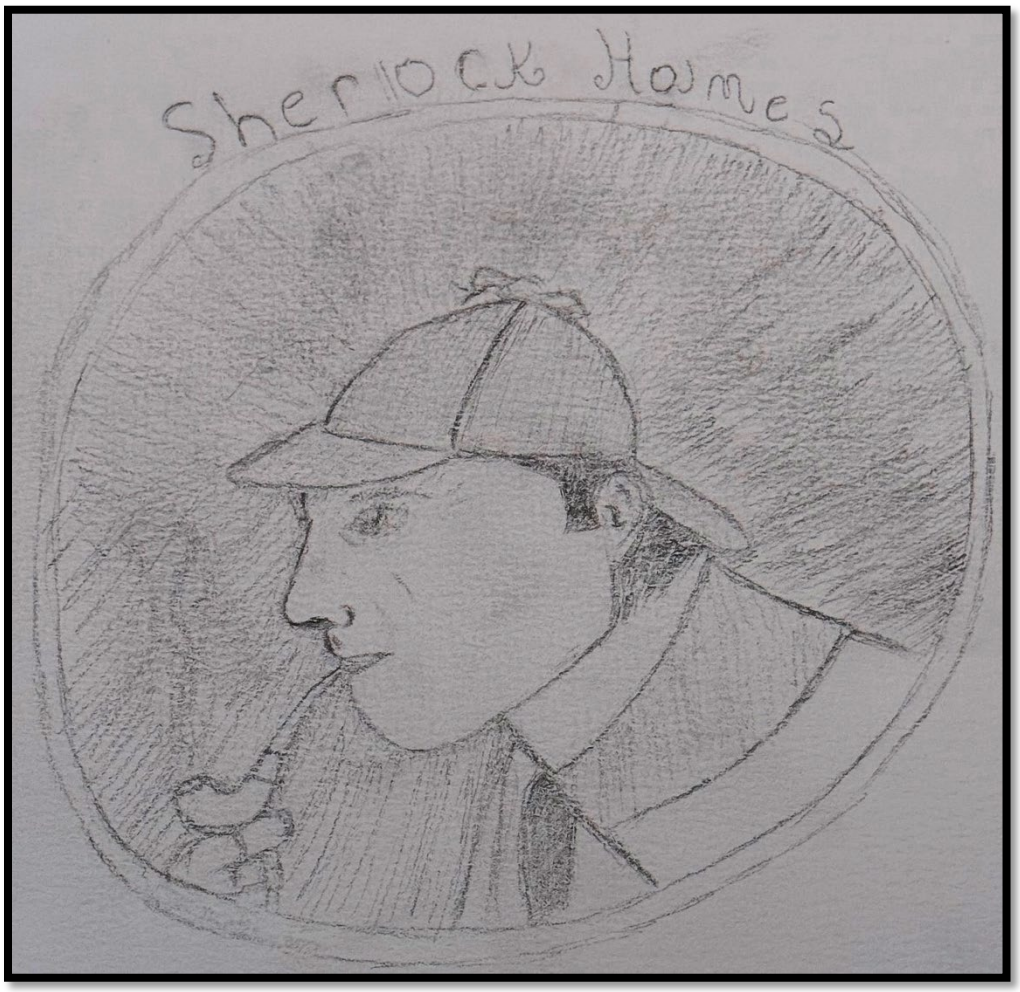
SHERLOCK'S SPOTLIGHT

A Quarterly Gazette for Young Sherlockians Everywhere



Winter 2026

"The Final Problem"

Cover artwork by Charlotte Ledwell

Your original artwork could be on the cover of our next issue…

See page 2 for more details!

Welcome to

SHERLOCK'S SPOTLIGHT

Volume 7, Number 1

Winter 2026: "The Final Problem"

Published four times a year by The Beacon Society, a society providing educators with resources to bring the magic of Sherlock Holmes to life.

Editor: Steve Mason
Associate Editor: Carla Coupe

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Submit Your Original Artwork for our Gazette Cover

We would love to use a student's artwork for the cover of each issue.
If you would like to submit a .jpg, .png, or .pdf of an original artwork, please follow the simple rules:

- You must be between the ages of 8-13.
- You must have your parent's or guardian's permission to submit the artwork.
- The artwork must be Sherlock Holmes based.

You may send the artwork by email directly to Steve Mason at mason.steve8080@gmail.com
Either have your parent or guardian email the artwork to us or have them include a statement authorizing the use of your artwork in our Gazette.

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Find out more about The Beacon Society and our efforts to bring Sherlock Holmes to students at: www.beaconsociety.com

Welcome to

SHERLOCK'S SPOTLIGHT

Volume 7, Number 1
Winter 2026: "The Final Problem"

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Highlights from the Head-Light

BRRRR, it's cold outside!

Now is the time of year when it's great to curl up with a good book (or issue of Sherlock's Spotlight), wrap up in a blanket, and spend the day reading. And do we have some great reading for you in this issue! This issue's story profile is "The Final Problem," the story that introduced the world to Sherlock Holmes's nemesis, Professor Moriarty!

Later in this issue, Rich Krisciunas will tell you how much of an impact this story had on the reading public when it came out. On other topics, Beth Gallego has some great book recommendations and Liese Sherwood-Fabre will tell you the history of food preservation.

Of course, you can always count on Steve Mason's brain teaser, maze, and mini-mystery to get your wheels turning.

So why brave the cold when there's so much to do right here in the latest issue of Sherlock's Spotlight?

Until our next issue…. The game's afoot!

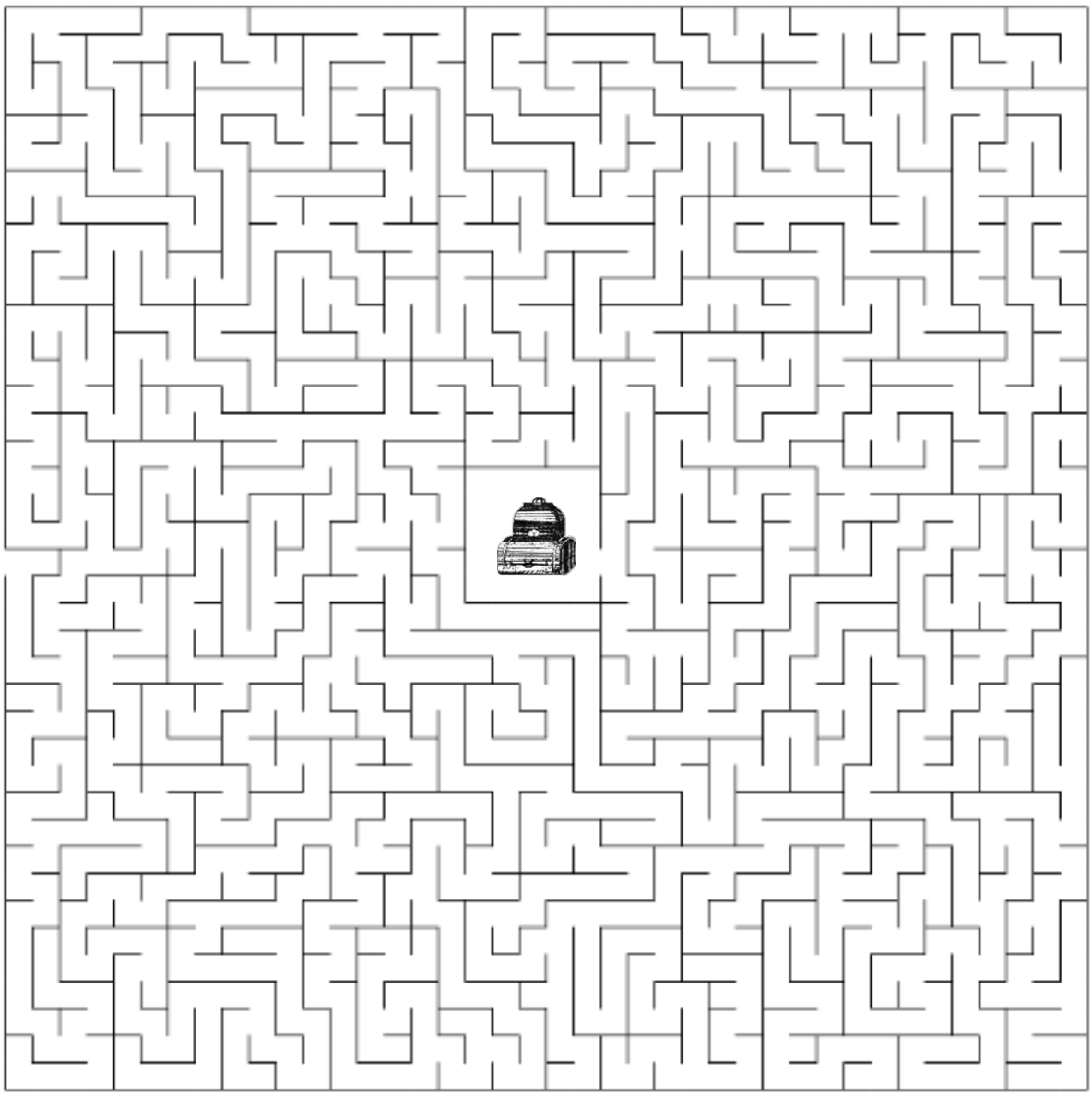
Rob Nunn

Head-Light, The Beacon Society

That's-A-Maze-ing

In "The Final Problem," Holmes and Watson travel to Europe with a pile of luggage. Please help Sherlock Holmes find his missing luggage.

Find the answer on page 17



Story Profile:
"The Final Problem"

First published in

- *Strand Magazine*, December 1893
- *McClure's Magazine*, December 1893

When the story takes place

- Friday, April 24, 1891

Primary Cast of Characters

- **MYCROFT**, Sherlock's brother
- **PROFESSOR MORIARTY,** "the Napoleon of Crime."
- **COL. JAMES MORIARTY,** Professor Moriarty's brother**.**
- **PETER STEILER,** proprietor of the Englisher Hof at Meiningen**.**
- **INSPECTOR PATTERSON,** in charge of rounding up the professor's gang**.**

Summary

In "The Final Problem," Watson is married and has his own medical practice. He no longer lives at 221b with Sherlock Holmes. One night, when Watson's wife is away, Holmes sneaks into Watson's waiting room and closes the shutters, telling Watson he is fearful of air guns. He tells Watson all about Professor Moriarty, his gang, and their crimes.

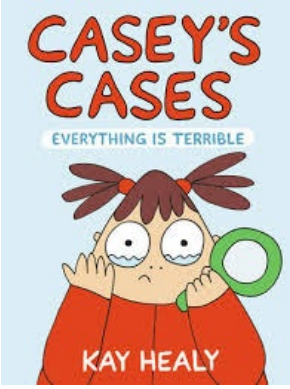
Holmes says Moriarty wants to kill him and has tried to run him down with a wagon, drop a heavy brick on him, attack him with a bludgeon, and finally has set fire to his rooms. Moriarty knows that in three days Holmes will be able to put Moriarty and his entire gang in jail. Until then, Holmes must stay alive! He invites Watson to go to Europe with him and Watson agrees, since "an accommodating neighbor" will see to his patients while he's gone.

The next day, following Holmes's instructions, Watson takes a circuitous route to Victoria Station, riding in a brougham driven by Sherlock's brother, Mycroft, who is in disguise.

Holmes and Watson know Moriarty will try to follow them, so they take a sneaky route to Europe and are devious in their travel plans to throw any pursuers off their path.

Eventually Moriarty overtakes them at the Reichenbach Falls. Watson is lured away by a fake note asking for his help back at the hotel. Holmes and Moriarty meet and fight and fall to their deaths, ending the career – as Watson says – "of the best and wisest man whom I have ever known."

Entertainment Resources for Younger Sherlockians: Comics, Books, & Graphic Novels



Casey's Cases: Everything is Terrible

Written and Illustrated by Kay Healy

Published by Neal Porter Books (Holiday House)

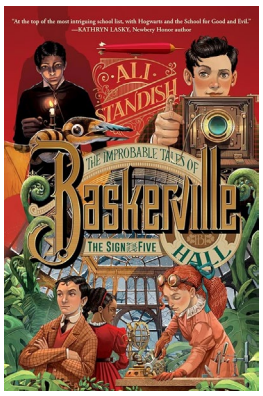
Recommended for: ages 7-10 (grades 2-5)

Casey Cauldwell is back and ready to tackle more mysteries, like "The Case of AJ's Full Name," "The Case of the Missing Vacuum," "The Case of the Tiny Clothing," "The Case of the Embarrassing Bathtub Photo," and even "The Case of Everything is Terrible!"

Along the way, Casey runs into the social challenges of the fifth grade. Will she win election for Class President? Will AJ ask her to the school dance? Will the class bully, Dina, really show everyone that embarrassing photo of Casey? And how did Dina get that photo when the only person who has seen it is Casey's best friend, Jan?

Things are changing at home, too: Casey finally has to say good-bye to Ms. Muffin's kittens and get ready to say hello to a new sibling. But nothing can keep Casey down for long, so things can't stay terrible forever, right?

This is the second book in a series, but the author has not said if there will be more in the future. For more fun with Casey, check out author Kay Healy's website for some printable craft activities.



The Improbable Tales of Baskerville Hall: The Sign of the Five

The Improbable Tales of Baskerville Hall: The Valley of Lies

Written by Ali Standish

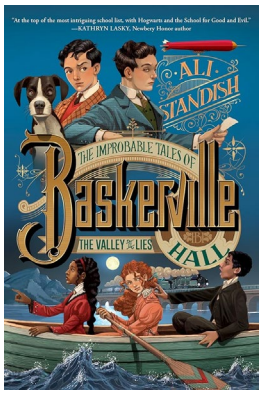
Published by HarperCollins

Recommended for: ages 8-12 (grades 3-7)

In the first book of this series, young Arthur Conan Doyle was admitted to the exclusive Baskerville Hall school just before classes began. His fellow students included names familiar to Sherlockians: his roommate, Jimmie Moriarty; an American girl named Irene Eagle; Mary "Pocket" Morstan, a very clever

young woman; and Sebastian Moran, a very unpleasant and snobby boy.

In book 2, *The Sign of the Five*, Arthur, Jimmie, Irene, Pocket, and a boy named Grover have become close friends through their very tumultuous first term. There are more adventures in store, as the five students find themselves caught in a fight that goes back decades before they were born. After Professor Holmes and Headmaster Challenger are poisoned, leaving them both unconscious, it is up to Arthur and his friends to put together the clues and find out who is really behind the attacks and why. With supernatural influences apparently involved, it will take all of them together to solve the mystery.



The third and final book, *The Valley of Lies*, follows the students through the end of their first year at Baskerville Hall. A class trip to the Lake District is far from the peaceful vacation any of them might have hoped for. Secrets that began coming between them in *The Sign of the Five* have only grown and become more complicated. By the end, none of them will be quite the same.

Throughout the series, historical facts and figures are blended with science fiction and fantasy to create a satisfying suspenseful adventure. Back matter in all of the books includes photographs and biographical information about Arthur Conan Doyle and his real-life adventures.

Beth Gallego, ASH, BSI

BRAIN-TEASER: The Mysterious Box

Watson and Holmes are called to the offices of Scotland Yard by Inspector Lestrade. Once there, Lestrade leads them to the Evidence Room, where a table and wooden box are located.

Lestrade explains the locked box had been removed from a crime scene, and had been moved from the floor of the Evidence Room to the table by an officer earlier this day.

Later on, the box was to be moved to another room for further inspection. However, now several officers could not lift the box off the table because of its weight. No one can determine why?

Holmes walked over to the box, knocking on all the visible sides of the container. He then tapped on the metal table the box was sitting on.

"I know what is in the box. You may never be able to remove the box while it is sealed."

What did Holmes determine was in the box.

The answer is on page 18

JUST CAN IT

Sherlock Holmes was not above choosing convenience over luxury in certain situations. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, he camped out on the moors in an ancient dwelling and lived on tinned (canned) foods such as beef tongue (a common Victorian dish) and peaches. Over the 19th century, tinning—or canning—food provided an important way to increase the variety and quality of people's diets.

For centuries, humans searched for ways to preserve good so they could survive long winters, droughts, or long journeys. Smoking, salting, pickling, and drying foods developed over time. These methods, however, had drawbacks. In 1795, the French government held a contest for an effective and efficient way to preserve food. The winner, Nicolas Appert, created a method of packing food in wide-necked glass containers and published his method in 1810. Soon, the process spread around the world.

Glass containers, however, tended to explode, violently spraying glass and the container's contents outward. Another Frenchman, Philippe de Girard, developed a method of using tin cans in 1811. A British merchant, Bryan Donkin, purchased the patent for tinned foods and produced them on a large scale to supply the Royal Navy and Arctic explorers. Such foods, however, were not without their dangers. The 1845 British Arctic expedition saw the death of several crew members from lead poisoning because some of the cans' seams had not been correctly sealed. Almost all of the supply was contaminated as a result.

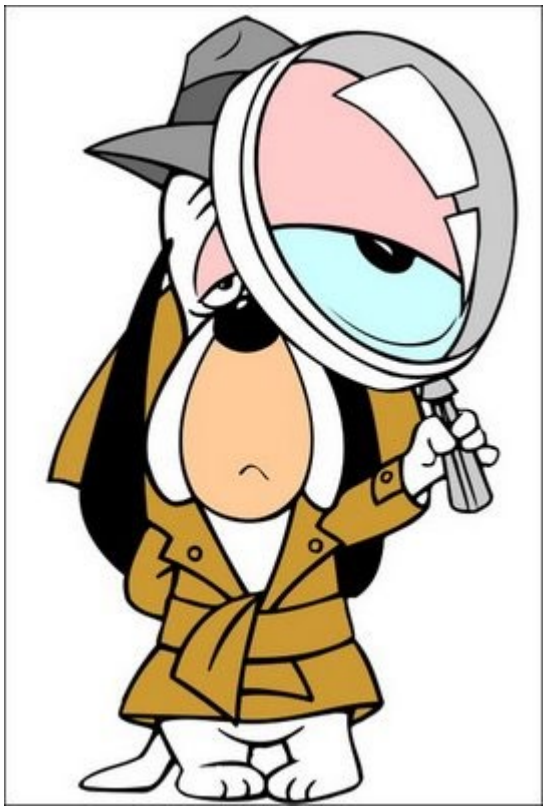
Canning was introduced in the US in 1825 with the introduction of canned oysters, fruits, meats, and vegetables, but it was Gail Bordon, Jr.'s condensed milk that made the process a commercial success. Borden introduced his Eagle Brand sweetened condensed milk in 1856 and supplied it to the US military during the Civil War. The product was also credited with reducing infant mortality in North America because the milk remained safe until it was used.

Cans and tins, however, predated any way to open them by about fifty years. Tops had to be

chiseled or pried open with an implement such as a hammer or bayonet. The can opener finally came along in 1858 when Ezra Warner patented his device.

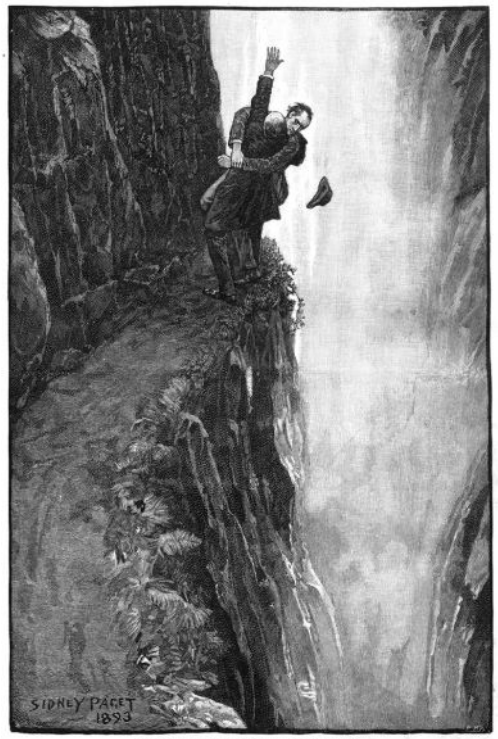
Today, most foods are packed near the source and often at the peak of harvest. As a result, few nutrients are lost during the process, and some are even enhanced. Almost any food that is grown can be canned. This is a long way from tinned tongue and peaches.

Liese Sherwood-Fabre, PhD, BSI



SHERLOCK HOLMES IS DEAD!

Sherlock Holmes is dead! "No! He's dead? It can't be true." Can you imagine how readers of "The Final Problem" must have felt in December 1893? Stories about Sherlock Holmes had appeared in English and American magazines since 1887. Author Arthur Conan Doyle had made a significant amount of money having published two novels, *A Study in Scarlett* and *The Sign of Four* along with 24 short stories that were published almost every month in *The Strand Magazine* in England as well as numerous newspapers in America from July 1891 through November 1893.



THE DEATH OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.

The short stories were later published together in two books, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. The Sherlock Holmes stories were so popular that readers lined up at newsstands for *The Strand* on publication day whenever a new Holmes story was to appear inside. One historian wrote, because of Holmes, Conan Doyle was, "as well-known as Queen Victoria".

Readers around the world were shocked to learn that the world's greatest consulting detective had died at Reichenbach Falls after a struggle with his long-time nemesis Prof. James Moriarty, the Napoleon of crime.

Artist Sydney Paget's drawing captured the world's most famous consulting detective's final moments before his disappearance. Dr. John H. Watson recounted the days leading up to the end and regarded Holmes "as the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known."

Many readers of *The Strand* were outraged by news of Holmes's death and hundreds wrote letters of protest. One letter addressed to Conan Doyle began, "You brute!" Americans started "Let's Keep Holmes Alive" clubs. Tales circulated around London of Holmes's fans wearing black mourning bands. More than 20,000 *Strand* readers cancelled their subscriptions which crippled the magazine financially and for a time it seemed as if it might fold.

Why did Arthur Conan Doyle kill off his profitable detective? Conan Doyle's reason for ending the Holmes stories was that he wanted to write about other things, both historical fiction and non-fiction, and, writing to his mother, he explained his decision, "I must save my mind for better things even if it means I must bury my pocketbook with him." In a speech, Conan Doyle

explained, "but I hold that it was not murder, but justifiable homicide in self-defense, since, if I had not killed him, he would certainly have killed me."

In 1894, the first year after Holmes's death, Conan Doyle concentrated on writing historical novels and published a play, "A Story of Waterloo", a novel, *The Parasite*, six short stories in a book based on his experiences as a medical doctor titled *Round the Red Lamp: Being Facts and Fancies of Medical Life*, and he resumed publishing writings in *The Strand Magazine*, this time about the adventures of Brigadier Gerard, a French military officer under Napoleon Bonapart.

Conan Doyle would write seven more Brigadier Gerard stories for *The Strand Magazine* the following year, in addition to a novel, *The Stark Munro Letters,* which was comprised of twelve letters from a doctor to a former friend and fellow-student that were somewhat autobiographical. For eight years after "The Final Problem" was published, Conan Doyle continued writing non-Sherlock Holmes short stories and novels, works that were published in *The Strand Magazine.*

In 1899, when Britain declared war on two Boer Republics of South Africa, Conan Doyle attempted to join the army at age 40 but was turned down. Conan Doyle then volunteered his medical skills, serving in a field hospital for the Royal Army Medical Corps in South Africa. He captured his wartime observations in a medical hospital treating soldier injuries and dealing with a typhoid epidemic on the battlefields when he published *The Great Boer War* in September 1900 and then continued to revise the book until he finished in 1902.

As a recognition of his wartime service and writing this book, he was knighted by King Edward VII. In correspondence with his mother, Conan Doyle intended to refuse the knighthood but in the end, she wore him down. "To refuse the honor," she said, "would constitute an insult to the king."

In 1901, eight years after the story of Holmes's death at Reichenbach, Conan Doyle wrote *The Hound of the Baskervilles* which took place prior to "The Final Problem," in 1889. The story was serialized in *The Strand Magazine* from August 1901 to April 1902. The success of *Hound* contributed to *The Strand* and the American magazine *Colliers* offering him more money than he had ever been offered for his writing before.

The good news for Sherlock Holmes fans was that Conan Doyle brought the consulting detective back to life beginning in 1903 with the explanation that Holmes had faked his death and only Moriarty had died in the fall. In Holmes's universe, "The Final Problem" took place in 1891, and "The Empty House" in 1894, so while ten years had passed in real life, Holmes had been on hiatus for only three years when he returned.

In all, Conan Doyle wrote four Sherlock Holmes novels and 56 short stories. His last Holmes story was "The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place" which was published in 1927, three years before the death of Conan Doyle. And now, since Sherlock Holmes never died, you can look forward to reading another 32 of his short story adventures and another novel, *The Valley of Fear*.

Rich Krisciunas, BSI, ASH

Sherlock Holmes Mini-Mystery

Holmes and Watson were called into a very secretive mission… several of the Royal Family jewels have been taken from the Tower of London.

It is not a normal robbery… the thief has left a clue at each location where the next jewel may be found.

Can you put the following list of clues in order, showing the path to regain all the missing jewels.

1. The diamonds did not lead them immediately to the garnets or rubies; the rubies did not lead them immediately to the diamonds or garnets; the garnets did not lead them to immediately to the diamonds or rubies.
2. The golden tiara was found sometime after the silver coins, but not immediately after.
3. The rubies were found two spots after the golden tiara.
4. The garnets were one of the first three things found, but not the first.
5. The silver necklace was one of the last three things found, but not the last.

The answer is on page 18

Steve Mason

The Junior Sherlockian Society

Unlocking a young person's understanding and appreciation of Sherlock Holmes

JUNIOR SHERLOCKIAN SOCIETY
OBSERVE REASON

The game is afoot!

The Beacon Society invites youth to complete Junior Sherlockian Training – an in-depth study of Sherlock Holmes's character traits, observational skills, capacity for critical thought, and inductive and deductive reasoning.

During the online training, Junior Sherlockians-in-Training complete tasks to ***explore***, ***experience***, and ***extend*** their understanding and appreciation of the great detective.

Upon completion of the tasks and submission of "training evidence", a certificate of completion is granted.

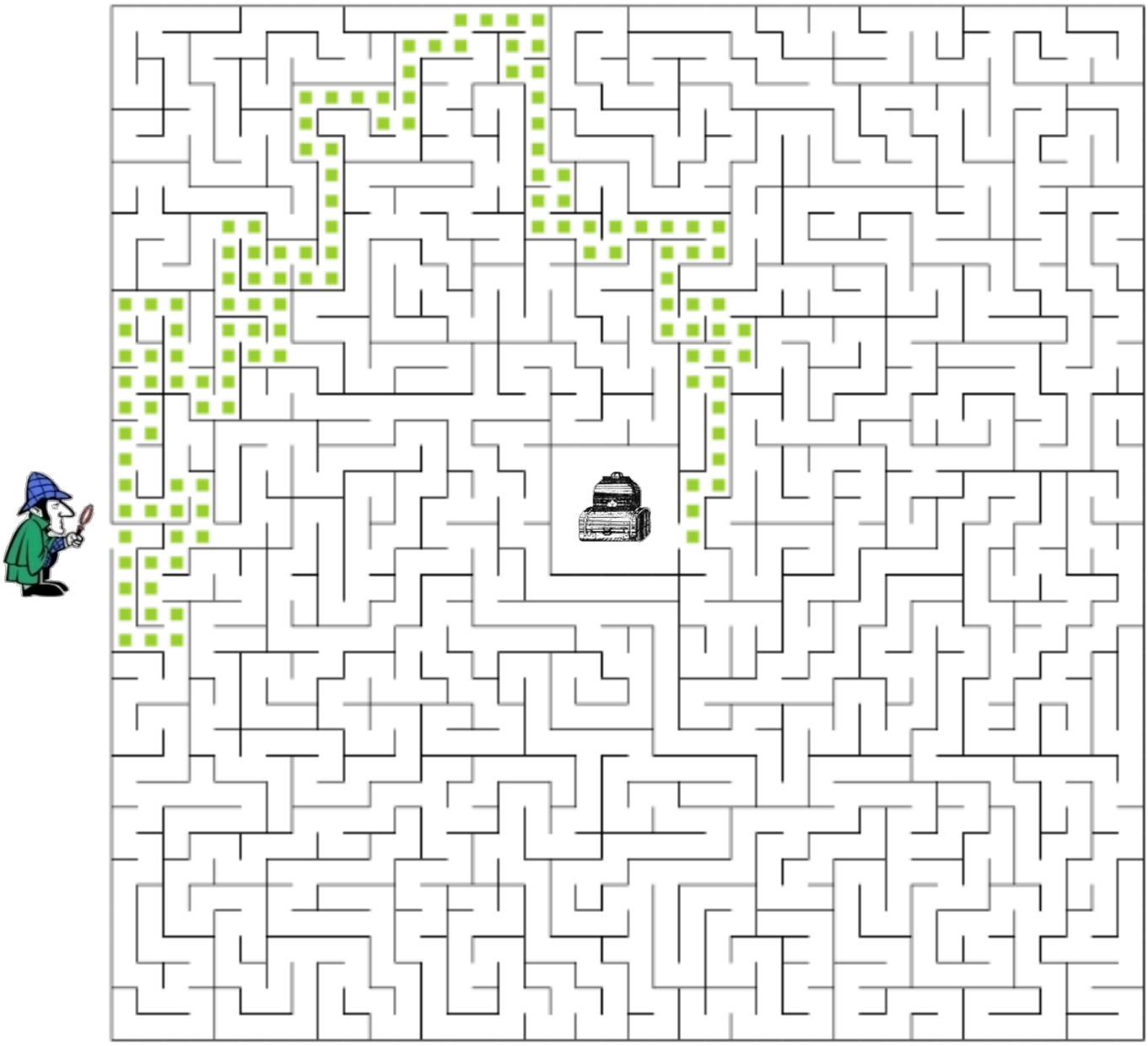
2	2	1	B
Explore Complete TWO TASKS to be introduced to the great detective.	**Experience** Read or listen to TWO stories written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.	**Extend** Complete ONE TASK to extend your understanding and appreciation.	**'B' RECOGNIZED** Submit your 2-2-1-b training evidence.

Begin your Sherlockian training
At https://www.beaconsociety.com/junior-sherlockian-society.html

THE BEACON SOCIETY

Puzzle Answers

THAT'S-A-MAZE-ING



Brain-Teaser

The box is full of very strong magnets. They have become magnetically attracted to the metal table the box is sitting on.

Mini-Mystery

The order in which the jewels could be found is:

1. Diamonds
2. Silver coins
3. Garnets
4. Golden tiara
5. Silver necklace
6. Rubies