

A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

By William S. Dorn



**The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes
Adventure XX -- The Adventure
of the Musgrave Ritual**

THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL DATE OF THE ADVENTURE*

CLUES:

1. Holmes was born in 1854 (see “His Last Bow”)
2. Holmes probably first attended college when he was 18
3. Holmes spent two years in college (see Gloria Scott case, 374)
4. Holmes says “ ... for four years I had seen nothing of him ... “ (388)
5. The ritual said the month was “ ... the sixth from the first ... “
6. Until 1752 the year in England began on March 25.

NOTE: The exact date cannot be determined from the clues given here. Find the year and the day within one month’s time.

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 and 2 imply that Holmes first attended college in 1872
- B. A and 3 imply that Holmes left college in 1874
- C. B and 4 imply the adventure took place in 1878
- D. 5 and 6 imply the adventure took place between September 25 and October 24
- E. C and D imply the adventure took place between September 25, 1878 and October 24, 1878

**The adventure took place between
September 25, 1878 and October 24, 1878**

*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 MUSGRAVE RITUAL VOCABULARY WORDS

- anomaly (386) – **departure from the normal**
Bohemianism (386) – **disregarding social conventions**
coal-scuttle (386) – **metal or wooden box where coal is kept
near the fireplace**
Boxer cartridges (386) – **ammunition invented by E. M.
Boxer**
V.R. (386) – **initials of the queen, Victoria Regina**
crux (386) – **basic point or feature**
lethargy (386) – **sluggishness; inactivity**
commonplace book (386) – **book in which things especially to
be remembered are methodically
recorded**
rueful (386) – **expressing sorrow or regret**
singular (387, 388, 390) – **beyond what is ordinary or usual;
remarkable**
recherché (387) – **uncommon or rare**
lucrative (387) – **profitable**
diffidence (388) – **shyness**
languid (388) – **with little spirit or animation**
scion (388) – **a descendent**
cadet (388) – **a younger branch of the family**
mullioned (388) – **vertical strip dividing the panes**
venerable (388) – **commanding respect by virtue of age**
feudal keep (388) – **central tower of a medieval castle; a
stronghold**
dandy (388) – **a man who shows extreme elegance in clothes
and manners**
preserve (388) – **to keep or protect game or fish for private
use**
paragon (389) – **a model of excellence or perfection**
Don Juan (389) – **a man who is an obsessive seducer of
women**

- game-keeper (389) – **man in charge of wild birds and animals on the owner's property**
- brain-fever (389) – **meningitis or encephalitis**
- café noir* (389) – **strong black coffee**
- taper (389) – **a small, feeble candle**
- livid (390, 395) – **ashen or pallid**
- reposed in (390) – **entrusted to**
- blazonings (390) – **coats of arms**
- charges (390) – **figures in heraldry**
- infamous (390) – **having an exceedingly bad reputation**
- fortnight (390) – **two weeks**
- assiduous (390) – **diligent**
- wan (390) – **melancholy**
- remonstrate (390) – **reason or plead in protest**
- garret (391) – **room on the top floor of a house**
- labyrinth (391) – **an elaborate set of interconnecting passages; a maze**
- footmen (391) – **uniformed servant who attended to carriages or waited on table**
- mere (391, 396) – **a small lake or pond**
- drags (391) – **dragnets; devices for recovering objects at the bottom of a body of water using grappling hooks**
- catechism (392) – **a formal set of questions posed for candidates**
- rigmarole (392) – **a confused, rambling, incoherent set of procedures**
- heavy-linteled door (393) – **door with a heavy horizontal beam that forms the upper member and supports the structure above the door**
- embalm (393) – **preserve from change**
- patriarch (393) – **old and venerable**
- girth (393) – **circumference**
- dog-cart (393) – **a cart with two seats placed back-to-back; name is derived from box under rear seat originally used to carry dogs**

groom (394) – **man or boy employed to take care of horses**

exultation (394) – **great rejoicing**

cardinal points (394) – **four principal directions on a compass: north, south, east, and west**

billet (395, 396) – **pieces of firewood**

flagstone (395) – **heavy, flat slab of stone**

shepherd's check (395) – **woolen cloth with a black and white checked pattern**

constable (395) – **lowest rank of police officer**

furred (395) – **covered or coated as if with fur**

hams (395) – **hamstrings, muscles in the back of the thigh**

personal equation (395) – **one particular person's tendency to make a mistake for which it is possible to take into account**

chink (396) – **narrow opening**

Celtic (396) – **Welsh, Irish, or Scottish**

sepulchre (396) – **burial vault**

treasure trove (396) – **valuable finding**

blanched (396) – **extremely white and pale**

made head (937) – **made headway**

Charles the Second (397) – **(1630-1685) King of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1660 to 1685 during the Restoration**

cavalier (397) – **supporter of Charles I of England in his struggles against Parliament, also called a Royalist; should begin with an uppercase C**

advent (397) – **coming or arrival, especially of something extremely important**

diadem (397) – **crown worn as a sign of royalty**

Stuarts (397) – **ruling house of England and Scotland (1603 – 1649 and 1660 – 1714)**

surmise (397) – **to infer something without sufficiently conclusive evidence**

THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL OPEN QUESTIONS

1. Where did Sherlock Holmes keep his
- (a) cigars?
 - (b) tobacco?
 - (c) correspondence?

- (a) he kept his cigars in a coal scuttle**
- (b) he kept his tobacco in the toe of a Persian slipper**
- (c) his correspondence was transixed by a jack-knife to the mantel**

2. The catechism (page 392) is

Whose was it?
His who is gone.
Who shall have it?
He who will come.
Where was the sun?
Over the oak.
Where was the shadow?
Under the elm.
How was it stepped?
North by ten and by ten, east by five and by
five, south by two and by two, west by
one and by one, and so under.
What shall we give for it?
All that is ours.
Why should we give it?
For the sake of the trust.

This is exactly as it appeared in the original publication in *The Strand*. However, when *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* were published in book form, the following couplet was added following ‘He who will come’.

What is the month?
The sixth from the first.

Why do you suppose this couplet was added?

HINT: Until 1752 the year began on March 25 in England. Thereafter, the year began on January 1 as it does now.

The directions would be useless without knowing the season. Moreover, this is a clue to the date. The ritual must have meant using the calendar in which the year started on March 25.

3. The dashed line in the figure on the next page is a scale drawing of the path that Holmes followed using the directions in the Musgrave Ritual. The solid line represents the walls of a portion of Hurlstone. The opening in the wall represents the door to the old part.

Holmes walked 20 paces north, 10 paces east, 4 paces south and finally 2 paces west as shown in the figure.

According to the Holmes’s description on page 393 Hurlstone was “ ... built in the shape of an L, the long arm being the more modern portion, ... Over the low, heavy-lintelled door (of the old part), in the centre of the old part ... “

Therefore, the door on the east wall was in the centre of the wall as shown in the figure. Assuming one pace was $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet, what were the dimensions of the old part of Hurlstone?

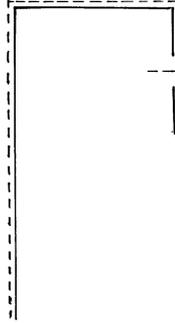


Diagram of Hurlstone

It certainly was a strangely shaped building. The old part was quite small. From east to west the old part was

$$\mathbf{10 \text{ paces} \times 2\frac{1}{2} \text{ feet} = 25 \text{ feet}}$$

While from north to south it was

$$\mathbf{4 \text{ paces} \times 2 \times 2\frac{1}{2} \text{ feet} = 20 \text{ feet}}$$

So the old part was 25 feet by 20 feet and was only 500 square feet.

THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL SIMPLE QUIZ*

1. The Musgrave Ritual was
 - a. a ceremony celebrated once a year
 - b. a catechism written on paper
 - c. an exercise engaged in by Reginald Musgrave
 - d. none of the above
2. Sherlock Holmes was accompanied on his trip to Hurlstone by
 - a. Dr. Watson
 - b. his brother, Mycroft
 - c. Brunton
 - d. none of the above
3. Who first discovered the treasure
 - a. Brunton
 - b. Sherlock Holmes
 - c. Reginald Musgrave
 - 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 MUSGRAVE RITUAL INTERMEDIATE QUIZ[#]

1. Where did Holmes live when he first came up to London?
 - a. Baker Street
 - b. Montague Street
 - c. Tottenham Court Road
 - d. none of the above
2. What had been Brunton's occupation before Reginald Musgrave's father hired him?
 - a. schoolmaster
 - b. surveyor
 - c. mathematics tutor
 - d. none of the above
3. How long did Reginald Musgrave give Brunton to leave Hurlstone?
 - a. a week
 - b. a fortnight
 - c. a month
 - d. none of the above
4. When Holmes discovered the location of the treasure, what was attached to the iron ring above where the treasure was hidden?
 - a. a stout piece of rope
 - b. Rachel Howell's apron
 - c. Brunton's muffler
 - 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 MUSGRAVE RITUAL ADVANCED QUIZ[&]

1. Which one of the following did Holmes NOT associate with Reginald Musgrave?
 - a. castle moats
 - b. mullioned windows
 - c. gray archways
 - d. none of the above

2. What did Reginald Musgrave take with him as a weapon when he entered the library and discovered Brunton reading the Musgrave ritual?
 - a. a weighted walking stick
 - b. a battle axe
 - c. an ancient spear
 - d. none of the above

3. What were the dimensions of the chamber where Brunton's body was found?
 - a. 4 feet deep and 7 feet square
 - b. 6 feet deep and 4 feet by 5 feet
 - c. 7 feet deep and 4 feet square
 - d. none of the above

4. Who helped Holmes raise the door to the chamber where Brunton's body was found?
 - a. a burly Sussex policeman
 - b. Reginald Musgrave
 - c. a strong farmhand from the Musgrave estate
 - 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

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Silver Blaze				
Simple	c	b	d	xx
Intermediate	c	a	a	b
Advanced	c	c	b	a
The Yellow Face				
Simple	b	c	c	xx
Intermediate	b	b	c	a
Advanced	c	b	b	c
Stock-Broker's Clerk				
Simple	a	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	c	a	a
Advanced	a	a	b	b
'Gloria Scott'				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	a	b	c
Advanced	c	c	a	c
Musgrave Ritual				
Simple	b	d	a	xx
Intermediate	b	a	a	c
Advanced	a	b	c	a
Reigate Puzzle				
Simple	c	b	b	xx
Intermediate	a	c	b	c
Advanced	b	a	c	b
Crooked Man				
Simple	b	b	a	c
Intermediate	b	a	c	c
Advanced	c	d	a	b
Resident Patient				
Simple	c	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	a	b	d
Advanced	b	c	c	a

Answers to Quizzes

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Greek Interpreter				
Simple	b	c	c	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	a
Advanced	c	a	b	b
Naval Treaty				
Simple	c	a	b	xx
Intermediate	b	a	c	a
Advanced	c	b	c	b
Final Problem				
Simple	c	b	c	xx
Intermediate	b	c	c	a
Advanced	a	a	b	b