

The Strange Case of the Musgrave Ritual

A modern retelling of a classic Sherlock Holmes mystery

About the Story

Lexile® Measure 830L (captions and pairing only)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective: to write a diary entry from the point of view of a character in the play

Featured Skill: character

Additional skills covered in this lesson plan: text structure, inference, author's craft

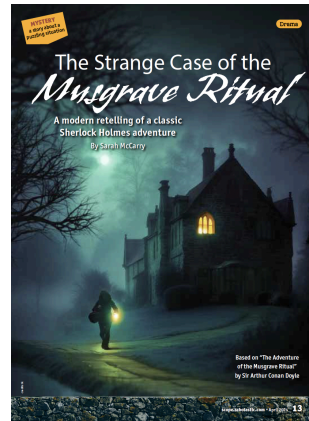
Essential Question:

- Who can we trust in life?
- How are mysteries solved?
- What makes a character memorable?

Standards:

The article and its suite of support materials support these Common Core Anchor Standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, W.2, W.3, SL.1

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Podcast:

- *Scope It Out!: The Sherlock Holmes Challenge*

Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- *Sherlock Holmes and the Midnight Killer*
- *The Mystery of the Stolen Jewel*
- *Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery of the Red-Headed League*

Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions
- Featured Skill: Character
- Choice Board
- Lesson Plan Slide Deck
- Quiz*

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

1. Prepare to Read (15 minutes)

Listen to a Podcast (5 minutes)

- Have students listen to *The Sherlock Holmes Challenge* podcast. (You may also want to share the transcript with them. Both are available in your Resources tab.) Then discuss how they did. Did they figure out the mystery? If so, how?

Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project the Google Slides version of **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice** on your whiteboard. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. Highlighted words: *bewilderment, deduction, disheveled, forensic, helm, inherit, inquiry*. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides. Optionally, print the PDF version or share the slideshow link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently before class.

2. Read and Discuss (55 minutes)

- Invite a volunteer to read aloud the As You Read box on page 14 or at the top of the digital story page.
- Assign parts and read the play aloud as a class.
- Divide students into groups to discuss the following **Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions**, which are also located in the Resources tab.

Close-Reading Questions

(25 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **What is the purpose of Scene 1?** (text structure) *Dr. Watson provides the audience with background information about Sherlock Holmes and his detective work, which is helpful to those unfamiliar with Arthur Conan Doyle's stories. Holmes makes it clear that the play's mystery took place in the past; which allows audience members/readers to mentally prepare to jump around in*

time. Lastly, Holmes provides the audience with an important piece of information—that “there is one question about the case that remains unanswered.” Audience members will likely keep this in mind throughout the play, trying to figure out for themselves what might remain “unanswered.”

2. **In Scene 2, Holmes correctly identifies Sara based solely on her appearance: “Your clothes are expensive and perfectly tailored. Your shoes are splashed with wet mud. It rained in the countryside but not in London, which tells me you traveled to London this morning. The necklace you’re wearing is old and valuable, and the pendant is the letter ‘M.’ The Musgraves are the nearest wealthy family with a country estate.” What can we infer about Holmes based on this passage?** (inference) *We can infer that Holmes is a brilliant and experienced detective. He instantly figures out who Sara is based solely on her physical appearance. He has incredible observational skills and uses them to make inferences about Sara’s identity. His knowledge of the weather, the value of jewelry and clothes, and the Musgrave family shows that he is well-informed on a variety of topics.*
3. **What is the purpose of the flashbacks in Scene 3?** (author’s craft) *The flashbacks show us the mysterious circumstances under which Robert and Vera disappeared. Additionally, we learn several important details that will have significance later in the play, such as the fact that Robert read the secret family poem.*
4. **In Scene 3, Sara describes Robert as “old-fashioned but loyal” and Vera as “smart and reliable.” Based on the play’s ending, how would you describe Robert and Vera?** (character) *Robert and Vera are conniving and deceitful. They try to take a treasure that does not belong to them, which is illegal. Their crime is especially reprehensible given that Robert has been with Sara’s family for decades. That said, it is Vera, not Robert, who is truly evil; her attempt to kill Robert reveals her villainous, wicked character.*
5. **In Scene 4, Holmes says to Sara, “Robert asked you the same question.” How does Holmes reach this conclusion?** (inference) *Holmes realizes Robert understood that the poem was a treasure map. Robert was asking for the height of the elm because once he knew the height, he could calculate the length of the shadow and figure out where to find the treasure.*
6. **Based on the last line of Scene 7, what can we infer happened to Vera?** (inference) *You can infer that the person behind the screen name “Treasure4Me” is probably Vera—and that she is, as Treasure4Me suggests, doing just fine. She got away with her attempted crimes at the Musgrave estate and is still out there—perhaps committing other crimes.*

“Meet a Real Crime Scientist”

- Read the interview as a class. Optionally, have students listen to the interview being read aloud while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- As a class, discuss the following **Critical-Thinking Questions**, some of which apply to the play and the interview.

Critical-Thinking Questions

(10 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **What skills does Holmes use to solve the case?** *Answers will vary. Students will likely say that Holmes has incredible observational and inference skills. For example, with one quick look, he can figure out a person's identity, personality, and interests. He does this with Sara Musgrave. Students may also note that Holmes excels at solving riddles, which involves analyzing information, using deduction, and thinking logically. He realizes that the family poem is a riddle pointing the way to a treasure; he then quickly solves the riddle, aware that finding the treasure will likely lead him to Robert and Vera.*
2. **Imagine Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was alive today and still writing Sherlock Holmes stories. How might Doyle incorporate modern-day forensic science into the stories?** *Answers will vary. Students might say that Doyle might have Holmes use fingerprints and DNA to solve his cases, or he might have Holmes work with forensic scientists.*

3. Write About It: Character

(45 minutes)

- Have students complete the **Featured Skill Activity: Character**. This activity will prepare them to respond to the writing prompt on page 18 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page:

Imagine you are one of the characters involved in the case of the Musgrave Ritual. Write a diary entry as that character, describing the events of the story and your thoughts and feelings.

- Alternatively, have students choose a task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of culminating tasks. Our Choice Board options include the writing prompt from the magazine, differentiated versions of the writing prompt, and additional creative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of a story or article.

Connected readings from the Scope archives—other read-aloud plays based on Sherlock Holmes adventures:

- [*Sherlock Holmes and the Midnight Killer*](#)
- [*The Mystery of the Stolen Jewel*](#)
- [*Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery of the Red-Headed League*](#)