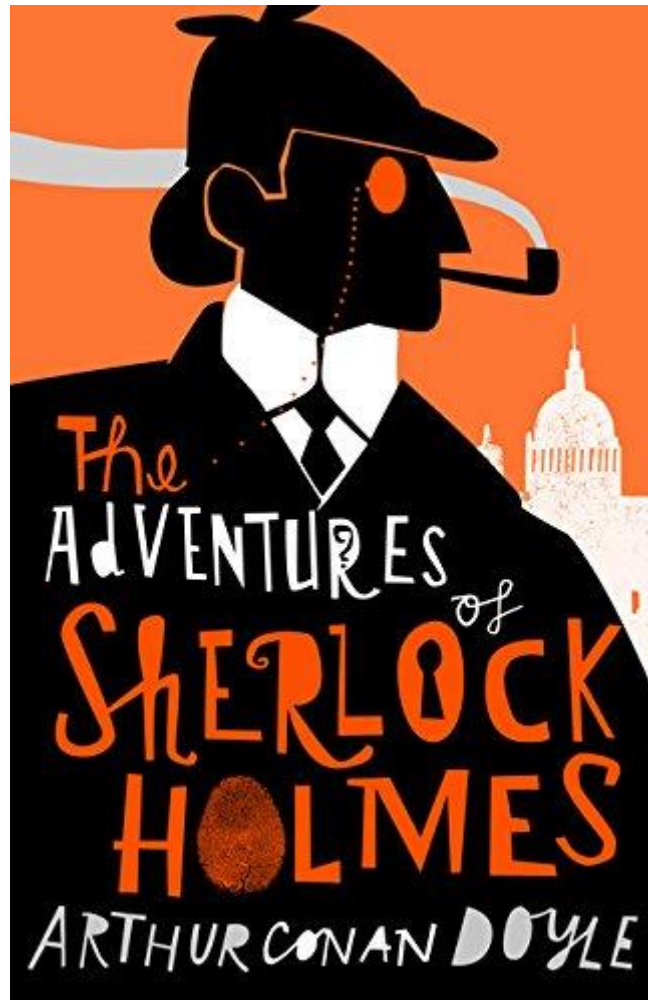


# Exploring Language Skills through Literature:

*The Adventure of the Speckled Band*

By Arthur Conan Doyle



Name: .....

Class: .....

# *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle

## Part 1

Learning Objective: I can identify and explain explicit and implicit information from a fiction text

**TASK:** As you read, highlight any information we learn about the character of Sherlock Holmes **and** any information we learn about his relationship with the narrator, Dr John Watson.

On glancing over my notes of the seventy odd cases in which I have during the last eight years studied the methods of my friend Sherlock Holmes, I find many tragic, some comic, a large number merely strange, but none commonplace; for, working as he did rather for the love of his art than for the acquirement of wealth, he refused to associate himself with any investigation which did not tend towards the unusual, and even the fantastic. Of all these varied cases, however, I cannot recall any which presented more singular features than that which was associated with the well-known Surrey family of the Roylotts of Stoke Moran. The events in question occurred in the early days of my association with Holmes, when we were sharing rooms as bachelors in Baker Street.

It was early in April in the year '83 that I woke one morning to find Sherlock Holmes standing, fully dressed, by the side of my bed. He was a late riser, as a rule, and as the clock on the mantelpiece showed me that it was only a quarter-past seven, I blinked up at him in some surprise, and perhaps just a little resentment, for I was myself regular in my habits.

"Very sorry to wake you up, Watson," said he, "but it's the common lot this morning. Mrs. Hudson has been woken up, she retorted upon me, and I on you."

"What is it, then—a fire?"

"No: a client. It seems that a young lady has arrived in a considerable state of excitement, who insists upon seeing me. She is waiting now in the sitting-room. Now, when young ladies wander about the metropolis at this hour of the morning, and knock sleepy people up out of their beds, I presume that it is something very pressing which they have to communicate. Should it prove to be an interesting case, you would, I am sure, wish to follow it from the outset. I thought, at any rate, that I should call you and give you the chance."

"My dear fellow, I would not miss it for anything."

I had no keener pleasure than in following Holmes in his professional investigations, and in admiring the rapid deductions, as swift as intuitions, and yet always founded on a logical basis with which he unravelled the problems which were submitted to him. I rapidly threw on my clothes and was ready in a few minutes to accompany my friend down to the sitting-room.

**SKILLS FOCUS: VOCABULARY**

**TASK:** Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:

- 1. Watson does not consider any of Sherlock Holmes’s cases to be ordinary:  
..... [1]
- 2. Sherlock Holmes’s motivation for taking on new cases is not to profit financially:  
..... [1]
- 3. Holmes believes that the young woman has something urgent to talk to him about:  
..... [1]

**SKILLS FOCUS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT RETRIEVAL**

**TASK:** Skim and scan the text (p.1) to determine whether the following statements are **true** or **false**:

- 4. Watson, the narrator, considers most of Holmes’s cases to be tragic. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 5. Watson and Holmes live together. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 6. Holmes typically wakes up very early in the morning. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 7. Holmes wakes Watson up because there has been a fire. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 8. A woman has arrived to speak with Holmes about something important. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 9. Watson enjoys working alongside Holmes. **TRUE / FALSE**

**SKILLS FOCUS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT RETRIEVAL**

**TASK:** Identify a word or phrase from the text (p.2) which supports each of the following points:

- 10. Holmes can occasionally act in a strange manner, without consideration for social norms:  
..... [1]
- 11. Holmes knows that Watson is as curious as he is when it comes to interesting cases:  
..... [1]
- 12. Watson admires the speed at which Holmes is able to solve mysteries:  
..... [1]

**EXTENDED WRITING TASK:** Rewrite the events of the text (p.2) from the point of view of Sherlock Holmes. Refer to ideas from the text, but be careful to use your own words. Write between 200 and 300 words. If needed, use the vocabulary prompts below:

Urgent	Appeared	Disturbed	Jolted awake	Curiosity
Housekeeper	Intriguing	Intuition	Colleague	Unusual

# *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle

## Part 2

Learning Objective: I can explore the writer's use of language to present a character

**TASK:** As you read, highlight any information we learn about the character of the veiled woman. In particular, look for words and phrases that carry connotations or create a particular image.

A lady dressed in black and heavily veiled, who had been sitting in the window, rose as we entered.

"Good-morning, madam," said Holmes cheerily. "My name is Sherlock Holmes. This is my intimate friend and associate, Dr Watson, before whom you can speak as freely as before myself. Pray draw up to it, and I shall order you a cup of hot coffee, for I observe that you are shivering."

"It is not cold which makes me shiver," said the woman in a low voice, changing her seat as requested. "It is fear, Mr. Holmes. It is terror." She raised her veil as she spoke, and we could see that she was indeed in a pitiable state of agitation, her face all drawn and grey, with restless frightened eyes, like those of some hunted animal. Her features and figure were those of a woman of thirty, but her hair was shot with premature grey, and her expression was weary and **haggard**. Sherlock Holmes ran her over with one of his quick, **all-comprehensive** glances.

"You must not fear," said he soothingly, bending forward and patting her forearm. "We shall soon set matters right, I have no doubt. You have come in by train this morning, I see."

The lady gave a violent start and stared in bewilderment at my companion.

"There is no mystery, my dear madam," said he, smiling. "The left arm of your jacket is spattered with mud in no less than seven places. The marks are perfectly fresh. There is no vehicle save a **dog-cart** which throws up mud in that way, and then only when you sit on the left-hand side of the driver."

"Whatever your reasons may be, you are perfectly correct," said she. "I started from home before six and came in by the first train to Waterloo. Sir, I can stand this strain no longer; I shall go mad if it continues. I have no one to turn to—none, save only one, who cares for me, and he, poor fellow, can be of little aid. I have heard of you, Mr. Holmes. Oh, sir, do you not think that you could help me, too, and at least throw a little light through the dense darkness which surrounds me? At present it is out of my power to reward you for your services, but in a month or six weeks I shall be married, with the control of my own income, and then at least you shall not find me ungrateful." [...]

**Haggard:** *looking exhausted and unwell, especially from fatigue, worry, or suffering*

**All-comprehensive:** *taking in every detail*

**Dog-cart:** *a light horse-drawn vehicle*

**SKILLS FOCUS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT RETRIEVAL**

**TASK:** Skim and scan the text (p.4) to determine whether the following statements are **true** or **false**:

- 1. The veiled woman is holding a rose in her hand. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 2. Holmes is polite and welcoming to the veiled woman. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 3. The veiled woman feels cold; she is not dressed appropriately. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 4. The veiled woman acts in a violent manner towards Holmes. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 5. There are very few people to whom the veiled woman can turn for support. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 6. The veiled woman has very little money now, but that will change soon. **TRUE / FALSE**

**SKILLS FOCUS: EXPLORING CHARACTERISATION**

**TASK:** Complete the table below, focusing on the character of the veiled woman:

A word/phrase to describe the veiled woman:	Evidence from the text to support this idea:

**SKILLS FOCUS: LANGUAGE ANALYSIS**

**TASK:** Explode the following quotations. Add annotations for images created, connotations, and the effect on the reader. Ensure that, when relevant, you identify techniques and methods.

*“her face all drawn and grey, with restless frightened eyes, like those of some hunted animal”*

*“Oh, sir, do you not think that you could help me, too, and at least throw a little light through the dense darkness which surrounds me?”*

# *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle

## Part 3

Learning Objective: I can explore methods of characterisation

**TASK:** As you read, highlight any information we learn about the character of Dr Roylott. What impression do you have of him? What can you infer about his character and personality?

“I have heard, Mr. Holmes, that you can see deeply into the manifold wickedness of the human heart. You may advise me how to walk amid the dangers which encompass me.”

“I am all attention, madam.”

“My name is Helen Stoner, and I am living with my stepfather, who is the last survivor of one of the oldest Saxon families in England, the Roylotts of Stoke Moran, on the western border of Surrey. The family was at one time among the richest in England. In the last century, however, four successive heirs were of a dissolute and wasteful disposition, and the family ruin was eventually completed by a gambler in the days of the Regency. Nothing was left save a few acres of ground, and the two-hundred-year-old house, which is itself crushed under a heavy mortgage. The last squire dragged out his existence there, living the horrible life of an aristocratic pauper; but his only son, my stepfather, seeing that he must adapt himself to the new conditions, obtained an advance from a relative, which enabled him to take a medical degree and went out to Calcutta, where, by his professional skill and his force of character, he established a large practice. In a fit of anger, however, caused by some robberies which had been perpetrated in the house, he beat his native butler to death and narrowly escaped a capital sentence. As it was, he suffered a long term of imprisonment and afterwards returned to England a morose and disappointed man.

“When Dr Roylott was in India, he married my mother, Mrs. Stoner. My sister Julia and I were twins, and we were only two years old at the time of my mother’s re-marriage. She had a considerable sum of money and this she bequeathed to Dr Roylott entirely while we resided with him, with a provision that a certain annual sum should be allowed to each of us in the event of our marriage. Shortly after our return to England my mother died—she was killed eight years ago in a railway accident near Crewe. Dr Roylott then abandoned his attempts to establish himself in practice in London and took us to live with him in the old ancestral house at Stoke Moran. The money which my mother had left was enough for all our wants, and there seemed to be no obstacle to our happiness.

### **SKILLS FOCUS: EXPLORING CHARACTERISATION**

**TASK:** Summarise your impression of the character of Dr Roylott in 3 words/phrases:

**TASK:** As you read, continue to highlight any information we learn about the character of Dr Roylott.

“But a terrible change came over our stepfather about this time. Instead of making friends and exchanging visits with our neighbours, who had at first been overjoyed to see a Roylott of Stoke Moran back in the old family seat, he shut himself up in his house and seldom came out save to indulge in ferocious quarrels with whoever might cross his path. Violence of temper approaching to mania has been hereditary in the men of the family, and in my stepfather’s case it had, I believe, been intensified by his long residence in the tropics. A series of disgraceful brawls took place, two of which ended in the police-court, until at last he became the terror of the village, and the folks would fly at his approach, for he is a man of immense strength, and absolutely uncontrollable in his anger.

“Last week he hurled the local blacksmith over a parapet into a stream, and it was only by paying over all the money which I could gather together that I was able to avert another public exposure. He had no friends at all save the wandering gipsies. He has a passion also for Indian animals, which are sent over to him by a correspondent, and he has at this moment a cheetah and a baboon, which wander freely over his grounds and are feared by the villagers almost as much as their master.

“You can imagine from what I say that my poor sister Julia and I had no great pleasure in our lives. No servant would stay with us, and for a long time we did all the work of the house. She was but thirty at the time of her death, and yet her hair had already begun to whiten, even as mine has.”

“Your sister is dead, then?”

“She died just two years ago, and it is of her death that I wish to speak to you. You can understand that, living the life which I have described, we were little likely to see anyone of our own age and position. We had, however, an aunt, my mother’s maiden sister, Miss Honoria Westphail and we were occasionally allowed to pay short visits at this lady’s house. Julia went there at Christmas two years ago, and met there a half-pay major of marines, to whom she became engaged. My stepfather learned of the engagement when my sister returned and offered no objection to the marriage; but within a fortnight of the day which had been fixed for the wedding, the terrible event occurred which has deprived me of my only companion.”

Sherlock Holmes had been leaning back in his chair with his eyes closed and his head sunk in a cushion, but he half opened his lids now and glanced across at his visitor.

“Pray be precise as to details,” said he.

**EXTENDED WRITING TASK:**

Produce a *description* of a character who experiences a sudden change in mood or personality. Aim to write between 350 and 450 words in total.

# *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle

## Part 4

Learning Objective: I can make inferences and predications about a text

**TASK:** As you read, highlight any words or phrases that help to create a sense of mystery or tension.

"It is easy for me to be so, for every event of that dreadful time is seared into my memory. The manor-house is, as I have already said, very old, and only one wing is now inhabited. The bedrooms in this wing are on the ground floor. Of these bedrooms the first is Dr Roylott's, the second my sister's, and the third my own. There is no communication between them, but they all open out into the same corridor."

"The windows of the three rooms open out upon the lawn. That fatal night Dr Roylott had gone to his room early, though we knew that he had not retired to rest, for my sister was troubled by the smell of the strong Indian cigars which it was his custom to smoke. She left her room, therefore, and came into mine, where she sat for some time, chatting about her approaching wedding. At eleven o'clock she rose to leave me, but she paused at the door and looked back.

"Tell me, Helen," said she, "have you ever heard anyone whistle in the dead of the night?"

"Never," said I.

"I suppose that you could not possibly whistle, yourself, in your sleep?"

"Certainly not. But why?"

"Because during the last few nights I have always, about three in the morning, heard a low, clear whistle. I am a light sleeper, and it has awakened me. I cannot tell where it came from—perhaps from the next room, perhaps from the lawn. I thought that I would just ask you whether you had heard it. [...] Well, it is of no great consequence, at any rate." She smiled back at me, closed my door, and a few moments later I heard her key turn in the lock."

"Indeed," said Holmes. "Was it your custom always to lock yourselves in at night?"

"Always."

"And why?"

"I think that I mentioned to you that the Doctor kept a cheetah and a baboon. We had no feeling of security unless our doors were locked."

"Quite so. Pray proceed with your statement."



**SKILLS FOCUS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT RETRIEVAL**

**TASK:** Skim and scan the text (p.8) to determine whether the following statements are **true** or **false**:

- 1. The manor-house was not in excellent condition. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 2. Julia went to Helen’s room to escape the smell of cigar smoke. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 3. Julia is unable to get to sleep in the evenings due to the whistling sound. **TRUE / FALSE**
- 4. The sisters lock their doors at night because they are scared of Dr Roylott. **TRUE / FALSE**

**SKILLS FOCUS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT RETRIEVAL**

**TASK:** Using the information from p.8, write down 4 true statements about Julia Stoner:

- 5. .... [1]
- 6. .... [1]
- 7. .... [1]
- 8. .... [1]

**SKILLS FOCUS: PREDICTION**

**TASK:** In your opinion, what do you think happened to Julia Stoner? Back your predictions up with reasons and explanations based on what you have read thus far:

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# *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle

## Part 5

Learning Objective: I can explore the writer's use of language to create tension

**TASK:** As you read, highlight any words or phrases that help to create a sense of mystery or tension.

"I could not sleep that night. A vague feeling of impending misfortune impressed me. My sister and I, you will recollect, were twins, and you know how subtle are the links which bind two souls which are so closely allied. It was a wild night. The wind was howling outside, and the rain was beating and splashing against the windows. Suddenly, amid all the hubbub of the gale, there burst forth the wild scream of a terrified woman. I knew that it was my sister's voice. I sprang from my bed, wrapped a shawl round me, and rushed into the corridor. As I opened my door I seemed to hear a low whistle, such as my sister described, and a few moments later a clanging sound, as if a mass of metal had fallen. As I ran down the passage, my sister's door was unlocked, and revolved slowly upon its hinges. I stared at it horror-stricken, not knowing what was about to issue from it. By the light of the corridor-lamp I saw my sister appear at the opening, her face blanched with terror, her hands groping for help, her whole figure swaying to and fro like that of a drunkard. I ran to her and threw my arms round her, but at that moment her knees seemed to give way and she fell to the ground. She writhed as one who is in terrible pain, and her limbs were dreadfully convulsed. At first I thought that she had not recognised me, but as I bent over her she suddenly shrieked out in a voice which I shall never forget, 'Oh, my God! Helen! It was the band! The speckled band!' There was something else which she would fain have said, and she stabbed with her finger into the air in the direction of the doctor's room, but a fresh convulsion seized her and choked her words. I rushed out, calling loudly for my stepfather, and I met him hastening from his room in his dressing-gown. When he reached my sister's side she was unconscious, and though he poured brandy down her throat and sent for medical aid from the village, all efforts were in vain, for she slowly sank and died without having recovered her consciousness. Such was the dreadful end of my beloved sister."

### **SKILLS FOCUS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT RETRIEVAL**

**TASK:** Skim and scan the text (p.10) to determine whether the following statements are **true** or **false**:

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. When Helen heard her sister's scream, she froze in terror.                    | <b>TRUE / FALSE</b> |
| 2. When Helen arrived at her sister's room, Julia was still alive.               | <b>TRUE / FALSE</b> |
| 3. It was clear from looking at her that Julia was drunk.                        | <b>TRUE / FALSE</b> |
| 4. Helen and Julia's stepfather, Dr Roylott, tried to save Julia, but he failed. | <b>TRUE / FALSE</b> |

### **SKILLS FOCUS: LANGUAGE ANALYSIS**

**TASK:** How does the writer use language to create tension and mystery in this scene? Aim for between 250 and 350 words of clear analysis. You should refer to the writer's methods in your response.

"Was your sister dressed?"

"No, she was in her night-dress. In her right hand was found the charred stump of a match, and in her left a match-box."

"Showing that she had struck a light and looked about her when the alarm took place. That is important. And what conclusions did the coroner come to?"

"He investigated the case with great care, but he was unable to find any satisfactory cause of death. My evidence showed that the door had been fastened upon the inner side, and the windows were blocked. It is certain, therefore, that my sister was quite alone when she met her end. Besides, there were no marks of any violence upon her."

"How about poison?"

"The doctors examined her for it, but without success."

"What do you think that this unfortunate lady died of, then?"

"It is my belief that she died of pure fear and nervous shock, though what it was that frightened her I cannot imagine."

"Ah, and what did you gather from this allusion to a band—a speckled band?"

"Sometimes I have thought that it was merely the wild talk of delirium, sometimes that it may have referred to some band of people."

Holmes shook his head like a man who is far from being satisfied.

"These are very deep waters," said he; "pray go on with your narrative."

"Two years have passed since then, and my life has been until lately lonelier than ever. A month ago, however, a dear friend, has done me the honour to ask my hand in marriage. His name is Armitage. My stepfather has offered no opposition to the match, and we are to be married in the course of the spring. Two days ago, some repairs were started in the west wing of the building, so that I have had to move into the chamber in which my sister died, and to sleep in the very bed in which she slept. Imagine, then, my thrill of terror when last night, as I lay awake, thinking over her terrible fate, I suddenly heard in the silence of the night the low whistle which had been the herald of her own death. I sprang up and lit the lamp, but nothing was to be seen in the room. I was too shaken to go to bed again, however, so I dressed, and as soon as it was daylight I slipped down, got a dog-cart at the Crown Inn, which is opposite, and drove to Leatherhead, from whence I have come on this morning with the one object of seeing you and asking your advice."

"You have done wisely," said my friend. "But have you told me all?"

# *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle

## Part 6

Learning Objective: I can identify and explain explicit and implicit information from a fiction text

**TASK:** As you read, highlight any words or phrases that show the change in Helen Stoner:

"You have done wisely," said my friend. "But have you told me all?"

"Yes, all."

"Miss Roylott, you have not. You are screening your stepfather."

"Why, what do you mean?"

For answer Holmes pushed back the frill of black lace which fringed the hand that lay upon our visitor's knee. Five little livid spots, the marks of four fingers and a thumb, were printed upon the white wrist.

"You have been cruelly used," said Holmes.

The lady coloured deeply and covered over her injured wrist. "He is a hard man," she said, "and perhaps he hardly knows his own strength."

There was a long silence, during which Holmes leaned his chin upon his hands and stared into the crackling fire.

"This is a very deep business," he said at last. "There are a thousand details which I should desire to know before I decide upon our course of action. Yet we have not a moment to lose. If we were to come to Stoke Moran to-day, would it be possible for us to see over these rooms without the knowledge of your stepfather?"

"As it happens, he spoke of coming into town to-day upon some most important business. It is probable that he will be away all day, and that there would be nothing to disturb you. We have a housekeeper now, but she is old and foolish, and I could easily get her out of the way."

"Excellent. You are not averse to this trip, Watson?"

"By no means."

"Then we shall both come. Will you not wait and breakfast?"

"No, I must go. My heart is lightened already since I have confided my trouble to you. I shall look forward to seeing you again this afternoon." She dropped her thick black veil over her face and glided from the room.

"And what do you think of it all, Watson?" asked Sherlock Holmes, leaning back in his chair.

"It seems to me to be a most dark and sinister business."

"Dark enough and sinister enough."

When you combine the ideas of whistles at night, the presence of a band of gipsies who are on intimate terms with this old doctor, the fact that we have every reason to believe that the doctor has an interest in preventing his stepdaughter's marriage, the dying allusion to a band, and, finally, the fact that Miss Helen Stoner heard a metallic clang, which might have been caused by one of those metal bars that secured the shutters falling back into its place, I think that there is good ground to think that the mystery may be cleared along those lines."

"I see many objections to any such theory."

"And so do I. It is precisely for that reason that we are going to Stoke Moran this day. I want to see whether the objections are fatal, or if they may be explained away. But what in the name of the devil!"

The **ejaculation** had been drawn from my companion by the fact that our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man had framed himself in the **aperture**.

**Ejaculation:** *something said quickly and suddenly*

**Aperture:** *an opening, hole, or gap*

### SKILLS FOCUS: VOCABULARY

**TASK:** Identify a word or phrase from the text (p.12,13) which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:

1. Holmes asks Watson if he has any objection to going on the trip to Helen's home:

..... [1]

2. Helen Stoner moved gracefully and smoothly:

..... [1]

3. As she died, Julia made a reference to the speckled band:

..... [1]

# *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle

## Part 7

Learning Objective: I can explore methods of characterisation

**TASK:** As you read, highlight any information we learn about the character of Dr Roylott. What impression do you have of him? What can you infer about his character and personality?

Our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man had framed himself in the aperture. His costume was a peculiar mixture of the professional and of the agricultural, having a black top-hat, a long frock-coat, and a pair of high gaiters, with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand. So tall was he that his hat actually brushed the cross bar of the doorway, and his breadth seemed to span it across from side to side. A large face, seared with a thousand wrinkles, burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion, was turned from one to the other of us, while his deep-set, bile-shot eyes, and his high, thin, fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey.

"Which of you is Holmes?" asked this apparition.

"My name, sir; but you have the advantage of me," said my companion quietly.

"I am Dr Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran."

"Indeed, Doctor," said Holmes blandly. "Pray take a seat."

"I will do nothing of the kind. My stepdaughter has been here. I have traced her. What has she been saying to you?" screamed the old man furiously.

"I know you, you scoundrel! I have heard of you before. You are Holmes, the meddler."

My friend smiled.

"Holmes, the busybody!"

Holmes chuckled heartily. "Your conversation is most entertaining," said he. "When you go out close the door, for there is a decided draught."

"I will go when I have said my say. Don't you dare to meddle with my affairs. I know that Miss Stoner has been here. I traced her! I am a dangerous man to fall foul of! See here." He stepped swiftly forward, seized the poker, and bent it into a curve with his huge brown hands.

"See that you keep yourself out of my grip," he snarled, and hurling the twisted poker into the fireplace he strode out of the room.

"He seems a very amiable person," said Holmes, laughing. "I am not quite so bulky, but if he had remained I might have shown him that my grip was not much more feeble than his own." As he spoke he picked up the steel poker and, with a sudden effort, straightened it out again.

**SKILLS FOCUS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT RETRIEVAL**

**TASK:** Using the information from p.14, write down 4 true statements about Dr Roylott from the first paragraph only:

- 1. .... [1]
- 2. .... [1]
- 3. .... [1]
- 4. .... [1]

**SKILLS FOCUS: SELECTIVE SUMMARY AND COMPARISON**

**TASK:** In your own words, summarise and compare the way in which Dr Roylott and Sherlock Holmes are presented in this extract. You should support your ideas with quotations from the text:

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**SUPPORT:**

Whereas	Although	Conversely	Equally
However	On the other hand	Similarly	Whilst

**EXTENDED WRITING TASK:** You are Dr Roylott. Write a diary entry in which you recount the events of this day. Make references to the following points:

- Why did you visit Sherlock Holmes?
- Was your conversation with Sherlock Holmes successful? Why/why not?
- What was your impression of Sherlock Holmes?

# *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle

## Part 8

Learning Objective: I can plan and produce an effective piece of descriptive writing

**PLOT SUMMARY:** Since the last extract, Sherlock Holmes and John Watson have travelled to Stoke Moran, Surrey, in order to visit Helen Stoner's home. Holmes has done some investigating: he has discovered that, in her will, Mrs Stoner had left her money entirely to Dr Roylott, which amounts to approximately £750 a year. However, she had also made a provision: each of her daughters can claim an annual income of £250 in the event of their marriages...

**TASK:** As you read, highlight any words or phrases that convey Helen Stoner's attitude towards Holmes and Watson. Which words or phrases implicitly convey her feelings or emotions?

Our client of the morning had hurried forward to meet us with a face which spoke her joy. "I have been waiting so eagerly for you," she cried, shaking hands with us warmly. "All has turned out splendidly. Dr. Roylott has gone to town, and it is unlikely that he will be back before evening."

"We have had the pleasure of making the doctor's acquaintance," said Holmes, and in a few words he sketched out what had occurred. Miss Stoner turned white to the lips as she listened.

"Good heavens!" she cried, "he has followed me, then."

"So it appears."

"He is so cunning that I never know when I am safe from him. What will he say when he returns?"

"He must guard himself, for he may find that there is someone more cunning than himself upon his track. You must lock yourself up from him to-night. If he is violent, we shall take you away to your aunt's at Harrow. Now, we must make the best use of our time, so kindly take us at once to the rooms which we are to examine."

### SKILLS FOCUS: VOCABULARY

In the text, Helen is happy to see Holmes and Watson. Complete the table below by suggesting at least 4 more verbs or adverbs that could be used to present Helen Stoner in a **different** manner:

Helen is <b>angry</b>	Helen is <b>bored</b>	Helen is <b>scared</b>
<i>Stomped</i> <i>Abruptly</i>	<i>Yawned</i> <i>Trudged</i>	<i>Timidly</i> <i>Warily</i>



**EXTENDED WRITING TASK:** Produce a piece of descriptive writing based on the extract above (p.16).

- Your description should focus on the character of **Helen Stoner** as she approaches Holmes and Watson
- She should be presented in a **different emotional state** to that of the original text e.g. *angry, bored, scared etc.*

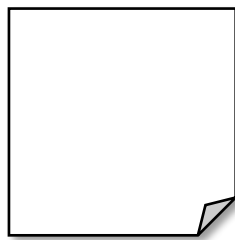
**SKILLS TOP TIPS: DESCRIPTIVE WRITING**

- ✓ A description is a moment in time, not a story
- ✓ A description should focus on building a precise picture in the reader's mind
- ✓ A description is typically written in third person
- ✓ A description requires detail and depth

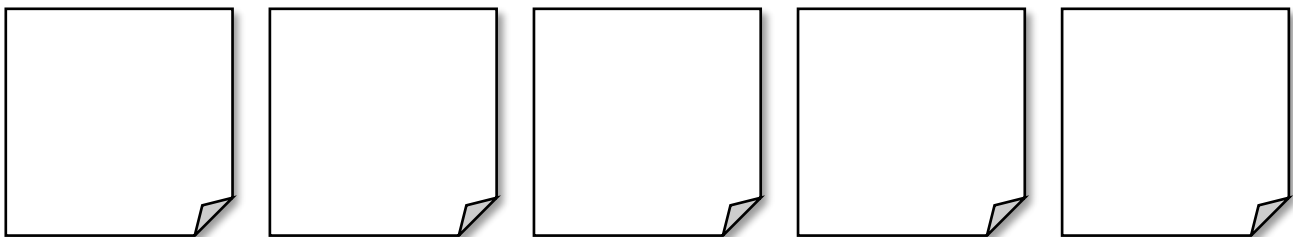


**POST-IT PLANNING:**

In my writing, I am going to present Helen Stoner as feeling ...



Words and phrases that I can use to **show** my reader this emotion include ...



Plan any further ideas in the box below. Consider body language, facial expression, actions, and the character's surroundings. Focus on presenting a particular mood or emotion throughout.

**SUPPORT: NOT SURE HOW TO START?**

*As the men approached the figure of Helen Stoner, Holmes noted the expression on her face: ... ..*

# *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle

## Part 9

Learning Objective: I can explore the writer's use of language and structure to create tension

**PLOT SUMMARY:** Holmes, Watson, and Helen explore her home. Holmes notes that, although Helen was asked to move bedrooms due to house renovations, there does not appear to be any sign of serious repairs being made. Holmes asks Helen to go into her room and lock any doors and windows; he tries to break in by force, but is unsuccessful. He ponders how anyone could stage an attack.

As he explores the rooms, Holmes finds the following items:

*Finally he took the bell-rope in his hand and gave it a brisk tug.  
"Why, it's a dummy," said he.  
"Won't it ring?"  
"No, it is not even attached to a wire. This is very interesting. You can see now that it is fastened to a hook just above where the little opening for the ventilator is."  
"How very absurd! I never noticed that before."*

*"There isn't a cat in it, for example?"  
"No. What a strange idea!"  
"Well, look at this!" He took up a small saucer of milk which stood on the top of it.  
"No; we don't keep a cat. But there is a cheetah and a baboon."*

*The object which had caught his eye was a small dog lash hung on one corner of the bed. The lash, however, was curled upon itself and tied so as to make a loop of whipcord.*

Any thoughts yet about the cause of Julia Stoner's death? By now Holmes certainly seems to think that he has pieced together the clues and determined the cause of death. However, when Helen asks him to reveal what he thinks he knows, he refused. Instead, he simply says:

*"I should prefer to have clearer proofs before I speak."*

Why does Arthur Conan Doyle choose to reveal that Holmes has solved the mystery, but chooses not to share the details with the other characters or the reader? Note your ideas below:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**PLOT SUMMARY:** At this point in the story, Holmes and Watson are at the nearby Crown Inn, waiting for Helen to send a signal that Dr Roylott has retired to his bedroom for the night.

**TASK:** As you read, highlight any words or phrases that help to create tension and or add an air of mystery to the scene:

About nine o'clock the light among the trees was extinguished, and all was dark in the direction of the Manor House. Two hours passed slowly away, and then, suddenly, just at the stroke of eleven, a single bright light shone out right in front of us.

"That is our signal," said Holmes, springing to his feet.

As we passed out he exchanged a few words with the landlord. A moment later we were out on the dark road, a chill wind blowing in our faces, and one yellow light twinkling in front of us through the gloom to guide us on our sombre errand. There was little difficulty in entering the grounds, for unrepaired breaches gaped in the old park wall. Making our way among the trees, we reached the lawn, crossed it, and were about to enter through the window when out from a clump of laurel bushes there darted what seemed to be a hideous and distorted child, who threw itself upon the grass with writhing limbs and then ran swiftly across the lawn into the darkness.

"My God!" I whispered; "did you see it?"

Holmes was for the moment as startled as I. His hand closed like a vice upon my wrist in his agitation. Then he broke into a low laugh and put his lips to my ear.

"It is a nice household," he murmured. "That is the baboon."

I had forgotten the strange pets which the doctor affected. There was a cheetah, too; perhaps we might find it upon our shoulders at any moment. I confess that I felt easier in my mind when, after following Holmes' example and slipping off my shoes, I found myself inside the bedroom. My companion noiselessly closed the shutters, moved the lamp onto the table, and cast his eyes round the room. All was as we had seen it in the daytime. Then creeping up to me and making a trumpet of his hand, he whispered into my ear again so gently that it was all that I could do to distinguish the words:

"The least sound would be fatal to our plans."

I nodded to show that I had heard.

"We must sit without light. He would see it through the ventilator."

I nodded again.

"Do not go asleep; your very life may depend upon it. Have your pistol ready in case we should need it. I will sit on the side of the bed, and you in that chair."

I took out my revolver and laid it on the corner of the table.

From outside came the occasional cry of a night-bird, and once at our very window a long drawn catlike whine, which told us that the cheetah was indeed at liberty. Far away we could hear the deep tones of the parish clock, which boomed out every quarter of an hour. How long they seemed, those quarters! Twelve struck, and one and two and three, and still we sat waiting silently for whatever might befall. Suddenly there was the momentary gleam of a light up in the direction of the ventilator, which vanished immediately, but was succeeded by a strong smell of burning oil and heated metal. Someone in the next room had lit a dark-lantern. I heard a gentle sound of movement, and then all was silent once more, though the smell grew stronger. For half an hour I sat with straining ears. Then suddenly another sound became audible—a very gentle, soothing sound, like that of a small jet of steam escaping continually from a kettle. The instant that we heard it, Holmes sprang from the bed, struck a match, and lashed furiously with his cane at the bell-pull.

“You see it, Watson?” he yelled. “You see it?”

But I saw nothing. At the moment when Holmes struck the light I heard a low, clear whistle, but the sudden glare flashing into my weary eyes made it impossible for me to tell what it was at which my friend lashed so savagely. I could, however, see that his face was deadly pale and filled with horror and loathing. He had ceased to strike and was gazing up at the ventilator when suddenly there broke from the silence of the night the most horrible cry to which I have ever listened. It swelled up louder and louder, a hoarse yell of pain and fear and anger all mingled in the one dreadful shriek. They say that away down in the village, and even in the distant parsonage, that cry raised the sleepers from their beds. It struck cold to our hearts, and I stood gazing at Holmes, and he at me, until the last echoes of it had died away into the silence from which it rose.

“What can it mean?” I gasped.

“It means that it is all over,” Holmes answered. “And perhaps, after all, it is for the best. Take your pistol, and we will enter Dr. Roylott’s room.”

### SKILLS FOCUS: VOCABULARY

**TASK:** Identify a word or phrase from the text (p.20) which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:

1. There was a brief and temporary flash of light:

..... [1]

2. Eventually, Holmes stopped hitting the undetermined object:

..... [1]

3. The cry included a number of different emotions, all mixed together:

..... [1]

# *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* by Arthur Conan Doyle

## Part 10

Learning Objective: I can identify and explain explicit and implicit information from a fiction text

With a grave face he lit the lamp and led the way down the corridor. Twice he struck at the chamber door without any reply from within. Then he turned the handle and entered, I at his heels, with the cocked pistol in my hand.

It was a **singular** sight which met our eyes. On the table stood a dark-lantern with the shutter half open, throwing a brilliant beam of light upon the iron safe, the door of which was ajar. Beside this table, on the wooden chair, sat Dr Grimesby Roylott clad in a long grey dressing-gown, his bare ankles **protruding** beneath, and his feet thrust into red heelless Turkish slippers. Across his lap lay the short stock with the long lash which we had noticed during the day. His chin was cocked upward and his eyes were fixed in a dreadful, **rigid** stare at the corner of the ceiling. Round his brow he had a **peculiar** yellow band, with brownish speckles, which seemed to be bound tightly round his head. As we entered he made neither sound nor motion.

“The band! the speckled band!” whispered Holmes.

I took a step forward. In an instant his strange headgear began to move, and there reared itself from among his hair the squat diamond-shaped head and puffed neck of a loathsome serpent.

### SKILLS FOCUS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT RETRIEVAL

**TASK:** Skim and scan the text (p.21) to determine whether the following statements are **true** or **false**:

1. Holmes knocks on the door of Dr Roylott’s bedroom before entering. **TRUE / FALSE**
2. Dr Roylott is still alive when Holmes and Watson enter the room. **TRUE / FALSE**
3. There is something red and grey wrapped around Dr Roylott’s head. **TRUE / FALSE**
4. The thing on Dr Roylott’s head begins to move when Watson approaches. **TRUE / FALSE**

### SKILLS FOCUS: VOCABULARY

**TASK:** Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined in the text:

1. singular ..... [1]
2. protruding ..... [1]
3. rigid ..... [1]
4. peculiar ..... [1]

As he spoke he drew the dog-whip swiftly from the dead man's lap, and throwing the noose round the reptile's neck he drew it from its horrid perch and, carrying it at arm's length, threw it into the iron safe, which he closed upon it.

Such are the true facts of the death of Dr Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran. It is not necessary that I should prolong a narrative which has already run to too great a length by telling how we broke the sad news to the terrified girl, how we conveyed her by the morning train to the care of her good aunt at Harrow, of how the slow process of official inquiry came to the conclusion that the doctor met his fate while indiscreetly playing with a dangerous pet. The little which I had yet to learn of the case was told me by Sherlock Holmes as we travelled back next day.

"I had," said he, "come to an entirely erroneous conclusion which shows, my dear Watson, how dangerous it always is to reason from insufficient data. The presence of the gipsies, and the use of the word 'band,' which was used by the poor girl, no doubt, to explain the appearance which she had caught a hurried glimpse of by the light of her match, were sufficient to put me upon an entirely wrong scent. I can only claim the merit that I instantly reconsidered my position when, however, it became clear to me that whatever danger threatened an occupant of the room could not come either from the window or the door. My attention was speedily drawn, as I have already remarked to you, to this ventilator, and to the bell-rope which hung down to the bed. The discovery that this was a dummy, and that the bed was clamped to the floor, instantly gave rise to the suspicion that the rope was there as a bridge for something passing through the hole and coming to the bed. The idea of a snake instantly occurred to me, and when I coupled it with my knowledge that the doctor was furnished with a supply of creatures from India, I felt that I was probably on the right track. The idea of using a form of poison which could not possibly be discovered by any chemical test was just such a one as would occur to a clever and ruthless man who had had an Eastern training. The rapidity with which such a poison would take effect would also, from his point of view, be an advantage. It would be a sharp-eyed coroner, indeed, who could distinguish the two little dark punctures which would show where the poison fangs had done their work. Then I thought of the whistle. Of course he must recall the snake before the morning light revealed it to the victim. He had trained it, probably by the use of the milk which we saw, to return to him when summoned. He would put it through this ventilator at the hour that he thought best, with the certainty that it would crawl down the rope and land on the bed. It might or might not bite the occupant, perhaps she might escape every night for a week, but sooner or later she must fall a victim.

"I had come to these conclusions before ever I had entered his room. An inspection of his chair showed me that he had been in the habit of standing on it, which of course would be necessary in order that he should reach the ventilator. The sight of the safe, the saucer of milk, and the loop of whipcord were enough to finally dispel any doubts which may have remained. The metallic clang heard by Miss Stoner was obviously caused by her stepfather hastily closing the door of his safe upon its terrible occupant. Having once made up my mind, you know the steps which I took in order to put the matter to the proof. I heard the creature hiss as I have no doubt that you did also, and I instantly lit the light and attacked it."

“With the result of driving it through the ventilator.”

“And also with the result of causing it to turn upon its master at the other side. Some of the blows of my cane came home and roused its snakish temper, so that it flew upon the first person it saw. In this way I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr Grimesby Roylott’s death, and I cannot say that it is likely to weigh very heavily upon my conscience.”

**SKILLS FOCUS: EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT RETRIEVAL**

1. Who or what is the speckled band?  
..... [1]
2. What happened to Helen Stoner?  
..... [1]
3. When Holmes started to suspect that a snake was involved, what information helped him feel certain of this suspicion?  
..... [1]
4. Where did Dr Roylott keep the snake during the day?  
..... [1]
5. How does Holmes feel about the death of Dr Roylott?  
..... [2]
6. A **red herring** is a clue or piece of information which is or is intended to be misleading or distracting. What red herring does Holmes mention in his explanation of the mystery?  
..... [1]
7. In your own words, what led Dr Roylott to commit the murder of Julia Stoner and the attempted murder of Helen Stoner?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
..... [3]
8. What star rating would you give this short story? 