

A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

By William S. Dorn



The Adventures of Sherlock
Holmes
Adventure IV -- The Red-Headed
League

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE
DATE OF THE ADVENTURE^{*}
(Date of the attempted burglary at bank)

CLUES:

1. The story was published in August 1891
2. It was “autumn of last year” (176)
3. The Red-Headed League was dissolved on October 9, 1890 (182)
4. Holmes says “To-day (the day of the attempted burglary) is Saturday ... “ (183)
5. October 9, 1890 was Thursday

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 and 2 imply it was autumn of 1890
- B. A and 3 imply it was October 1890 shortly after the 9th
- C. B, 4 and 5 imply it was Saturday, October 11, 1890

**The attempted burglary of the bank was on
Saturday, October 11, 1890**

^{*}The story may contain other clues to the date of the adventure. However, use only the clues shown here. Your only goal should be to use logical reasoning to find a date based on the clues shown here.

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE VOCABULARY WORDS

- florid (176) – **flushed with rosy color; ruddy**
settee (176) – **an indoor seat with a back and arms for two or more persons; a sofa**
embellish (176) – **to add ornamental or fictitious details to**
singular (176, 184, 185) – **beyond what is ordinary or usual; remarkable**
portly (177) – **comfortably stout**
greatcoat (177) – **large heavy overcoat**
obese (177) – **extremely fat; grossly overweight**
pompous (177) – **having excessive self-esteem or exaggerated dignity**
shepherd's check trousers (177) – **woolen trousers with a black and white checked pattern**
frock-coat (177, 186) – **knee-length, double-breasted coat; a gentleman's ordinary daytime costume**
waistcoat (177) – **vest**
Albert chain (177) – **a watch-chain made of heavy links, named for Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, who wore such a chain**
chagrin (177) – **disappointment or mental uneasiness**
Omne ignotum pro magnifico (177) – **Latin for 'Everything unknown passes for something splendid.' – Publius Cornelius Tacitus**
crib (179) – **berth, job**
shutters (179) – **wooden coverings for the shop windows**
coster (179) – **short for costermonger which means fruit seller**
barrow (179) – **wheelbarrow**
deal (180) – **wooden**
cobbler's wax (180) – **shoe polish**
billet (181, 182) – **job**
press (181) – **a cupboard, usually with shelves and used to hold clothes, books, etc.**
blotting paper (181) – **absorbent paper used to blot a surface by soaking up excess ink**

- quill-pen (181) – **pen made from the hollow stem-like main shaft of a feather taken from a fowl**
- foolscap (181, 182) – **13” x 16” writing sheets with a fool’s cap and bells as a watermark**
- sovereign (181) – **gold coin worth one pound**
- curt (182) – **using few words; terse**
- solicitor (182) – **lawyer who practices law but is not permitted to appear as counsel in court**
- introspective (184) – **prone to self-examination**
- poky (184) – **small and cramped**
- shabby-genteel (184) – **striving to convey an appearance of refinement and respectability but starting to show signs of wear and tear**
- gilt (184) – **resembling gold**
- pavement (184) – **sidewalk**
- the City (185) – **financial district of London**
- footpaths (185) – **sidewalks**
- conundrums (185) – **riddles whose solution involves a play on words; puns**
- stalls (185) – **seats in the front section of parquet (orchestra)**
- languid (185) – **showing little or no spirit; listless**
- languor (185) – **lack of physical or mental energy; listlessness**
- askance (185) – **with disapproval, suspicion, or distrust**
- nocturnal (186) – **occurring in the night**
- hansom (186, 187) – **two-wheeled, one horse carriage seating two with the driver mounted behind and reins going over the roof of the hood; invented by J. A. Hansom, a Yorkshire architect who patented the cab in 1834**
- consequential (186) – **self-important**
- loftily (186) – **arrogantly; haughtily**
- deference (186) – **courteously yielding to the wishes of another**
- rubber (186, 188) – **series of three games to decide a winner**

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- smasher (186) – **someone who passes counterfeit money**
bracelets (186) – **handcuffs**
crib (186) – **bank**
labyrinth (187) – **intricate structure of interconnecting passages through which it is difficult to find one's way**
tenacious (187) – **holding on persistently**
flags (187) – **flagstones**
bullion (187, 190) – **gold or silver in the form of bars or ingots**
dark lantern (188) – **lantern with a sliding door which, when shut, gives no light**
partie carrée (188) – **party of four**
dank (188) – **disagreeably damp**
acute (188) – **extremely sharp**
lurid (188) – **shining with the glare of fire through a haze**
rending (188) – **violently splitting apart**
aperture (188) – **opening**
lithe (188) – **having effortless grace**
skirts (189) – **coattails**
hunting crop (189) – **short whip used to make a horse run faster**
derbies (189) – **handcuffs**
snigger (189) – **partly stifled laugh**
ennui (190) – **listlessness from lack of interest; boredom**
L'homme c'est rien – l'oeuvre c'est tout (190) – **'Man is nothing – work is everything' (The correct quotation is: *L'homme n'est rien, l'oeuvre tout*)**
Gustave Flaubert (190) – **French writer considered a forerunner of naturalism and known for his precise literary style (1821-1880)**
George Sand (190) – **Pen name of Amandine Aurore Lucie Dupin, Baroness Dudevant (1804-1876); she was a French writer whose novels, plays, and essays concern the freedom and independence of women**

RED-HEADED LEAGUE OPEN QUESTIONS

1. Would not Spaulding (the fourth smartest man in London – see page 184) have recognized Holmes?

Perhaps he did but wanted to see if he could outwit Holmes

2. Why didn't Clay just steal the keys from Merryweather rather than go to the trouble of digging a tunnel?

That would be too easy for Clay who wanted to show off his skill as a criminal.

3. Where did Clay put the dirt that he excavated?

Good question. There doesn't seem to be anywhere unless the basement was very large.

4. Why was the French gold not in the Bank of England or at least in the strong room of the bank's head office? After all, they "had several warnings" (187).

Merryweather wasn't the brightest of bankers.

5. Why did Holmes knock at the door of the pawn shop (184), a shop that is open to the public?

If Holmes had entered the pawn shop, there was a good chance that Spaulding would be standing behind the counter. If so, Holmes would not have been able to see the knees of his trousers.

6. What became of Jabez Wilson? Is there a clue in Clay's remark, "I'll swing for it" (189) ?

“I’ll swing for it” sounds like Clay expected to be hanged. This implies that they had killed Jabez Wilson.

7. Why was the League dissolved before the job was done? One more week at four pounds, and they would not have been caught.

It could be that the criminals ran out of money to pay Jabez Wilson.

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE SIMPLE QUIZ*

1. Jabez Wilson owned

- a. a grocery store
- b. a pawn shop
- c. a print shop
- d. none of the above

2. The criminals planned to

- a. kidnap Jabez Wilson
- b. rob a bank
- c. destroy the underground (subway)
- d. none of the above

3. Vincent Spaulding was also known as

- a. John Clay
- b. Merryweather
- c. Altheney Jones
- d. none of the above

* The Simple Quiz is designed to determine if the student has read the story. Anyone who has read the story through should have no trouble in completing this quiz. The Intermediate and Advanced Quizzes are more challenging.

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE INTERMEDIATE QUIZ[#]

1. Holmes said that Vincent Spaulding was
 - a. the fourth most dangerous man in London
 - b. the fourth smartest man in London
 - c. the fourth vilest man in London
 - d. none of the above

2. What was Jabez Wilson's nautical occupation?
 - a. ship's captain
 - b. ship's carpenter
 - c. first mate
 - d. none of the above

3. What letter was Jabez Wilson about to start copying from the Encyclopaedia Britannica when the Red-Headed League was dissolved?
 - a. B
 - b. C
 - c. D
 - d. none of the above

4. The men awaiting an interview for the job with the Red-Headed League made the street look like
 - a. a barrel of red apples
 - b. a coster's orange barrow
 - c. a field of pink flowers
 - d. none of the above

[#] The Intermediate Quiz is designed to test whether the student has read the story with reasonable attention to detail. The Simple Quiz is an easier test while the Advanced Quiz is much more challenging.

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE ADVANCED QUIZ[&]

1. Where did the founder of the Red-Headed League, Ezekiah Hopkins, live?
 - a. Kansas City, Missouri
 - b. Lebanon, Pennsylvania
 - c. San Francisco, California
 - d. none of the above

2. Where were the offices of the Red-Headed League?
 - a. 8 Fleet Street
 - b. 17 King Edward Street
 - c. 7 Pope's Court
 - d. none of the above

3. What hours did Jabez Wilson work each day for the Red-Headed League?
 - a. nine to three
 - b. ten to two
 - c. eleven to three
 - d. none of the above

4. What was on the breast pin that Jabez Wilson wore?
 - a. an arc-and-compass
 - b. a gold star
 - c. a pink fish
 - d. none of the above

[&] The Advanced Quiz is designed for aficionados of the Canon. The questions are quite challenging. The Intermediate and Simple Quizzes are designed for the more casual reader of the stories.

ANSWERS TO QUIZZES FOR THE ADVENTURES

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
A Scandal in Bohemia				
Simple	a	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	b	c
Advanced	b	a	b	b
The Red-Headed League				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	a	b
Advanced	b	c	b	a
A Case of Identity				
Simple	b	b	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	c	b
Advanced	c	b	d	c
The Boscombe Valley Mystery				
Simple	a	b	b	xx
Intermediate	c	b	b	b
Advanced	b	a	c	a
The Five Orange Pips				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	b	c
Advanced	c	a	b	a
The Man with the Twisted Lip				
Simple	b	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	c	b	a
Advanced	b	a	c	b
The Blue Carbuncle				
Simple	a	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	a	a
Advanced	b	b	c	c
The Speckled Band				
Simple	c	c	b	xx
Intermediate	c	a	a	b
Advanced	a	c	c	c

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QUESTION	1	2	3	4
The Engineer's Thumb				
Simple	b	a	c	xx
Intermediate	a	b	c	b
Advanced	b	c	c	a
The Noble Bachelor				
Simple	b	b	c	xx
Intermediate	a	b	b	c
Advanced	a	a	c	c
The Beryl Coronet				
Simple	b	b	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	a
Advanced	b	c	b	c
The Copper Beeches				
Simple	a	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	a	c	b
Advanced	a	b	c	c