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"Well, Watson, what do you make of it?": An In-Depth Look at Sherlock Holmes as a Hero

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“Well, Watson, what do you make of it?”

An In-Depth Look at Sherlock Holmes as a
Hero

By
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An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Graduation from the
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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Dedication

First and foremost, thank you God. The Lord of my life and my one constant and steady hand throughout my journey at Western Oregon University.

Thank you to my parents, Brett and Heidi Ramsey, for always believing in me and working harder than anyone I know so that I am able to achieve all I set out to do.

Thank you to my brother for making me and therefore, this work, legendary.

Abstract

This project analyzes the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. In doing so, the goal was to discover whether or not the character of Sherlock Holmes could be considered a heroic figure or not. So what is a hero exactly? There are many heroic archetypes and many ideas that society as a whole agrees upon for what a hero should look like. Each individual even has a set of requirements based on their previous experience with heroic figures in movies and books. Analyzing the Conan Doyle novel allows the audience to better see how Sherlock Holmes could (or could not) fit into these ideals that have been created.

Holmes' defining characteristic is that of his logic and reasoning skills or his ratiocination. When looking at this particular aspect of his personality, we are made aware of the ways in which he operates and his superiority over others. Another very well-known aspect of the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes stories is that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote an intriguing relationship between Holmes and Watson. This relationship is a demonstration of the way Holmes interacts with people that he cares for and we see his humanity through this. Additionally, Sherlock's relationships and interactions with the other characters reveals to the audience how Holmes acts under pressure and with people that he does not or barely knows.

In looking at these aspects of the novel and Sherlock Holmes' personality, we are able to see different heroic aspects of Sherlock's character. But is he a hero? In reality, that is completely based upon conjecture and personal opinion. And there are enough heroic archetypes that almost anyone could fall into a hero category. However, after analyzing *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and truly seeing Holmes for who he is as a character, it is safe to say that his heroic tendencies may be more than just tendencies.

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Introduction: The Popularity of Sherlock Holmes

When we first think of the word hero, what or who do we picture? I am willing to bet that the majority of people immediately think of Superman or Captain America: two of the superheroes we are all so fond of. Or our minds may also go to thoughts of our “everyday heroes” such as firefighters or soldiers. As a society, we see heroes as people who do what is right and what is good even when it is difficult. They are consistent in putting others before themselves in precarious situations and valuing each individual life. Heroes are also strong: physically strong, mentally strong, and emotionally strong. These are all criteria by which we judge whether or not someone falls into the hero category. We all have specific criteria for what makes a hero a hero, whether we are consciously aware of that criteria or not. In this project, I analyze the fictional character Sherlock Holmes to determine whether he functions as a heroic figure and if so, how.

Throughout this project, my goal has been to gain enough knowledge through my research and analysis to highlight the existing heroic tendencies of Sherlock Holmes, why he is so remarkably popular, and how he has lasted this long in the spotlight. This study will be complete when the question “Is Holmes a modern day hero?” is answered through evidence that comes directly from the novel. This project began with a comprehensive reading of one of the most

famous Holmes stories, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. In my reading of the *Hound*, the focus is on three different topics that pertain to the Sherlock Holmes stories: the art of ratiocination, the relationship between Holmes and Watson, and the way Holmes interacts with others.

When looking at the topic of ratiocination -- the process of exact thinking and reasoning -- this study will address what exact thinking means in terms of Holmes' crime-solving. I discuss reasoning and examine how Holmes uses his intelligence and attention to detail in order to prove that he can be successful without letting emotion compromise his thinking. Holmes continuously analyzes scenes and people from a purely logical perspective. That is my working definition of ratiocination concerning Holmes. I then move on to the relationship between Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. I look at the friendship that they possess to gain a deeper understanding of Holmes' human side. Most of what is memorable about Sherlock is his lack (or repression) of emotion. However, through Watson, we are able to see Holmes' raw emotions and his good nature. The final topic I discuss is the relationships Sherlock makes with people other than Watson. When Sherlock interacts with other characters, do we see a compassionate human being or one who views himself as better and shows no empathy? In my research and analysis of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, I uncover

the popularity of Sherlock Holmes through this idea of him existing as a flawed, modern day, heroic individual.

The popularity of Sherlock Holmes is a defining part of our culture. As a society, we love the idea of a hero, but Holmes is a possible-heroic individual who stands out from the rest. This analysis of Sherlock Holmes as a character and societal phenomenon will lead us to the conclusion that Holmes is a modern day hero in our world. This has been thought of before as in "Making the Transition: The Modern Adaptation and Recreation of the Scientist Detective Hero" where the author discusses Sherlock and Watson as heroic figures in society. However, I discuss why Sherlock Holmes is a hero and not why the world needs him to be one. Of the scholars who have written about Sherlock as a hero, many discuss the world itself and why they need a hero like Holmes or even why they believe Watson to be a hero instead. In Marinaro and Thomas' work "Don't Make People into Heroes, John," they discuss Watson as the hero figure and Holmes as his quest. "John Watson is then cast as a hero in need of a quest: and as a result, he gravitates toward Sherlock Holmes" (70). However, my fascination is with the way the world reacts to Sherlock Holmes and always has. First of all, Sherlock is the focus and not Watson so Watson can't be the hero our world seeks. Second, I do not believe that the world needs heroes, but that we desire them. We choose heroes because they make us feel better and we enjoy them, not because we

need them. So why did we, and why do we currently, choose Sherlock Holmes?

This is what I want to know; this is my big question. Through analyzing Sherlock Holmes and the way he interacts with the people he loves, the other people around him, and his skill set and passion, I can finally understand the Sherlock Holmes that people find so intriguing, the Sherlock that I find so intriguing.

Chapter One: What is a hero?

Through my research and my own personal experiences I have found there to be three major characteristics that define a hero or three major characteristics that we use as criteria for our so-called heroes. However, each hero need not possess all three, depending on the type of hero they are.

The first major heroic characteristic is that of moral integrity. In our eyes, a hero must be good and choose good above all else. In their book *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them*, Allison and Goethals state: "...one of the defining traits of heroes is that they put the common good, and we emphasize good, ahead of their personal concerns" (5). However, this doesn't necessarily have to be the basis of their character. Some heroic characters that we know and love do not show a particular fondness toward putting others before themselves and choosing the moral way until they are put in a position where it truly counts. For instance, in the literary world, Benadick is a character in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* who is heroic for his choice to serve the country in the war and genuinely chooses the morally right thing. However, through the entire play he makes fun of Beatrice and lacks basic human decency on several occasions. In the real world, this type of person can be the cop who lets the power go to their head; they are arrogant and use their position of power to lord their superiority

over people, but in every dire situation choose good. Our moral requirement for heroes means that heroes do not get that title without earning it. They have to prove that they will always choose what is good and right over their own personal agenda or gain -- then we can allow them to be heroic.

The second characteristic that we judge heroes by is competence. If a hero does not have a skill or ability that sets them apart then how could they be heroic? This comes in all shapes and sizes because not every hero is the same. In the superhero universe the heroes have abilities that are not humanly possible (abilities that no normal human being could possess). For instance, the Flash is a hero whose special ability is his speed. This speed sets him apart from the rest of the world and allows the regular human population to look up to him since he has an ability that others do not. Within our own real world we have people who are prodigies or geniuses. These are people who have skills and abilities that far outweigh our own in terms of music, sports, and school. We look up to them and value them because they do more and know more than we ever could no matter our time spent practicing or learning. For us, heroes need to be better than us because we need to be able to look up to them and value them as more capable than we are. Heroes need to be capable of more than a normal human being; they need to be completely competent in their area of expertise whether it be Superman's flight or Mozart's piano playing.

The third and final heroic characteristic is leadership. We tend to view heroes as the ones who have a particular knack for leadership because they want to do what is good and right and they have abilities and skills that others do not possess. The previous characteristics usually land heroes into leadership positions and we see this as part of what it takes to be a true hero. If a hero cannot or will not lead then they have forfeited their right to the title of hero. We see this in King Arthur when he gathers his men around the round table to deliberate (and hear from everyone) the best way to protect Camelot. Leadership is what is required of most heroes. For example, if someone were eating in a restaurant and the person next to them started to choke on their food, they would not wait for the doctors or leaders in medicine to help, they would start the Heimlich maneuver themselves. A hero would never wait for someone else to take the reins, they would step up and be leaders where they are needed because they have more knowledge and a broader skill set than others as well as having people looking to them in times of need.

With all that said, heroes aren't just the ones we read about in comic books and the ones on our television screens; our everyday heroes, like the person performing the Heimlich in a restaurant or the mothers that lift cars off of their children, do not necessarily meet each of our criteria. These are the people that are the more pure and true heroes. They step up when they are needed. A

hero does not have to be someone with no weaknesses or someone who saves lives in a literal sense. They can be people who help the elderly carry their groceries or who walk children across the street safely; they could save animals from abusive owners or from shelters through adoption. A helping hand, a kind heart, and integrity are all the real true characteristics of an everyday hero.

However, there are many types of heroes or hero archetypes. We hear about the Classic Hero, the Superhero, the Everyday Hero, the Tragic Hero, the Damaged Hero, etc.; all of which meet different criteria. They all seem to have at least one of our three characteristics which, when used correctly, makes them a hero.

Whether it is something we think about regularly or not, we all know what a hero is to us individually and we look up to those people as role models and leaders in our lives. When we all start to think about what a hero should be there are three things almost guaranteed to be requirements in one way or another: heroes need to have moral integrity in critical moments, competence or expertise in an area that others do not have, and the ability and willingness to lead. People who have all of these traits we would consider to be heroic, heroes from all walks of life and all heroic archetypes.

Chapter Two: Ratiocination

The first way I evaluated the heroism of Mr. Sherlock Holmes was to look at the art of ratiocination within the novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Ratiocination is the process of exact reasoning or thinking; a reasoned train of thought (Merriam-Webster). In terms of Sherlock Holmes, ratiocination is the part of Holmes that is observant where others are not, is clever where others are not, and is logical above all else. This is shown to us throughout the first and last third of the novel since the middle third of the novel is the time where Watson is alone in Dartmoor without Holmes. However, even without Holmes in the middle third of the novel, we are left with plenty of evidence of Holmes' natural ratiocination to analyze, which is where I will start.

Before we dive into the text, we need to break down what Sherlock's specific ratiocination looks like. For this novel and my analysis, I will break it down into three sections: observation, testing (early deduction), and confirming (later deduction). Each of these are demonstrated in Holmes' dialogue throughout the novel and are what I will analyze here. I am choosing to only focus on Sherlock's dialogue because since the story is told from Watson's perspective, there is the possibility that if I were to analyze Sherlock's body language or anything other than dialogue it would be unreliable. It would be Watson's interpretation instead of the complete truth and fact of the dialogue. Analyzing the dialogue gives us the information we need without the possibility of clouded judgement from other characters.

The first and third sections of the novel differ. In the beginning, Sherlock is in a constant state of information gathering and so is doing much less of the testing and confirming parts of the ratiocination. Towards the end, he has the majority of the base information that he needs so he is doing much less of the gathering information portion and much more of the testing and confirming portions. Throughout both sections there are still examples of all three pieces of Holmes' ratiocination, but the first third contains more of the beginning stages while the last third contains more of the stages toward the end.

In terms of the first section of Sherlock's ratiocination -- observation -- Holmes is seeing and paying attention to all that is happening around him. In the first third of the novel, we are introduced to this observation as Sherlock Holmes and John Watson go about their business. At the very beginning of the novel we are able to see Watson introduce us to just how observant Holmes is: "I have, at least, a well-polished, silver-plated, coffee pot in front of me" (1). In this first moment of Holmes' ratiocination, he is surprising Watson, and us for that matter, with how much he notices. This scene happens to be when Holmes asks Watson about what he was doing without even looking at him and we discover that instead of turning around, he watched Watson through the reflection in the coffee pot. That may seem like an ordinary thing that just about anyone could do or come up with, but as we continue to turn the pages, we will

see that a large piece of Holmes' ratiocination is, in fact, his extraordinary observation skills.

Further on in the novel, we are able to see Sherlock's skill in observation again, but this time with something so small and seemingly insignificant. We find that Dr. Mortimer is the unknown visitor from early on in the story and when he enters the scene, Holmes' observations are definitely that which no other man would notice immediately: "I observe from your forefinger that you make your own cigarettes. Have no hesitation in lighting one" (5). This type of observation is not what a normal human eye would see when first taking in the sight of a visitor. It could potentially be noticed at a later time, but seeing as it was the second thing that they discuss, Holmes observes it much faster than the average person would -- making Holmes a superior observer.

Early on in the novel, Sherlock says: "The probability lies in that direction. And if we take this as a working hypothesis we have a fresh basis from which to start our construction of this unknown visitor" (3). In this section, Sherlock is confirming what Watson has told him and telling him that from that observation, they can create a profile of the man whom the stick belongs to. Additionally, on that same page, Holmes delves further into this thought process:

"Now, if you will observe that he could not have been on the staff of the hospital, since only a man well-established in a London practice could hold such a position, and such a one would not drift into the country. What was

he, then? If he was in the hospital and yet not on staff he could only have been a house-surgeon or a house-physician--little more than a senior student. And he left five years ago--the date is on the stick. So your grave, middle-aged family practitioner vanishes into thin air, my dear Watson, and there emerges a young fellow under thirty, amiable, unambitious, absent-minded, and the possessor of a favorite dog, which I should describe roughly as being larger than a terrier and smaller than a mastiff."

(3)

In this interaction between Holmes and Watson, Holmes is revealing what he observed and his early deductions. We are able to see the first and second part of the process. In terms of the second part of Sherlock's ratiocination, early deductions, Sherlock is making some educated guesses as to what could be true based on his initial observations. In other words, he is creating hypotheses and testing his observations. This is reflected in the excerpt above when he begins constructing who their visitor is based on his walking stick.

Holmes' early deduction skills are revealed in other parts of the novel as well and help us to understand how the ratiocination process continues. Sherlock is taking his observations and applying what he believes could have happened and asking questions to further that knowledge.

“The man was elderly and infirm. We can understand his taking an evening stroll, but the ground was damp and the night inclement. Is it natural that he should stand for five or ten minutes, as Dr. Mortimer, with more practical sense than I should have given him credit for, deduced from the cigar ash?” (20)

In this instance, Sherlock is using his observations about the night that Sir Charles died and Dr. Mortimer’s observations about the cigar ash to understand what happened just before Sir Charles’ death. He is taking those observations and coming up with a hypothesis for that night, or in other words, demonstrating his early deduction skills.

In terms of the third and final piece of Holmes’ ratiocination - later deduction - Sherlock is now confirming or denying his early deductions. Even though the first third of the novel focuses more on the observations and early deductions, it still reveals to us some of Holmes’ later deductions. He is taking his previously theorized hypotheses that came from his (and others’) observations and finding evidence to either confirm or deny those hypotheses.

“I am presuming that the cause of his fears came to him across the moor. If that were so, and it seems most probable, only a man who had lost his wits would have run from the house instead of towards it. If the gipsy’s evidence may be taken true, he ran with cries for help in the direction where help was least likely to be. Then, again, whom was he waiting for

that night, and why was he waiting for him in the yew alley rather than in his own house?" (19)

Sherlock took all of the information that had been given to him from the manuscript, the public information, and Dr. Mortimer's information to create a theory of what happened. After this theory, he received evidence from the aforementioned gypsy about what happened the night of Sir Charles' death. He is demonstrating that early deduction stage when he speculates and the later deduction stage when he speaks with confidence and surety because his suspicions were confirmed so we are able to see his thought process continue.

In the last third of the novel, we see a similar pattern, but we are shown much more of his later deductions than that of his observations and early deductions. But in chapter twelve, Sherlock is reintroduced into our novel so Watson shows us again just how observant he is:

"If you seriously desire to deceive me you must change your tobacconist; for when I see the stub of a cigarette marked Bradley, Oxford Street, I know that my friend Watson is in the neighborhood. You will see it there beside the path. You threw it down, no doubt, at that supreme moment when you charged into the empty hut." (90)

In this interaction, Holmes tells Watson exactly what he observed and what he believed happened from those observations. This becomes a second introduction into the

observant nature of Sherlock Holmes since it has been about 50 pages since we last witnessed his skills. We also are able to be introduced back into the second piece of Holmes' ratiocination, not just the first.

If we look further into the last third Sherlock reveals to us yet again that he is the superior observer in two specific instances: "Ha, you see it now. My eyes have been trained to examine faces and not their trimmings. It is the first quality of a criminal investigator that he should see through a disguise," and "Yes, it is an interesting instance of a throwback, which appears to be both physical and spiritual. A study of family portraits is enough to convert a man to the doctrine of reincarnation. The fellow is a Baskerville--that is evident" (103). In this discovery, Holmes is using his observation skills and really demonstrating his superiority in them. He is paying attention to what is around him far more than Watson, or others, and in doing so, creates a hypothesis. This text demonstrates the first and second sections of Sherlock's ratiocination.

In a demonstration of the later parts of his ratiocination, Holmes displays how one of his previous hypotheses (the relationship between the Stapletons being marriage and not siblings) becomes a confirmed deduction.

"Because he so far forgot himself as to tell you a true piece of autobiography upon the occasion when he first met you, and I dare say he has many a time regretted it since. He was once a schoolmaster in the north of England. Now, there is no one more easy to trace than a

schoolmaster. There are scholastic agencies by which one may identify the man who has been in the profession. A little investigation showed me that a school had come to grief under atrocious circumstances, and the man who had owned it--the name was different--had disappeared with his wife. The descriptions agreed. When I learned that the missing man was devoted to entomology the identification was complete." (93)

Here we are shown that Sherlock observed all and then uses those observations to guide him toward solving the case. He payed attention to a very small detail when no one else did and was able to unravel the entire plot planned by Mr. Stapleton just with that single observation. We see in this scene that Sherlock can observe, create a hypothesis, and confirm his hypothesis, completing the three parts of his ratiocination all at once.

To further their evidence and reveal Sherlock's third piece of ratiocination, Watson and Holmes visit Laura Lyons. She has information that they have theorized about, but do not completely know so Holmes' purpose in visiting her is to further confirm what he has observed and believes to be the truth based on his observations and early deductions: "I presume that the reason he gave was that you would receive help from Sir Charles for the legal expenses connected with your divorce?' 'Exactly.' 'And then after you had sent the letter he dissuaded you from keeping the

appointment?' 'He told me that it would hurt his self-respect...the obstacles which divided us.' 'He appears to be a very consistent character. And then you heard nothing until you read the reports of the death in the paper?' 'No.' 'And he made you swear to say nothing about your appointment with Sir Charles?'" (107). Sherlock hypothesized what happened from his observations and his early, unconfirmed deductions from those observations. In contacting Mrs. Lyons, Sherlock was able to confirm those hypotheses and come to his final deductions, the truth.

Throughout all of these examples of observation, early, and later deduction skills in the first and last thirds of the novel, we know that Sherlock Holmes is very advanced. Holmes is superior to other people; average people such as Sir Henry, smart and talented people such as Dr. Mortimer, and people of the same field and who know him personally such as Watson. He uses this art of ratiocination to outwit all others and observe what they miss in everyday conversations and everyday instances. He then uses those observations and other obvious information to create hypotheses and then find ways to confirm or deny those hypotheses. In addition to that, the entirety of the novel has shown the audience that Sherlock fully embodies the definition of ratiocination and demonstrates throughout the text that he makes incredible observations, is able to create a hypothesis from that information, and is able to find a way to discover the truth from those observations and hypotheses.

Chapter Three: Relationship with Watson

The second way that I am evaluating the heroism of Sherlock Holmes is through his relationship with John Watson throughout the novel of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Holmes and Watson are roommates and essentially best friends in the city of London. They work on each of their cases together, however, this “business” was started by Holmes so Watson is more of his sidekick and assistant. We get all of our information about Holmes from Watson since each story is written from Watson’s perspective, but we can still analyze how they interact through Holmes’ dialogue.

I am breaking up the dialogue into three sections. The first is when Holmes talks down to Watson or treats him poorly in any way; I will call this insolence. The second is when Holmes refers to Watson as his friend or treats him kindly and like they truly are friends; this will be referred to as affection. The third is when he asks Watson for advice on cases or help in any way, including what he makes of the current situation or observation that Holmes is making at that moment; this will be called consultation. Breaking their relationship down this way allows us to understand how Holmes interacts with the people he is close to, which is really only Watson within this particular novel. When we understand that, we are able to analyze how heroic his countenance is with people he knows

well and who know him well because how we treat the people we love is a telltale sign of our personal character.

To begin, one of the ways that Holmes interacts with Watson is that he talks down to him and does not treat him completely favorably (insolence). Sometimes he does this without realizing how he is treating Watson.

“Really, Watson, you excel yourself,” said Holmes, pushing back his chair and lighting a cigarette. “I am bound to say that in all the accounts which you have been so good as to give of my own small achievements you have habitually underrated your own abilities. It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it. I confess, my dear fellow, that I am very much in your debt.” (2)

While most of this interaction seems fairly kind, it is what one would call a backhanded compliment. While trying to compliment Watson’s observations, he is also telling him that he is not a genius and he really only came up with those observations because he has become privy to Holmes’ own observation abilities.

In another scene later in this section, Sherlock looks down upon Watson and refers to him as more of a tool than a partner in their work on cases: “There is a delightful freshness about you, Watson, which makes it a pleasure to exercise

any small powers which I possess at your expense” (18). Here Sherlock is showing Watson that his powers of observation allow him to understand Watson to such a degree that he basically knows all. Sherlock’s arrogance really demonstrates that their relationship is not perfect.

The next way that Holmes and Watson interact is when Sherlock actually refers to Watson as his friend and treats him with kindness and respect (affection). This happens within the dialogue much more often than when he speaks to Watson negatively and so is a more telling part of Holmes’ true feelings in his relationship with Watson. One of the first times that this takes place is when he introduces Watson to another character for the first time, “No, this is my friend Dr. Watson” (5). When this happens, Sherlock corrects their visitor and introduces Watson as his friend and as a distinguished man (Dr.). This shows how he would like others to refer to Watson and so reveals that he believes Watson to be worth the title Dr. and the respect which comes from that title as well as being friends with Holmes himself. If Holmes had no respect for Watson, he would certainly not introduce him as a friend.

As the text progresses, we see Holmes treat Watson with the utmost respect as we started to see in the last section. “If my friend would undertake it there is no man who is better worth having at your side when you are in a tight place. No one can say so more confidently than I” (33). Here Holmes is putting

Watson on the case when he cannot go himself and it is a huge compliment to give the case over to Watson. Holmes is handing over one of the biggest cases they have gotten in a long time, one that interests Holmes greatly, and he is putting it in Watson's hands. Not only that, but he is verbally putting all his confidence in Watson and calling him his friend yet again. These are very high honors in Holmes' book since the only person he ever does this to and for is Watson.

The final way that the relationship between Holmes and Watson can be interpreted is through the responsibility that Holmes gives Watson (consultation). In the majority of their dialogue, Holmes is asking Watson what he thinks of different things, if he has any observations to make, and if he can assist him in different ways. On multiple occasions, he actually uses the phrase "Watson, what do you make of it" and "What do you think?" Both of these are clear indications of the trust he has in Watson as well as the respect he has for him. Another place where this is seen is on the first page of the novel:

"Watson, what do you make of our visitor's stick? Since we have been so unfortunate as to miss him and have no notion of his errand, this accidental souvenir becomes of importance. Let me hear you construct the man by an examination of it." (1)

In this part of the novel, Holmes is genuinely curious as to how Watson would make observations from the walking stick and then create hypotheses from them. In doing this, whether or not he already has his own hypotheses, Holmes is showing Watson that he values his opinion on the matter and that he trusts him to come up with something meaningful. This shows a lot of respect for who Watson is as a person as well as confidence in Watson's observation and deduction skills.

In the last third of the novel, we are able to see these interactions between Holmes and Watson take place even more frequently in each section of our interpretation. When we look at the interactions where Holmes talks down to Watson or treats him as lesser, it is clear that they are in the midst of situations where Holmes is under much duress and is stressed out about the case at hand. For example, in a later section of the novel Sherlock reprimands Watson for investigating instead of staying with Henry Baskerville, who he was ordered to protect: "Fool that I was to hold my hand. And you, Watson, see what comes of abandoning your charge!" (94). At this point, Holmes is worried and so his lashing out at Watson can be seen as justified and not as blatantly rude, but he still gets upset with Watson for not doing his job when in reality he is fulfilling a job requirement after all.

In another instance, Sherlock talks down to John in a more bossy way. While Sherlock and John are technically partners when they work on cases together, sometimes Sherlock makes it seem as though he is the lead and John is just the faithful assistant or the trusty sidekick. "Watson, you will send a note to Stapleton to tell him that you regret that you cannot come" (104). While Watson does not seem to think too much of this interaction, it is a moment where Holmes uses his "superiority" to demand tasks of people and to get others to do his bidding. In this particular incident, Sherlock treats John as if he has no say in the matter and is not allowed to contribute to this part of the case.

The better part of their relationship is shown when Sherlock treats Watson in the opposite fashion, when he shows him that he is appreciated and viewed as a friend and colleague, not as lesser and as an assistant. This is demonstrated much more in the last third of the novel as well when Holmes explains why he did what he did in actually participating in the case without telling Watson:

"My dear fellow, you have been invaluable to me in this as in many other cases, and I beg that you will forgive me if I have seemed to play a trick upon you. In truth, it was partly for your own sake that I did it, and it was my appreciation of the danger which you ran which led me to come down and examine the matter for myself. Had I been with Sir Henry and you it is confident that my point of

view would have been the same as yours, and my presence would have warned our very formidable opponents to be on their guard. As it is, I have been able to get about as I could not possibly have done had I been living in the Hall, and I remain an unknown factor in the business, ready to throw in all my weight at a critical moment.” (91)

This moment shows a very soft and kind facet of Holmes’ personality. He cares so much for Watson that he made sure that Watson understood that his goal was not to trick him or make him feel useless, but to help him and to watch over him. Not only that, but Sherlock verbally states that John is incredibly important to him as a colleague in the current case as well as past cases which shows the amount of respect he has for Watson as well.

His love for Watson is shown again as the novel comes to a close and we are made aware of just how much he enjoys Watson’s presence and friendship.

“And now, my dear Watson, we have had some weeks of severe work, and for one evening, I think, we may turn our thoughts into more pleasant channels. I have a box for ‘Le Huguenots.’ Have you heard the De Reszkes? Might I trouble you then to be ready in half an hour, and we can stop at Marcini’s for a little dinner on the way?” (124)

This section of the text says a lot about the relationship that Holmes and Watson share. They are friends first and colleagues second. It is their friendship that allows for them to work together so well and to trust each other completely with the cases they take on. Holmes reveals to the audience here that Watson is so much more than a business partner, but is in reality the person he enjoys spending time with the most and loves as a very dear friend. He makes it clear that he values Watson as a person and as a companion.

The last interpretation of the relationship between Sherlock and John is their professional relationship. In the latter half of the novel, Holmes needs Watson more than ever to bring the case to a close and actually catch the culprit. Since they were working separately for the majority of the case they have somewhat different knowledge in their different areas of focus. "Well done! Our researches have evidently been running on parallel lines, and when we unite our results I expect we shall have a fairly full knowledge of the case" (91). In this scene, Holmes trusts Watson so much that he wants his side of the case. All the information that Watson discovered on his own without Holmes is what Holmes is now saying that he wants to add to his knowledge of the case. This is a big step for Sherlock since he has made clear in the beginning of the novel that he holds more knowledge and more capability than others do. He respects Watson's abilities and he trusts him enough to join forces at this point in the case.

Additionally, within the novel we see many cases where Sherlock leaves his trust and the success of the case entirely upon Watson's shoulders. It is plain that Holmes would not do so unless he had unwavering trust in Watson and respect for his abilities.

“But one last word, Watson. Say nothing of the hound to Sir Henry. Let him think that Selden's death was as Stapleton would have us believe. He will have a better nerve for the ordeal which he will have to undergo tomorrow, when he is engaged, if I remember your report aright, to dine with these people.” (100)

This is another great example of Holmes complete and utter trust in Watson. He knows Watson so well and knows that he would never do anything to jeopardize the case even on accident because he knows wholeheartedly that Watson is cautious. He trusts him beyond the shadow of a doubt or he would not have been part of the case the entire time and he certainly would not have allowed him to be the one relaying information to Henry Baskerville if he did not fully trust and believe in him.

When each of these pieces to the puzzle come together we know that even though he is a flawed man, as in his poor treatment of Watson every so often, he is a fairly good man due to his (more often) wonderful treatment of Watson and his complete trust in him. These parts of Holmes' relationship with

Watson reveal to us that he has his drawbacks just like any other human being, but that in his heart he truly cares for the one he loves. It opens our eyes further to what his relationship with Watson is really like and what it really means to him as well as showing us that Watson may be the window into the side of him that is more emotionally mature and stable; his relationship with Watson gives us a view of his moral integrity.

Chapter Four: Relationship with Others

Now that the first two sections of Holmes' personality have been analyzed, it is time for the last: Holmes' humanity. In this case, when Holmes' humanity is discussed, it means how he interacts with the other people around him. It is almost impossible to analyze Holmes' humanity, but we can look at how he treats people which will add information about his moral integrity and leadership skills to lead us to the answer to this question: is Sherlock Holmes a hero? When looking at the novel, Holmes interacts in three ways; his ratiocination (observations and deductions), his relationship with Watson (affection, insolence, consultation), and his relationship with other people or his relationship with humanity. His relationship with humanity breaks into sections the same way that it did for Holmes' relationship with Watson: when does Holmes treat others with kindness and care (affection), when does Holmes treat others rudely and with sarcasm or arrogance (insolence), and when does Holmes ask for help from others directly or indirectly (consultation). This will reveal a whole new side of Holmes as we get to see the way he interacts with people he doesn't love and see his leadership skills come into play.

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Holmes' only interactions with people are with Watson and with the people involved in the case. When we start to analyze his interactions with them and look at each way he interacts with the other

characters in the novel, we will start to see different aspects of his interactions and how they develop and change over the course of the novel. Learning how Sherlock treats and interacts with other characters is a way to then further analyze if Holmes can fall under the hero category because heroes treat others with a decent amount of respect.

What I noticed when reading the novel and then when separating the parts where he interacts with other characters, is that the way Holmes treats people changes over the course of the novel. In the first third of the novel, there are a lot more documented incidents of Holmes treating the other characters rudely or with sarcasm and arrogance than in the last third of the novel. There are actually twenty eight incidents of insolence as opposed to ten. For example one of the first things he says to a potentially new client is: "Interesting, though elementary" (2). While it does not seem super harsh, what Holmes is implying here is that their visitor is not up to par with his skills. In this case, he is looking upon Dr. Mortimer as less than he is and showing him contempt.

Along with that, Holmes shows that he does not believe their new visitor to be worthy of his time and that he is not concerned with what Dr. Mortimer is concerned with. "I hitherto confined my investigations to this world," said he. "In a modest way I have combated evil , but to take on the Father of Evil himself would, perhaps, be too ambitious a task'" (15). In this scene, Sherlock is

disregarding entirely what Dr. Mortimer is showing genuine concern for. This act of mockery and disregard is rude and shows the audience that Holmes cares nothing for this visitor other than what he can provide him in terms of a case.

Within the last third of the novel, we see Sherlock tone down this type of attitude and behavior. As previously mentioned, there is much less dialogue that includes Holmes' insolence to be found in the latter part of the novel. However, when we do see them, the reasons for them have completely changed. While in the first third of the novel, Sherlock has a complete lack of interest in the other characters and a disregard for their feelings, the last third shows the total opposite. For example, later on in the last third Sherlock speaks to Watson, but addresses the whole group of people he is working with in Dartmoor to tell them how stupid they have been: "That's lucky for him--in fact, it's lucky for all of you, since you are all on the wrong side of law in this matter. I am not sure that as a conscientious detective my first duty is not to arrest the whole household. Watson's reports are most incriminating documents" (101). In this section of novel, Holmes has established a bit more of a rapport with the rest of the characters and so addresses them in this insolent way. But this is not because he doesn't like them or because he does not care about what they care about, but rather, he wants them to stay safe and not make any choices that could jeopardize them or the case.

While Holmes has developed into a somewhat nicer and more caring character as the novel progresses, his personality still contains that air of arrogance and rude behavior. He demonstrates this when he and Watson go to further their knowledge with the help of Laura Lyons. “I am investigating the circumstances which attended the death of the late Sir Charles Baskerville,” said he. “My friend here, Dr. Watson, has informed me of what you have communicated, and also of what you have withheld in connection with that matter” (106). This is Holmes’ first time meeting with Mrs. Lyons and so a pattern starts to emerge. Holmes’ relationships with other characters needs to become more established and needs time to grow before he loses his insolence and moves on to kinder interactions. Since he has had a growth period for most of the other characters, Holmes uses much less of this insolence within his interactions than he does in the first third of the novel. In the last third, however, we see most of those rude interactions happening with characters like Laura Lyons who he has not established a relationship with yet.

The first third of the novel, since it contains much more insolent behavior from Holmes, also contains less affectionate behavior as well. While there is not as much affectionate behavior in the first third as there is in the last third, there are still points in the dialogue where Sherlock proves that he is kind hearted

towards others. For example, before he truly knows the people he is going to be helping, he is reassuring to them and helps to comfort them.

“You shall share our knowledge before you leave this room, Sir Henry. I promise you that,” said Sherlock Holmes. “We will confine ourselves for the present with your permission to this very interesting document, which must have been put together and posted yesterday evening.” (21)

In this moment, Holmes is entirely intrigued by this new information they have received, which usually would entail him disregarding all else. But in this case, Sherlock makes sure to keep the others calm and care for them in their state of distress before he is consumed by the new information--which is his usual course of action. He stops what he is doing to assure Sir Henry that they will all be caught up to the same information once he discovers what the letter means. That shows a great deal of consideration and kind heartedness on Sherlock's part toward Sir Henry.

In a later section, Holmes not only proves that he is kind hearted, but that he truly values other people. “Well, of course, that is possible also. I am very much indebted to you, Dr. Mortimer, for introducing me to a problem which presents several interesting alternatives. But the practical point which we now have to decide, Sir Henry, is whether it is or is not advisable for you to go to

Baskerville Hall” (25). In this passage, Holmes is finally pausing to thank Dr. Mortimer for coming to him in his time of need. Earlier, Holmes had mocked and ridiculed his visiting and his thoughts about the case, but now he is full of gratitude. In this instance, it may be because Holmes is glad to have a case as interesting as this, but even so, he is treating the others very kindly and showing that he values them in this moment.

If we fast forward to the last third of the novel, we will see significantly more of these interactions and for more moral reasons than before. In this section, Holmes and Watson are looking at what they believe to be the dead body of Sir Henry.

“In order to have my case well rounded and complete, I have thrown away the life of my client. It is the greatest blow which has befallen me in my career. But how could I know--how *could* I know--that he would risk his life alone upon the moor in the face of all my warnings?” (95)

In this scene we are faced with an almost hysterical Sherlock Holmes. He is devastated and outraged that the case cost Sir Henry his life. This type of care and value of life does not come from wanting to just solve a case or interest only in what one can provide him with. This kind of reaction comes from someone who truly values human life and cares for the particular person who has been

found dead. This scene shows how much Holmes has changed just over the course of the novel as he has grown in his relationship with Sir Henry.

Even though Holmes shows us here how far he has come in terms of his affection, we can still see instances within the last third of the novel where he treats others with affection to achieve some sort of goal. For instance, right after they find the body and realize that it is not actually Sir Henry's, Holmes and Watson run into Mr. Stapleton. During their conversation, Holmes has a kind interaction with Mr. Stapleton, but only to appease the man and get what he wants out of the situation: "One cannot always have the success for which one hopes. An investigator needs facts and not legends or rumours. It has not been a satisfactory case" (98). Here Holmes is trying to get Mr. Stapleton off of his trail. He is trying to trick him so as to finish solving the case. In doing so he is kind and shows him trust by somewhat elaborating on the case. While this is for the benefit of the case and the client, Holmes is still using affectionate interactions for personal gain.

The last section to analyze -- Holmes' consultation of the other people in the novel -- shows a lot more during the first third of the novel than the last third. Sherlock is in the midst of getting all the information he needs from the people around him which is why he is asking for help in the last third of the novel.

However, he does have the majority of it figured out so he does not need anyone to give him information, but to help him execute his plans.

The first third of the novel, though, does have quite a few instances of Holmes asking the others around him for help on the case. Sherlock starts with trying to understand what it is that is needing to be solved in the first place: “I think, Dr. Mortimer, you would do wisely if without much more ado you would kindly tell me plainly what the exact nature of the problem is in which you demand my assistance” (6). In this scene, Holmes is trying to understand why this person has shown up at their door and so is asking for the reason. This is just the beginning of the requests he makes because the only way Holmes can solve this case is getting the full picture before he makes a decision.

The other times in which Sherlock is interacting with others in terms of consultation, he is more of an interrogator. He uses those moments to ask question after question of Dr. Mortimer and Sir Henry so that he may fully understand what he needs to investigate first. This passage begins with Sherlock’s interrogation of Sir Henry:

“Pray, take a seat, Sir Henry. Do I understand you to say that you have yourself had some remarkable experiences since you arrived in London?”

“Who knew that you were going to the Northumberland Hotel?”

“But Dr. Mortimer was no doubt already stopping there?” (21)

These questions are how Holmes creates a foundation of knowledge for his case. He uses these consulting interactions to understand the case at a deeper level and create meaning from the seemingly meaningless. This is Holmes’ way of asking the people around him for help before he trusts them. We saw in the last section about Holmes’ relationship with Watson that he trusts him to a degree to ask for real input, but at this moment, Holmes has not reached that level of trust with the others.

In the last third of the novel this, yet again, changes. While the consultation is used a lot less, it is used in a more trustworthy way. Instead of using it as a chance to interrogate and learn all there is to know, it has become a chance for Sherlock to trust others to help him solve the case. At one point, he gets the help of Sir Henry by asking him to do what he says: “One more direction! I wish you to drive to Merripit House. Send back your trap, however, and let them know that you intend to walk home” (104). In this moment, the case is coming to a head as the confirmation of what has been going on draws near. By requesting or directing Sir Henry to do as he says, he is--without telling him--trusting him a great deal. Allowing that much control of the situation to be in Sir Henry’s hands is putting the success of the case and his own life in his hands as well.

As the plot continues to thicken in the last third of the novel, Holmes introduces another person whom he is trusting in the same way. Detective Lestrade joins the ranks as Sherlock closes in on Mr. Stapleton. While this is happening, Sherlock asks: “Are you armed, Lestrade?” (109). In this moment, Sherlock has brought in a stranger to all of them (other than Sherlock) to help solve this case. Not only does that carry a lot of weight and say a lot about the trust he has in Lestrade, but also he trusts him enough to be the protector of the group. The person he usually allows to carry a gun to protect them is Watson, whom we know he trusts above all others. Allowing Lestrade to play that same role shows much confidence in his abilities.

Sherlock Holmes’ personality takes on many different forms and when it comes to the others around him, he displays multiple traits. He makes people feel inferior and sometimes stupid, he makes them feel valued, and he trusts them. These all come out of the dialogue between Holmes and the other characters within the novel and they show themselves in different ways as the novel progresses. Sherlock Holmes has many aspects of his relational side that reveal how heroic he can be while he also has aspects that are not so heroic. All in all, our conclusion can be that he is not perfect, but human when it comes to interpersonal communication.

Conclusion: Is Sherlock a Hero?

Now that we know what a hero is and how Sherlock speaks and interacts with other people, we can move on to answering the very important question: Is Sherlock Holmes a hero? Due to the never-changing love that society has deemed Sherlock Holmes worthy of, we have to wonder what makes him so intriguing. There are many theories about what it is specifically about Sherlock and about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's writings that have caused such a tremendous phenomenon. However, after looking at what other scholarly authors have to say and diving deep into the writing and character of Holmes, I have come to a conclusion.

Sherlock Holmes is a hero...BUT he falls into a specific hero category, not just any general hero definition. When I opened up the text and really analyzed what was happening and what was being said, I finally understood Sherlock Holmes as a person. He came to life for me, like he does for all other "Sherlockians," but as a human who is not perfect. Sherlock does not fall into the archetype of a pure hero or a superhero or any hero from the past archetypes who seems to have no faults. He is both good and bad, smart and naive, kind and blatantly rude and these are all things that make him a hero, believe it or not. In chapter one, I discussed the three main criteria that people usually have to

identify heroes, and now I will use the evidence from the text to show how Sherlock does and does not fit into these criteria.

When looking at morality, we as a society find it important that someone know the difference between right and wrong and that they act in the right when it is serious. Sherlock does this on multiple occasions as we saw throughout the way that he interacts with the other people around him. In the section on Sherlock's relationship with humanity, we were shown that he has his moments, but when it counts he cares for other people more than himself and chooses the path of good morality. An example that we did not discuss in the earlier chapters was when Sherlock saved Sir Henry Baskerville's life. On multiple occasions Sherlock demonstrated his morality by using his words to communicate with people, but here he uses actions to make a morally right choice in favor of his friend Sir Henry:

Sir Henry: "You have saved my life."

Sherlock: "Having first endangered it. Are you strong enough to stand?"

Henry: "Give me another mouthful of that brandy and I shall be ready for anything. So! Now, if you will help me up. What do you suppose to do?"

Sherlock: "To leave you here. You are not fit for further adventures tonight. If you will wait, one or other of us will go back with you to the hall." (112-113)

Sherlock uses his words to first express his regret for putting Sir Henry in this situation as he has done before. Then he moves on to telling Henry that he will be taken care of and that is a promise. He takes charge here in a morally good way because he keeps Henry from pushing himself too far or from experiencing anything further since he has already been exposed to so much trauma. Sherlock uses this interaction as an opportunity to show how much he cares for people; maybe in other moments he has been rude to or disregarded Henry, but in this moment, when it truly counts, he does not allow anything to happen to him, he proves that he has a working conscience, and he proves that he is altogether a morally good man.

When we think about competence among our societal view of hero, we can actually see that all of them are good at something that no one else is; or at least not to the same extent. There are so many moments where people that we view as heroic, whether they be people we know personally or not, demonstrate a skill or ability that no one can compete with. In Sherlock Holmes' case, his skill is observation and his ability is ratiocination. Sherlock is more observant than anyone within his world in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and he has the uncanny ability to piece together information like a puzzle in a way that is so foreign to us readers. We saw this demonstrated throughout the entirety of the novel and we analyzed it in the section on ratiocination. This word has been specifically

attributed to Sherlock because his skill set is so incredibly different than anyone else's. I found another instance where his competence is revealed to the audience in the middle of a conversation with Watson:

Watson: "And the dog?"

Holmes: "Has been in the habit of carrying this stick behind his master. Being a heavy stick the dog has held it tightly by the middle, and the marks of his teeth are very plainly visible. The dog's jaw, as shown in the space between these marks, is too broad in my opinion for a terrier and not broad enough for a mastiff. It may have been--yes, by Jove, it is a curly-haired spaniel!" (4)

In this scene, Watson is trying to understand how Sherlock has come to the conclusions he has stated and so asks about the dog Sherlock had previously mentioned. Then, in Sherlock's description of what the dog could possibly be we are made privy to the unbelievable nature of his ratiocination skills. Holmes comes up with the dog's size and is beginning to narrow down the breed all from a tooth imprint on a walking stick. This is an obvious display of Holmes' superiority and his skills that no one else seems to be able to rival.

Leadership is a common trait amongst the heroes that we are familiar with. It means they can handle responsibility and are willing to step up and take control when they are needed. This proves that heroic individuals are up for the

tasks they are asked to complete and it helps the people around them (and even the rest of the world) look up to them and trust their judgement. Sherlock Holmes also displays leadership throughout the novel:

“Let me have the hotel directory,” said Holmes. “Thank you! Now, Cartwright, there are names of twenty-three hotels here, all in the immediate neighborhood of Charing Cross. Do you see?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You will visit each of these in turn.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You will begin in each case by giving the outside porter one shilling. Here are twenty-three shillings.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You will tell them you want to see the waste paper of yesterday. You will say an important telegram has miscarried and you are looking for it. You understand?”

“Yes, sir.”

“But what you will really look for is the centre page of the Times with some holes cut in it with scissors. Here is a copy of the Times. It is this page. You could easily recognize it, could you not?” (28-29)

In this moment, Sherlock takes initiative and decides what the next best course of action is. He orders Cartwright to find information for him while he and Watson work out other details. This is a good demonstration of his leadership skills because he stands up and takes control, but he also is delegating because he cannot possibly follow every lead himself, delegation being a very important leadership quality. This shows the audience that Holmes knows what he is doing and is willing to take on challenges when others cannot, but he is also willing to share the workload and not overload himself. This demonstrates great maturity in leadership and again shows the readers that Sherlock is qualified for the term “hero.”

While these are all true demonstrations of the heroic qualities that reside in Sherlock Holmes, he also does things to the contrary. We saw this in the majority of the ways he interacts with people in the beginning of the novel because he does not know anyone other than Watson yet and he is not aware of the reality and severity of the case being brought before him. These things cause Sherlock to not be kind, loving, or understanding, but more rude, arrogant, and impatient. This is what makes Sherlock Holmes a modern day hero instead of a pure hero or an everyday hero. The modern day hero is a representative of the best and worst parts of our society today. Take *Deadpool* for instance; in the movie *Deadpool* we have this sort of superhero who wants to rid the world of

bad men, but is also one himself. He is neither good nor bad, but a combination of both. Sherlock is the same in that he represents the best parts of the audience (our love for humanity, our fearless leaders, our emotional and physical strength in the face of adversity) and the worst parts of the audience (our arrogance, our disrespect, our carelessness, and our recklessness).

In the past, heroic figures have been seen by society as perfect people with limited or no faults, but Holmes differs from this stereotype. With Holmes, we are shown a man of many flaws who still happens to do good in his life and form lasting relationships with people he cares for--all while being an incredibly interesting character. When reading the novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, three really key themes come to life. The first was Holmes' ratiocination skills, the second was Holmes' relationship with Watson, and the third was Holmes' relationship with everyone else. These three things seemed to be what made Sherlock stand out from the rest and what actually make him a hero. Sherlock Holmes is a man of great skill - he can have interactions with people and notice much more than a regular person could. He is a man of great heart - he values friendship and the people (or person, to be more exact) that he places in that role. He is a man of compassion and quick wit - he empathizes with others, but also always has a sense of humor. Because of these things, we see much of ourselves in Sherlock. He is a hero that reflects our personalities and our

humanity, but is more notable and more capable due to his incredible talent in observation and in his intelligence.

Being a modern day hero means having both good and bad to the extreme, but truly being a hope and light in society. That is what Sherlock Holmes embodies and that is why he can be considered a hero. The hero that inspires us, creates a longing in our hearts to do better and be better, but reminds us of our flaws and humbles us. With his logic and crime-solving abilities, he inspires us. He makes us want to become more observant and shows us that the world isn't as complicated as we think or make it out to be. In his relationship with Watson he connects to us and creates the bond that we need to then feel humbled by his love for humanity. We become aware of our own faults when seeing his and strive to be better just as he does. In these ways Sherlock teaches us how to be more than we are and that is the definition of the modern day hero. He is our good and our bad and we love that about him because it means that we can be heroes too.

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