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# SEASON 49 PlayNotes



SHERLOCK HOLMES:  
THE FINAL ADVENTURE  
with STEVEN DIERZ  
based on the original stories by WILLIAM GILLETTE - SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

ISSUE 02  
PORTLAND STAGE

# The Meticulous Mind of Sherlock Holmes

by Moira O'Sullivan

Sherlock Holmes's mind is one of the most admired and discussed of any fictional character, but what makes him so brilliant? How does he solve such complex mysteries without some kind of superpower? Sir Arthur Conan Doyle rooted his detective's skills in something he knew well himself: science. As a man who studied to be a medical doctor and who read scientific journals for fun, Conan Doyle was fascinated by the rapidly evolving science of the late 1800s and drew upon new technical advancements for inspiration.

At the basis of all of Holmes's techniques is the scientific method, or the systematic observation and measurement of data and the testing of hypotheses. A common misconception is that Holmes used *deductive* reasoning, but he actually used *inductive* reasoning. The difference is simple. Deductive reasoning forms a theory or hypothesis and uses observation to confirm whether it is right or wrong. Inductive reasoning begins with observations, looks for patterns among them, and then forms a hypothesis or theory from that information which would *induce* those patterns. Sherlock solves crimes by taking in the most minute details around the crime scene, recognizing patterns among the clues and then coming to a logical conclusion. In some of his stories, he even explains to Watson that his eyes are no better than anyone else's, but most people only *see*, they do not *observe*. The awareness that Sherlock practices makes him so aware of his environment that he makes connections that others do not.

Beyond having keen observations, Sherlock is described as incredibly well-read and has a breadth of scientific knowledge from chemistry to botany to medicine, as well as cultural knowledge of the opera and literature. The brief time that Conan Doyle spent in medical school opened his eyes to cutting-edge

science and his mentor surgeon, Dr. Joseph Bell, actually inspired Sherlock's attention to detail. Conan Doyle's passion for reading is mirrored in Holmes, whose comprehension of such a variety of information improves his thinking and lends itself to creativity as he puts together the facts.



WHEN SOLVING A PARTICULARLY COMPLEX MYSTERY, ONE WOULD SEE SHERLOCK SMOKING HIS PIPE WHILE THINKING. IN DIETZ'S ADAPTATION, HOLMES CALLS IT A "THREE PIPE PROBLEM."

Many credit Holmes as popularizing forensic science in criminal investigations, quite a feat for a fictional character. He was an early believer in preserving crime scenes and carefully documenting everything about them. Before the 1890s, it wasn't uncommon for people to walk all over or clean up the area as they didn't think to gather evidence in the way we do today. There was no CSI back then! Sherlock utilized a lot of new technology in his investigations, most of which was not yet adopted in the UK or the US at the time when the stories were published. He first used fingerprints in the story *The Sign of Four* in 1890, though Scotland Yard did not use the technique until 1901. Similarly, he solves a mystery in "A Case of Identity" (published in 1891) by comparing the unique qualities of typewriters, matching suspicious printed letters to the machine owned by the culprit. In the US, the FBI did not form a documents department for this kind of analysis until

1932. Conan Doyle called upon his medical experience in 1887's *A Study in Scarlet* to expose a culprit by exploring blood testing. The method he describes of testing hemoglobin in blood stains predates the first two examples of reliable blood testing, the Uhlenhuth test created in 1900 and the Kastle-Meyer test created in 1903. *A Study in Scarlet*, Sherlock's first story, also introduced a now iconic detective tool: the magnifying glass. Holmes was the first character in fiction to ever use a magnifying glass to inspect evidence.

It's important to note that though Holmes was ahead of his time on some things, he was behind on others. For instance, he did not want to concern himself with the fact that the earth revolves around the sun. In *A Study in Scarlet*, he denounces the Copernican theory, exclaiming to Watson, "You say that we go round the sun. If we went round the moon it would not make a pennyworth of difference to me or to my work." Throughout his earlier stories, Holmes makes it very clear that he does not care to know about astronomy, but in later stories he makes a few references to the field, which shows that he gave in to learning, even if just a little. Holmes has no problem dismissing things he finds to be irrelevant due to his "brain attic" theory. Also

in *A Study in Scarlet*, he explains his analogy that the human brain is like an attic, empty until you fill it with furniture, or facts. The attic has a fixed capacity, he believes, and advises Watson to keep his attic uncluttered with facts that don't help him do his job or live his life. For every important piece of information, an unimportant one must be tossed. Though we now know that the brain's capacity is not actually fixed and can expand or contract depending on how one uses it, Holmes did have an inkling about how memories are retained and forgotten, a constant process throughout one's life. He was definitely onto something.

The brilliance of Sherlock Holmes is multidimensional and to this day impresses even the most capable of detectives. Conan Doyle's use of science, technology, and diverse information to bolster Holmes's remarkable observational awareness makes the character unforgettable and inspiring to problem-solvers and critical thinkers to this day.



DETECTIVE USES MAGNIFYING GLASS TO INSPECT BULLET.

# Sherlock's Fandom

by Moira O'Sullivan

We've all had that one character we couldn't get enough of (Michael Scott on *The Office*, anyone?) and maybe even took to the internet to express our outrage when they left a TV show. (I'm still not over McDreamy's exit from *Grey's Anatomy*, and don't get me started on Daenerys on *Game of Thrones*.) Our obsession with fictional characters is nothing new these days, but the extent to which readers became attached to Sherlock Holmes in the late 19th century was unfathomable.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, though truly passionate about what he considered his more serious work like his historical novel *Micah Clarke*, became a smash hit with his short mysteries. Sherlock fans would line up at newsstands on the day *The Strand* published a new story; the monthly UK magazine would pay Conan Doyle handsomely for any Holmes content he could supply. The demand was so high that Conan Doyle started to regret having created the character in the first place. By 1893 he decided he wanted out of the Baker Street business and wrote "The Final Problem," which ends with Sherlock and Moriarty falling off a lethal cliff. He then wrote in his diary "Killed Holmes," an unsentimental ending to a huge chapter of his career. He later said, "I have had such an overdose of him that I feel towards him as I do towards pâté de foie gras, of which I once ate too much, so that the name of it gives me a sickly feeling to this day."



BAKER STREET TUBE STATION IN LONDON

The readers were not very understanding, and the twist ending was met with outrage. They mourned the detective by wearing black armbands in the streets for a month, and *The Strand* lost 20,000 subscribers in the blowback. Countless angry letters were sent to the magazine and the writer himself. The readers hassled Conan Doyle so much that years later, in 1901, he gave in and gave the people what they craved: more Holmes. He first published a prequel story, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and in 1903 took it one step further and resurrected his old detective, explaining that unlike his nemesis Moriarty, he had never actually died in the fall. This was met with an overwhelmingly thrilled response from his fanbase.

Today, Sherlock's fans might have taken to Twitter with an angry hashtag or posted a reaction video to Instagram after finishing "The Final Problem." Fan culture has become commonplace within our society, with fan clubs and online communities as well as giant conventions and fanfiction. We simply love to be obsessed. Not only that, but we continue to be obsessed with Sherlock Holmes. Beyond Conan Doyle's books, we have adapted Holmes to tread the boards in the theater, appear in movies and TV, and even inspire new characters with a similar knack for observation. From William Gillette's first portrayal of the detective on stage in 1899 to Robert Downey, Jr. in the 2009 film, to contemporary versions of the famous sleuth like BBC's *Sherlock* starring Benedict Cumberbatch or CBS's *Elementary* with Jonny Lee Miller, we clearly cannot get enough. The character of a brilliant yet socially insensitive problem-solver has continued to be popular, as seen in the successes of Hugh Laurie in Fox's *House* or Tony Shalhoub in USA's *Monk*. The next generation is even getting in on the Sherlock mania with Millie Bobby Brown's *Enola Holmes*, a recent Netflix movie (based on a young adult book series) that follows Sherlock's younger sister as she solves mysteries. Wherever you look, there's a little bit of Holmes still present and stirring conversation, whether Conan Doyle expected it or not.

## Gillette and the Making of Ho(I)me(s)

by Moira O'Sullivan

When we think of Sherlock Holmes, a specific image comes to mind: a deerstalker hat, a long cloak, and a curved pipe. However, this iconic image is never actually described in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's work. In fact, its roots are in the theater, stemming from the mind of William Gillette, the first actor to ever play Holmes and the co-writer of the first stage adaptation in 1899. An actor, director, and playwright, Gillette was born and raised in Hartford, CT, next door to writer Mark Twain. He became entwined with the character of Sherlock for most of his career, appearing as Holmes 1,300 times over the course of 33 years.

The fruitful collaboration between Gillette and Conan Doyle dates back to 1897. Having written "The Final Problem" and ending the Sherlock series (or so he thought), Conan Doyle was looking for a way to make some money and decided to write a play depicting his famous sleuth. With added pressure to do so before a competing production hit the stage, Conan Doyle found himself frustrated writing for this new medium, so he turned to a Broadway producer friend for advice. His friend introduced him to Gillette, who was performing in a play on the West End and seemed like the perfect person to bring Holmes to life. After a generative meeting, Gillette took on the project and wrote his play, entitled simply *Sherlock Holmes*. It premiered at the Star Theater in Buffalo, NY, in October, 1899, and while not a huge hit with critics, it was incredibly well-received by audiences.

Gillette's take on the character was a bit more arrogant and callous than in the books, and along with the costume we now know so well, he chose to use a curved pipe prop instead of the straight pipe mentioned in the books. He believed it would be easier to handle on stage and added to the development of his character's physical behavior. Known for his conversational acting style, he was also responsible for writing Sherlock's famous line to Watson, "Oh, this is elementary, my dear fellow," which led to the first film adaptation's version of the line, "Elementary, my dear

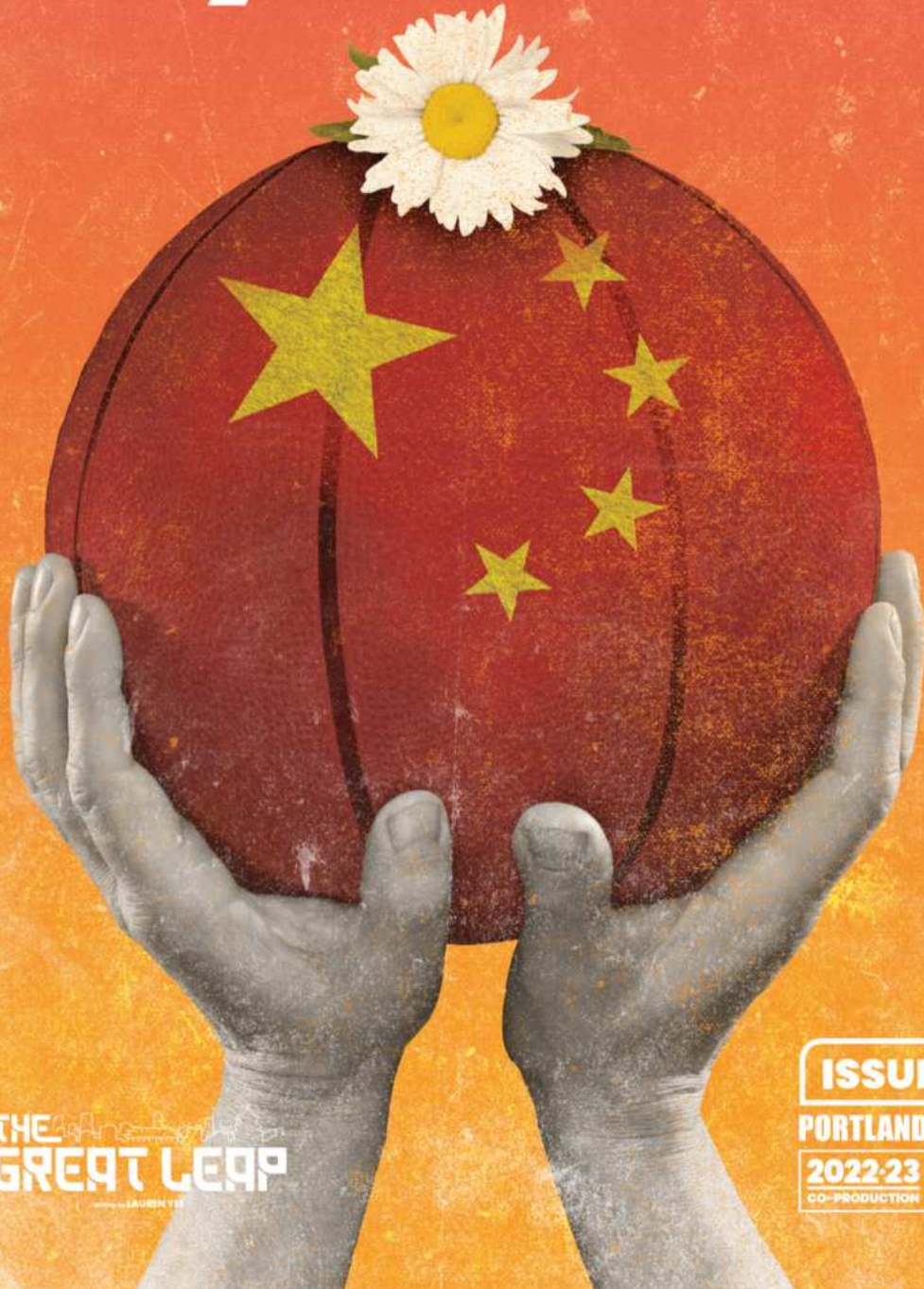
Watson." The phrase never actually appears in any of Conan Doyle's writing. Conan Doyle was so pleased with Gillette's work that they continued to collaborate, and he even used Gillette's Holmes as the inspiration for the illustrations that accompanied his second round of writings beginning in 1901.

Gillette's professional collaboration with Conan Doyle changed the trajectory of his career and his finances. Using his Sherlockian fortune, he built a 24-room stone castle on 184 acres of land in Haddam, CT, overlooking Long Island Sound. The clever design of his home was inspired by his creative, sneaky lifelong character. The medieval-looking castle sitting atop a mountain was outfitted with puzzle locks and secret passageways, as well as mirrors designed to allow Gillette to make surprise dramatic entrances and spy on his guests (including such celebrities as Calvin Coolidge and Albert Einstein). Now on display to the public, Gillette's Castle is a popular tourist attraction and a Connecticut state park, with stunning views and hiking trails surrounding it. It brings in over 100,000 visitors a year.



WILLIAM GILLETTE, ACTOR & PLAYWRIGHT.

# SEASON 49 PlayNotes



THE GREAT LEAP  
by LAURENCE

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CO-PRODUCTION HANGAR

## China and Basketball: A Slam Dunk

by Moira O'Sullivan

According to the Chinese Basketball Association, 300 million Chinese people—roughly the population of the entire United States—play basketball. In fact, in 1935, it became a national pastime. Though it may seem surprising, basketball is one of the cornerstones of popular culture in China, so much so that NBA China was formed in 2008. With over 150 million followers on Chinese social media (apps such as WeChat and Weibo), the NBA has found its largest international market.

*The Great Leap* zooms in on the Chinese basketball scene in the 1970s and 1980s, but basketball's roots in China are actually far earlier. The game was first introduced to the country in 1895 by YMCA missionaries, merely four years after its creation in Springfield, Massachusetts (current home of the Basketball Hall of Fame). By the 1920s, it was widely adopted by the military as a way to form bonds among soldiers and teach them teamwork and communication. For many years, the best basketball players in the country were members of the military.



When Chairman Mao and the Communist Party took control in 1949, most Western influences, such as books and music, were banned, but basketball was not one of them. Mao strongly felt that the sport was integral to the culture and encouraged people to keep playing. Makeshift hoops appeared throughout neighborhoods as the youth found an alternative to ping pong. College and commercial teams sprung up, offering many young people a chance to connect with their peers, particularly those without siblings due to the one-child policy, a government program introduced in the late 1970s that limited families to one child each in an attempt to slow the rapid population growth in the country.

In 1987, after making a deal with NBA commissioner David Stern, China gained broadcasting rights from the NBA and the national basketball obsession grew to new heights. Once NBA games were available, its audience increased and the country became infatuated with players such as Michael Jordan and, later, Shanghai native Yao Ming. In 1994, all NBA finals were shown live in China. Since Chinese Central Television started airing the games, the fanbase has grown to approximately 450 million people. In 2004, the US started bringing their teams to China for exhibition games, for which tickets can currently sell for up to \$2,500.

Nowadays, basketball is ingrained in popular culture in China, and its influence is seen in the Nike sneakers and team merchandise worn on and off the court. NBA China has partnered with local tech companies and retail outlets. Its popularity online has inspired American marketing campaigns and social media strategies, trying to tap into the success of their Chinese counterparts. The American league's expansion hinges on China and their enthusiasm for the game, which shows no signs of fading anytime soon.



# Glossary

by Moira O'Sullivan

**Boosters:** People who support a school's sports team by financially contributing to the athletic department or the sports organization.

**Capitalist Roader:** In Mao Zedong thought, it refers to someone who bows to the pressure of the bourgeois and pulls the revolution in a capitalist direction.

**Chang'an Avenue:** One of the most important streets in China, whose name translates to "Eternal Peace." It runs east to west through the heart of Beijing, bordering Tiananmen Square.

**Colma:** The smallest city in San Mateo County on the San Francisco peninsula in the San Francisco Bay area.



FLAG OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA.

**Communist Party of China (CPC):** The socialist political party that took over rule after the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

**The Cultural Ministry:** A department under the state council in China that is responsible for regulating cultural and arts-related policies, guidelines, and the development of arts and entertainment programs. Their headquarters is based in Beijing.

**The Cultural Revolution:** Launched in 1966 by Mao Zedong in order to reassert his power over the Chinese government, which he believed was leading the nation in the wrong direction. He encouraged the youth of

the country to rebel and purge the "impure" elements of the current society.

**Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997):** A leader of the Communist Party who helped bring stability and economic growth back to China after the Cultural Revolution. During the Tiananmen Square protests, he supported using deadly force to suppress the student protesters in Beijing.

**Division One:** NCAA Division One basketball colleges have teams competing at the highest level. Players meet highly competitive recruiting guidelines set by the schools and are among the best in the nation. There are currently 350 Division One basketball schools in the US.

**Exhibition Game or Friendship Game:** A match that does not impact the team's rankings and has no prize money involved. Also called a scrimmage, a warm-up game, or a demonstration game. It is an agreement between the two teams to play as practice or for charity.

**Forbidden City:** An imperial complex in Beijing constructed in 1496, during the Ming Dynasty, that served as the political center of China for more than 500 years.

**Fuzhou:** The capital city of the Fujian province in southeastern China, situated on the north bank of the estuary of Fujian's largest river, the Min River, a short distance from its mouth on the East China Sea.

**Genghis Khan (1162-1227):** Conqueror who consolidated many tribes into a unified Mongolia and continued to take control across China, using massacre and psychological warfare to achieve his goals.

**The Great Leap Forward:** Chinese campaign from 1958-1960 aimed at accelerating the industrialization of the country by focusing on achieving agricultural and technical growth through manpower and labor instead of

the purchasing of heavy machinery. The abrupt shift from large-scale farming to small farming communes, in addition to a few natural disasters and the loss of support from the Soviets, led to a collapse in the nation's agriculture industry and a period of great starvation, with 20 million lives lost between 1959 and 1962.

**"Ich bin ein Beijinger, Eleanor Rigby!":** A reference to JFK's speech in 1963 at the Berlin Wall—"Ich bin ein Berliner," literally "I am a Berliner."—expressing solidarity with the city and its people at the height of the Cold War. "Eleanor Rigby" is a reference to the 1965 hit Beatles song.



A CROWD HOLDING THE LITTLE RED BOOK UP AT A POLITICAL RALLY.

**The Little Red Book:** A Western nickname for Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung, published in 1964. It contained over 400 quotes from Mao Zedong's writings and speeches and was extremely popular during the Cultural Revolution in China. It became a symbol of rebellious and revolutionary youth. Though its content was about communist ideas, publication of the book was halted by the Chinese Communist Party in February, 1979.

**Mao Zedong** (1893-1976): Chairman of the People's Republic of China from 1949-1959. A Marxist theorist, he led the country in the communist revolution and is often regarded as the visionary of new China.

**Martial Law:** The use of the military for law enforcement, involving the suspension of ordinary laws, usually declared during civil unrest or in states of emergency.

**Mervyn's:** Middle-scale American department store chain (1920-2021) based in Hayward, California, many locations of which were in malls.

**Mikhail 'Mickey' Gorbachev** (1931-2022): Leader of the Soviet Union from 1985-1991 known for defusing nuclear tension between the Soviet Union and the United States in the 1980s and bringing Eastern Europe out from behind the Iron Curtain.

**Mishpucha:** A Yiddish term for an entire family network comprising relatives by blood and marriage.



EDITION OF THE PEOPLE'S DAILY.

**The People's Daily:** A state-run newspaper in China, started in 1948, which is published worldwide and features current news and viewpoints from the Chinese Communist Party.

## THE WORLD OF THE GREAT LEAP

**Ping-Pong Diplomacy:** After Mao's communist revolution in 1949, the relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China had been tense. But in 1971, Chairman Mao offered a historic invitation to the American table tennis team to visit China and play against their country's team. This opened new political doors between the countries and was supported by President Nixon.

**Roster:** A list of persons or groups; any list, roll, or register. Used in sports to organize players.

**San Francisco Chronicle:** Newspaper serving the San Francisco Bay area in California, founded in 1865.

**Schlemiel:** A Yiddish term for an awkward and unlucky person for whom things never turn out right.



TANK MAN POLITICAL CARTOON.

**Tank Man Image:** The famous photograph of a lone pro-democracy protester at Tiananmen Square blocking the path of the military tanks seeking to take control of the area. Wearing a white collared shirt and black pants, carrying a bag, he stood in the middle of the street in front of the lead tanks. Though no one knows who he was or what became of him, he serves as a strong representation of defiance. Photographed by Jeff Widener for the Associated Press.



TIANANMEN SQUARE.

**Tiananmen Square:** A public square located in front of the Forbidden City that is well-known for the protests that occurred there in the spring of 1989. Students gathered to demand political and social change after the death of former CPC secretary Hu Yaobang, who argued for democratic reform. The students wanted more individual rights and less government corruption. By mid-May, the protest crowds had grown to include many Western journalists who were in town for the arrival of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Though moderates advocated for the protesters and suggested making concessions, the CPC chose to take military force to sweep the protesters from the square. Martial law was declared; tanks were brought in, but protesters blocked their path to the center of the city. The CPC militia used violence and deadly force to make their way to the square, where they had cleared the crowds and taken control by June 5th.

**West Coast Conference:** NCAA Division One athletic conference made up of ten colleges on the West Coast, including the University of San Francisco.