

Special Section

“The Press, Watson, is a most valuable institution, if you only know how to use it.”
– Sherlock Holmes

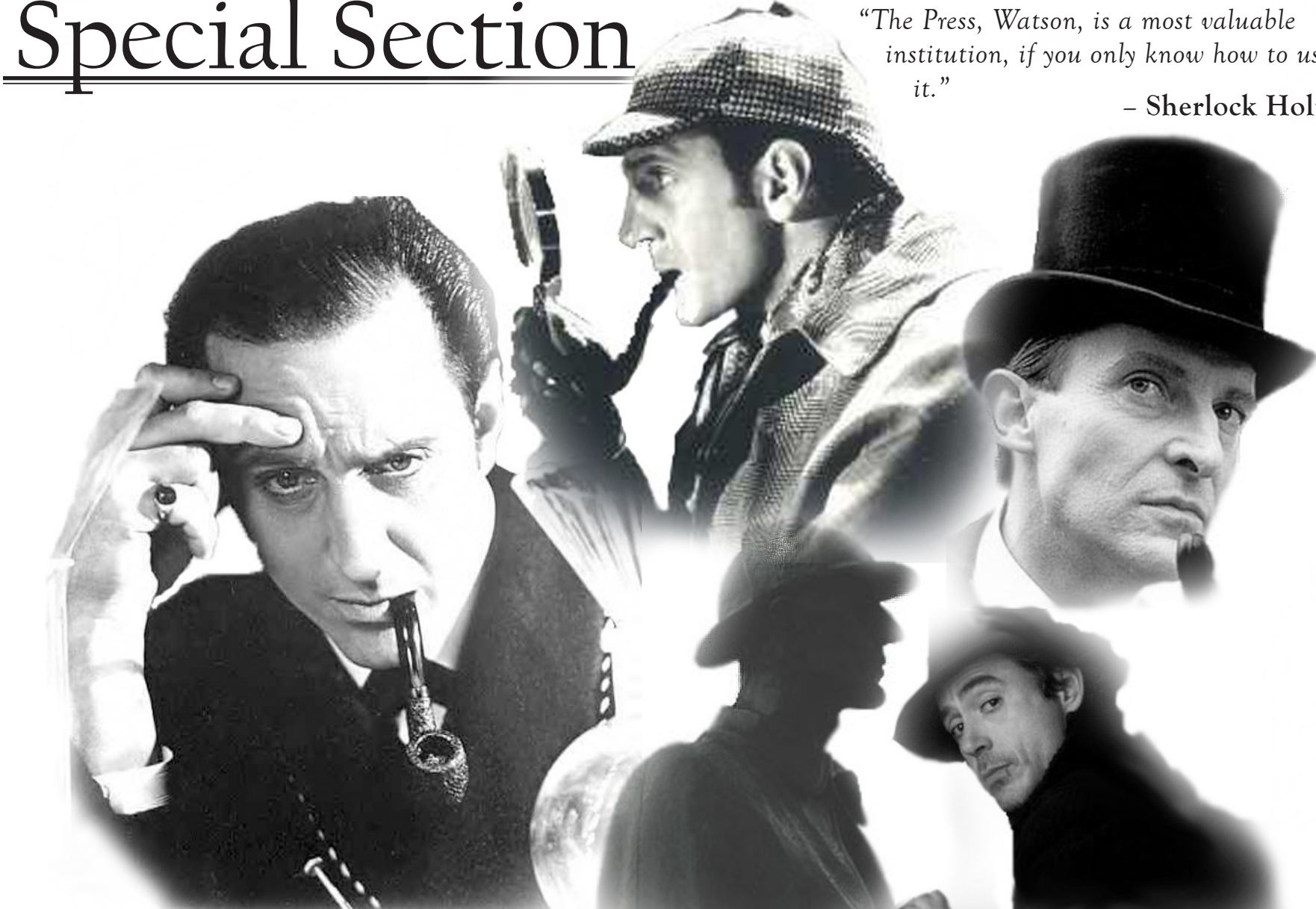


Photo collage by Sarah Wendel and courtesy of Google Images

The many faces of Sherlock Holmes seen through movies, played by actors old and new, the newest of which being Robert Downey Jr.

It's Elementary, the Golden Sierra Case



Sarah Wendel
Staff Writer

“It’s Elementary, my dear Watson,” is one of Sherlock Holmes’ most famous lines, and is also a misnomer. Did you know that Holmes never actually says this line? Nowhere throughout the prolific writings of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson does he say that. Despite this, Holmes has many other fantastic lines as he continues to delight readers over a century after his creation.

The writer of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, enjoyed immense popularity during his career. Readers today are still fascinated with the eccentric detective and his homely assistant, in fact there is a whole society dedicated to Holmes mysteries. They are called the Sherlockians and love anything Holmes. A specific sect of these Sherlockians, known as the Beacon Society, are dedicated to permeating Holmes stories into youth-reading. It is because of the Beacon Society’s efforts that Golden Sierra can now welcome Sherlock Holmes to Grizzly territory.

“I thought it would be fun to explore an interdisciplinary approach to mysteries because they involve such a broad range of thinking skills and issues,” says Honors English teacher Ms. Elizabeth Ketelle, the head of this new Holmes

project, “I also wanted to capitalize on the popularity of the newest Sherlock Holmes movie and maybe get teenagers to love him as much as I do.” The project was first struck into motion because of a \$250 grant from the Beacon Society, to which Ms. Ketelle and Biology teacher Mr. Brad Mason applied for. Golden Sierra won the grant money and has used it to buy books of Sherlock Holmes’ most famous case, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which is currently being read by seniors in all English classes.

The project came into full motion as Ms. Ketelle went around to all the senior English classes and presented two PowerPoints. The first was a showcase of Holmes’ London—what the city would have been like, what people he would have met and seen, and what lifestyle he would have led. The second was a look into the gothic and mystery novel genres, giving a dos and don’ts list of mystery stories. Upon getting background, the seniors set out to discover more about Holmes, his mysterious cases, and also real life detective stories.

The project blew out from just reading *The Hound of the Baskervilles* to encompassing much of Golden Sierra in other classes and other grades. “In the scientific realm, we . . . have students from AP Bio [investigating into] the John Snow cholera ‘mystery.’ As part of a critical thinking unit led by Professor Moriarty [Calculus teacher Mr. Kevin Orris], we

will look at debunking the currently popular ‘ghost hunter’ phenomenon,” related Ms. Ketelle. Not only that, but the Drama classes will also be reading dramatic scenes from the play version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

The project didn’t stop there. Students also got into groups and researched something dealing with detective work or mysteries. They had to create an entire project based upon their topic and perform for their class. Topics ranged anywhere from finger printing, to the vampirism scare in early 20th century London, to Scotland Yard, to Jack the Ripper, and many more. Ms. Ketelle is musing over the possibility of having “the best projects from each class and scenes from the play done by Advanced Drama students” presented “at a parent night.” She is also tossing around the idea of creating a school-wide Clue tournament, the beloved board game mixing very well with the mysterious atmosphere taking over Golden Sierra.

In mid-March the projects were performed. There has been great enthusiasm for this new project brought in by Ms. Ketelle and Mr. Mason, and the support from the Beacon Society is much appreciated. So grab your magnifying glass and your homely assistant and get out there and solve mysteries!



Photo courtesy of prairieghosts.com

Megan Harston
Managing Editor

Sherlock Holmes, a character of mystery and detection, who is well-known, revered, and lives at the imaginary address of 221b Bakers Street, was the inspired creation of the Scotland born, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

His inherent talent of storytelling appeared during his miserable stay at a Jesuit Boarding school in England as a child. His school mates eagerly gathered around him to hear his riveting stories firsthand. This imagination allowed Doyle to escape from his less than pleasant situation at school and home. Despite the stress of his circumstances, he took control of his future and pursued a medical degree, which explains his ability to describe Holmes’ chemical evaluations in each adventure.

Doyle was privileged to meet many future authors while attending the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. The one who impressed him the most was Dr. Joseph Bell, his inspiration for Sherlock Holmes. Bell was known as a “master at observation, logic, deduction, and diagnosis,” characteristics clearly evident in Holmes.

After he received his Bachelors degree in Medicine and Masters Degree in Surgery, his confidence grew. He began to jokingly call himself “licensed to kill.” He opened his own business in Portsmouth, one of his best choices ever, where he found enormous success and was married to Louisa Hawkins. He also wrote his first Sherlock Holmes

novel, *A Study in Scarlet*; the start of a great series of mystery novels that quickly became famous in his area and on other continents.

Despite his successes, Doyle was unsettled and moved to Vienna, then to London, and changed his specialization to eyes. No one even called him to make an appointment. Despite this unlikely state of affairs, Doyle continued to develop the Sherlock Holmes character to the one that is so well known today. With the help of A.P. Watt, many of his works were published in *The Strand* magazine.

After recovering from a serious case of influenza, Doyle re-evaluated his life. Rather than overloading himself being a doctor and author, he resorted to being an author only. Even with a smaller work load, the Sherlock Holmes series was overburdening. He killed off Holmes and Professor Moriarty, his nemesis, in his novel *The Final Problem*. Fans were outraged but he refused to change his mind until later.

While absorbed in his writing, Dr. Doyle remained unaware of his wife’s, Louisa Hawkins, deteriorating health. Once he realized the direness of her situation, he used his doctoring skills to keep her alive for a time. In order to keep himself from sinking into sorrow and to keep his restless self occupied, he traveled far and wide to give lectures. He then published his first book in the Brigadier Gerard series, another instant hit.

With the Boer War underway, Doyle felt the need to enlist in the military. The 40 year old overweight man was declined, and so, he reapplied as a medical doctor and was

accepted. He was sent to Africa to battle Typhoid fever in soldiers. After his service, he was knighted by King Edward VII for his valiant efforts.

After the Boer War had ended, Doyle began believing a war with Germany was imminent and wrote letters to newspapers trying to convince them of its nearness. He made suggestions to the military about how to adequately prepare, but his comments were blown off. Then World War I broke out, just as he predicted. He offered additional advice to the, “War Office to provide ‘inflatable rubber belts,’ and ‘inflatable life boats.’ He also spoke of ‘body armor’ to protect soldiers on the front.” All but one official found his letters to be utterly ridiculous. Winston Churchill was the official and actually wrote Doyle thanking him for his suggestions.

Later in life, he tried to make the existence of fairies a reality and that of communication with the dead. His wife, Jean Leckie whom he married after his first wife’s death, supported him, believed him, and even encouraged him in this. Despite the constant mockery of the Press, he continued in his endeavors only to return again to his original writing topics when he ran low on money.

His health declined in his old age in 1930. As he died, his last words were spoken to his wife. He lay in her arms, said, “You are wonderful,” and passed away.

His legacy of stories based on mystery and deduction are as famous now as they were then. Sherlock Holmes and his creator have captured the minds of readers across the world.



Photo courtesy of blogspot.com

Write Your Own Mystery Novel

Sarah Wendel
Staff Writer

With all the Holmes hype going around, one has to wonder, how did Sir Arthur Conan Doyle do it? Conan Doyle was one of many authors of famous detective novels. The mystery genre bows its head to its creator, Edgar Allan Poe. Writers such as Conan Doyle and the Queen of Crime, Agatha Christie, brought mystery from its beginning stages to a fully fledged phenomenon that has gripped western culture and kept readers riveted for decades.

So say you want to write your own mystery novel full of murderous suspects, suspense, thrills, and a dash of danger. Where do you start? Firstly, you need to decide what *kind* of mystery you want to write—there are several. The three most popular are the English “cozy” mystery, modern American “pulp” detective stories, and the very popular “police procedural” mystery. An English cozy mystery is usually set in the countryside with a small number of neighbors for the detective to deal with—commonly the motive is family feud and the investigator is incredibly intuitive, such as Sherlock Holmes. Pulp fiction is the American take on the detective novel and usually involves a hardened, tough detective who has to sift through a city full of suspects—usually the pace is quick and the facts come quickly, jumping from scene to scene. Last is the police procedural mystery, a very popular genre in modern culture, with TV shows such as “CSI,” “The Mentalist,” and “Law & Order.” Police procedurals follow the lives of very competent detectives (opposite of the cozy mystery, in which the investigator is called in because the local police are *incompetent*) who dabble in various forensic methods and are pursuing a criminal whose identity is known from the beginning.

Once you’ve decided on a genre, it’s time to develop your characters. Commonly, your lead investigator must be quirky, even eccentric, with uncommon traits that paint them colorfully within the story. They will usually have a contemporary or subordinate, such as Dr. Watson, to whom the detective relates information upon coming across clues. The informant, or confidante, must be trustworthy and able to keep up with the erratic investigator. Also present must be a good pool of suspects. Whether it be a town full or a city full, suspects must be given a little character, personality, and background—but not too much to give away who is responsible for the crime.

The method of the murder is also important. Did the murderer use poison or a gun, a rope or a knife? Details are

everything in a mystery and the reader must always come across clues throughout the novel, though they might not recognize that the slipped-in comments are truly clues to solving the case. Information cannot be withheld; at least not the majority of it, or it would be unfair to the reader. Remember, you are playing a game with your reader as the

author—a guessing game as to if they can hypothesize correctly the true culprit.

Now that you have the basics down, it’s time to get writing. Follow these guidelines and you’ll be well on your way to writing a riveting mystery that will keep your readers guessing.

1. Pick a Type of Mystery

2. Develop Characters

3. Make a Lead Investigator

4. Invent a Side-Kick

5. Create a Method of Murder

6. Add Suspense and Foreshadowing

7. Keep Readers Guessing

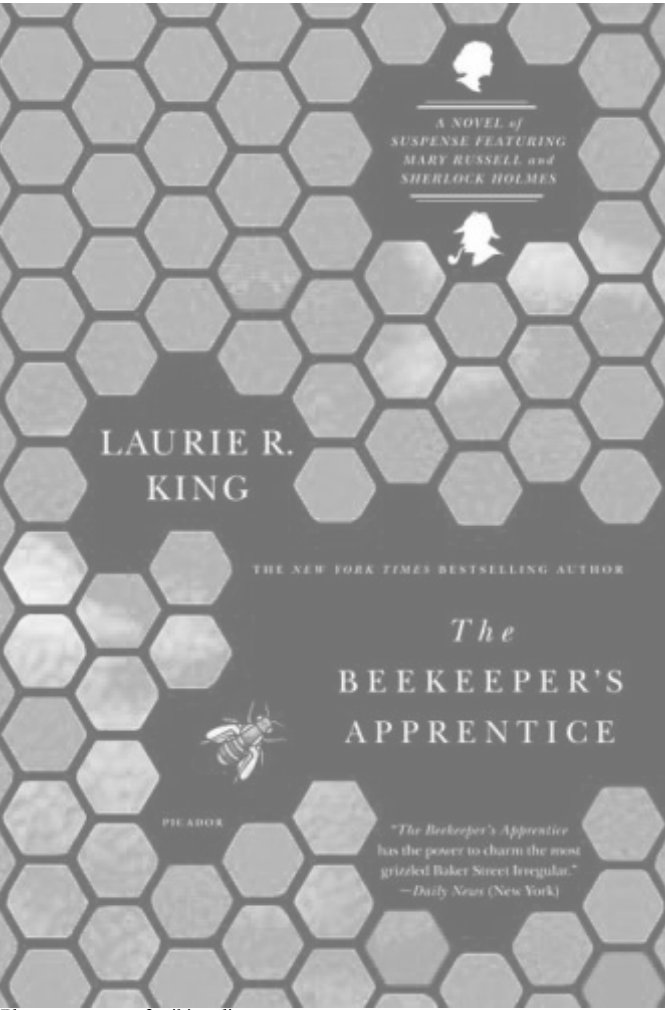




Photo courtesy of wikimedia.org

Sherlock Holmes Trains Apprentice

Caitlin Hess
Staff Writer

Readers who enjoy stories with enthralling mystery, thrilling plot twists, and a good dose of action will surely like any Sherlock Holmes story. The tales of Holmes and his trusty assistant Watson are classic mysteries that have been read and cherished for over one hundred years. But, if after reading all of the original 56 stories and four novels, your hunger for mystery is just not satisfied, there is another way to get your fix of Sherlockian mystery.

Laurie R. King has picked up where Sir Arthur Conan Doyle left off, and begins another series with Holmes living a life happily retired from sleuthing. The series, titled the “Mary Russel Series” begins with the first installment, “The Beekeeper’s Apprentice” in which the reader meets Mary Russell.

Mary Russell is an energetic, strong willed and ridiculously intelligent 15 year old girl who has recently become an orphan. She and Holmes meet, and he is impressed to find that her intellect is far greater than anyone else her age. He then takes her under his wing and teaches her the arts of deduction, sleuthing, and disguise. They then form a strong friendship, even with

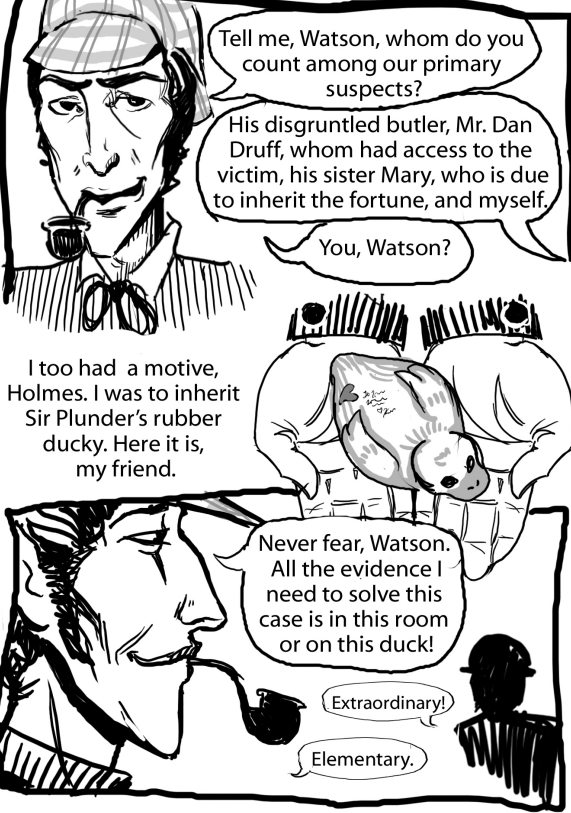
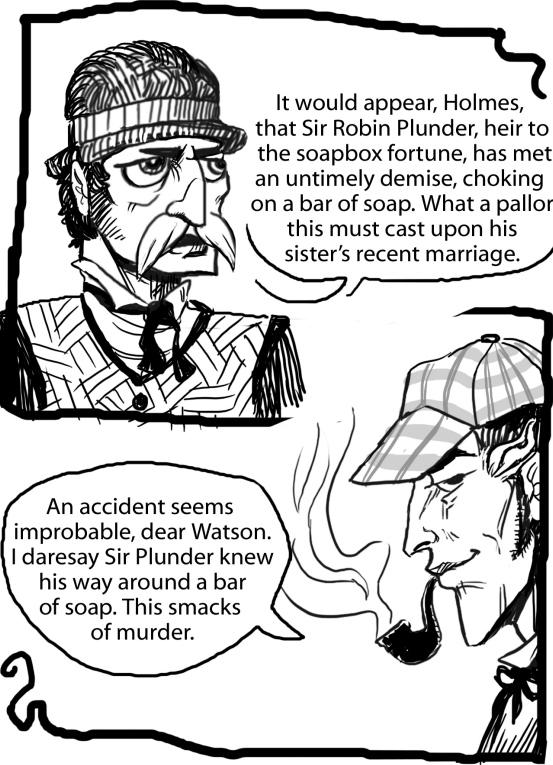
the drastic age difference.

While teaching Russell, Holmes slowly starts coming out of retirement and begins taking small and less dangerous cases. After a time, Holmes allows Russell to help him on some of these easy cases, and she proves her worth. This time of peace and easy work is then shattered when a criminal begins to make many attempts to kill Holmes and Russell. What began as a game of sorts to allow Russell to hone her abilities quickly spirals out of control into a tactical and logical game of cat and mouse between Holmes and a ruthless enemy from his past.

The action and continued plot twists in this novel will surely keep any reader intrigued, and the intellectual banter between Holmes and Russell is funny and smart at the same time. The mystery is so well thought out and the clues so enigmatic that it is difficult to try to figure it out. The reader is kept guessing and speculating until the very end.

“The Beekeeper’s Apprentice” is currently available for checkout in the library, and if enough people request them, Ms. Elizabeth Kettle, English teacher and school librarian, is willing to purchase the rest of the series for the library. This is an excellent book, and it is sure to satisfy the needs of any mystery-lover.

Journalism Mystery Challenge



Rules: Help Sherlock Holmes solve the murder! Using the visual and verbal clues in this comic, create your own ending to the story and solve the murder. Send in your solutions to the Bear Facts, and the winning solution will be illustrated by the paper, and printed in the next issue as the mystery’s conclusion. Remember, anyone can be the murderer, and they can be implicated with any of the clues in this comic strip so long as the reasoning is sound. Entries will be judged based on creativity and use of “deductive reasoning.”