

"The Red-Headed League"

from The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



Point of View (RL 1, RL.5, RL 6)

From what point of view is the narrative written?	How Do You Know? Cite textual evidence that supports this point of view.	Who is the narrator of the story?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••	

What EFFECT does it have on the story that it is not told by the protagonist? What information is revealed or not revealed as a result? How might the story have changed if it had been told from the protagonist's POV?

Find EVIDENCE in the following passage that the narrator and protagonist perceive things differently?

What motivated Watson to help Sherlock Holmes?

"I know, my dear Watson, that you share my love of all that is bizarre and outside the conventions and humdrum routine of everyday life. You have shown your relish for it by the enthusiasm which has prompted you to chronicle, and, if you will excuse my saying so, somewhat to embellish so many of my own little adventures."

"Your cases have indeed been of the greatest interest to me," I observed.

"You will remember that I remarked the other day, just before we went into the very simple problem presented by Miss Mary Sutherland, that for strange effects and extraordinary combinations we must go to life itself, which is always far more daring than any effort of the imagination."

"A proposition which I took the liberty of doubting."

"You did, Doctor, but none the less you must come round to my view, for otherwise I shall keep on piling fact upon fact on you until your reason breaks down under them and acknowledges me to be right."

Inference/Line of Reasoning (RL.10, SL.3, SL.4)

Sherlock Holmes used a variety of clues to determine facts about the planned crime. Complete the chart below by filling in the missing parts. Compare what you already know about specific situations with clues from the text to infer the details that helped Holmes figure out the crime.

How Did Holmes Solve the Mystery in "The Red-Headed League"?		
Facts you ALREADY KNOW	CLUES from the story (Textual Evidence)	INFERENCE (What detail was deduced?)
Most people are unwilling to work for less than full salary.	Vincent Spaulding was working for ½ the usual salary.	
If it's too good to be true, it's probably NOT true.		Holmes knew the red-headed league was not a real company.
	Spaulding told Wilson about the ad for the Red-Headed League.	Spaulding wanted Wilson away from the pawn shop each day.
	Vincent Spaulding spent a lot of time in the basement.	
You can determine details about people by the way they dress.		
The sound of something hollow has a different sound from something solid.		The tunnel did not go in front of the pawn shop.
		The thieves planned to rob the London City and Suburban Bank.
	The bank would be closed for the next two days.	
		Spaulding was really John Clay
Using the clues above, explain the line of reasoning used by Sherlock Holmes to solve the mystery.		

Indirect Characterization (RL.1, RL.3)

Some facts about characters are told directly, others are inferred by things they do or say, how they appear or feel, and how they respond to or are perceived by others. **Record details about each character in the chart below.** Then using this evidence, write a short description of each character. Remember to consider the following: (STAAR: Speech, Thoughts, Actions/Appearance, Reactions)

Character	Sherlock Holmes	John Watson	Jabez Wilson	John Clay (Vincent Spaulding)
Details from the text about each character. (STAAR)				
What do these character traits reveal?				
What other details from the story help you understand the character better?				
What kind of character is _____?				
COMPARE & CONTRAST- Identify the similarities & differences between the protagonist, Sherlock Holmes, and the antagonist, John Clay (aka, Vincent Spaulding).				
Similarities			Differences	

Interpretation (RL.1, RI.2, L.3, L.5)

Explain the meaning and significance of the following quotes from “The Red-Headed League.” Use context clues to help you figure out words and phrases with which you are unfamiliar.

QUOTE	MEANING / SIGNIFICANCE
“As a rule,” said Holmes, “the more bizarre a thing is the less mysterious it proves to be. It is your commonplace, featureless crimes which are really puzzling, just as a commonplace face is the most difficult to identify.”	
“Your case is an exceedingly remarkable one, and I shall be happy to look into it. From what you have told me I think that it is possible that graver issues hang from it than might at first sight appear.”	
"As a rule, when I have heard some slight indication of the course of events, I am able to guide myself by the thousands of other similar cases which occur to my memory. In the present instance I am forced to admit that the facts are, to the best of my belief, unique."	
“Here I had heard what he had heard, I had seen what he had seen, and yet from his words it was evident that he saw clearly not only what had happened, but what was about to happen, while to me the whole business was still confused and grotesque.”	
“He curled himself up in his chair, with his thin knees drawn up to his hawk-like nose, and there he sat with his eyes closed and his black clay pipe thrusting out like the bill of some strange bird.”	
“It saved me from ennui,” he answered, yawning. “Alas! I already feel it closing in upon me. My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence. These little problems help me to do so.”	

Discussion Question (RL.5, W.2):

Sherlock's last comment in the story is, "**L'homme c'est rien-l'oeuvre c'est tout.**" This French phrase, originally used between two well-known European authors means, "**The man is nothing-the work is all.**" In other words, Sherlock is somewhat belittling his own accomplishment in solving the mystery of "The Red-Headed League" by saying all that matters is that the crime is solved; it doesn't matter who solved it.

*Respond to the following questions in essay format (200 words minimum).

Based on your characterization of Holmes above and evidence from the text, do you think Holmes really feels this way? How would the story be different if someone else were trying to solve the mystery? Does Sherlock himself matter or is it just about the crime? There's not really a wrong answer as long as you support your opinion with details from the text.