

# The curious case of Doyle

On the eve of the 161st birth anniversary of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, we tell you how this physician scripted his success as a writer



Sherlock Holmes, the iconic detective of 221B Baker Street, is possibly the most famous sleuth of all time. Wearing his signature tweed suit and hat, Holmes will amaze you with the way he solves cases. And, his creator, author Arthur Conan Doyle too was a legend in his own right. A bestselling

author, doctor, cricketer and even a polar explorer, Doyle was a man of many talents. He revolutionised the crime/detective fiction genre through his Sherlock Holmes stories.

## Writing, a prescription for boredom

Doyle was an eye specialist in London. He wrote in his autobiography that not a single patient ever crossed his door. This gave him all the time to focus on his writing. That's when he came up with Sherlock Holmes - a consulting detective who solves cases with his empirical skills. The fictitious character was based on a real person - Dr. Joseph Bell, who was a forensic scientist with Edinburgh University and Doyle had studied under him.

Holmes appeared in a 1887

novel, "A Study in Scarlet", which was followed by "The Sign of Four." Stories on Holmes also ran as a series in the "Strand Magazine" and gathered a huge fan following.

## Resurrection of Holmes

At the peak of the popularity of Holmes, Doyle did the unthinkable - he killed his protagonist in "The Final Problem" published in 1893. The public reaction was unlike anything ever seen before. Angry fans hounded Doyle on the streets of London; one woman even attacked him with her umbrella. Grieving fans even wore black armbands to mourn Holmes. So Doyle wrote a posthumous Holmes story - "The Hound of Baskervilles". Finally, on public demand, Doyle resurrected the detective after eight years.

## Did you know?

\*\* Doyle wrote "The Lost World" in 1912, which became a precursor to books and films based on dinosaurs.

\*\* He was conferred knighthood for his services in the Boer War and not for his fiction writing.

\*\* Doyle sailed to the Arctic in 1880 on a whaling ship called 'Hope'. His experiences inspired the back story of the famous Baker Street detective.

\*\* Doyle helped solve two major crimes, including the murder of an 82-year-old woman in Scotland.

\*\* Cricket played an important role in Doyle's life. He named his famous detective after two county cricketers-Shacklock and Sherrinford. A cricketer himself, Doyle took just one first-class wicket in his career - that of the legendary W G Grace!

## Other works

\*\* "Professor Challenger" series  
 \*\* "Brigadier Gerard" series - Historical fiction  
 \*\* Political essays and plays

\*\* "The Story of Spedegue's Dropper" - Based on Doyle's experience of when he was bowled by former England cricketer A.P. Lucas.

## ACTIVITY: Crimes and Clues

Guess the titles of these Sherlock Holmes stories based on the clues:

1. Dr. John Watson moves in to 221B Baker Street, where he gets introduced to his eccentric housemate.
2. Is a diabolical, supernatural hound behind the recent deaths in Dartmoor? Or is there more to it than meets the eye?
3. A valuable gem is stolen

from Lady Morcar until it ends up in the Christmas goose.

4. A young woman suspects her stepfather may be trying to kill her in order to retain control of her inheritance.
5. A mysterious letter arrives from India containing five orange pips.

Answers: 1. "A Study in Scarlet", 2. "The Hound of Baskervilles", 3. "The Blue Carbuncle", 4. "The Speckled Band", 5. "The Five Orange Pips"

## Oh, really?

\*\* In 1914, on a family trip to the Jasper National Park in Canada, he designed a golf course and ancillary buildings for a hotel.

\*\* In "The Blue Carbuncle", the priceless-stolen gem turns up in the crop of the Christmas goose. This is considered to be Doyle's greatest blunder as geese do not have a crop, a pouch in a bird's throat.

\*\* The Grand Game is an ongoing analysis of 60 of his stories by his fans, who are convinced that Holmes and Watson were real people and Doyle was their literary agent.

## Today's Sherlocks

\*\* "Sherlock" (2010) - The tall and brooding Benedict Cumberbatch plays the detective in the modern retelling of the classic in the television series "Sherlock".

\*\* "Sherlock Holmes" (2009): Robert Downey Jr and Jude Law play Holmes and Watson respectively in this period film and its sequel, "Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows" (2011).



PHOTOS: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS AND AFP

## The last chapter

Doyle died in 1930 in a manner befitting the author. He collapsed in his garden clutching a flower. His last words to his wife are said to be: "You are wonderful". His tombstone lists his achievements as "Patriot, physician and man of letters."



## ARTIVITY

Mohak Narang, Class 1, Bal Bharati Public School, New Delhi

Read the newspaper and create an original artwork based on a news item that interests you and send your entry to school@thehindu.co.in with the subject - Artivity. Select entries will be published. Please mention your name, class, school and city.

## QUEST

# A peek at the world of Science

How are clouds induced to drop rain? What is the role that detritivores play? Find out...

### Cloud seeding

Rain occurs when the water droplets in a cloud collide, merge and become heavy enough to fall to earth. When rain is scarce a method called cloud seeding is sometimes used to get the cloud to give rain. For this, substances called seeding agents are introduced into the clouds by aircraft or other means. The seeding agents may be salt crystals, dry ice or silver iodide crystals. Water vapour in the clouds condenses on the particles of these substances and a large number of water droplets are formed. This increases the chances of heavy water droplets forming in the cloud.

The clouds must be large enough and last long enough to support the process of formation of large droplets of water or the method will not succeed. Such clouds are usually scarce in drought-hit areas.



### What are detritivores?

Detritivores are living organisms, vital to the Earth's ecological health. They are a very important part of the food chain. There are many kinds of detritivores and their role is to eat dead organic material or detritus. This might be decomposing plants and animals as also animal faeces.

Most detritivores are insects, fish and a few crustaceans. They also include birds, reptiles and mammals that are primarily scavengers. For instance, some crabs and fish feed off the material they find on the sea bed or sea floor. Dead animals, fish scales, fish excreta and dead plants are a major part of the diet of these "bottom feeders". They perform the essential function of keeping the water clean.

Insects such as termites and woodlice eat dead wood. Wasps, flies and butterflies gather in their hundreds on animal carcasses. Earthworms are great detritivores because they enrich and fertilize the soil with their faeces after they eat the debris they find in the soil!

Among birds, vultures are superb detritivores. They only scavenge and don't hunt actively. Large mammals including lions, foxes and hyenas are opportunistic detritivores. They occasionally feed on dead meat if they cannot find live prey.

There is a difference between detritivores and decomposers. Decomposers are fungi, bacteria and other microscopic organisms that consume and finally break down what the detritivores have partly digested and excreted!



(Content provided by Amrita Bharati)

## TECH BYTES

# What are wearable computers?

As the name suggests, wearable computers are digital devices that you can wear on your body. These can be anything from T-shirts and watches to chips inserted into the body. Wearable devices are usually powered by batteries. While some are used to track heart rate, steps taken and calories burnt, some remind you about tasks and help you perform calculations. Some of the most common types of wearable computers are smartwatches, activity trackers, and smart glasses.

Wearable computers are portable and easy to carry around. They keep people on the move and come in great designs. However, there are concerns about the violation of privacy due to such devices as well as the ease to hack into smartphones that these devices are connected to.

# Kane and able!

WILLIAMSON'S CAPTAINCY NOT UNDER THREAT  
 NZC confirms there is no truth in contrary suggestions

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND: New Zealand Cricket (NZC) has rubbished the claims that Kane Williamson's captaincy in Test format is under threat and that Tom Latham could be considered to lead the side in the longest format of the game.

Following New Zealand's 0-3 whitewash in the Australia Test series, questions were put up over Williamson's captaincy. James McOnie, The Crowd Goes Wild broadcaster, had recently claimed that head coach Gary Stead prefers Latham as Test captain and is planning a change. However, the cricket board has rejected the suggestions, according to a report in NZ Herald. "There's absolutely no truth to any suggestion Kane's captaincy is under threat," a team spokesman told Newshub. Following Australia debacle, Williamson and Co. however went back to the winning ways and after suffering a 5-0 whitewash in the T20Is against India, they thrashed Virat Kohli's men in both the three-match ODI and two-match Test series. IANS

New Zealand's Kane Williamson  
 PHOTO: AFP



### KANE CAN

A look at Williamson's record as captain across all three formats...

### TESTS

Matches: 32 Won: 18  
 Lost: 8 Draw: 6  
 Win-Loss ratio: 2.25

### ODIs

Matches: 77 Won: 41  
 Lost: 33 Tied: 1  
 Win-Loss ratio: 1.24

### T20s

Matches: 42 Won: 19  
 Lost: 21 Ties: 2  
 Win-Loss ratio: 0.90

Even in an age where time is - more accurately - displayed on our mobile phones and other digital devices, people are still willing to spend huge amounts of money for their time-pieces. This is what makes watch designing a lucrative profession.

**How it works:** Watch designing is different from watchmaking. A watch designer comes up with the concept and design for the watch and a watchmaker follows the design and builds the time-piece. Watch design comes under a larger umbrella of industrial and lifestyle design. It's a job that demands immense creativity, expertise and focus. Designers spot



emerging trends, conceptualise forms and functions, which are unique and appealing to a large set of customers. Sometimes, they even create their own trends and stories for relevant target groups.

**What are the prospects:** After studying design, one can work as an industrial designer in watch-making companies

or watch houses. With several international brands coming into the country, there is a need for frequent product launches resulting in increased demand for designers who can constantly come up with differentiated designs.

**What to study:** Many institutes offer specialisations in watch designing.

\*\* National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad: Master of Design (M.Des) in Industrial Design and Product Design

\*\* National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi: M.Des in Lifestyle Accessory Design.

\*\* CPFT - École D'Horlogerie, Switzerland: Three or four year training in watchmaking