The Classical Formula

- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
  (1859 – 1930)
Influences On Conan Doyle

– Eugène François Vidocq (1775-1857) who had been a police informer, a thief-turned cop, and who became the first head of the Sûreté (the French police Force). Vedoc (early 1800s)


– Wilkie Collins (1824 – 1889) – English – Victorian fiction writer

– Charles Dickens (1812 – 1870) – English – Serialized fiction

– Edgar Allan Poe (1809 – 1849) – American –
Influences On Conan Doyle

Profession of Medicine:

- He was a doctor – he practiced, he traveled
- In Medical School –
  - Dr. Joe Bell - his medical school teacher who was a
    - great diagnostician--diagnosis on the spot
    - observant analyst – amazed young Doyle

Doyle then creates Sherlock Holmes
Other Influences on Doyle as a Writer

- Literacy of the general public expanding at this time
- Victorian period ideas = keeping order and justice is important
- **Goodness needs to be restored to society**
  - Holmes is the agent of order
1887 – Conan Doyle Writes First Sherlock Holmes Story –

- The World – Victorian England

- 1895 is the main year - 1881 – 1903 - Holmes and Dr. Watson live on Baker Street
Origins of Sherlock Holmes

• “A Study in Scarlet” first story

• Serialization – wrote for *The Strand Magazine*

• “A Scandal of Bohemia”

• Later – “Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes”
The World – Victorian England

- 1895 is the main year

- Values taken for granted by British society.
  a Middle class rises from the industrial revolution – many live in comfort, material wealth –

- Great middle class concern with objects and money.

- Ability to rise in class structure

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The World – Victorian England

- Increase in leisure time – reading / art / literature. 1870s forward – more literacy
- Magazines published – reading as component of a culture
- Family, politics, responsibility
- It is important to “play by rules” of this society.
The World – Victorian England

• Belief in PROGRESS of humanity
• England – hierarchy of social classes – outward signs of wealth –
• People are aware of their “place”
• Belief in monarchy and values and order – the structure
• Stay in your place and keep overall order –
• AVOID SCANDAL
The World – Victorian England

• The right ORDER OF THINGS:
  • White English / American male.....women second
  • Then “Other” people
  • Look for this set of cultural ideas as foundation for the way in which Holmes approaches crime, solving it, the world, etc.
CLASSICAL FORMULA

• “Speckled Band” – one of Doyle’s favorite

• Conventions of the Mystery become set in these stories and novels.
PLOT

Sherlock Holmes stories structured a certain way

• Detective introduced to establish his reputation, skill, genius in detection
• Watson recalls Holmes cases – Speckled Band as unusual
PLOT

• Client /Victim typically arrives in Holmes & Watson’s quarters
  – Holmes and Watson are at home visited by client with a problem.
  – There is usually a mysterious death and odd circumstances (ie: cheetah, baboon, band of gypsies).
PLOT

- Holmes establishes his powers of observation
- Explains the situation to audience
PLOT

• Presentation of crime itself and clues that will lead to solving.

• In “The Speckled Band”
  - Helen Stoner - in great terror because of problem with stepfather
  - Flashback of story - presents series of clues
  Holmes listening (Watson too)

• these clues offer few clear solutions to us, audience
“The Speckled Band”

- Holmes investigates – and is intrigued
- Detective questions several witnesses and those involved – young woman and stepfather.....
- Holmes checks on the will first - money and property
- Looks for motive
  - stepfather is a suspect.
  - gypsies are suspect - red herrings appear (false possibility)
    lead dog’s scent astray by smell of fish.....

Holmes checks other witnesses, pieces of info., false info....
PLOT

• Detective prevails.....knows....finds the SOLUTION
  – Police are inadequate
    Inspector Lestrade – (Holmes feels superior)
  – Solution is dramatic revelation of the criminal’s identity

• Watson can’t put clues together himself
PLOT

• Watson can’t put clues together himself
• Holmes sets things up that will occur----he has solved it but Watson and we/audience have not
• Dramatic revelation = the speckled band is a snake
• Snake has been trained to kill in order to gain inheritance/property
PLOT

• Classical mysteries come with sense of order restored when mystery is solved in the end.

• Holmes has no pangs of conscience when Roylet killed – order and morality is restored.

• Pleasure and closure when things come back together in end.
CHARACTERS

• Holmes = a detective who is an eccentric amateur - a consulting detective called in to solve things on basis of his reputation

• Watson = his companion - good natured but not as astute as detective

• Bachelors living together
CHARACTERS

• **Victims** = secondary and depicted with less detail. We’re not as interested in them as we are in the detective
  
  Helen Stoner not a very vivid character

• **Villains** = varied – arch criminals in Doyle - men who have stepped to dark side - who were good but are turned around by greed, jealousy, etc.
CHARACTERS

• **Suspects** = other possible criminals that complicate matters – gypsies

• **Police** = thick headed who can’t see beyond the obvious
CHARACTERS

• “The Final Problem”
  – Moriarty = the most evil man alive

• Their final confrontation – is a very different criminal problem
  – Moriarty is villainous figure who is the equal of Holmes as a heroic detective figure
Holmes’ Demise

• Conan Doyle does do away with Holmes – and his archrival Moriarty in “The Final Problem”

• Much to the dismay of the audience.

• 1903 Doyle writes *Hounds of the Baskervilles* – that is set prior to the “The Final Problem” – the events of that novel occurred prior to death above.
POINT OF VIEW

• Conventional
  – Often 1\textsuperscript{st} person narrator – Dr. Watson –

• There is some variety in novels or stories

• The teller doesn’t lay out everything for reader
POINT OF VIEW

• Watson’s point of view narration “withholds” information because Watson he doesn’t see all.

• Not omniscient
THEMES

• Reassurance

• Victorian – reassertion NEED TO restore order in society by catching worst criminals
THEMES

• Society needs Holmes who can reason through all this — goes beyond the simple scientific method to solve crimes.

• p. 52 — Holmes states that it is “a wicked world .... [and] when a clever man turns mind to crime it is the worst of all.”

• Destroying villain does not bother the Victorian conscience in the least bit.
The WORLD – ISOLATED

• Central detective character is loner, eccentric. Lives own style of life.

• There is certain ennui and dissatisfaction with life. Holmes’ addiction, etc.
The WORLD = ISOLATION

• Isolation: = physical world of classical typical mystery.

• Crime happens in separate world – Stoke Moran 200 years old, falling down –
  – “the locked room mystery”
  – isolated in the country all that can be known is in one isolated spot. –
The WORLD = ISOLATION

• An underlying theme in turn of century Victorian society – chaos and disorder threatens – but a rational person with strong intellect can prevail and restore rational order.

• Set of Victorian values of order is restored.

• Conan Doyle reinforces these ideas in all stories.
The WORLD = REASON

- **CLASSICAL** formula affirms power of the observant intellect - to find an explanation for the inexplicable and to bring order out of disorder - at the heart of Sherlock Holmes stories and all that they influence -
The WORLD = REASON

• Only a particular kind of detective can see the truth because of how he looks at things... with his capacity for observation and reasoning.
The WORLD = REASSURANCE

- World already circumscribed and easy to put back together, as a result
- Order is restored – Sense of things brought back to where they should be:
  - girl can be married
  - evil villain removed entirely
- Satisfaction at pleasure of closure