

MOST FAMOUS EXAMPLE OF CREATIVE  
THINKING IN LITERATURE

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S

SHERLOCK HOLMES

Steps in the Creative Thinking Process

1. Preparation - Holmes visits scene of the crime and questions witnesses and suspects
2. Incubation - in the middle of the case Holmes plays the violin or attends a symphony
3. Illumination - Ah ha; Holmes exposes the culprit
4. Verification - "elementary my dear Watson"; Holmes explains the logical piecing of evidence which led to his conclusion.

By FREDERICK JOHN

**S**TUDY the six photographs with this article. All the men in the photos were closely associated with Sherlock Holmes. One of them was the real Sherlock. Can you pick him out?

Here are some clues.

One of the men was England's favorite Sherlock.

Another was the man Americans called Holmes.

Another was Arthur Conan Doyle's pride and joy.

Another was Sherlock's right-hand man.

Another was a doctor who wrote about Holmes.

The sixth was a doctor who did not write about Holmes.

**S**HERLOCK Holmes, based on book store sales, old movies, film spoofs and plays, is more popular today than he was back at the turn of the century when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle penned his stories about the legendary detective and his friend, Dr. John Watson.

There always has been speculation the fictional detective was modeled after a real person. This often has been ridiculed. It was doubted a man of such brilliance ever existed. In 1930 Doyle himself added to the confusion by writing: "If anyone is Sherlock Holmes, then I confess it is myself."

English writer Michael and Mollie Hardwich, in fact, wrote a book about Doyle called *The Man Who Was Sherlock Holmes*. But when Doyle confessed he was close to death and deeply involved in spiritualism. Simply stated, he was not then the man he had been.

To find out the truth about Holmes we must go back to an autobiographical book Doyle wrote called *Memories and Adventures*, telling about his days as a medical student at the University of Edinburgh.

He wrote: "But the most notable of the characters whom I met was one Joseph Bell, surgeon at the Edinburgh Infirmary. Bell

was a very remarkable man in body and mind. He was thin, wiry, dark, with a high-nosed acute face, penetrating gray eyes, angular shoulders and a jerky way of walking. His voice was high and discordant.

**"F**OR SOME reasons, which I have never understood, he singled me out of the droves of students who frequented his wards, and made me his out-patient clerk, which meant that I had to array his out-patients, make simple notes of their cases, and then show them in, one by one, to the large room in which Bell sat in state, surrounded by his students. Then I had ample chance of studying his methods and of noticing that he often learned more of the patient by a few quick glances than I had done by my questions.

"In one of his best cases, he said to a civilian patient: 'Well, my man, you served in the army.'"

"Aye sir."

"Not long discharged?"

"No sir."

"A Highland regiment?"

"Aye sir."

"A noncom officer?"

"Aye sir."

"Stationed at Barbados?"

"Aye sir."

"You see gentlemen," Dr. Bell

would explain, 'the man was a respectful man, but did not remove his hat. They do not in the Army, but he would have learned civilian ways had he been long discharged. He has an air of authority, and he is obviously Scottish. As to the Barbados, his complaint is elephantiasis, which is West Indian and not British.'

**"T**O HIS audience of Watsons," Conan Doyle concluded, "it all seemed very miraculous until it was explained, and then it became simple enough. It is no wonder that after the study of such a character, I used and amplified his methods when in later life I tried to build up a scientific detective who solved cases on his own merits, and not through the folly of the criminal."

Let us go a step further. If Bell was Holmes, then who was the real life Dr. John H. Watson, M.D.? Dr. Watson was, obviously, a popular British author of mystery stories named Arthur Conan Doyle. Both were doctors (Doyle was until he became a best selling author) and both spent a lot of time writing about Sherlock Holmes.

Dr. Bell was interviewed by a London reporter about 75 years ago. Naturally, Bell was asked about Doyle.

"Doyle was always making

notes. He seemed to want to copy down every word I said. Many times, after the patient had departed my office, he would ask me to repeat my observations so that he would be certain he had them correctly."

Bell gave as an example a day he had greeted a man, obviously Irish, and asked if he had enjoyed a walk over the links on the south side of town, all because it was a showery day and the reddish clay on the man's boots existed only in one spot.

"Once the patient was gone," concluded Bell, "Conan Doyle made me explain about the boots and clay, and he wrote my every word down in his little book."

It's logical deduction. Watson kept a written record of Sherlock's chats with his clients. Doyle made notes on Bell's chats with his patients. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle modeled Dr. Watson after himself. Sherlock Holmes was really Joseph Bell.

It's elementary.

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### Photos

- A. Nigel (Watson) Bruce
- B. John Gielgud, of British radio
- C. Adrian Doyle, Sir Arthur's son
- D. Basil (Sherlock) Rathbone
- E. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
- F. Dr. Joseph Bell

# IN SICK

