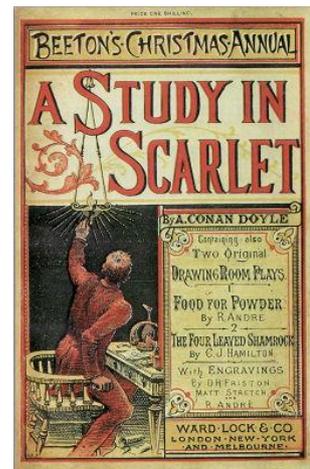


I thought I would finish off talking about various Victorian figures by talking about SHERLOCK HOLMES (pronounced 'Homes'). He is the most famous detective of all time. He was born in 1854, and lived at 221B Baker Street in London along with DR JOHN WATSON, who assisted Holmes on most of his cases and wrote about them, explaining Holmes' methods for detecting who had committed a crime. These methods involved Holmes getting to know every detail of a case that he was asked to solve, and making brilliant deductions about how to explain what had happened. Holmes would use these powers of deduction in normal life as well.



Dr Watson explained - in the first story he wrote about Holmes, called A STUDY IN SCARLET - that the first time he met Holmes on New Year's Day 1881 (Watson was looking for somewhere to live and he had been told there were some rooms spare in the house which a MRS HUDSON rented out to Holmes), Holmes shook his hand and said 'I see you are from Afghanistan'. Watson had no idea how Holmes could have known this - Watson had been serving in the British Army in Afghanistan and had just come back to England, but hadn't told Holmes what he did or where he was from. Holmes later explained, 'My train of reasoning ran: "Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly. His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a stiff and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan." It didn't take me more than second to realise this.' Holmes' detective skills meant that his services were in big demand, by some of the most important people in Victorian society, including the Prime Minister (who needed Holmes' help to track down a hugely important document that had been stolen from a government minister).



In 1891, it was announced that Holmes had died, at the age of just 37. He had been on the track of a master criminal named PROFESSOR JAMES MORIARTY, who was the head of a huge criminal organisation. Holmes and Moriarty finally confronted each other in Switzerland, and both fell to their deaths while fighting just above a waterfall called the REICHENBACH FALLS (pronounced 'Ry - kun - back Falls'). Watson wrote up the details of Holmes' final case under the title 'THE FINAL PROBLEM', and went into mourning for Holmes, just as much of London did. But then three years later, in 1894, Holmes contacted Watson to say that only Moriarty had fallen to his death at the Reichenbach Falls - Holmes had pretended to have died himself to avoid being killed by Moriarty's friends, but now it was safe for him to come back to England and resume his life as the world's greatest detective, with Watson at his



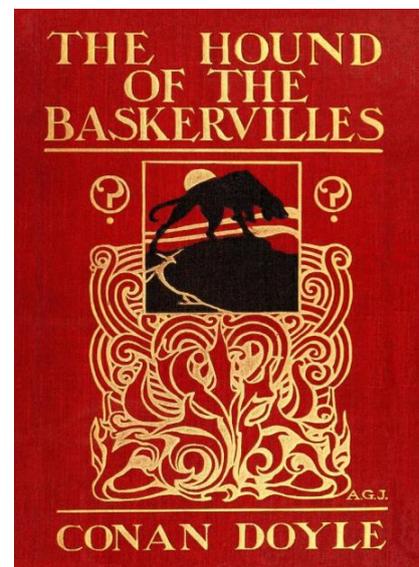
side. Holmes and Watson went on to have more adventures together, until Holmes quit the detective business in 1904 at the age of 50 and left London to become a beekeeper in the South of England. Ten years later, when WORLD WAR I began, Holmes and Watson reunited on a couple of cases to help the British war effort. But after that no more was heard about Holmes. He never married. In one of his cases - which Watson wrote up under the title 'A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA' - he got to know a woman called IRENE ADLER: Holmes had been asked to find out where she kept some damaging information about a European prince, and to get it back or destroy it. Holmes didn't succeed because Irene Adler was too clever for him, and ever since that incident, Irene Adler was the only woman that he had any feelings for - but he never met her again.



So that's the story of Sherlock Holmes, one of the most famous people to come out of the Victorian age. But probably the most amazing fact about him is - HE NEVER EXISTED. He was a creation of a writer called ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, who wrote 56 short stories about Sherlock Holmes (published in The Strand magazine) and four novels. Everything I have told you comes from those short stories and novels. Conan Doyle got the idea to write about a detective from meeting a Scottish surgeon called JOSEPH BELL. He observed how Bell would make brilliant deductions about what his patients were suffering from based on detailed observation of the patients - and Conan Doyle thought, 'That sort of brilliant way of thinking would make for a great detective.'



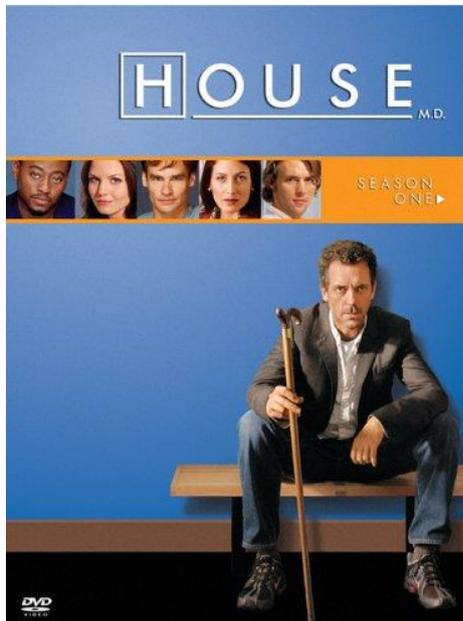
The first story Conan Doyle wrote about Sherlock Holmes was 'A Study in Scarlet' and that was published in 1887. By 1893, stories about Holmes were hugely popular in England and America, and Conan Doyle felt like Holmes was taking over his life. So he decided to kill Holmes off, and wrote 'The Final Problem' to get rid of him. People were devastated, and The Strand magazine lost 20,000 readers when they realised they would no longer be able to read about the adventures of Sherlock Holmes in the magazine. For eight years, Conan Doyle resisted pressure to supply the public with any more stories about Sherlock Holmes - but eventually in 1901 Conan Doyle gave in, first of all writing one of the most famous Sherlock Holmes stories THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, which was set at some time before Holmes 'died', and then bringing Holmes back to life in 'THE ADVENTURE OF THE EMPTY HOUSE'. Conan Doyle continued to write more Sherlock Holmes stories until 1927, three years before Conan Doyle himself died in 1930.



There is no doubt that Sherlock Holmes is the most famous fictional (which means he never existed, except in books) character ever created. He is so famous that people actually believe he existed, and still write to Sherlock Holmes at 221B Baker Street (which is now the site of

the Sherlock Holmes Museum). There have been a huge number of TV series and films based on Conan Doyle's stories, but for my (and lot of other people's) money, the best ever version of Sherlock Holmes was JEREMY BRETT's, for four series of Sherlock Holmes stories produced by ITV. You can see him in action here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQW98Q4zEgQ>



Just as a doctor was the inspiration for Sherlock Holmes, in 2003, Sherlock Holmes was the inspiration for an excellent TV series about a brilliant doctor who made amazing deductions about what



was wrong with his patients. It was called 'HOUSE' (you see the connection with 'Holmes'? ) and told the story of Dr Gregory House, and his long-suffering friend, Dr James Wilson (a thinly disguised version of Dr John Watson). House was played by the English actor HUGH LAURIE, and his is probably the second best portrayal of a Sherlock Holmes type character in history. But Brett is the best, by a very long way.