

A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

By William S. Dorn



The Casebook of Sherlock
Holmes
Adventure LVIII -- The
Adventure of the Retired
Colourman

THE RETIRED COLOURMAN DATE OF THE ADVENTURE*

(Date when the story took place)

Note: The date can be determined only to within two months.

CLUES:

1. Holmes says, "Early in 1897 he (Josiah Amberly) Married ..." (1113)
2. Holmes also says, "... within two years (of his marriage) He (Josiah Amberly) is ... as broken and miserable a creature as crawls beneath the sun." (1113)
3. Watson says, "... it was ... on a summer afternoon I set forth to Lewisham ..." (1114)
4. Watson also says, "... the weather was hot ..." (1118)

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 and 2 imply the story took place between early 1898 and early 1899
- B. A and 3 imply the story took place in the summer of 1898
- C. B and 4 imply that the story took place in July 1898 or August 1898

The story took place in either July 1898 or August 1898

*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 RETIRED COLOURMAN VOCABULARY WORDS

quack (1113) – **an untrained person who pretends to be a physician and dispenses medical advice and treatment**

competence (1113) – **income sufficient to furnish the necessities and conveniences of life**

Coptic (1114) – **relating to the Christian church of Egypt whose members adhered to the doctrine that in the person of Jesus there was but a single, divine nature**

Patriarchs (1114) – **in the Old Testament one of the descendants or ancestors of the human race, from Adam to Noah**

gaunt (1114) – **thin and bony**

acid (1114) – **unpleasantly sharp, pungent, or bitter to the smell**

rapiers (1114) – **light, sharp-pointed swords lacking a cutting edge and used only for thrusting**

penurious (1114) – **ungenerously unwilling to spend money**

patrician (1114) – **aristocrat**

mottled (1114) – **spotted or blotched with different shades or color**

lichens (1114) – **fungus that forms a crustlike or branching growth on rocks or tree trunks**

spindled (1114) – **very long and thin**

slatternly (1115) – **slovenly; untidy**

sanctum (1115) – **private place where one is free from intrusion**

upper circle (1115) – **second balcony**

obtruded (1116) – **imposed themselves without invitation**

- Lothario (1116) – **someone who acts without moral restraint; Lothario was such a character in the Nicholas Rowe play *The Fair Penitent* written in 1703**
- greengrocer (1116) – **vegetable seller**
- betimes (1116) – **early**
- austere (1117) – **somber and grave**
- branch line (1117) – **small railroad line that connects with a main line; a spur of the main line**
- sardonic (1118) – **scornfully or cynically mocking**
- malevolent (1118) – **displaying ill will**
- Masonic (1118) – **relating to a secret fraternal organization of ancient origin whose members called themselves *Free and Accepted Masons***
- taciturn (1119) – **untalkative**
- efface (1119) – **erase**
- Broadmoor (1120) – **a prison for criminal lunatics located in the southeast of Berkshire**
- niggardly (1120) – **grudging and petty in giving or spending**
- hermetically sealed (1120) – **completely sealed, especially against the escape or entry of air**
- astute (1120) – **shrewd**
- skirting (1120, 1121) – **edging material used around the bottom of a wall**
- swank (1122) – **bravado**
- acumen (1122) – **insight or keenness of judgment**

THE RETIRED COLOURMAN SOME OPEN QUESTIONS

1. Holmes says, “ ... we (Holmes and Barker) have been working independently” (1118) and then later says, “ ... and as to Barker, he has done nothing save what I told him” (1119). How could both of these statements be true?

Holmes told Barker what to do but then left Barker to carry out those assignments independently of Holmes’s actions.

2. Holmes says, “Well, well, MacKinnon is a good fellow. You can file it (the case) in our archives, Watson. Some day the true story may be told.” (1122) How could the true story ever be told without embarrassing Inspector MacKinnon?

MacKinnon must not have been the inspector’s real name otherwise he would have been terribly embarrassed when Watson published the story. Incidentally, perhaps Lestrade, Gregson and the other Scotland Yard detectives were also fictitious names.

3. Holmes says, “If you (Inspector MacKinnon) find an indelible pencil on the body (of Dr. Ray Ernest) ... “ Dr. Ernest died while writing with the indelible pencil, so how could the pencil be found on his body?

Holmes didn’t mean that the pencil would be literally found on the body although even finding it buried with Ernest would be surprising. In any case finding the pencil would only be circumstantial evidence.

THE RETIRED COLOURMAN SIMPLE QUIZ*

1. Josiah Amberly amassed his wealth by selling
 - a. artistic materials
 - b. hardware products
 - c. wine and spirits
 - d. none of the above

2. Josiah Amberly's second wife was
 - a. younger than he was
 - b. about the same age as he was
 - c. older than he was.

3. Holmes thought Josiah Amberly would end up
 - a. in Broadmoor Asylum
 - b. in Princetown Prison
 - c. on the gallows
 - 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 RETIRED COLOURMAN INTERMEDIATE QUIZ[#]

1. What was the name of Holmes's arch rival on the Surrey shore?
 - a. Barker
 - b. MacKinnon
 - c. Ray Ernest
 - d. none of the above
2. Josiah Amberly's wife was how many years younger than Amberly?
 - a. five
 - b. ten
 - c. twenty
 - d. none of the above
3. What color was Josiah Amberly painting the woodwork when Watson visited him?
 - a. blue
 - b. green
 - c. white
 - d. none of the above
4. Holmes said that Josiah Amberly had "A competence, a wife, leisure – it seemed a straight road which lay before him". What does competence mean in this sentence?
 - a. mental alertness
 - b. sufficient income
 - c. well managed household
 - 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 RETIRED COLOURMAN ADVANCED QUIZ[&]

1. In what year did Josiah Amberly marry his wife?
 - a. 1889
 - b. 1897
 - c. 1901
 - d. none of the above

2. Which one of the following was NOT one of the places Holmes suggested as likely hiding places for bodies?
 - a. cellars
 - b. a garden
 - c. a furnace
 - d. a disused well

3. Which one of the following persons was one that Holmes did NOT criticize Watson for not interviewing?
 - a. the vicar of the local parish
 - b. the girl at the post-office
 - c. the wife of the greengrocer
 - d. the young lady at the Blue “Anchor”

4. What was the name of the vicar in Little Purlington?
 - a. Earnest
 - b. Elman
 - c. Ernest
 - 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 CASEBOOK

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Illustrious Client				
Simple	c	a	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	a
Advanced	c	a	b	c
Blanched Soldier				
Simple	a	a	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	a
Advanced	b	a	b	c
Mazarin Stone				
Simple	c	a	c	xx
Intermediate	c	c	b	a
Advanced	a	b	b	c
Three Gables				
Simple	b	b	c	xx
Intermediate	b	b	c	b
Advanced	b	c	a	b
Sussex Vampire				
Simple	b	c	b	xx
Intermediate	b	b	c	c
Advanced	a	b	c	c
Three Garridebs				
Simple	a	a	b	xx
Intermediate	b	b	a	a
Advanced	b	a	a	c

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Thor Bridge				
Simple	b	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	a	c	c
Advanced	a	b	a	b
Creeping Man				
Simple	b	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	a	c	b
Advanced	d	a	b	c
Lion's Mane				
Simple	b	c	b	xx
Intermediate	b	b	c	a
Advanced	c	a	a	a
Veiled Lodger				
Simple	a	a	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	b	c
Advanced	c	b	b	a
Shoscombe Old Place				
Simple	c	a	c	xx
Intermediate	b	c	a	a
Advanced	b	a	a	a
Retired Colourman				
Simple	a	a	a	xx
Intermediate	a	c	b	b
Advanced	b	c	a	b