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UDC: 821.111-312.4

SHERLOCK HOLMES AS A CLASSICAL MODEL OF THE DETECTIVE

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24091503

Abstract

This article examines Sherlock Holmes, created by Arthur Conan Doyle, as a classical model of the detective in English literature. The study focuses on the character's intellectual abilities, powers of observation, analytical reasoning, and scientific approach to crime investigation. Particular attention is paid to the representation of deductive reasoning in A Study in Scarlet, The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, and The Hound of the Baskervilles. The article also explores the influence of Holmes on the development of detective fiction and the formation of subsequent literary detective characters. It argues that Holmes represents not merely an exceptional fictional investigator but also an important literary embodiment of rational thinking and the scientific method.

Keywords: Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle, detective fiction, detective character, deduction, analytical reasoning, observation, crime investigation, English literature.

Introduction

Detective fiction occupies a significant position in world literature due to its exploration of crime, justice, human psychology, and logical reasoning. The development of this genre is closely associated with the works of Edgar Allan Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle. Among the most influential characters in detective literature is Sherlock Holmes, whose intellectual abilities and investigative methods have established him as a classical model of the literary detective.

Sherlock Holmes first appeared in Arthur Conan Doyle's novel A Study in Scarlet, published in 1887. The character became widely recognised for his extraordinary powers of observation, logical reasoning, attention to detail, and ability to interpret seemingly insignificant evidence. Through Holmes, Conan Doyle transformed crime investigation into an intellectual process based on the systematic examination of facts.

The purpose of this study is to analyse Sherlock Holmes as a classical detective character and identify the literary and intellectual characteristics that distinguish him from other fictional investigators.

Sherlock Holmes and the Intellectual Characteristics of the Detective

One of the most distinctive characteristics of Sherlock Holmes is his exceptional powers of observation. Unlike ordinary individuals, Holmes pays attention to details that are frequently overlooked by others. Clothing, footprints, handwriting, physical appearance, and behavioural patterns become valuable sources of information in his investigations.

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Holmes's observation is not merely a passive act of looking. It involves the interpretation of evidence and the construction of logical explanations. His intellectual superiority is demonstrated through his ability to connect separate details and establish relationships between seemingly unrelated facts.

Laura J. Snyder, in her article "Sherlock Holmes: Scientific Detective" (2004), discusses the scientific foundations of Holmes's investigative methods. She argues that Conan Doyle's detective was influenced by scientific approaches popular in nineteenth-century Britain. Holmes's investigative practices reflect the growing importance of observation, experimentation, and evidence-based reasoning in scientific thought.

Another essential feature of Holmes's character is his analytical reasoning. Although the detective frequently describes his method as deduction, his investigations involve several forms of reasoning, including deduction, induction, and abduction. These methods enable him to formulate hypotheses, examine evidence, eliminate unlikely explanations, and identify the most plausible solution.

Emmanuel J. Genot (2021) examines Holmes's "Science of Deduction and Analysis" in relation to the logic of discovery. His research demonstrates that Holmes's investigative process involves more than formal deduction. It also includes questioning, information gathering, and the development of hypotheses. This interpretation provides a more comprehensive understanding of Holmes's intellectual method.

Sherlock Holmes's Investigative Method in Conan Doyle's Works

The classical characteristics of Sherlock Holmes are particularly evident in A Study in Scarlet, The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, and The Hound of the Baskervilles.

In A Study in Scarlet, Holmes demonstrates his ability to interpret physical evidence and reconstruct events through logical analysis. His examination of the crime scene reveals details that remain unnoticed by conventional police investigators. This contrast establishes Holmes as an exceptional intellectual figure whose methods differ from traditional approaches to criminal investigation.

The short story "A Scandal in Bohemia", included in The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, presents another important dimension of the detective's character. In this narrative, Holmes encounters Irene Adler, a woman whose intelligence and ability to anticipate his actions challenge his usual intellectual superiority. The story demonstrates that Holmes's investigative abilities are powerful but not infallible.

In The Hound of the Baskervilles, Holmes's analytical reasoning and interpretation of evidence are central to the development of the narrative. The novel combines rational investigation with elements of mystery and psychological suspense. Although the events initially appear supernatural, Holmes approaches them through observation and logical examination.

These works demonstrate that Holmes's investigative method is based on the systematic analysis of evidence rather than intuition alone. His ability to transform seemingly insignificant details into meaningful conclusions establishes him as a representative of rationality and scientific thinking in detective fiction.

The Influence of Sherlock Holmes on Detective Fiction

Sherlock Holmes has played a fundamental role in shaping the conventions of detective fiction. His character established a literary model characterised by exceptional intelligence, detailed observation, logical reasoning, and the systematic investigation of crime.

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The relationship between Holmes and Dr Watson is also significant. Watson functions as the narrator and intermediary between the detective and the reader. His perspective makes Holmes's intellectual achievements more impressive and allows readers to participate in the process of discovering the truth.

Andrew Glazzard (2018) explores the complexity of Conan Doyle's detective narratives and highlights the importance of examining the relationship between Holmes's solutions and Watson's narration. This perspective demonstrates that Holmes's classical status is determined not only by his investigative abilities but also by the narrative structure through which his character is presented.

Holmes's influence extends beyond British literature. Numerous detective characters created in later literary works, films, and television series demonstrate characteristics associated with the Holmesian model. His analytical approach, intellectual independence, and attention to detail continue to shape the representation of detectives in contemporary popular culture.

Conclusion

Sherlock Holmes represents one of the most influential and enduring detective characters in world literature. Created by Arthur Conan Doyle, he embodies the essential characteristics of the classical literary detective: exceptional observation, analytical reasoning, intellectual independence, and a systematic approach to crime investigation.

The analysis of Conan Doyle's works demonstrates that Holmes's investigative method combines different forms of reasoning and relies on the careful interpretation of evidence. His character reflects the growing significance of scientific thinking and rational inquiry in nineteenth-century literature.

Sherlock Holmes's contribution to detective fiction lies in his establishment of a literary model that has influenced generations of writers and investigators in fictional narratives. Therefore, the study of Holmes remains relevant to literary criticism, particularly in examining the evolution of detective characters, the representation of rational thought, and the relationship between deduction and crime investigation.

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