

Interview with Elizabeth Eulberg,

author of

The Great Shelby Holmes series

During the spring of 2021, we read all four books in The Great Shelby Holmes series and created The Society for the Preservation of Plucky Superslueths. We grant membership to our club when someone has read all four books in the series. Through email, we shared this exciting news with the series's author, Elizabeth Eulberg, and... she emailed us back! We were so intrigued by her books we asked if she would be interested in responding to some of our questions. She said, "Yes!" We hope you enjoy our interview with Ms. Eulberg.

With warm Sherlockian regards,
E, Jackson, and Quincy,
4th-grade students in 221b Baker Street of Moore Elementary School (our Accelerated Learning classroom), in Franklin, TN

When were you first introduced to Sherlock Holmes? Which of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories is your favorite?

When I was in sixth grade, my school's spring musical was about Sherlock Holmes! So I've known about him and Watson since at least then. But here's the thing: I wasn't a fan of Sherlock Holmes for a very long time. Why? Well, I'm the musical one in my family. I always had the lead in all the musicals, but this one didn't have any female leads. So I was put in the choir with the rest of the girls in school. And the person who played Sherlock Holmes? My not-as-talented-musically older brother. So yeah, I was a bit bitter and stubborn about it. But I eventually got over it. ;)

My favorite is probably The Dancing Men. I really like a good cipher. And that story has lots of twists and turns. It was the inspiration for The Great Shelby Holmes and the Coldest Case. But instead of dancing men, I decided to do figure skaters.

What inspired you to create the Shelby Holmes series of books? When did you start writing the first book, and how long did it take?

I had so many people tell to watch Sherlock, a TV show set in modern London. The actor who portrays Sherlock Holmes, Benedict Cumberbatch, plays him like a spoiled child, complete with temper tantrums. Within ten minutes of watching the first episode, I thought...hmm, what if Sherlock Holmes was a nine-year-old girl?

I came up with the idea for the series back in 2014. I spend a lot of time plotting out the Shelby stories before I write a single word. So I'll take at least a month figuring out every clue and red

herring. I use index cards to plot out my books. Once I know everything that's going to happen, I write a very fast first draft. Then spend months revising and revising to make the story stronger. From outlining to turning into my editor, it's about a four to five month process, then we spend at least six months going back and forth on edits. From the start of a book to it coming out generally takes two years! Publishing can be very slow! (That series I mentioned above isn't coming out until 2023!!!)

Have you ever solved a mystery?

I'm a lot more observant because of the Shelby series! I haven't really solved a mystery, but I have been able to deduce on a panel that an author had a large dog, that a student during a presentation was lying to me, AND I was able to break into my parents house after I was locked out, but can't tell you how. Oh, and I was watching the news one night and a mother and her children had gone missing. When they interviewed the husband, he did a few things that caused me to say, "Oh, he totally did it!" And wouldn't you know two days later he was arrested! So basically, the police should hire me.

Have you ever lived in Harlem, the setting for the Shelby Holmes books?

I haven't lived in Harlem, but spent a lot of time there. I used to live across the river in Hoboken. I set the book in Harlem because I wanted Shelby's parents to work at Columbia University nearby in case I ever needed them to have access to a university lab or library. Which never ended up happening!

Which character do you relate to the most, Shelby or John? Why?

While Shelby and I are more alike physically, I'm definitely more like John! Not only am I a writer, I like to have friends and be friendly and not...like Shelby!

Do you have an older, annoying brother? ;)

See answer to the first question. ;)

It was clever to name a character Moira Hardy! Moriarty! What was your most favorite clever connection you made to Conan Doyle's stories?

Thank you, I'm VERY proud of Moira! I'd say Moira is a favorite. Also I like that I had Shelby addicted to sugar since um, Sherlock's addictions weren't as innocent. And as a lover of English bulldogs, I had to include one and name him after Sir Arthur (Conan Doyle!).

We read The Best Worst Summer! The way you told the story was very intriguing. The setting, characters, and plot are sooooo different than those in the Shelby Holmes books. Was it difficult to make the switch?

Awww, thanks so much! I'm glad you liked it. I had written several novels for teens before writing the Shelby series so I was used to exploring different characters and worlds. What was the most challenging for The Best Worst Summer is that I had to tell two different stories--characters, plot, arcs--and weave them together. But it was also a lot of fun.