

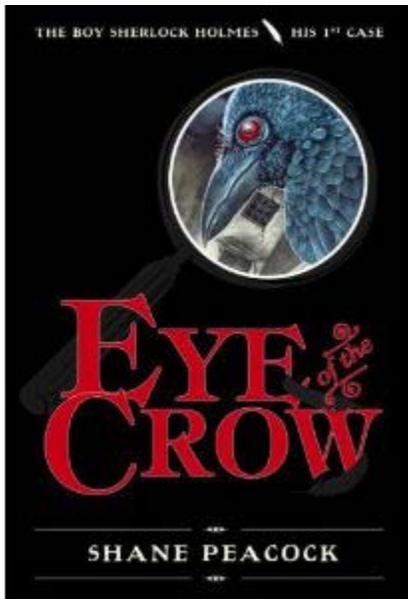
Sherlockian Book Reviews

Sherlockian Books for Young People

Sherlock Holmes in Children's Literature

Baker Street Irregular Sally Sugarman has compiled a [reading list](#) for young people who may not be quite ready for Arthur Conan Doyle or may want to explore contemporary mysteries with youthful detectives. Professor Sugarman retired from Bennington College where she taught Childhood Studies for thirty-five years. She is currently teaching Literature for Children and Popular Culture in America for Johnson State College and Community College of Vermont. We are most grateful that her love of teaching and Sherlock Holmes have come together for the Beacon Society.

Reviews by [Dr. Wayne Scott](#)



Peacock, Shane. *Eye of the Crow*. Toronto: Tundra books, 2007. 250 pages. Ages 10-16+

Youngsters who relish a rousing good mystery should certainly enjoy *Eye of the Crow*, the first case in Shane Peacock's "The Boy Sherlock Holmes" detective series. This adventure, set in 1867 London, is a real page-turner, filled with surprises, including a

teenage incarnation of the future Professor Moriarty and the adolescent Holmes's first romantic interest, Irene Doyle, a prelude to his adult attraction for another Irene, "*The Woman*," Irene Adler.

When the novel opens, Sherlock is a thirteen-year-old misfit, brilliant, bitter and bullied at school, living in a dreary flat in an East End slum and dreaming of a better life. Sherlock's mother is well-born, the daughter of an upper class family who has committed the social sin of marrying a man considered "inferior," despite his above-average intellect and university education. She had defied her parents and eloped with an intellectual Jew, and for this rebellious act of flouting tradition and Victorian propriety, she has been disowned by her family. Sherlock's father has been denied his deserved opportunities and prevented from achieving his full potential. Only low wages and poverty-level employment are available to him, while Sherlock's mother has to supplement their meager income by providing singing lessons to the daughters of the wealthy.

Thus, because of his parents' status as social outcasts, Sherlock bears the emotional burden of their romantic rebellion. Without friends, solitary by both nature and choice, Sherlock has only his wits and his resolve to aid him in seeking a viable sense of his own identity. Given this bleak prologue to his future career, Holmes's canonical reticence regarding his earlier family life and the sordid squalor of his youth is quite understandable and plausibly explained in Peacock's narrative.

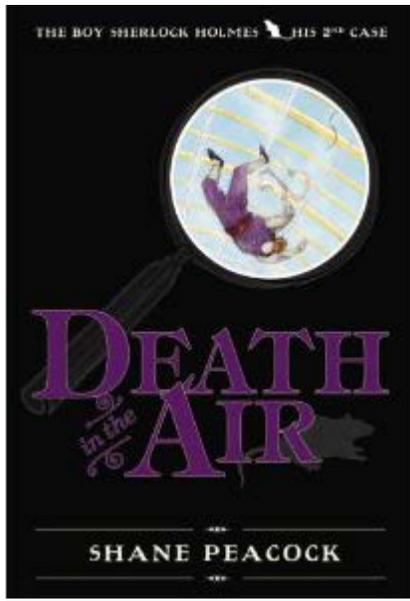
Nevertheless, the boy Sherlock is indeed fortunate as he enters his teens, for his sharp powers of observation and deduction are clearly evident even in this dark world. Viewing the London scene all about him, he finds pleasure in applying his intellect to the analysis of even the tiniest details and subtlest behaviors of all those he chances to meet. Peacock's young Holmes is depicted as having all the emerging talents and many of the character traits which will reach their full development in the iconic adult Master Sleuth. His relentlessly probing eye, his complex and enigmatic ego, his absolute integrity and unflinching pursuit of justice, and his commitment and perseverance in seeking truth are all visibly realized in the juvenile Sherlock. Peacock has created a fascinating figure and an appropriate model hero for his audience, one who will well deserve to become a favorite character of his young readers.

In the beginning of this adventure, a beautiful woman is the victim of a vicious stabbing. In the dead of night, shrouded in a yellow fog, she is left to die in a pool of blood in a dark alley. There are no human witnesses to this horrific crime, only an ominous flock of crows. They, and a missing diamond, will play a key role in the Boy Sherlock's solution of the mystery surrounding her brutal murder.

Partly to entertain himself, Sherlock focuses his analytical eye on the shocking crime, treating it as a challenge to his budding detective skills. More than once, he finds himself compulsively drawn to the murder scene, where on one occasion, he encounters a young Arab, who will soon be accused of the killing and arrested for the crime by Scotland Yard's Lestrade, the father of a later Lestrade. Aided by Irene Doyle, the younger Lestrade, and even by his ongoing childhood nemesis, the bullying gang leader Malefactor, Sherlock races about London on his quest to save the innocent Arab suspect. But once the "game is afoot," even Sherlock himself is accused of the crime. Since in 1867 Victorian London thirteen-year-old boys are hanged for crimes far less serious than murder, Sherlock must now not only save the Arab but he must save himself as well.

Finally, when Sherlock begins to visualize the murder through the eye of its only witness, he is able to perceive the truth at the heart of the mystery, freeing the Arab and clearing himself. However, a fatal error during his investigation and the tragic result of that error forever alter young Sherlock's life, thus forming the complex, very private character whom we revere today as the World's Greatest Detective.

This reviewer highly recommends Shane Peacock's *Eye of the Crow* as the first case of a new series of youth-centered Holmes pastiches. Although not part of the juvenile audience, this 71-year-old Holmes devotee thoroughly enjoyed this adventure of the young Sherlock. Readers, even those much older than 16, should find this tale a fun read.



Peacock, Shane. *Death in the Air*. Toronto: Tundra

Books, 2008. 254 Pages. Ages 10-16+

In Shane Peacock's second well-paced, suspenseful adventure *Death in the Air* (not to be confused with Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot mystery with the same title), in the Boy Sherlock Holmes series, the future Baker Street detective again joins forces with his attractive young ally, Irene Doyle, and the crafty teenage gang leader, Malefactor, Sherlock's rival for Irene's attentions. As readers of *Eye of the Crow* now realize, this unlikely part-time childhood partner in detection appears to be an early avatar of the much more formidable adult Professor Moriarty, as Miss Doyle images that other Irene, Irene Adler. Here too is the elder Inspector Lestrade as Sherlock's early foil, and a new ally, the daring young aerialist known as the Swallow. This youthful hero is only one of the many well-crafted characters in Peacock's narrative.

During the sweltering heat of July, 1867, the thirteen-year-old Holmes still suffers from the shock of his mother's unexpected death the previous May in that squalid East End rookery known as The Seven Dials. Sherlock carries a heavy burden of guilt because of her death, the result of his investigation of the brutal back-alley stabbing of a lovely young woman. Now dedicated to solving such mysteries, Sherlock immerses himself in another case, that involving the notorious Brixton Gang, a brazen and baffling robbery, and a violent death in the midst of an extremely popular public entertainment.

Sherlock's father, a university-educated Jewish intellectual and societal victim of Victorian anti-Semitism, is currently working at London's famed Crystal Palace, a masterpiece of pseudo-Gothic Victorian architecture erected to dazzle the world with the marvels of British technology and culture. The boy detective himself is now employed by a kindly apothecary, Sigerson Bell—medical man, scientist, even Victorian alchemist, who becomes both friend and science tutor to Sherlock. Years later, during his “great hiatus” following his supposedly fatal plunge over the Reichenbach Falls, Holmes will assume the identity of a man named Sigerson, and disappear from 1891 to 1894. It is also interesting to note that his mentor's last name is the same as that of the Edinburgh University physician and professor who was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's medical professor and mentor in deductive logic, Dr. Joseph Bell.

Acknowledging his debt to Dr. Bell, Conan Doyle wrote this in an 1892 letter:

- *It is most certainly to you that I owe Sherlock Holmes, and though in the stories I have the advantage of being able to place [Holmes] in all sorts of dramatic positions, I do not think that his analytical work is in the least an exaggeration of some effects which I have seen you produce in the out-patient ward. Round the centre (sic) of deduction and inference and observation which I have heard you inculcate, I have tried to build up a man who pushed the thing as far as it would go—further occasionally . . .*

Sigerson, Irene Doyle, and other such references, in both *Eye of the Crow* and *Death in the Air*, are examples of Peacock's affectionate homage to the particulars of Doyle's own life, as well as to elements of the original Canon.

Visiting his father at the Crystal Palace one day, Sherlock joins a host of spectators at one of Victorian England's favorite entertainments—the acrobatic skills and netless highwire dynamics of trapeze artists and tight rope walkers like Leotard, Blondin and the Flying Farinis. During this performance what appears to be a terrible accident occurs, when, without warning, the master aerialist, Monsieur Mercure, “the bird-like leader of the flying Mercure family,” with a heart-wrenching cry, plummets 100 feet to his death upon the Palace's wooden floor virtually at the feet of the stunned Sherlock. Just before he dies, the bleeding and badly broken acrobat manages to gasp two cryptic words into

Sherlock's ear; "Silence . . . me . . .," he rasps. In the frenzy that follows this shocking tragedy, the consistently perceptive youth sees what no one else notices—something odd about the trapeze bar lying beside the twisted body. And based on what he observes, he suspects murder, so for him "the game is now afoot." However, what the adolescent sleuth does not yet know is that his investigation will lead to a rift between Irene Doyle and himself and expose them both to danger from the ruthless Brixton mob.

As Sherlock dashes through a vividly drawn and sharply detailed London, from Mayfair to Charing Cross to the grimmer East End and still magnificent Crystal Palace in a city suburb, the reader races along beside him in his quest to solve the puzzle of the daring robbery, discover the identity of the Flying Mercure's murderer, and bring the vicious Brixton gang to justice. Peacock's narrative is suspenseful and well-paced, his characters are engaging, and the Boy Detective is appropriately brilliant, admirably committed, and intensely energetic in his pursuit of the truth. In short, this new case of the Boy Sherlock is an absorbing read for mystery fans ages 10-16 and even older.

*Dr. Wayne Scott is a retired professor of English and American Studies. He received his PhD from Case Western Reserve University where his major areas of studies were medieval literature, Victorian studies and the novels of Charles Dickens. His teaching career includes positions at Penn State University, Case Western, Wittenberg and Gannon. Since becoming a resident of Columbia, SC, he has taught at Claflin University and Newberry College. During the summer of 2003-2004 he was visiting professor at Stamford University in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Dr. Scott is a contributor to the college textbook **American Civilization and Culture** and other scholarly publications. He is currently at work on a Holmes/H.G. Wells pastiche and an historical thriller involving a Holmes-like American detective and his pursuit of Jack the Ripper. He is greatly interested in promoting reading among young people, particularly reading about Sherlock Holmes. Dr. Scott is a member of the Hansom Wheels scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars in Columbia, SC.*

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Sally Sugarman, BSI

*Sally, a retired professor, taught Childhood Studies
at Bennington College for thirty-five years*



There are many children's books that are related to Sherlock Holmes which will get children interested in the Canon or will supplement their reading of the Canon. Some are easier to find than others, but most libraries should be able to get them for their eager readers.

For the youngest group, about four to six years old, [Joe Sherlock](#) by David Keane is a series of books in which fourth grader Joe wants to be like Sherlock Holmes and solves cases for his friends. Even better known are the [Basil of Baker Street](#) books by Eve Titus, made famous by the movie [The Great Mouse Detective](#). However, it is not only mice that take on the detective mantle. [Trouble in Bugland](#) by William Kotzwinkle offers Inspector Mantis with deerstalker and pipe investigating crime with his faithful companion, Dr. Hopper.

For slightly older children, there is [Damian Drooth Supersleuth](#) by Barbara Mitchell Hill. This is another boy who models himself after Sherlock Holmes to solve local mysteries.

For the fourth through seventh grade readers, there are many different types of Sherlock Holmes related books. There are Shane Peacock's book series about "The Boy Sherlock Holmes." The first in the series of six is [Eye of the Crow](#). For a quite different version of Sherlock Holmes as a boy, there is Andrew Lane's "Sherlock Holmes: The Legend Begins" series starting with [Death Cloud](#). Both of these series are recent and readily available. The last book in the Shane Peacock series was published in 2012. The Andrew Lane series has 2011 republication dates.

Nancy Springer's "Enola Holmes Mystery" series should not be neglected. This is also a series of six books starting with [The Case of the Missing Marquess](#). When their mother goes missing, Mycroft wants to send fourteen year-old Enola off to a boarding school. She runs away and sets up her own detective agency, eluding brother Sherlock and solving mysteries ahead of him.

Another enterprising female who is an admirer of Sherlock Holmes in 1900 is Chicago-born Paris McKenzie in the "[My Name is Paris](#)" series. Written by Elizabeth Howard, this series may be difficult to find, but is worth it as Paris encounters many of the famous artists and writers in early 20th century Paris while she is solving mysteries. Also a contemporary admirer of Sherlock Holmes is Griffin Sharpe, a fourteen year old from Boston who goes to live with his uncle, a

detective who lives at 221A Baker Street, but who is no competition for Holmes in [No Place Like Holmes](#), by Jason Lethcoe, the start of another new series.

Series involving the Baker Street Irregulars abound. There is Jake and Luke Thoene's series of the Baker Street Detectives who not only undertake the case of [The Giant Rat of Sumatra](#), but in [The Thundering Underground](#) investigate some crimes involving the newly-built London underground rail service. Robert Newman's series begins with [The Case of the Baker Street Irregular](#). Although Holmes is mostly absent from the subsequent books in the series, the children solve a number of crimes on their own. Tracy Mack and Michael Citrin wrote a five-book series of "Sherlock Holmes and the Baker Street Irregulars" beginning with [The Fall of the Amazing Zalindas](#). At about the same time, Alexander Simmons introduced "The Raven League" with their leader Wiggins being regularly in touch with Holmes. [Sherlock Holmes is Missing](#) is the first in that series, which is out-of-print but available for Kindle.

As might be expected, there are many British publications about Sherlock Holmes for young people. It often takes detective work to track down some of the older series, but it's worth the effort. Anthony Read's [Baker Street Boys](#) series was based on a television series that he did for the BBC. Tim Pigott-Smith has a three-book series: [The Baker Street Mysteries](#). In the 1970s and 1980s Terrance Dicks wrote about contemporary children in London who solved crimes as [The Baker Street Irregulars](#). The group is more affluent than the original Irregulars, but they are capable investigators. This British series is fast-moving and fun, as one would expect from a former writer for the Dr. Who television series. [The Case of the Crooked Kids](#) is the first in the series, hinting at a Fagin-like gang. In all of these Irregulars series, girls are members of the gang, unlike in the original stories.

Fourteen of the Sherlock Holmes cases have been adapted by Murray Shaw and M. J. Cosson into graphic novels for children. The series is called [On the Case with Holmes and Watson](#). They are illustrated by Sophie Rohrbach. There are questions and suggestions for further reading at the end of each book.

There are more contemporary admirers or relatives of Sherlock Holmes solving mysteries. There is Shirley Holmes, the great-grandniece of Sherlock Holmes, who solved mysteries on Canadian television and is now published in a series of books, [The Adventures of Shirley Holmes](#) by Judie Angell. Then there are Xena and Xander Holmes, great, great, great grand-twins of Sherlock Holmes, who inherit his unsolved cases book and, with their friend Andrew Watson, begin to unravel these mysteries. Written by Tracy Barrett, the "Sherlock Files" series starts with [The 100-Year-Old Secret](#). Ed Dunlop has written the [Sherlock Jones](#) mysteries in which seventh-grade Penny Gordon and her best friend Jasper Sherlock Jones solve mysteries.

Contemporary young people are fascinated by the three [Echo Falls Mystery Series](#) written by Peter Abrahams. These feature sleuth Ingrid Levin-Hill, a great admirer of Holmes, who solves mysteries starting with [Down The Rabbit Hole](#). These books are fun as they combine themes from other children's books such as The Wizard of Oz and Alice in Wonderland.

Steve and Kendra are another mystery-solving pair who appear in two books by Albert A. Bell, Jr. An African-American girl, Kendra Jordan and her best friend Steve Patterson pass a graveyard in [The Secret of The Lonely Grave](#) and decide to investigate. Kendra is a great admirer of Sherlock Holmes so she and Steve unlock a one hundred and fifty year old mystery relating to the Underground Railroad of slave days. The second book is [The Secret of the Bradford House](#).

Not only is there a rich collection of books related to Sherlock Holmes available, but more seem to be published regularly. They are a great supplement to the Canon for children and a rich resource for parents and teachers.