

# A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

By William S. Dorn



His Last Bow  
Adventure XLVI -- The  
Adventure of the Dying  
Detective

**THE DYING DETECTIVE  
DATE OF THE ADVENTURE\***  
(Date when Holmes tricked Culverton Smith)

**CLUES:**

1. Watson says, “ ... she (Mrs. Hudson) came to my rooms in the second year of my married life ...” (932)
2. Watson was married in late 1888 or early 1889
3. Watson says that he went to visit Holmes and looked at him, “In the dim light of a foggy November day ...” (932)
4. Mrs. Hudson says, “He (Holmes) took to his bed on Wednesday afternoon ...” (932)
5. Mrs. Hudson also says, “For three days he has been sinking ...” (932)
6. November 1, 1890 was Saturday
7. November 1, 1890 had more than 3 hours of sunshine
8. November 8, 1890 had more than 6 hours of sunshine
9. November 15, 1890 had almost 2 hours of sunshine
10. November 22, 1890 had more than 1 hour of sunshine
11. November 29, 1890 had no sunshine
12. Holmes tricked Culverton Smith on the day Watson visited Holmes

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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.

## CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 and 2 imply it was late 1890 or early 1891
- B. A and 3 imply it was November 1890
- C. 4 and 5 imply Watson visited Holmes on a Saturday
- D. B, C and 6 imply Watson visited Holmes on one of November 1, November 8, November 15, November 22, or November 29 in 1890
- E. 3, D, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 imply that Watson visited Holmes on Saturday, November 29, 1890
- F. E and 12 imply Holmes tricked Culverton Smith on November 29, 1890

**Holmes tricked Culverton Smith on  
Saturday, November 29, 1890**

## THE DYING DETECTIVE VOCABULARY WORDS

- gaunt (932) – **emaciated and haggard; drawn**
- coverlet (932) – **bedspread**
- spasmodic (932) – **given to sudden outbursts of energy or feeling excitable**
- imperiousness (933) – **state of being arrogantly domineering or overbearing**
- coolie (933, 939) – **unskilled Asian laborer**
- venomous (933) – **malicious or spiteful**
- Tapanuli fever (934) – **a tropical disease that existed only in the imagination of Sherlock Holmes**
- black Formosa corruption (934) – **another tropical disease that existed only in the imagination of Sherlock Holmes**
- remonstrance (934) – **expression of protest**
- perambulation (934) – **walking about**
- half-crown (935, 941) – **coin worth two shillings and sixpence or one-eighth of a pound**
- petulant (936) – **unreasonably irritable or ill-tempered**
- coquettishly (937) – **teasingly**
- rickets (937) – **disease resulting in defective bone growth; it arises from a lack of vitamin D or calcium and from insufficient exposure to sunlight**
- injunction (938) – **command or directive or order**
- haggard (938) – **worn and exhausted**
- sniggered (939) – **a partly stifled laugh**
- rasping (939, 940) – **harsh, grating sound**
- dock (941) – **part of the courtroom where the accused stands**
- claret (941) – **dry red wine produced in the Bordeaux region of France**
- biscuits (941) – **cookies**
- toilet (941) – **act of dressing or grooming oneself**

dissimulation (941) – **concealing one's true intentions**

belladonna (941) – **extract of deadly nightshade, used to enlarge the pupil of the eye**

beeswax (941) – **wax secreted by the honeybee for constructing honeycombs**

malingering (941) – **faking illness**

astute (941) – **shrewd or discerning**

viper (941) – **poisonous snake**

reversion (941) – **returning of an estate to the grantor or his/her heirs after the grant has ended**

Simpson's (941) – **a well-known, exclusive restaurant in the Strand**

## THE DYING DETECTIVE OPEN QUESTIONS

1. Apparently Holmes did not intend to ask Watson to stay after he (Watson) returned from his visit to Culverton Smith. If Watson hadn't stayed, who would corroborate Smith's confession?

**Nobody. Anyway, Holmes no doubt knew that Watson would want to stay.**

2. Holmes said that the reason he deceived Watson into thinking he (Holmes) was dying was because he did not believe that Watson could be convincing in telling Culverton Smith that Holmes was on his death bed. However, Culverton Smith was so eager to see Holmes die that it probably wouldn't have taken much of an actor to convince him that Holmes was in a bad way. Why then was Holmes so insistent that Watson not come close?

**Holmes may have been thinking about Watson later writing the story and thought this act would make a better story. On the other hand, perhaps Holmes had very little confidence in Watson's ability to carry off even a modest acting performance.**

## THE DYING DETECTIVE SIMPLE QUIZ\*

1. Who wrote this story?
  - a. Holmes
  - b. Mrs. Hudson
  - c. Watson
  - d. an unknown third person
  
2. Of what did Holmes appear to be dying from?
  - a. an Asiatic disease
  - b. a physical beating
  - c. a heavy blow to the head
  - d. none of the above
  
3. How did the poison that supposedly infected Holmes arrive at Baker Street?
  - a. in a small vial that was delivered by hand
  - b. in a box that arrived in the mail
  - c. in a hypodermic needle in Dr. Watson's medical bag
  - 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 DYING DETECTIVE INTERMEDIATE QUIZ<sup>#</sup>

1. Where was Watson while Culverton Smith was visiting the supposedly ill Holmes?
  - a. making the rounds of his patients
  - b. hiding behind Holmes's bed
  - c. on his way to Scotland Yard
  - d. none of the above
  
2. Who had Culverton Smith previously murdered with his tropical poison?
  - a. Barney Stockdale
  - b. Jeremy Dixon
  - c. Victor Savage
  - d. none of the above
  
3. What was the signal Holmes used to summon Inspector Morton to his bedroom?
  - a. the curtains were parted
  - b. the gas was turned up
  - c. the window was opened
  - d. none of the above
  
4. What was Culverton Smith's occupation?
  - a. a physician who specialized in tropical diseases
  - b. an extortionist in league with Professor Moriarty
  - c. a planter in Sumatra
  - 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 DYING DETECTIVE ADVANCED QUIZ<sup>&</sup>

1. Where did Culverton Smith live?
  - a. 13 Lower Burke Street
  - b. 31 Lyon Place
  - c. 131 Pitt Street
  - d. none of the above
  
2. How many half crowns did Watson have in his pocket when he visited Holmes?
  - a. three
  - b. five
  - c. six
  - d. none of the above
  
3. Which one of the following did Watson NOT observe when he arrived at Culverton Smith's residence?
  - a. an old-fashioned railing
  - b. a massive folding-door
  - c. an enormous wrought iron gate
  - d. shining brasswork
  
4. What was the name of Culverton Smith's butler?
  - a. Sanger
  - b. Savage
  - c. Staples
  - 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 HIS LAST BOW

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
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### **Wisteria Lodge**

Simple	b	a	a	xx
Intermediate	a	b	a	b
Advanced	b	c	c	a

### **Cardboard Box**

Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	c	c	a
Advanced	a	b	b	a

### **Red Circle**

Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	c	a
Advanced	b	c	c	a

### **Bruce Partington Plans**

Simple	a	b	a	xx
Intermediate	c	c	a	b
Advanced	a	b	a	a

### **Dying Detective**

Simple	d	a	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	c
Advanced	a	b	c	c

### **Lady Frances Carfax**

Simple	c	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	b	b	c
Advanced	b	c	b	a

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Devil's Foot</b>				
Simple	c	c	b	xx
Intermediate	b	a	c	b
Advanced	b	c	c	a
<b>His Last Bow</b>				
Simple	b	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	a	a	b
Advanced	a	d	c	a