

Most people like detective stories. A famous detective story writer was Conan Doyle, who was born in 1859 and died in 1930. He invented Sherlock Holmes. Sherlock Holmes seemed so real that people wrote letters to him, asking for help. His address was known: 221 B Baker Street. It was a flat which he shared for many years with his friend Dr Watson.

Why were the stories so popular? Not only because Conan Doyle could tell thrilling events. The readers

liked Sherlock Holmes as a person. He spoke little, he was a sharp observer and a clear thinker. He studied crime like a scientist. In his best stories he puts the facts before us so that we can try and solve the mystery ourselves. Moreover, Sherlock Holmes was fearless, a man of great courage. He even enjoyed danger. He was generous, a gentleman, always ready to help those who needed him and to fight evil.

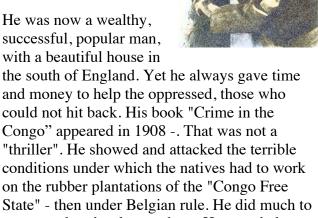
In a way, Sherlock Holmes is Conan Doyle himself. For Conan Doyle was more than a teller of good stories. Before the first world war (1914 to 1918) he was one of the best known and most famous men in England, a friend of the king and of all the great statesmen of his time.

Conan Doyle had studied medicine. Yet he was a doctor for only nine years. Then he began writing books. He wrote historical novels, plays and poems. Yet he was always a man of action as well as a writer. He was a first-class sportsman. He played football and cricket, even for England. Another sport he liked was boxing. When in 1894 his wife fell ill and he spent a few months at Davos, he went skiing. He was one of the first skiers in Switzerland. He used skis that he had imported from Norway. In March he and two men from Davos climbed up to the Strela Pass, starting at half past four, and skied down to Arosa - a thing that only "a mad Englishman"

would do. He drove his first car in 1903 and learnt how to fly in 1911. In 1902 the King knighted him. His name was now Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The king wished to honour him not for the books he had written, but for the work he had done in the Boer War (1899-1902), where he was in charge of a small hospital. A terrible disease broke out, and all the hospitals were overcrowded. The chief doctor went home, as he could not stand the awful smell. So Conan Doyle took his place. He had to fight not only the disease but also the incredible stupidity of the

generals. When he could get away, he went to the front to see the war. Later he wrote a book on the war and suggested reforms. The generals did not like him.

He was now a wealthy, successful, popular man, with a beautiful house in



on the rubber plantations of the "Congo Free State" - then under Belgian rule. He did much to put an end to the slavery there. He gave help to private people, too, who were in trouble or had been wrongly accused of a crime. In several cases he was a true detective himself.

accuse: charge, incriminate Boer war: 1899-1902 in South Africa

case: legal action comfortable: cosy consider: think about disease: illness enjoy: love event: happening evil: wicked fearless: hardy flat: apartment generous: big-hearted in charge: in control incredible: unbelievable instead of: rather than invent: create, discover lead: guide moreover: additionally mystery: secret natives: local novel: story oppress: keep down overcrowded: full rubber: gum, latex

rule: regime scientist: researcher share: part solve: answer suggest: propose thrill: kick to honour: respect to knight: to honour true: real wealthy: rich

## Sir Arthur Conan Doyle TRUE or FALSE?

