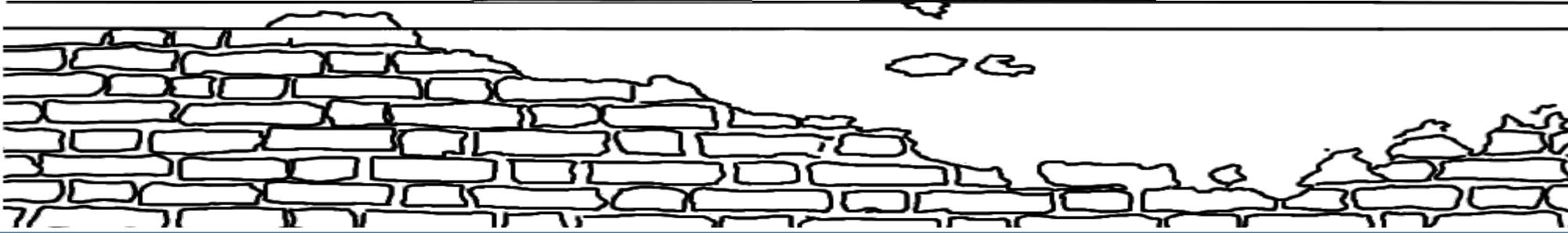




The ostracism that could have ensued from such common knowledge of their action might have led to the destruction of their livelihood, marriage, or social status.



In more than one case, Holmes chose to assist them in averting such gossip by applying his own concept of justice...



...and rather than sharing it with the legal authorities, kept the particulars to himself.



As Watson noted, many of his case notes in the dispatch box at Cox & Co. held others' secrets...



*...most likely enough to
raise Langdale Pike's
income even higher.*



*Luckily for such clients,
Holmes was one who
respected their confidences.*



*So we have completed
topic # 080 in our
series...*

*Yes, but we'll be back
with another topic
soon...*



References for this topic:

- 1) <https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2005/04/gossip>
- 2) <https://time.com/5680457/why-do-people-gossip/>
- 3) <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/talking-apes/201502/why-you-were-born-gossip>
- 4) <https://academic.oup.com/restud/article/86/6/2453/5345571>
- 5) Ari Adut, *On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics and Art*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.



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"The Life and Times in Victorian London"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

JOE FAY

LIESE SHERWOOD-FABRE

RUSTY MASON

&

STEVE MASON

