

## **MEET SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE**

The greatest crime that detective Sherlock Holmes ever faced didn't happen in the pages of a book. It happened in real life. The crime was his own murder, and the criminal was his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. And just as in his stories, Holmes triumphed.

It happened in 1901. Weary of constructing convoluted mysteries, Doyle killed off Holmes in the short story "The Final Problem." His fans rebelled, canceling subscriptions to the magazine where his stories appeared, and demanding Holmes' return. Defeated, Doyle complied and resurrected the detective.

For Doyle, Holmes' popularity was a mixed blessing. Because of it, he was one of the highest paid writers of his time, but felt his other accomplishments were overlooked. Despite his misgivings, Doyle will always be remembered for creating the world's most famous detective.

**Diagnoses and Deductions** Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, Doyle was the second of 10 children. He was educated in England and Austria, and received several medical degrees from the University of Edinburgh.

In medical school, Doyle studied under Dr. Joseph Bell, an expert diagnostician. Bell dazzled his students by determining not only diseases but also a person's occupation merely by observation.

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When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. —  
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

**A New Detective** While studying medicine, Doyle also wrote stories. He started a medical practice after earning his degree, but soon he was earning more money for his occasional short stories than for his medical work.

To build a readership for his writing, Doyle wanted to create a character that could appear in several stories. He admired the detective stories of Edgar Allan Poe, so he decided to make his character a detective. Recalling his college professor, Dr. Bell, Doyle gave his detective remarkable deductive skills.

His new creation, Sherlock Holmes, first appeared in *A Study in Scarlet*, published in 1887. The novel was a success, so Doyle followed with more Holmes stories and novels. By 1890, he quit his medical practice to focus on writing full-time.

**Fairies, Spirits, and Lost Worlds** Doyle continued to write Sherlock Holmes stories through 1926, but also pursued other interests. He published historical novels, including two tales of 14<sup>th</sup>-century chivalry. Inspired by his participation in the Boer War as a medical officer, he also wrote military books. He was knighted in 1902 for his military service.

Doyle would never top the popularity of Sherlock Holmes, but he did win many readers with the adventures of a new character, Professor

Challenger. The most popular installment of the series, *The Lost World*, has been adapted in several movie versions and as a television series.

Despite Holmes' hard-nosed rationalism, Doyle himself had a keen interest in the paranormal. He was an advocate for spiritualism, attending séances and lecturing about the spirit world. He also believed in the existence of fairies, and wrote several books on the topic.

His belief in the "unseen world" was a solace later in life. Before his death at age 71, he wrote, "The reader will judge that I have had many adventures. The greatest and most glorious awaits me now."

*Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born in 1859 and died in 1930.*