

A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

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**The Return of Sherlock Holmes
Adventure XXXI -- The
Adventure of the Solitary
Cyclist**

THE SOLITARY CYCLIST
DATE OF THE ADVENTURE*
(Date when Holmes rescued Violet Smith)

CLUES:

1. Watson says, “On referring to my notebook for the year 1895, I find that it was upon Saturday, the 23rd of April, ...” that Violet Smith visited Baker Street(527)
2. April 23, 1895 was Tuesday.
3. Violet Smith says, “Last December – four months ago.”
4. It was the following Saturday that Holmes and Watson went to Farnham to spy on the two cyclists (533)

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 and 2 contradict each other.
- B. 1 and 3 imply that April is the correct month.
- C. A, B and 2 imply that it must have been Saturday, April 13, 1895.
- D. C and 4 imply it was Saturday, April 20, 1895.

Holmes rescued Violet Smith on Saturday, April 20, 1895

*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 SOLITARY CYCLIST VOCABULARY WORDS

- abstruse (527) – **difficult to understand**
- spatulate (527) – **shaped like a kitchen tool that has a broad, flat, flexible blade**
- odious (528, 533) – **arousing strong dislike or intense displeasure**
- sallow (528, 535) – **sickly yellowish complexion**
- heath (529, 530, 533) – **extensive tract of uncultivated open land; a moor**
- ménage (530) – **persons who occupy one house**
- yew hedge (530) – **evergreen shrubs**
- lichen (530) – **a fungus that forms a crustlike growth on rocks or tree trunks**
- gorse (530, 533) – **spiny shrubs having fragrant yellow flowers; also called furze**
- furtive (531) – **shifty**
- deigning (531) – **condescending, thinking inappropriate to one's dignity**
- public-house (532) – **pub; tavern; drinking establishment**
- scullery-maid (532) – **dish washer**
- ignominious (532) – **marked by shame or disgrace**
- uneccelesiastical (532) – **inappropriate to a church**
- audacity (533) – **fearless daring**
- publican (533) – **keeper of a public house or tavern**
- duns (533) – **dingy colors**
- drab (533) – **dull light brown color**
- sedentary (534) – **taking little exercise**
- cantering (534) – **smooth gait that is slower than a gallop but faster than a trot**
- dog-cart (534) – **a cart with two seats placed back-to-back; name is derived from box under rear seat originally used to carry dogs**

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blackguard (534, 538) – **a scoundrel**

ostler (534, 538) – **someone who is employed to tend horses**

corde (534) – **laces**

gaiters (534) – **heavy cloth or leather covering for the legs
extending from the instep to the ankle or knee**

bowling-alley (535) – **green used for bowling on the green**

Jingo! (535) – **used for emphasis or to express surprise [from
the phrase *by jingo*, used in the refrain of a
bellicose 19th-century English music-hall song,
from alteration of Jesus.]**

greensward (535) – **ground that is green with grass; turf**

akimbo (535) – **hands on the hips with the elbows bowed
outward**

surplice (535, 537) – **loose-fitting, white church gown with wide
sleeves, worn over a cassock**

swing for it (535) – **be hanged for it**

mottled pallor (535) – **extreme or unnatural paleness marked
with spots or blotches of different shades
or colors**

glade (536) – **open space in a forest**

bleat (537) – **a whining, feeble complaint**

round (537) – **turn traitor**

THE SOLITARY CYCLIST OPEN QUESTIONS

1. How did Williamson think that the wedding could have been legal? After, all he was no longer an ordained minister, the 'bride' had a handkerchief round her mouth (535) and so could not make the required responses, and the ceremony was held in a place that was not licensed for weddings.

Perhaps he thought he could frighten Violet Smith into thinking her marriage was legal and use that to bribe her into signing away some of her inheritance.

2. If Violet Smith had a handkerchief around her mouth when Holmes, Watson and Carruthers arrived at the scene (535), how could she have screamed earlier (535)?

The handkerchief wasn't placed round her mouth until after she screamed.

3. What caused the 'choke and gurgle' that suddenly ended Violet Smith's scream (535)?

A 'choke and gurgle' sound often results when death is near. She must have been nearly killed by the gag.

4. If blood spurted from the front of Woodley's waistcoat (535) when Carruthers shot him, how could Watson blithely say just a few moments later, "He will live" (536)?

The bullet must have missed his heart and perhaps only punctured a lung but that still would leave Woodley's life in a precarious state.

THE SOLITARY CYCLIST SIMPLE QUIZ*

1. Who was the cyclist who followed Violet Smith?
 - a. Carruthers
 - b. Woodley
 - c. Williamson
 - d. none of the above

2. Why did one of the men want to marry Violet Smith?
 - a. as revenge against her mother
 - b. to get part ownership in her father's business
 - c. to get their hands on her inheritance
 - d. none of the above

3. What did Carruthers do to Woodley after the supposed wedding?
 - a. stabbed him
 - b. punched him
 - c. shot him
 - 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 SOLITARY CYCLIST INTERMEDIATE QUIZ[#]

1. Where did Holmes say Watson should have gone to get information on his visit to Farnham?
 - a. the village hotel
 - b. the nearest pub
 - c. the local house agent
 - d. none of the above

2. Why didn't Violet Smith's uncle have a will?
 - a. for the last ten years he had been isolated in the gold fields of South Africa
 - b. he had a fear of attorneys
 - c. he couldn't read or write
 - d. none of the above

3. When Holmes and Watson finally encountered Bob Carruthers, what were they doing?
 - a. hiding behind some bushes on the heath
 - b. riding bicycles
 - c. riding in a horse drawn trap
 - d. none of the above

4. What injury did Holmes suffer in his fight with Woodley?
 - a. bruised knuckles
 - b. a cut lip
 - c. a bloodied nose
 - 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 SOLITARY CYCLIST ADVANCED QUIZ [&]

1. What was the occupation of Violet Smith's father, James?
 - a. common laborer
 - b. orchestra conductor
 - c. green grocer
 - d. none of the above

2. What was the name of Violet Smith's fiancé?
 - a. Jack Bennett
 - b. Horace Harker
 - c. Cyril Morton
 - d. none of the above

3. What did Holmes give to Carruthers at the end of the story?
 - a. his card
 - b. a note to give to the police inspector
 - c. a letter of recommendation
 - d. none of the above

4. Woodley was convicted of abduction and assault. How many years was his sentence?
 - a. five years
 - b. seven years
 - c. ten years
 - 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 RETURN

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Empty House				
Simple	c	c	c	xx
Intermediate	a	b	c	c
Advanced	c	a	a	b
Norwood Builder				
Simple	c	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	a	b	c
Advanced	a	a	a	b
Dancing Men				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	c	a	a
Advanced	b	b	a	b
Solitary Cyclist				
Simple	a	c	c	xx
Intermediate	b	c	c	b
Advanced	b	c	a	c
Priory School				
Simple	b	a	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	a	b
Advanced	d	a	c	b
Black Peter				
Simple	b	a	c	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	c
Advanced	b	c	b	d
Charles Augustus Milverton				
Simple	b	a	a	xx
Intermediate	c	c	a	b
Advanced	b	c	b	a

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Six Napoleons				
Simple	a	c	c	xx
Intermediate	b	b	c	b
Advanced	c	a	a	b
Three Students				
Simple	c	a	d	xx
Intermediate	a	b	c	b
Advanced	b	c	a	b
Golden Pince-Nez				
Simple	a	b	a	xx
Intermediate	c	c	c	a
Advanced	b	b	c	c
Missing Three-Quarter				
Simple	b	c	b	xx
Intermediate	b	a	b	c
Advanced	a	c	b	a
Abbey Grange				
Simple	a	c	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	b	c
Advanced	b	b	a	b
Second Stain				
Simple	a	a	b	xx
Intermediate	c	a	b	c
Advanced	a	b	a	c