

# A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

By William S. Dorn



The Adventures of Sherlock  
Holmes  
Adventure -- The Adventure of the  
Blue Carbuncle

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE DATE OF THE ADVENTURE\*

(Date on which Ryder confessed)

### CLUES:

1. The story was published in January 1892
2. There was a reference to "... the Irene Adler papers ... " (245)
3. A Scandal in Bohemia was in March 1889
4. It was "... the second morning after Christmas ... " (244)
5. On that day "... a pile of crumpled morning papers, evidently newly studied .. " were beside Holmes (244)
6. Newspapers were not delivered on Sunday
7. December 27, 1891 was on Sunday
8. Breckinridge offered to deliver "... five hundred (geese) tomorrow morning." (252)
9. Breckinridge was not likely to deliver geese on Sunday
10. December 28, 1890 was on Sunday

### CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 implies it was before 1892
- B. 2 and 3 imply it was after March 1889
- C. A, B and 4 imply it was December 27 in 1889, 1890 or 1891
- D. C, 5, 6 and 7 imply it was not 1891
- E. C, 8, 9 and 10 imply it was not 1890
- F. C, D, and E imply it was December 27, 1889

**Ryder confessed on Friday, December 27, 1889**

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\*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 ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE VOCABULARY WORDS

- lens (244) – **magnifying glass**
- forceps (244) – **instrument resembling a pair of pincers or tongs, used for grasping, manipulating, or extracting**
- singular (245, 252, 257) – **beyond what is ordinary or usual; remarkable**
- commissionaire (245) – **former non-commissioned soldiers employed in jobs that require trust, for example, messengers, watchmen, etc.**
- billycock (245) – **bowler or round soft felt hat**
- gaslight (245) – **light from a street lamp**
- roughs (245, 250) – **thugs**
- stick (245) – **walking stick; cane**
- hat-securer (246) – **an elastic cord attached to a hat at one end and a coat-lapel at the other, in order to prevent the hat from being blown off**
- moral retrogression (246) – **declining morals**
- lime cream (246) – **hair dressing**
- tallow (247) – **candle made from animal fat, harder than the usual candle**
- guttering candle (247) – **candle with the wax melting away through the side of the hollow formed by a burning wick**
- treasure trove (248) – **valuable discovery**
- conjectured (248) – **made a judgment based on inconclusive or incomplete evidence**
- Assizes (248) – **trial session, civil or criminal, held periodically in specific locations by a judge or court which moves from place to place**
- upper-attendant (248) – **bell captain; head attendant**
- morocco (248) – **soft, fine leather of goatskin tanned with sumac**
- deposed (248) – **testified**
- bonny thing (249) – **pleasing to the eye**
- vitriol (249) – **sulfuric acid**

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- purveyor (250) – **something that furnishes food**  
woodcock (250) – **North American game bird having brownish plumage, short legs, and a long bill**  
Scotch bonnet (250) – **forage cap with double tail or a tam o'shanter, that is. large beret**  
fanlight (250) – **fan-shaped window above a door**  
grizzled (250) – **flecked with gray**  
frock-coat (250) – **knee-length double-breasted coat; a gentleman's ordinary daytime costume**  
sideboard (250) – **dining room furniture having drawers and shelves for linens and tableware**  
*disjecta membra* (251) – **scattered limbs**  
ulster (251) – **long, loose fitting, rough overcoat usually belted**  
cravats (251) – **scarves**  
public house (251) – **pub, drinking establishment**  
side-whiskers (252) – **side burns**  
gas-flare (252) – **gas fueled flare lighting the outside of a stall**  
akimbo (252) – **hand on hips, elbows out**  
nipper (252) – **small boy**  
sovereign (253) – **1 £ and worth much more than two geese**  
cocksure (253) – **overconfident**  
chagrined (253) – **keenly embarrassed**  
pink 'un (253) – **sporting journal printed on pink paper**  
vestige (254) – **trace, visible evidence**  
impunity (255) – **exemption from punishment**  
waiting-maid (255) – **superior female servant in personal attendance to a lady**  
dock (255) – **place in court where the prisoner stands**  
waistcoat (256) – **vest**  
gullet (256) – **esophagus**  
crop (256) – **pouch-like enlargement in gullet; serves as a temporary receptacle for food and for its preliminary mastication; geese have no crop**  
huffed (256) – **angry**

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE OPEN QUESTIONS

1. What was unusual about finding a blue carbuncle (or any jewel for that matter) in the crop of a goose?

**A goose has no crop.**

2. What is unusual about finding a blue carbuncle anywhere?

**Carbuncles are garnets (red). However, see p. 248, where the stone is referred to as “crystallized charcoal”, i.e., a diamond.**

3. How much was the blue carbuncle worth?

**The reward was £1,000 which was 1/20th of the value so the stone was worth £20,000 or about \$100,000 which was the value of the Hope diamond**

4. How large was the blue carbuncle compared to say a grain of sand or a bean or a plum?

**40 grains (see p. 249). In Britain 1 carat = 3.163 troy grains so 40 grains = 12.62 carats which makes it about the size of a lima bean**

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE SIMPLE QUIZ\*

1. On Christmas eve Henry Baker lost

- a. his hat and his goose
- b. his cane and his goose
- c. his hat and his cane
- d. none of the above

2. James Ryder stole a jewel from

- a. Henry Baker
- b. the Countess of Morcar
- c. the Duke of Balmoral
- d. none of the above

3. After Holmes captured James Ryder, he (Holmes)

- a. took the jewel from Ryder
- b. turned Ryder over to the police
- c. let Ryder go free
- d. none of the above

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\* 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 ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE INTERMEDIATE QUIZ<sup>#</sup>

1. What was the name of Breckinridge's young helper?
  - a. Arthur
  - b. Jimmy
  - c. Bill
  - d. none of the above
  
2. How many geese raised by Maggie Oakshott had a barred tail?
  - a. one
  - b. two
  - c. three
  - d. none
  
3. What was the name of the Scotland Yard inspector in this case?
  - a. Bradstreet
  - b. Gregory
  - c. Jones
  - d. none of the above
  
4. In what neighborhood of London was the Alpha Inn located?
  - a. Bloomsbury
  - b. the Dockyards
  - c. the West End
  - d. none of the above

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<sup>#</sup>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 ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE ADVANCED QUIZ<sup>&</sup>

1. How many tallow stains were there on Henry Baker's hat?
  - a. three
  - b. five
  - c. seven
  - d. none of the above
  
2. Of what kind of leather was the casket that the Countess of Morcar kept the blue carbuncle made?
  - a. calf skin
  - b. morocco
  - c. seal skin
  - d. none of the above
  
3. How many years of imprisonment did John Horner face?
  - a. three
  - b. six
  - c. seven
  - d. none of the above
  
4. In what prison did Ryder's friend, Maudsley, serve time?
  - a. Broadhurst
  - b. Dartmoor
  - c. Pentonville
  - d. none of the above

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<sup>&</sup> 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
<b>A Scandal in Bohemia</b>				
Simple	a	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	b	c
Advanced	b	a	b	b
<b>The Red-Headed League</b>				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	a	b
Advanced	b	c	b	a
<b>A Case of Identity</b>				
Simple	b	b	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	c	b
Advanced	c	b	d	c
<b>The Boscombe Valley Mystery</b>				
Simple	a	b	b	xx
Intermediate	c	b	b	b
Advanced	b	a	c	a
<b>The Five Orange Pips</b>				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	b	c
Advanced	c	a	b	a
<b>The Man with the Twisted Lip</b>				
Simple	b	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	c	b	a
Advanced	b	a	c	b
<b>The Blue Carbuncle</b>				
Simple	a	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	a	a
Advanced	b	b	c	c
<b>The Speckled Band</b>				
Simple	c	c	b	xx
Intermediate	c	a	a	b
Advanced	a	c	c	c

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