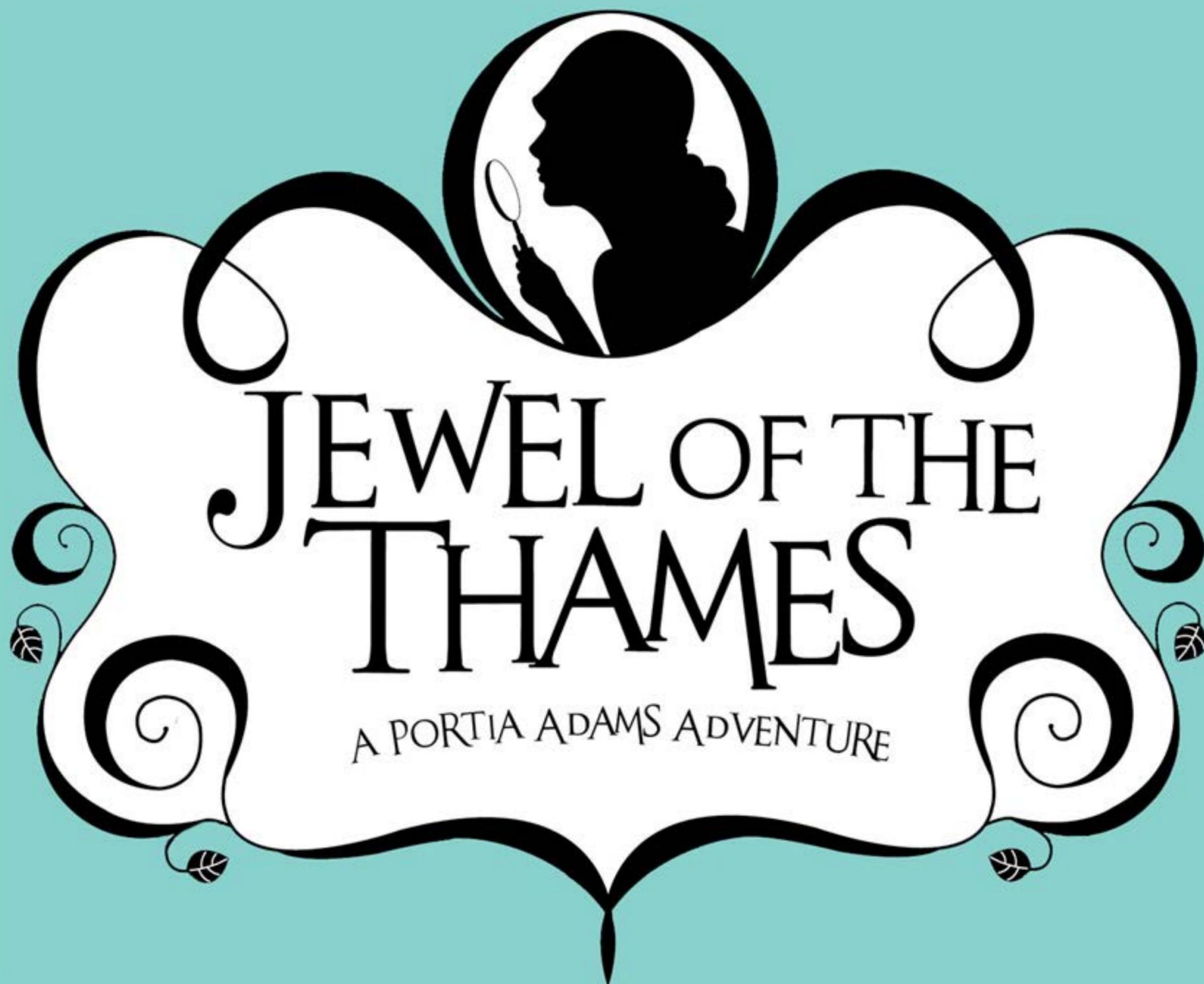


The Teacher's Guide



Canadian Children's Book Centre's
Best Books for Kids and Teens 2014



Angela Misri is a Toronto author who writes detective fiction inspired by her birth country, Great Britain.

The first book in her YA detective series is called *Jewel of the Thames* and follows her detective Portia Adams through her first three cases as she emmigrates from 1930s Toronto to the bustling streets of London.

Misri has spent most of her career at the CBC in Toronto making CBC Radio extra-terrestrial through podcasts, live streams and websites. These days she 's the Digital Director at The Walrus.

She also teaches journalism at Ryerson University in Toronto.

www.AngelaMisri.com

Jewel of the Thames was published by Fierce Ink Press in March 2014.

The second book in the series, *Thrice Burned* came out in March 2015, and the third, *No Matter How Improbable*, in March 2016.



This guide was written to help you talk about *Jewel of the Thames* in your classroom.

Classified as a Young Adult novel, it also sits in the Mystery and Historical Fiction sections of your local bookstores and libraries.

I like to tell people that the age range is 10-100 years old because I've had reviews from kids as young as 10 and adults well into their 80s.

The Teacher's Guide was written by Angela Misri and edited by Joyce Grant. It is free to use in your classrooms and please share it with other teachers.

You can download a copy of this guide at AngelaMisri.com.

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Jewel of the Thames introduces us to 19-year-old Portia Constance Adams. A Canadian girl of middleclass means, Portia is an introverted bookworm who has no friends and not much of a future in front of her. When her beloved mother dies of cancer, she finds out that she has been left in the guardianship of a complete stranger: a Mrs. Irene Jones. In the same reading of her mother's will it is revealed that Portia has inherited the offices of the most famous detectives in the world: 221 Baker Street in London, England.

The book is divided into three cases: *Jewel of the Thames*, a *Case of Darkness* and *Unfound* with the larger story arc of Portia discovering her true relationship with Holmes and Watson over the course of the full book.

Jewel of the Thames

Portia's downstairs tenant at Baker Street is the charming and handsome Constable Brian Dawes, who shares her fascination with the previous owners of the townhouse.

Brian, along with the rest of the police force have been unable to capture a jewel thief who is plaguing London, and Portia decides to help. After a few mis-steps the duo solve the case bringing Portia and her relationships with Baker Street to the attention of her schoolmates and Scotland Yard.



A Case of Darkness

The solution of the jewel thefts leads to Portia's second case - this one brought to her by a classmate who has heard of her success through the college grapevine. James Barclay claims that his sister is dangerously depressed by the ailing health of their father – a very well-known judge.

Little does Portia know that James is using her – leaving clues in her path to lead our amateur detective to accuse his sister of patricide when the judge is found dead. Portia discovers quite by accident that James has been poisoning the books in the family library, but only the ones that the judge and his sister read.

Unfound

The final case happens over an eight-hour train ride Edinburgh aboard the Flying Scotsman. Portia has gathered that point to Irene Jones actually being the – *The Woman* from Holmes and Watson's casebooks. she intends to confront The Woman upon her arrival in Edinburgh, but first must solve the case of the missing little girl. A woman is beaten and her child is missing and the entire train is up in arms looking for the small blonde girl they saw board with her mother. After hours of fruitless searching the officers on board are ready to give up when Portia figures out that the child has been hidden in plain sight - dressed up as a small boy and dosed with laudanum so he could be explained away as sick.



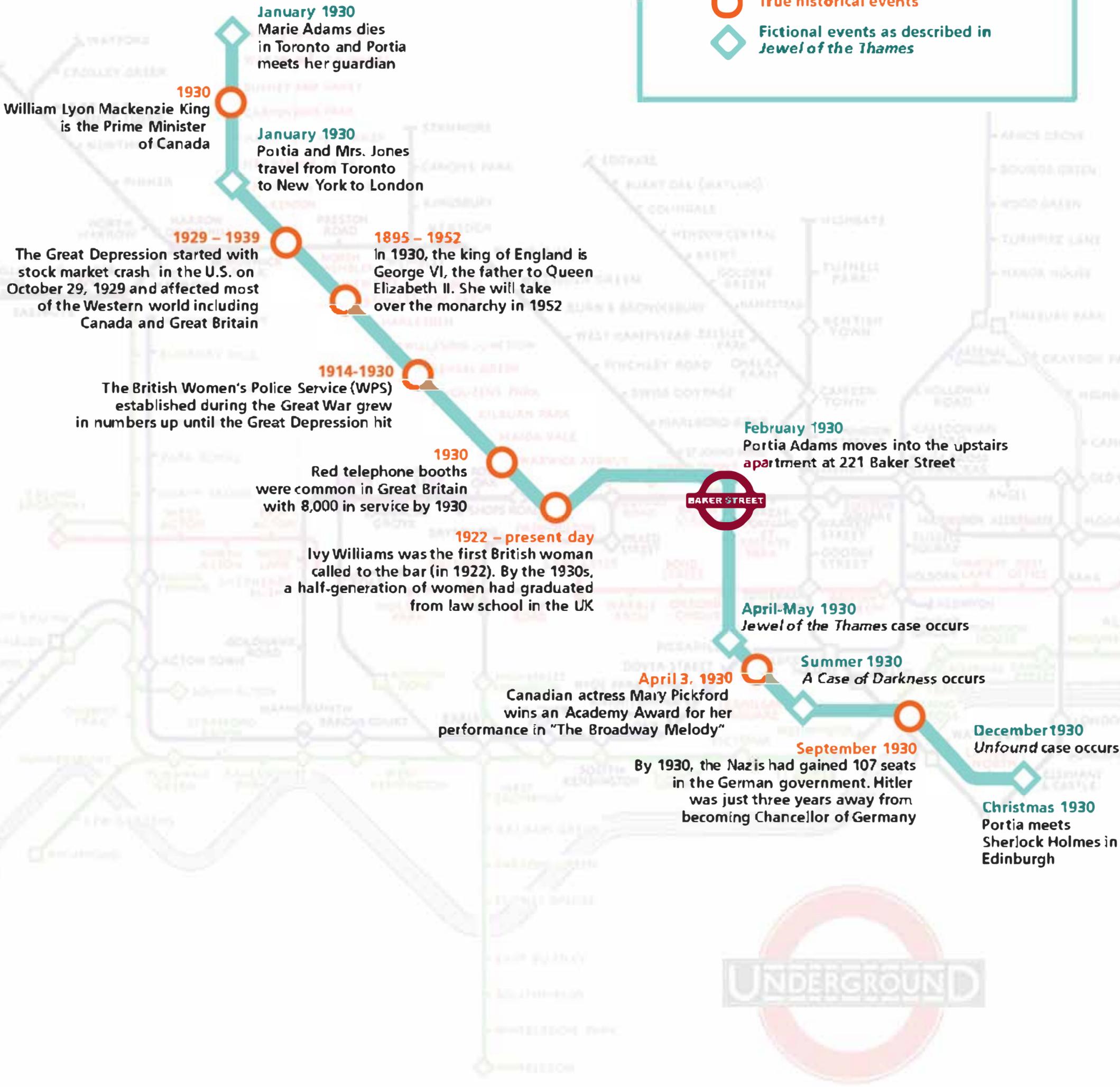
from London to Edinburgh, but first must begin to put clues to infamous Irene Adler Armed with evidence,

At the rented Chateau in Edinburgh, Portia confronts her guardian, only to be surprised by Sherlock Holmes stepping from the shadows to confirm her suspicions and reveal that he and Adler are her paternal grandparents.



These are a few of the historical events that set the stage for *Jewel of the Thames*.

- True historical events
- ◇ Fictional events as described in *Jewel of the Thames*



RAILWAY MAP

ISSUED FREE
No. 1 1930

*INTERESTING FACT: This is a scan of a real 1930s tube map published by the City of London. The Baker Street tube stop is accurately depicted on the map!

Arthur Conan Doyle created his masterful detective in the late 1800s, introducing the world to Sherlock Holmes and his trusty sidekick Dr. John Watson.

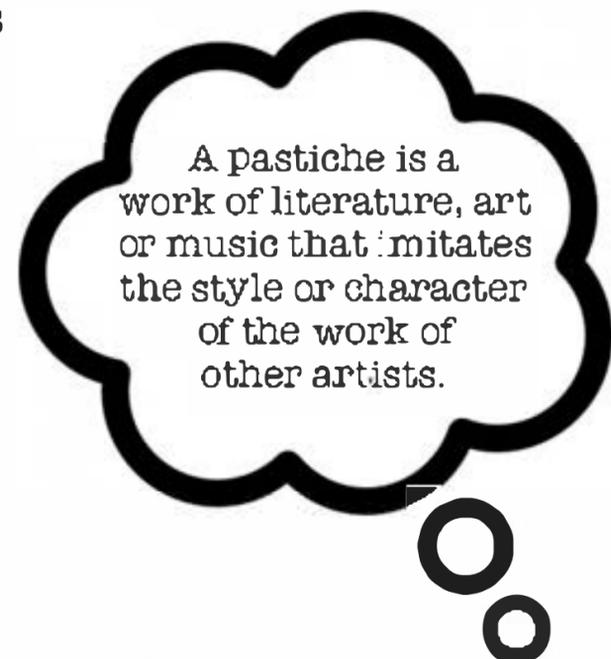
The canon written by Doyle is made up of four novels and 66 short stories, all but four of which are told from the point of view of Watson. The final Holmes story was published in 1927 and his creator died a mere three years later.

Since Conan Doyle's death a great many authors have taken up the characters, either directly using Holmes and Watson or indirectly referring to them.

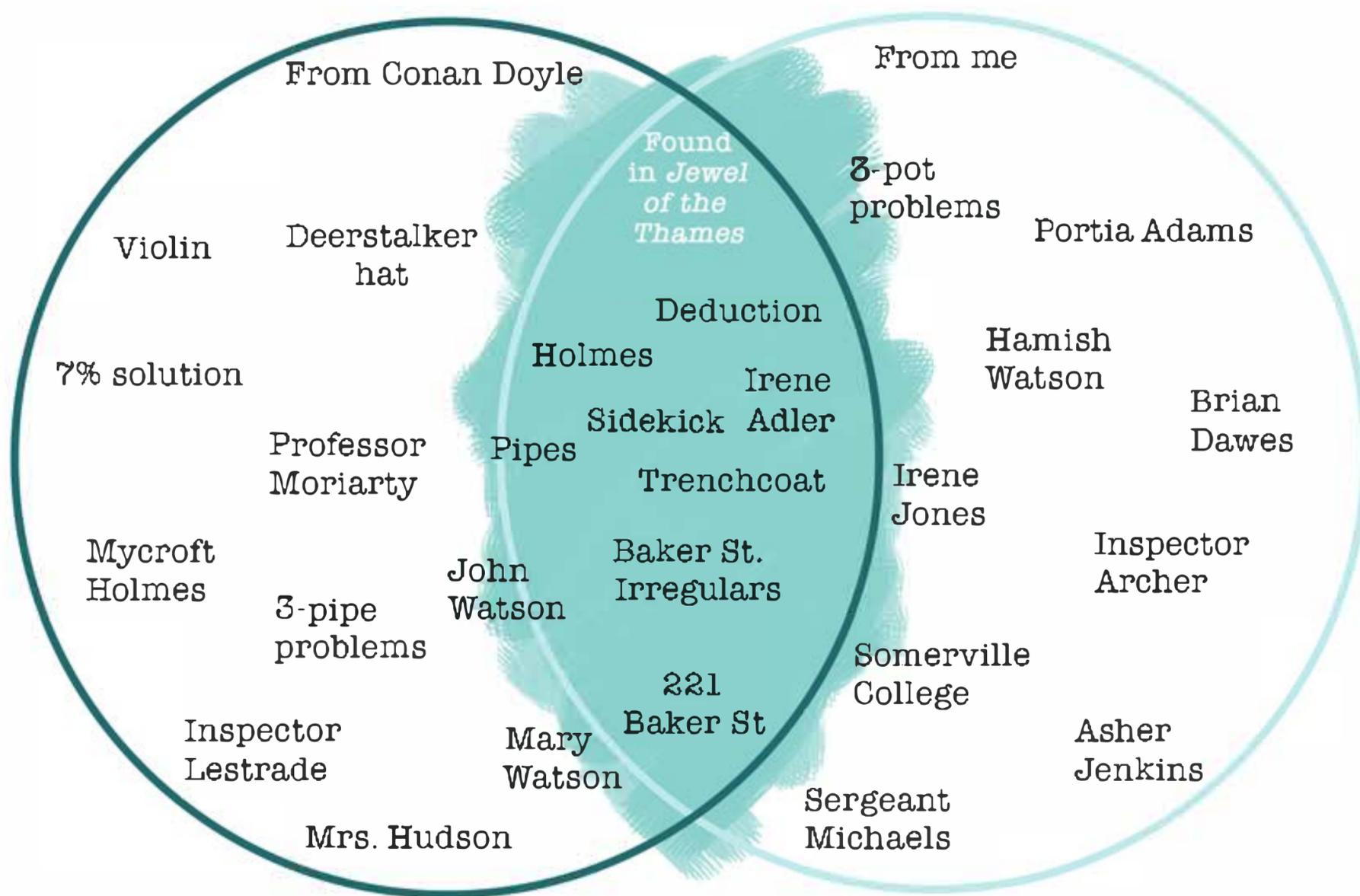
For example, *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* is a collection of short stories written by Conan Doyle's own son Adrian. They continue to follow the exploits of Holmes and Watson.

Author Laurie R. King went in a different direction, choosing to introduce a new character – 15-year-old Mary Russell – who runs into the middle-aged Holmes and becomes his protégé.

There are many more examples including stories that drop Holmes and Watson and riff off Irene Adler or Inspector Lestrade instead. Conan Doyle has left behind a legacy of incredible characters that many authors have pushed even further than their creator could ever have imagined.



The Borders of My Pastiche





Identity

The protagonist in this story is a young woman who starts out knowing very little about her family and through the course of the book learns that she is the granddaughter of Sherlock Holmes and Irene Adler (on her father's side) and Constance Adams and Dr. Watson (on her mother's side).

Not only is she battling through the usual teenage issue of figuring out who she is in the world but she must come to terms with this new and rather intimidating family tree.

TALKING POINT: Nature VS Nurture: is Portia product of her genes or her upbringing?

RELATED ACTIVITY: Create your own Family Tree



Mental Health & Introversion

Portia has recognized herself as an introvert in that she displays more than a few of the traits identified by psychotherapist Carl Jung. She prefers solitary activity, has very few friends (none save her mother while she lived in Canada) and sometimes becomes overwhelmed by crowds.

She is also slightly depressed in the clinical definition of the word, and like Holmes, will retreat into darkness and solitude when left mentally unchallenged.

Her friends and family in the series recognise these traits and seek to draw her out from her bouts of depression in their own ways.

TALKING POINT: How do Portia's personality traits help her be a great detective?

RELATED ACTIVITY: Mental Gymnastics

Feminism & the Role of Women in 1930

The period between the World Wars is revolutionary for the status of women. Along with attending colleges and universities, women over 30 who owned property were given the vote in 1918. In the UK, The Representation of the People Act of 1928 extended the voting franchise to all women over the age of 21.

By the time Portia arrives in London, she can attend college, vote and within a few years she'll be able to wear trousers in public without being snickered at.

While a female detective is uncommon at this time in history, Portia was not the first to hang her shingle. Also, the Women's Police Service (WPS) has existed in London since the first World War, though their numbers diminished during The Great Depression.

TALKING POINT: What does feminism mean to you?

RELATED ACTIVITY: Take the Equality Test

Grief & Loss

Like many families during the Great War, Portia lost her father on the beaches of France. In the first chapter of *Jewel*, she loses her mother to cancer and her step ather abandons her.

Portia chooses to deal with her solitude by throwing herself into her new life in London, filling her days with law studies, and her nights by immersing herself in the journals of Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes.

Every once in a while a memory creeps in and she is forced to face her loss directly, and has to work through her most recent grief of losing her mother over the course of the book. Her friends and her new guardian do their best to help her through this.

TALKING POINT: How do you help someone deal with loss?

RELATED ACTIVITY: Loss Leaders

GET A CLUE:

Go through one of the cases and pick out the clues. Divide them into the **clues everyone sees**, and the **clues only our plucky detective sees**.

Now look at the classroom around you – what are clues everyone would see, and what can **you** see with a little extra focus, attention and induction? Can you tell if your classmate has pets by the tiny hairs on their pants? Can you pick out the last book touched on the bookshelf by comparing the dust in front of each book? What kind of clues would you find on your blackboard if you had a left-handed teacher?

**What Would Portia Do?**

Take a contemporary mystery and ask yourself **WWPD?** What would she look for? What would she see? What is it that you could bring to the table with your own observational skills?

Suggestions for modern-day mysteries: Who killed JFK? Does Big Foot/ the Loch Ness Monster/Sasquatch really exist? Is the Bermuda Triangle a real threat to air travel? Can people have psychic abilities?

**WRITE YOUR OWN MYSTERY:**

Start with the crime. Describe what happened, who or what was injured or lost. Write the scene where the crime is discovered, giving as much detail as you can. Next **start a list of clues** and divide them into the clues anyone would see, the clues the police might see and the clues only a detective like Portia Adams would see. Now put it together into a short story that peaks when your detective figures out the crime. Conclude your mystery within 1,500 words.

Suggestions: You can start this out as a group project with 2-3 students coming up with the crime and the clues and then they can go off and write the story.

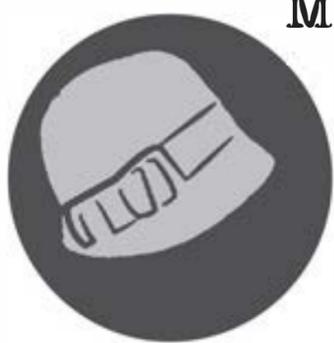


TAKE THE EQUALITY TEST:

Do you believe our society treats kids and teenagers as equals? Make a list of rights available to adults and then **prioritize them by the rights you believe should be extended to your age group.**

Suggestions: Should children be allowed to work? Should kids have the vote? Should kids be allowed to marry?

LOSS LEADERS



Many protagonists in YA fiction deal with the issue of loss.

From losing a parent to losing a pet to in some cases, even losing themselves. What are some examples from your own bookshelves?

Create a table with three columns: one each for **Protagonist**, **What/Who they lost** and **What effect** the loss had on them.

How does loss contribute to character? How does it drive them to be a hero or a villain in a story?

Suggestions: Harry Potter, Portia Adams, Katniss Everdeen, Oliver Twist, Mega Mind, Frodo Baggins, Nancy Drew, the Baudelaire children.

MENTAL GYMNASTICS:

The history of how the mentally ill have been treated over the centuries is laden with tragedy, misdiagnoses and death. Only recently has mental health become an accepted reality in our daily lives and it still has a long way to go.

Pick a mental health issue and talk about the **stigmas** associated with it.

Why would someone choose to hide such a condition? How can we as a society make a person suffering from this issue **feel supported and loved**?

Unleash your creative side by illustrating some of the symptoms as if you were trying to explain the mental health issue to a young child.

Suggestions: Depression, Anxiety, Eating Disorders, Body Dysmorphia

Writing 'Britishisms' becomes a whole new adventure when you have to go back almost a hundred years. Here are some of my more interesting findings about 1930s jargon:

Bauble - still in use today but less so on this side of the pond, a bauble is a piece of jewelry or a jewel.

EXAMPLE: "Get that bauble back to Lady Spencer!"

Bin - short for rubbish bin which is the garbage pail. Used as a verb, it means to throw something away; "to bin it."

EXAMPLE: "I rummaged through the bin for the dinner receipt."

Blighter - an innocent curse word that is usually used in reference to a man. It is a negative term.

EXAMPLE: "The blighter got away with murder!"

Bobby - slang term for a member of the police. Still in use today.

EXAMPLE: "The bobby raced around the corner in pursuit."

Flat - the British word for an apartment, or in Portia's case the upper floor of the Baker Street townhouse. She lives in the upstairs flat (221B) while Brian Dawes and his parents live in the downstairs flat (221A).

EXAMPLE: "My flat was two doors down from Sheela's."

Hackney - can refer to several related things. A horse-drawn hackney was an early 20th century taxi named after the breed of horse that pulled the carriages. Later, when motorized taxis began displacing the horse-drawn ones, the name stuck and they too were called hackneys. In 1930 both existed on the streets of London.

EXAMPLE: "I hailed a hackney as soon as I turned the corner."

Luv - a slang term used by men and women at varying levels of intimacy. Complete strangers as well as best friends can call each other 'luv.' It's akin to the word 'buddy' or 'hon' in North American jargon.

EXAMPLE: "That's alright luv, you didn't mean it!"

Nicked - as in "you've been nicked" was (and still is) a way to say that you had been arrested or captured or caught. It can also mean to steal something.

EXAMPLE: "As I walked out of the market I nicked an apple from a bin by the door, hoping no one was watching."

These are original graphics created by Angela Misri. Feel free to print and distribute them.



KEEP
CALM

AND

FOLLOW ME
TO BAKER ST

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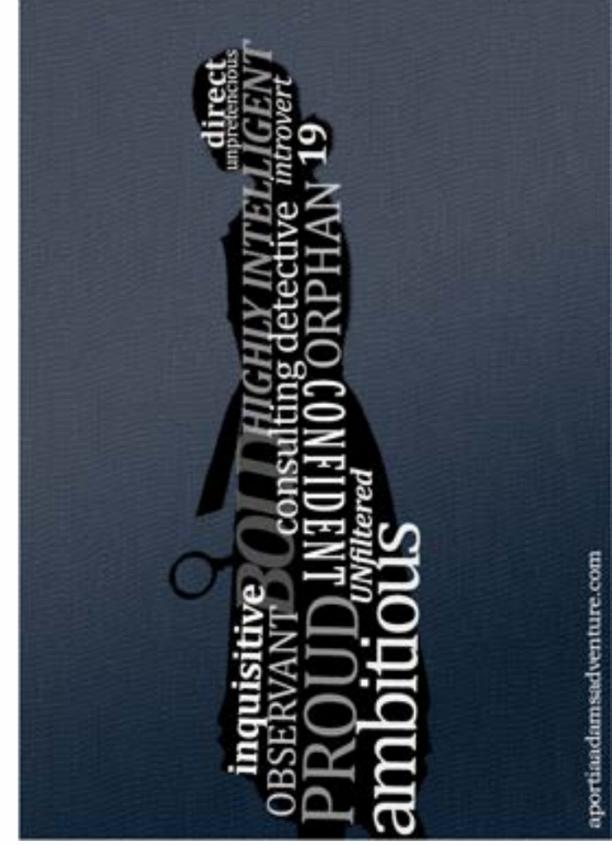


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