

Introduction: What interested me about Arthur Conan Doyle was the fact that his creation, Sherlock Holmes is the detective on which almost all modern day detective fiction is based on. Sherlock Holmes is the original detective and I was curious to know what made the Sherlock Holmes such a classic and well-known name. Having done some research on Doyle, I found that he expressed strong beliefs in a spiritual world. Doyle also believed in fairies. Interestingly, these beliefs were backed with little evidence. It is well known that Sherlock Holmes was a fiction mastermind relying on logic and fact to solve his cases. This leads me to believe that Sherlock Holmes is the embodiment of everything Doyle isn't, a polar opposite. It seems as though the creation of Sherlock was partially used as a method for Doyle to resolve his own problems. We all confront our problems differently and this might have been Doyle's way. Doyle seems to use his writing as a means of control. His logic which comes out in most of his stories seems to be rebelling against his imagination. *The primary concern of Doyle and his main reason for creating Sherlock Holmes I believe, however, is to address the problems of society* in the late 19th and early 20th century- the time frame the stories were published in. 'The Speckled Band', 'The Five Orange Pips', 'A Case of Identity' and 'A Scandal in Bohemia' all address problems in society at the time. These problems include *greed, discrimination based on gender and the human need for control.* (1)

Section 1 The human need for control: Humans are creatures of habit. We value repetition. It gives us a sense of reassurance. Take the majority of detective movies. The 'good guy' always makes a startling discovery in the last minutes of the movie. He catches the villain and justice is served. This nice conclusion gives us comfort. We love the certainty, the lack of doubt that comes from a happy ending. *However, in reality life is not a movie. We don't always get the satisfying resolution we so commonly see on a screen. We experience chaos in life. Therefore we need to understand the reality of life not what we see on television.* Doyle gives us the neat conclusion we love in his short story, 'A Case of Identity'. (2)

In this short story, 'A Case of Identity', the stepfather is the only man who "really profited by the incident". We see clear motive behind the killings and this solves the case. It is the stepfather that is the villain. This short story gives us a sense that everything is falling into place for Sherlock. He uses the typewriter as a tool to solve the case. He even finds the victim "more interesting than her little problem". Sherlock seems more focussed on the character than the problem. Sherlock even describes the case as "trite" suggesting the case is simplistic. We know this case presents no real challenge for Sherlock. However in reality, *it is unreasonable that Sherlock can just instantly understand the motives of a man he doesn't know. It is possible that Doyle's imagination is getting the better of his logic. This imagination gives us the distorted fantasy we love however it goes against reality.* (3)

Doyle does occasionally go against the grain of the usual resolution we see nowadays leaving discontent in the reader's mind. This gives a sense of reality to the stories. We see this in 'The Five Orange Pips'. This short story provides a degree of realism in the stories. While we know that the Ku Klux Klan (K.K.K) is responsible for the murders of the Openshaws we have no indication of the motivation behind the killings or which individual or even group of individuals killed the Openshaws. The only evidence, referred to as "the papers" is burnt before Sherlock's case begins. *This lack of understanding is bewildering. It is now so foreign to us to be left not knowing what has transpired in fictional texts yet the confusion and lack of motives reflects reality.* (4) Even Sherlock is dissatisfied with the lack of logical proof to back up his theories. Everything is disjointed. There is no order. Sherlock is responsible for John Openshaw's death. This leaves Sherlock "depressed and shaken". As Watson narrates we also read about the "uncontrollable agitation" of Holmes's. *With Sherlock's normally composed demeanour broken we know even he is troubled by the chaos of normal life.*(4)

We can become complacent, ignorantly believing the pieces of the puzzle will all slot perfectly into place like they do in 'A Case of Identity'. In 'The Five Orange Pips' it *shows the need to adapt to chaos as we can't avoid chaos.*(5) We do however have the ability to choose how we react to it. If we can accept it and deal with it then we win. This is because we can carry on normally as if it wasn't there. Doyle uses 'The Five Orange Pips' to communicate with us that life can't be neatly-wrapped up. *Even someone as successful as Sherlock doesn't get the nice conclusion every time. The sense of reality to the story suggests that Doyle is also rebelling against the fantasy world and his imagination.* (5)

Section 2 The relationship between gender equality and logic: Although it may be a sensitive topic, men have been considered superior to women historically..... [paragraph deleted]

'A Speckled Band' was published in 1883. In this short story we see a woman as a victim. She is vulnerable and weak. Her hair is shot with "premature grey". This suggests weakness as grey hair is a sign of aging, even a deterioration of the body. This contrasts with the main villain in the story. He is 6 foot 5 and a "man of immense strength". This contrast gives the impression of a powerful man tormenting a helpless woman. *This writing may reflect the perception Doyle has towards women as well as the perception of the society around him towards women.*(6) It suggests that women are inferior to men.

However in the short story 'A Scandal in Bohemia' published in 1888 the roles of the victim in villain are reversed. We see a 6'6 "Hercules" as the victim to a seemingly innocent "pretty faced" woman. This challenges the idea that women are inferior. *Doyle seems to be suggesting that women are equals to men and just as capable of evil. We can sense this case is unusual.* (6) Unlike most this villain has brains not brawn. She has already proven her smarts for evading the King of Bohemia before the short story starts, "five attempts have been made"... "there has been no result". The villain, Irene Adler ends up outwitting Sherlock and it changes Sherlock's perception on women. Sherlock used to "make merry over the cleverness of woman" but his encounter with Adler changes his views on their intelligence, with Watson stating he had not "heard him do it of late".

*The significant change in Sherlock's perception of women and the reversal of the male and female roles between the 5 year period of the stories seems to reflect a change in Doyle's own perception of women.* (6) It is possible that Doyle saw fit the need to change people's perceptions of women and used his writing to convey the message that men and women are equals. He realises that society has evolved since the tribal hunter-gatherer times with more emphasis on intelligence than brute strength. While in a fantasy world anything can be justified, Doyle's logic exposes the flaws of the gender inequality and through reason proves there is no basis to have gender inequality in the current society in which he is living. After all there are no apparent differences in the intelligence of men and women. Therefore Doyle challenges the imposed inferiority placed on women which is no longer relevant in the 1880s.(8)

Section 3 The relationship between greed and control: Power is the ability to influence others. A person's desire for power comes back to the human need for control. Power can be a form of control over one's life. It is only natural that people desire to obtain the means to do so. *Ironically people can lose control in their search for power as it begins to cloud their judgement and govern their actions.* (6) This is commonly known as greed, an intense and selfish desire for power. In both 'A Speckled Band' and 'A Case of Identity' we see the corruption of a stepfather's morals in his attempts to maintain power.(9)

In 'A Speckled Band' greed motivates the stepfather to kill his stepdaughters. [deleted paragraph]

The storyline in 'A Case of Identity' is very similar.[deleted paragraph] ....

**Conclusion:** Arthur Conan Doyle uses his writing in attempts to resolve the problems he saw in society during the 19th Century. I feel his writing which connected with large audiences has made an impact with gender inequality no longer being as large scale problem nowadays particularly in the Western World. He also addressed the problems associated with greed and I feel he was reasonably successful with educating the world on the problems of giving individuals too much power. However there are still exceptions with some individuals still being corrupted by greed. *Unfortunately Doyle's attempts to address the problem of human need for control seems to be futile with detective shows like Criminal Minds, The Mentalist and Cold Case largely contradicting his attempts to expose individuals to chaos with their repetitive and neat resolutions. These shows tap into our desire for control in a chaos filled world making them so popular. Because human greed and a need for control are still apparent today it shows that Doyle's writing still has relevance in the 21't Century.* (6)