SHERLOCK'S SPOTLIGHT

A Quarterly Gazette for Young Sherlockians Everywhere

Autumn 2026

"The Adventure of the Norwood Builder"

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 4

Autumn 2026: "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder"

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

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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

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SHERLOCK'S SPOTLIGHT

Volume 7, Number 4

Autumn 2026: "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder"

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Highlights from the Head-Light

The Beacon Society is proud to bring you the Autumn 2026 issue of Sherlock's Spotlight! Our society publishes these quarterly gazettes for all of our readers to learn more about Sherlock Holmes and his world of Sherlockiana.

This issue focuses on the story called "The Norwood Builder." You can read a summary of the clever mystery and then help Sherlock Holmes navigate a maze to the secret passage where the criminal Oldacre is hiding! You will also learn about fingerprints, and how they feature in the story. You can enjoy playing Sherlock Holmes as you try to solve the Mini Mystery as well as the Brain Teaser. Our Spotlight also features some great book recommendations! I hope you enjoy this latest issue of Sherlock's Spotlight!

I also want to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Head-Light of the Beacon Society! I have big shoes to fill as our outgoing Head-Light Rob Nunn has done a fantastic job of leading the Beacon Society. We thank him for his service and his commitment to bringing Sherlock Holmes to young readers.

I am not new to the Beacon Society as I have been serving as the secretary (Percy Phelps) for the past several years. I was also honored to receive the Beacon Society's Susan Z. Diamond Award for bringing Sherlock Holmes to the students at my school, and for hosting Sherlock Week in my hometown in New Hampshire.

I am excited to share the fascinating world of Sherlockiana with you!

The game's afoot!

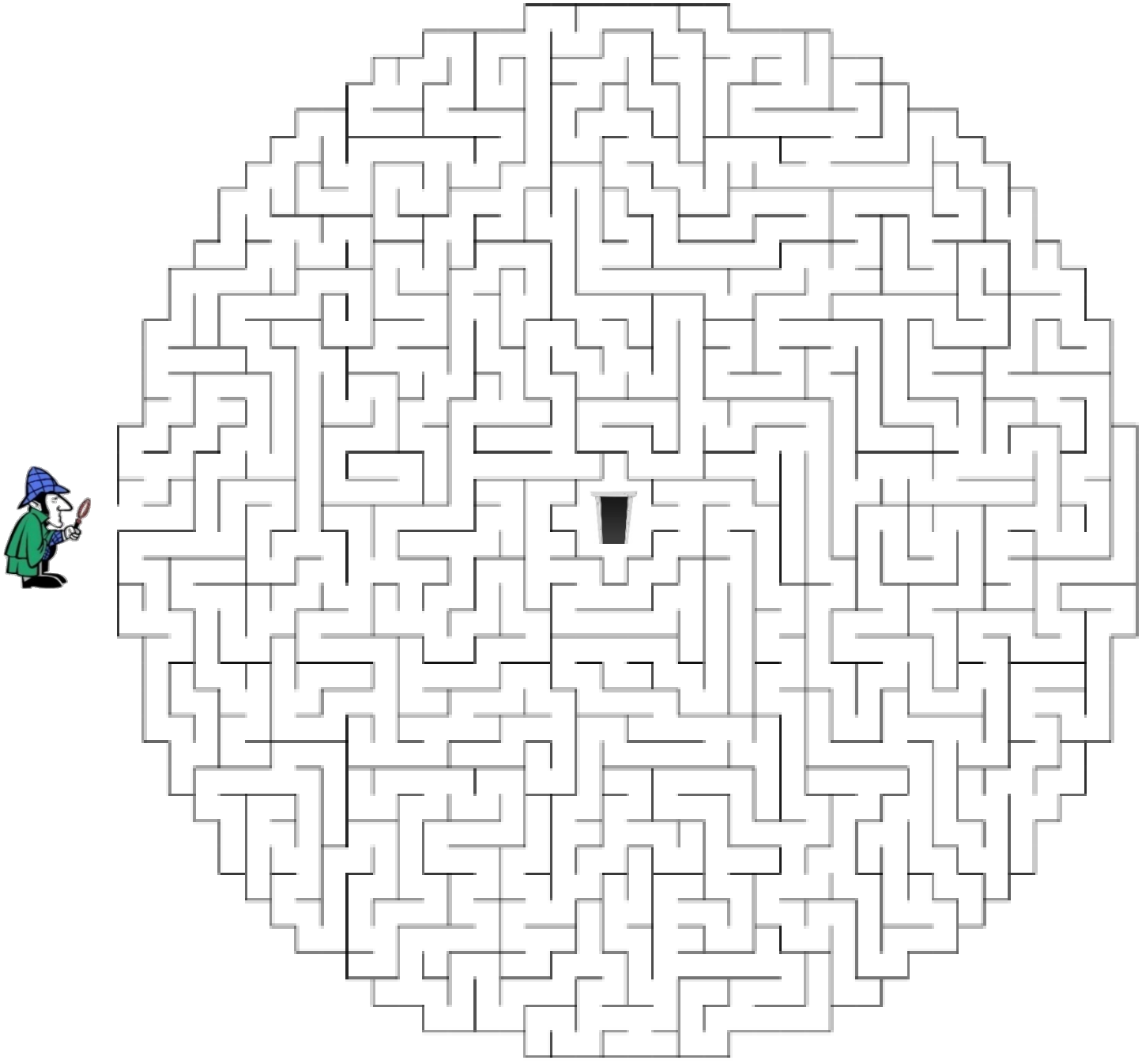
Anna Behrens

Head-Light, The Beacon Society

That's-A-Maze-ing

In "The Norwood Builder," Holmes must find the hidden room where Jonas Oldacre is hiding. Help Holmes find the hidden passage concealing Mr. Oldacre.

Find the answer on page 16



Story Profile:
"The Adventure of the Norwood Builder"

First published in

- *Collier Weekly Magazine,* November, 1903

When the story takes place

- Midsummer, 1894

Primary Cast of Characters

- **JONAS OLDACRE**, the Norwood builder
- **JOHN HECTOR McFARLANE**, accused of murdering Oldacre.
- **MRS. LEXINGTON**, Oldacre's accomplice and housekeeper.
- **MR. CORNELIUS**, alias used by Oldacre.
- **MRS. McFARLANE**, mother of John and former fiancée of Oldacre.
- **LESTRADE**, Scotland Yard Inspector
- **HYAMS**, Oldacre's tailor

Summary

One morning, as Holmes is complaining to Watson (who had moved back to Baker Street a few months ago) about the lack of interesting criminal cases since the death of Moriarty, a panic-stricken young solicitor called John McFarlane burst in the room, certain that he is about to be arrested for the murder of Jonas Oldacre, a builder in Lower Norwood.

Oldacre is a wealthy 52-year-old bachelor that McFarlane hadn't met until the day before, when he came to the law office to announce that he intended to make him heir to a considerable bequest, having heard high praise of the young man. Oldacre invites McFarlane home on the same night to seal the deal.

The next day, Oldacre is missing and burnt remains were found after a fire in a wood pile behind his house. Signs of a struggle, scattered papers and McFarlane's walking stick were found in his home.

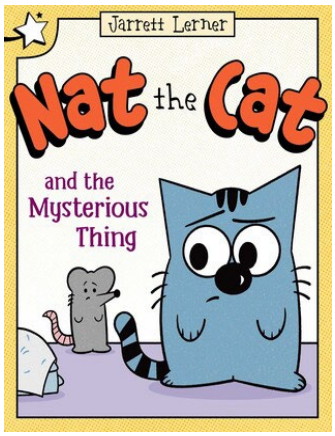
Lestrade, who arrived in 221B Baker Street in the meantime, arrests the young man; Holmes, who noticed that Oldacre's will seems to have been written carelessly on a train, states he's heading to Blackheath, where McFarlane's parents are living. He learns that Oldacre and McFarlane's mother were engaged years earlier but she broke it off. Continuing to Norwood, he examined the builder's house but found nothing that could exonerate the lawyer. He did, however, find a "curious little point" in Oldacre's papers: lately, several cheques for substantial amounts had been made out to a Mr. Cornelius. The next day, Holmes and Watson head back to Norwood, asked here by Lestrade who shows them new evidence against McFarlane: his bloody thumbprint on the wall. Holmes, who had examined the wall the day before and was certain the print hadn't been there, then, understands that Oldacre is still in the house and starts a fire to bring him out of hiding.

Oldacre claims it had all been a practical joke, but Holmes explains to Lestrade he acted out of revenge toward the woman who rejected him and had intended to start a new life under the name of Cornelius.

(from the ACD Encyclopedia, at arthur-conan-doyle.com)

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

Nat the Cat and the Mysterious Thing



Written and illustrated by Jarrett Lerner

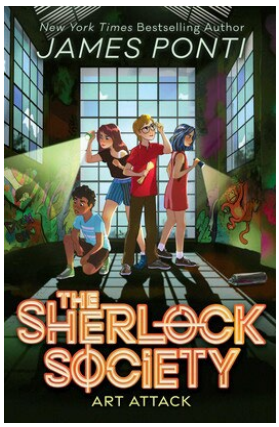
Published by Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing

Recommended for: ages 5-8 (grades K-3)

Nat the Cat and Pat the Rat have found a mysterious thing. Nat doesn't know what the thing is. Pat doesn't know what the thing is. That means one thing: time to investigate! It is dusty. It is hairy. And whatever it is, it seems to be waking up!

Nat and Pat are already the stars of a Ready-to-Read series. With fun comic-book-style illustrations, simple dialogue, and short chapters, this quick-paced mystery is the perfect next step for fans ready to take on chapter book adventures.

The Sherlock Society: Art Attack



Written by James Ponti

Published by Aladdin

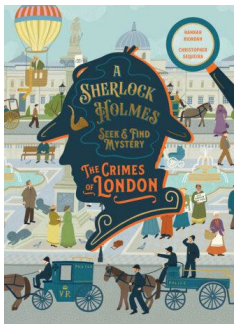
Recommended for: ages 8 to 12 (grades 3-7)

Alex, Zoe, Lina, Yadi, and Grandpa are back for another adventure. This time, the Sherlock Society has a paid case: a developer wants local graffiti artist Funky Munky to paint a mural for them, and he is willing to pay up to $20,000 if they can uncover Munky's real identity and put them in contact.

It starts out as an interesting challenge, but figuring out the answer raises more questions. Are the good guys really good? Who exactly are the bad guys? And how far will the Sherlock Society go to follow a lead?

As in the previous books, clever clue-solving and a little dangerous action combine to make a satisfying mystery.

A Sherlock Holmes Seek & Find Mystery: The Crimes of London



Written by Christopher Sequeira

Illustrated by Hannah Riordan

Published by Smith Street Books

Recommended for: ages 8 and up (grades 3 and up)

There is a new master villain at work in London, and Mycroft Holmes wants you to assist Holmes and Watson in tracking down the criminal. Who is The Observer, and how do they manage to stay one step ahead at all times?

Carefully search detailed illustrations of Trafalgar Square, the Crystal Palace, the Lyceum Theatre, and other famous locations for hidden clues to The Observer's true identity. Help solve some other quick cases along the way, and keep an eye out for some familiar names and faces. All the answers are provided in a special case file at the end - no peeking until you have your solution ready!

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Beth Gallego, ASH, BSI

BRAIN-TEASER: A Mysterious Shipwreck

Holmes and I were at the horse track, researching racing in advance of our adventure known as “Silver Blaze.” While watching the horses circle the track, Holmes could not resist posing the following 2 questions to me.

“For this race, there are 8 horses running. Now tell me, Watson, if a horse begins to move up through the field of horses, and overtakes the horse in 2nd place, what place is that horse in now?

I immediately answered, “Of course the horse is now in 1st place, that being one better than 2nd.”

Holmes responded, “That is logical… now for the 2nd teaser… If a horse has just overtaken the horse in last position, what position is that horse in now?”

The answer seemed so obvious to me. There are 8 horses in the race, so this horse is now clearly one from last, so it must be in the 7th position.

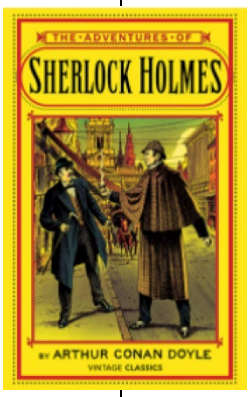
Holmes sighed, and said, “Watson, you have made 2 very false assumptions and conclusions.”

Can you guess what those two mistakes were.

The answer is on page 17

YELLOW-BACK NOVELS

Yellow-back novels were a popular form of entertainment during the Victorian era, particularly among railway travelers. In "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," Dr. Watson tried to amuse himself by reading one, and Violet Hunter read another to her employer in "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches." Their growing popularity reflected the increasing number of people who could read and wanted affordable books.



The term "yellow-back" originated from a printing technique developed by engraver Edmund Evans in 1847. He produced colorful illustrations on yellow-glazed paper, creating eye-catching covers that attracted readers from a distance. Most books measured approximately seven by five inches and could easily fit into a pocket. Although yellow-backs cost almost twice as much as ordinary paperback books, many readers considered their sturdier covers and clearer printing worth the price. Advertisements for common products like soap and cocoa on the back cover and inside pages also allowed the books to be more affordable.

Several publishers produced yellow-backed books, but George Routledge achieved particular success with his "Railway Library" series, which ran from 1848 to 1899. W.H. Smith sold many of these books at his railway bookstalls, starting with his first store at London's Euston Station in 1848. By 1860, his business had expanded across most major railway lines. The books would entertain passengers during train journeys, after which readers might exchange them, discard them, or pass them along. Since Watson visited a railway station before beginning his yellow-back novel, he might have purchased his there.

The yellow-backs might also have owed their popularity to their subject matter, which often featured mysteries, crimes, dramatic events, and unexpected revelations. Victorians called these stories "sensation novels" because they aimed to surprise readers. Passengers could enjoy such books while traveling among strangers without worrying about the opinions of friends or family. Booksellers, however, reviewed the publications to ensure they offered suitable reading material. Their selections also included inexpensive editions of novels by famous authors, along with nonfiction works on science, medicine, and sports.

Unfortunately, travelers frequently discarded these books, so relatively few survive today. Many authors published their works only in yellow-back editions, making the surviving copies valuable to historians studying Victorian society. To preserve these books, several institutions have made them available digitally. Emory University offers more than 1,200 for download: https://tinyurl.com/yjwu43hm.

In 2017, W.H. Smith reproduced several titles for its 225th anniversary, including *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Watson found the plot of his yellow-back novel rather thin, but readers of the Sherlock Holmes yellow-back would have enjoyed theirs much more.

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Liese Sherwood-Fabre, PhD, BSI

FINGERPRINTS

“The Adventure of the Norwood Builder” is one of the few Sherlock Holmes stories in which a fingerprint provided a clue to help identify a suspect of a crime. Insp. Lestrade found a bloody thumb print on a wall in Jonas Oldacre’s house and told Holmes,

"You are aware that no two thumb marks are alike?"

"I have heard something of the kind."

"Well, then, will you please compare that print with this wax impression of young McFarlane's right thumb, taken by my orders this morning?"

Dr. Watson wrote, “As he held the waxen print close to the blood-stain it did not take a magnifying glass to see that the two were undoubtedly from the same thumb.”

A fingerprint is a special mark left on a surface by a human finger. Fingerprints can be left on surfaces when the oils, sweat, and other residues from the skin transfer onto those surfaces, creating impressions known as latent fingerprints. A fingerprint can be left on many surfaces such as a window, a door, or a murder weapon. These prints are often invisible to the naked eye and require specific techniques for detection and enhancement. A fingerprint can be made visible by brushing it with a powder, by viewing it under a special light, or treating it with chemicals in a lab.

No two people, not even identical twins, have the exact same fingerprints. Every person has unique fingerprint patterns with different shapes and designs. This makes them extremely valuable for telling people apart. Your fingers have tiny raised lines and grooves, like miniature mountains and valleys. These patterns are called friction ridges.

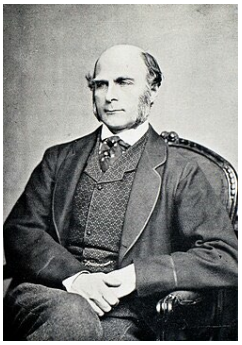
Every person’s unique fingerprints, can be classified into three basic types of patterns known as loops, whorls, and arches.

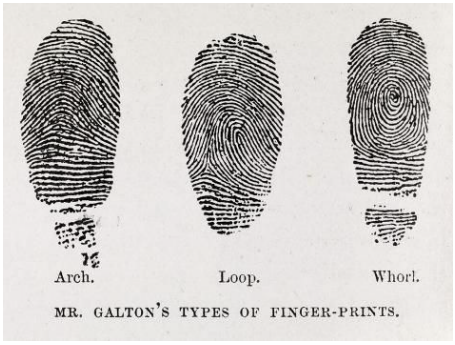
The most common type of pattern is a Loop which starts on one side of the finger, curves around, and then exits on the same side. Loops make up about 60-65% of all fingerprints. A Whorl pattern looks like a circle or a spiral. It has at least one ridge that makes a complete circle. Whorls are found in about 30-35% of fingerprints. The rarest type of pattern is an Arch which looks like a gentle hill or a wave. The ridges rise in the middle and then fall on the other side. Arches make up only about 5% of all fingerprints.

Throughout history, fingerprints have been used for identification purposes. Some of the earliest uses of fingerprinting date back to 1000 BC when fingerprints were used in place of signatures on official documents in places including China, Babylon and Persia.

In 1686, an Italian professor, Marcello Malpighi, was one of the first people to seriously analyze fingerprints. He found fingerprints to have common patterns, which he identified as arches, loops, whorls, and ridges. By 1880, Dr. Henry Faulds, a Tokyo physician, conducted his own experiments and suggested that a human's fingerprints are *unique* after he successfully matched a lab worker to fingerprints left on a stray bottle.

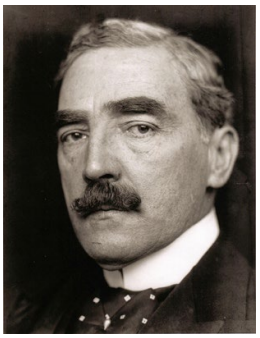
It was not until 1892 that fingerprints were used to solve a crime. In Argentina, police discovered a bloody fingerprint on a door frame and analyzed it to identify the murderer; a mother, Francisca Rojas, who killed her two children. In the same year, Sir Francis Galton, a British scientist who was a cousin of Charles Darwin, published a book, *Finger Prints*, in the same year, establishing that fingerprints were permanent and unique to every person. This book included the first published classification system for fingerprints.





SIR FRANCIS GALTON

According to chronologists who try to identify the dates that the stories about Sherlock Holmes took place, the "Norwood Builder" took place around 1894. When did the police in England start using fingerprints? In 1897, in Britain, Galton's system of classifying prints by patterns and shapes was further developed by Sir Edward R. Henry and was eventually accepted by Scotland Yard in 1901. That same year, English courts first accepted fingerprint evidence at trials. The Henry system soon became the standard fingerprint-classification method throughout the English-speaking world.

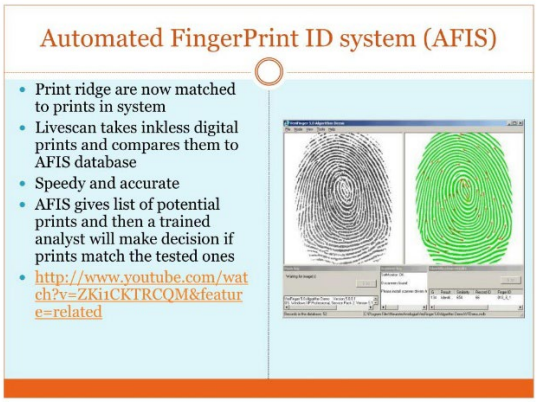


SIR EDWARD R. HENRY

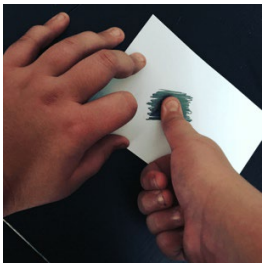
When criminal defendants were arrested, they were fingerprinted and their prints were retained by the police. The first conviction in the UK based on fingerprint evidence occurred in June 1902, in a burglary case in South London where a police officer noticed fingerprints on a window sill that had recently been painted.

Identifying a *known* suspect by comparing his fingerprints with prints found at a crime scene was a major breakthrough for police, however, there was no easy way of identifying an unknown suspect *solely* on the basis of latent fingerprints left at a crime scene, because police would not know which particular set of prints on file (if any) might match those left by the suspect. This problem didn't change until the 1980s when the Japanese National Police Agency established the first electronic system for matching prints. Today police in most

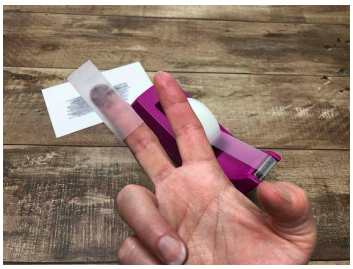
countries use such systems, called automated fingerprint identification systems or (AFIS), to search rapidly through millions of digitized fingerprint records.



Now that you know more about fingerprints, what type of patterns do you have on your fingers? One way to find out is to take a #2 graphite pencil and scribble back and forth on an index card until you have a square two inches by two inches wide. Then firmly place your thumb on the pencil marks and move it back and force to coat your thumb with graphite from the pencil.



Next, take a transparent piece of adhesive tape and place it in front of you, sticky side up. Then place your thumb on the tape being careful not to slide your thumb. The sticky side of the tape will pick up the fingerprint. Then carefully lift the tape and place it sticky side down on a white unlined index card. Large index cards are the perfect size to make prints for multiple fingers.



Now use a magnifying glass like Sherlock Holmes and compare your thumb print with the different fingerprint patterns above. Is your thumb print a loop, arch or a whorl? Next, try this with all of your fingers and see what else you find. Here's a YouTube video that will show you how to do it.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJbv23_pWOo

Rich Krisciunas, BSI, ASH

Sherlock Holmes Mini-Mystery

During our "Adventure of the Illustrious Client," Holmes and I visited Violet de Merville at her family home, a house as forbidding as a castle at Berkeley Square. During our hansom cab trip there, Holmes decided it was time to tease me with one of his brain exercises.

"Since we are visiting a 'CASTLE', I challenge you with the following. I will give you 5 challenges. Each challenge consists of the word 'CASTLE' with 1 additional letter of the alphabet. I will also provide a hint for each challenge. Your job is to unscramble the word 'CASTLE' and the additional letter to form a new word that fits the clue. Good luck."

Let's see how you do with the challenge.

1. CASTLE + 'H' = _____ hint: Homes in the Swiss Alps Mountains
2. CASTLE + 'I' = _____ hint: Stretchy
3. CASTLE + 'M' = _____ hint: Least ruffled
4. CASTLE + 'K' = _____ hint: Move made by Rugby players
5. CASTLE + 'R' = _____ hint: Bright red
6. CASTLE + 'O' = _____ hint: An enzyme found in milk

The answer is on page 17

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.

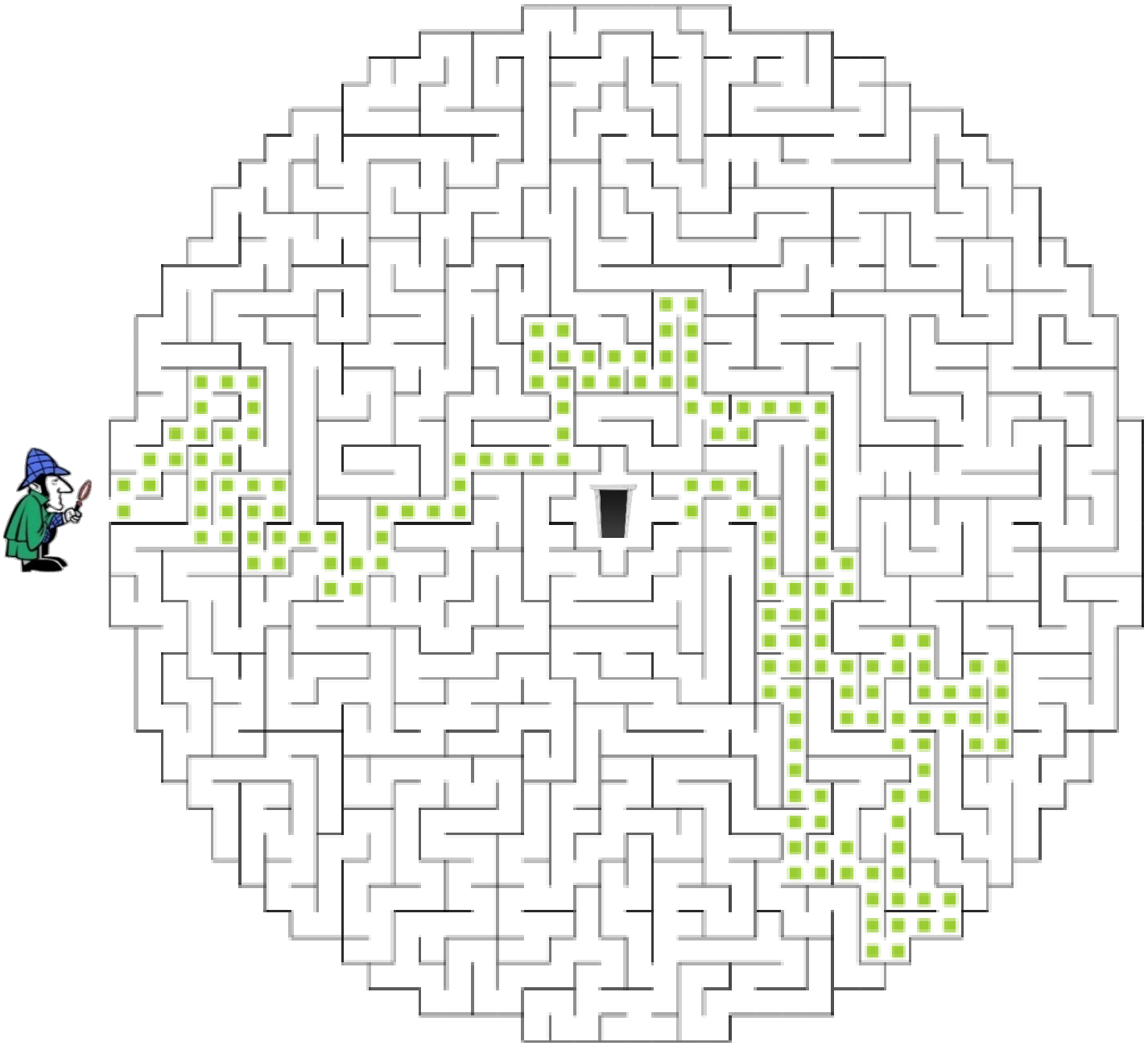
2	2	1	B
Explore Complete TWO TASKS to be introduced to the great detective.	**Experience** Read or listen to TWO stories written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.	**Extend** Complete ONE TASK to extend your understanding and appreciation.	**'B' RECOGNIZED** Submit your 2-2-1-b training evidence.

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

If a horse is in 2nd place and is overtaken, the horse overtaking him is now in 2nd place, not 1st.

If a horse is in last place in a race, then a horse overtaking him must have lapped him… otherwise, the faster horse would have been last place. So the faster horse could be in any place, other than last.

Mini-Mystery

1. CHALETS
2. ELASTIC
3. CALMEST
4. TACKLES
5. SCARLET
6. LACTOSE