

SHERLOCK HOLMES

“Cheap, Healthful Literature”

Pre-Exhibit Field Trip: Grades 9-12
Extensions for Grades 6-8

Many of the Sherlock Holmes stories were first published in “The Strand,” a popular British literary and lifestyle magazine. Students will view “The Strand” online, explore short story structure, and participate in a collaborative writing project.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- View a Sherlock Holmes story in its original published form and explore historic periodicals
- Learn the structure of a short story
- Contribute to a collaborative short story composed by the class

TIME REQUIRED

Pre-Lesson:
Reading Assignment

Lesson Plan:
~60 minutes

Post-Lesson:
Writing Assignment

PROGRAM FORMAT

<u>Segment</u>	<u>Format</u>	<u>Time</u>
Introduction	Viewing <i>The Strand</i>	10 min
The Short Story	Group Discussion	20 min
Building a Mystery	Group Writing Activity	30 min

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using an effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using an effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

SUPPLIES

Supplies	Amount	Notes
“The Adventure of the Copper Beeches” short story	1 per student	See the Resources section.
Internet access (optional)	1 per student or 1 web-enabled projector	If internet access is unavailable, print sources can be substituted.
Selected Sherlock Holmes’ stories from <i>The Strand</i> (optional)	1 per student	See the Resources section.

ADVANCE PREPARATION

Previous Class:

- Students should read “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches,” in class or for homework.

Notes and Hints:

- This lesson can be modified to accommodate varying levels of classroom technology access. Scans of *The Strand* are available via the Internet Archive (see web address in the Resources section), so if access is available, have students peruse the archive on their own or in groups. Or, if a computer-connected projector is available, the instructor may show the class a few selections from the archive. If computer access is unavailable, the instructor can print out a few of the Sherlock Holmes stories from the archive ahead of time.
- *The Strand*, as a document from the turn of the 19th century, reflects some outdated attitudes about culture, race, and gender. If you are allowing the class to explore the archive freely, it might be helpful to mention this fact.

SETUP

The instructor may pass around or display “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches” in its original published form. (See the Resources section on page 10 for the specific web address.)

INTRODUCTION

10 minutes

Notes

Suggested script is shaded.

Important points or questions are in bold.

Suggested answers are in italics.

Where do we get our entertainment? How do we learn about the world around us?

Online, in books or graphic novels, in movies, on TV.

In the 1890s, which is when “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches” was published, what do you think people did for entertainment? How did they learn about culture, science, and the world around them?

Newspapers, the theater, books.

At the turn of the 19th century, one very popular source of information and entertainment was *The Strand*.

This is a good time to display *The Strand* archive on a projection screen, have the students scroll through the archive on laptops or class computers, or pass around a printout of the original “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches” story. Ideally, some other sections of the magazine should be examined as well, for context.

The magazine, founded in 1891, published short stories, interviews, puzzles, portraits, and articles about celebrities, science, fashion, and fads. Does that sound familiar to you? It’s a lot like the blogs or magazines we know today, right?

Herbert Greenhough Smith, the first editor of *The Strand*, said his mission was to provide “cheap, healthful literature” to the British public. Many of the Sherlock Holmes stories, including the one you read, “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches,” were first published in *The Strand* magazine.

What is the most popular TV show right now? What do you just have to watch every week, where you cannot miss an episode? *Answers will vary.*

That is what the Sherlock Holmes stories were like. They were a sensation. So every time a new issue of *The*

Strand came out, people were eager to see what case Sherlock was going to solve next.

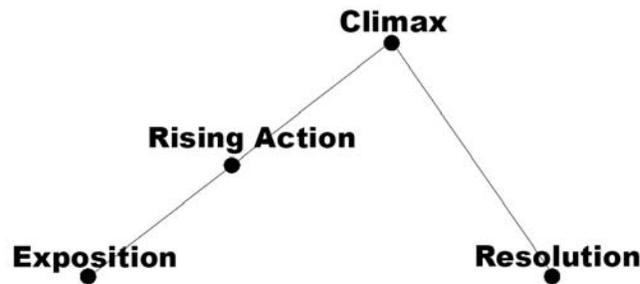
GROUP DISCUSSION

The Short Story

20 minutes

Although Conan Doyle also wrote Sherlock Holmes novellas and novels, most of the Sherlock stories take the form of a short story.

1. The instructor draws or displays a basic “story structure” graph.



Once you learn the structure of a short story, you will see these basic elements repeated in all kinds of narratives: novels, movies, television episodes, comic book issues, etc. If a narrative is missing one of these elements, we notice it, sometimes consciously, but often on the subconscious level. In a novel or a longer work, we might see a much more complicated structure, but a short story really only needs these basic elements.

Let us take a look at very basic story that everyone knows, like “The Ugly Duckling.” We have our main character, the character we are going to relate to, the Ugly Duckling. We have a setting (a nest of ducklings), a conflict or problem (the Ugly Duckling is not accepted by the other ducklings because he looks different), a climax (the Ugly Duckling discovers he is really a swan), and the resolution (the Ugly Duckling finds his family and lives happily ever after.)

Even though the structure seems like a simple one, for a short story to really succeed, each of those elements has to be really strong. Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes' stories are some of the world's most famous and beloved stories. What makes them so successful?

2. The students take out their copies of "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches."
3. Work with the class (or have them break into partners or groups) to identify how the story follows the graph on the board.

Since the students will each be contributing a part of a collaborative mystery, it is helpful to discuss the different ways Conan Doyle engages the reader at every stage of the story. The students may want to take notes during this section, or the instructor may write them on the board so that students can reference the notes later when they are thinking about the collaborative story.

Exposition/Setting

For example, you might discuss how Conan Doyle begins the story right in the middle of a conversation between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. Did the students think this technique was successful? Students might discuss how the strong characterization of Holmes and Violet Hunter helps ground the reader in the story and make the subsequent mystery more engaging. For example, Violet Hunter is portrayed as capable and bright, which makes her urgent summons ("Do come! I am at my wit's end.") all the more significant.

Rising Action

The students might discuss where in the story they think the "rising action" begins. Does Violet Hunter's initial visit to Holmes signal the beginning of the rising action, or is it part of the story's exposition? Does "rising action" have to be "physical" action? You might ask the students when they first felt "invested" in the story, and what detail or event piqued their interest, and why.

Climax

What do the students consider the climax of the story to be? You might have the students identify the most climactic section of the story, then the most climactic

paragraph, then the most climactic sentence. Of course, opinions will vary! Ask the students how the rising action contributed to the climax and how the language in the climax itself contributes to its success. Is the language different then it was in the setting and rising action? Has the pace of the story changed? How did Conan Doyle create a feeling of “excitement” in this section?

Resolution

What does a resolution need to do? Where does the story’s resolution begin? The students may discuss if they thought the resolution of the story was satisfying and if there was anything else they wanted to know. Was there a change in the language of the story?

GROUP ACTIVITY

Building a Mystery

30 minutes

1. Following the discussion of “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches,” write the four basic sections of the story on the board: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, and Resolution. Tell the students they will be collaboratively composing their own mysteries, but each story will have some similar elements, which the students will provide, “Mad Libs” style.
2. Have the students call out suggestions for the following questions:
 - Where does the story take place? Name three characteristics of the setting (geographic location, era, building, etc.)
 - Who is solving the mystery? Name three characteristics of the detective.
 - Who is the victim of the crime? Name three characteristics of the victim.
 - How does the detective find out about the crime?
 - What is the nature of the crime? (Burglary, murder, fraud, etc.) Where did the crime take place?
 - Name three items that are important clues in the story. Name one red herring.
 - Who has committed the crime? Name three characteristics of the perpetrator.

- Where does the story's climax take place?

Write the questions and the suggestions provided on the board or have students write them down.

3. Break the students into groups of four. The students will work together to conceptualize their version of the story, but each student will be responsible for one section of the story: the exposition, rising action, climax, or the resolution. Students should keep in mind the notes they took during the discussion about what makes each section “work” in a story. Students can write in class, if time permits. The sections of the story may not line up perfectly—but that’s part of the fun!
4. Student can share their stories aloud in class.

FOLLOW-UP ASSIGNMENT

Write a Collaborative Mystery!

If the students are unable to complete their stories in class, they can complete their sections of the story for homework and re-group during the next class to discuss, revise, and refine the story that they produced. The students can share the stories aloud in class or integrate them in the suggested project below.

For a more robust project, students can work in groups to produce their own mini versions of *The Strand*. This project can include the story that the students wrote and other original work such as photographs, drawings, or stories about local or school events. For a more history-focused version, students can research various trends, events, and literature of Conan Doyle’s era and contribute original articles about the politics, fashion, science, and culture of the time to create a more “authentic” *Strand*. The students will “publish” their issues in a variety of ways, depending on classroom technology. Options include publishing via a website, using a program like Publisher or Microsoft Word, or via a collage or cut-and-paste.

EXTENSIONS

DISSECTING A MYSTERY

Modern Media

Have students plot the structure of a Sherlock Holmes story on the short story structure graph, and then have them try it with the plots of popular movies or TV episodes. How are the narratives similar? How do they differ?

COLLAPSING THE NOVEL

Short Stories

Have the students try to rewrite one of their favorite novels as a short story. Which elements are most important to keep in? Which elements could be removed?

SERIALIZATION

A Group Story

It was very common for authors during Conan Doyle's time to publish a longer story or novel in installments. Have the students "serialize" a story by having each student contribute a paragraph or two to an ongoing story

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This background information is for teachers. Modify and communicate this information to the students as necessary.

The Sherlock Holmes stories appeared in some of the most prominent publications of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's era, including *Harper's Weekly* and *Collier's*. But Conan Doyle's most enduring relationship was with *The Strand*, a magazine devoted to fiction, popular culture and science, and interviews, which was founded in 1891. *The Strand's* mix of popular subjects, lavish illustration and photography, and what editor Herbert Greenhough Smith called "cheap, healthful literature," would define the magazine for the next sixty years. Throughout its history, it would publish mystery greats such as G.K. Chesterton and Agatha Christie and legendary literary figures such as P.G. Wodehouse, Rudyard Kipling, and H.G. Wells.

"A Scandal in Bohemia" was the first of the Sherlock Holmes stories to appear in *The Strand* and it was an instant success. Readers clamored for more, and Conan Doyle would provide: between 1891 and 1927, over fifty Sherlock Holmes stories were published in *The Strand*, including a serialized version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Although the magazine was shut down in 1950 (and revived in 1998 with exclusively mystery-focused content), archival copies of *The Strand* are available for perusal online. They are a tremendous artifact of their age—full of information about popular topics, innovations, and attitudes at the turn of the 19th century.

RESOURCES

"The Adventure of the Copper Beeches"

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, the collection that this story appears in, is in the public domain and is available in a variety of formats via Project Gutenberg, Google Books, and many other websites.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/>

<http://books.google.com/books>

Audio recordings of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* are available via LibriVox.

<http://librivox.org/>

***The Strand* Archive Online**

The archive features various full issues of *The Strand* in various formats.

<http://archive.org/details/TheStrandMagazineAnIllustratedMonthly>

A direct link to the issue featuring “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches”:

<http://archive.org/stream/TheStrandMagazineAnIllustratedMonthly/TheStrandMagazine1892aVol.IIJan-jun#page/n7/mode/2up>