

## PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

### How to use these practice tests

This book contains seven GCSE English Literature exam-style practice tests for *The Sign of the Four*. All the York Notes tests have been modelled on the ones that you will sit in your AQA GCSE 9–1 English Literature exam.

There are lots of ways these tests can support your study and revision for your AQA English Literature exam on *The Sign of the Four*. There is no 'right' way – choose the one (or ones) that suits your learning style best:

#### 1 Alongside the York Notes Study Guide for *The Sign of the Four*

Do you have the York Notes Study Guide for *The Sign of the Four*?

These tests will allow you to try out all the skills and techniques outlined in the Study Guide. So you could:

- choose a question from this book
- read the sections of the Study Guide relevant to the question, i.e. Plot and Action; Characters; Themes, Contexts and Setting; Structure, Form and Language
- use the Progress Booster exam section of the Study Guide to remind yourself of key exam techniques
- complete the question.

#### 2 As a stand-alone revision programme

Do you know the text inside out and have you already mastered the skills needed for your exam?

If so, you can keep your skills fresh by answering one or two questions from this book each day or week in the lead-up to the exam. You could make a revision diary and allocate particular questions to particular times.

#### 3 As a form of mock exam

Would you like to test yourself under exam conditions?

You could put aside part of a day to work on a practice test in a quiet room. Set a stopwatch so that you can experience what it will be like in your real exam. If some of your friends have copies of this book then several of you could all do this together and discuss your answers afterwards.

Or, you could try working through Part Two of this book slowly, question by question, over a number of days as part of your revision, and save the further questions in Part Three to use as a mock test.

### How to use the answer sections

This book contains a mixture of annotated sample answers and short (indicative content) answers that will help you to:

- identify the difference between Mid, Good and Very High Level work
- understand how the Assessment Objectives are applied
- grade your own answers by comparing them with the samples provided.

The answers can also give you additional ideas for your responses and help you to aim high.

QUESTION 1, MID LEVEL ANSWER

Conan Doyle also presents Watson as lacking in confidence somewhat. In the extract he uses questions to show Watson's self-doubt. *What was (an army surgeon with a weak leg...)? He feels like he is not good enough for Miss Morstan and that she would not find him attractive. Later in the novel he is worried when he finds out Miss Morstan will inherit the treasure and because of the emphasis on social status at the time, he feels Miss Morstan will end up being of a higher social status than him because of her wealth.*

Although Watson is nervous, he is still a brave and trusted assistant to Sherlock Holmes. He is always part of the action when tension is high, such as the visit to Pondicherry Lodge and the boat chase along the Thames. *Jonathan I shall leave to you? He is there as an assistant to Holmes through the action. "That you, Watson?" he cried. He is a sensitive and supportive friend to Holmes but to Miss Morstan too which is perhaps what makes her like him.*

Again, quotation not embedded fluently

Informal expression

A clearer detail linked to context

Quotation not embedded, explained or developed

**MID LEVEL**

**Comment:** This is a sensible response which deals with the key ideas raised in the extract. There are a number of clear points made about Watson's character, most of which are supported appropriately and some of which offer useful inferences or suggestions. There is some mention of method, for example narrative perspective and contrast, but little close analysis of language. The response touches on some contextual issues but does not explore or explain these closely enough.

**For a Good Level:**

- Make more connections between the extract and the wider text.
- Embed quotations more fluently, use consistently formal expression and avoid long sentences.
- Develop ideas and inferences.
- Consider context in a more subtle way.

Sample answers show the key points and ideas you could have included, with examiner-style annotations linked to the Assessment Objectives.

Each annotated sample is awarded a level with an examiner-style comment.

Points for improvement are given to show the difference between Mid, Good and Very High Level work.

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## Annotated sample answers

Now, read the three sample answers that follow and, based on what you have read, try to allocate a level to your own work. Which of the three responses is your answer closest to? Don't be discouraged if your work doesn't seem as strong as some of the responses here – the point is to use these samples to learn about what is needed and then put it into practice in your own work. Conversely, you may have mentioned relevant ideas or points that don't appear in these responses; if this is the case, give yourself a pat on the back – it shows you are considering lots of good ideas.

## Sample answer A

**AO2** Considers a method the writer uses, with support, but quotation could be more fluently embedded

**AO2** Another method is touched on and supported, but the sentence could be shorter

**AO3** Touches on a point of context but does not explore or develop it; another long sentence

**AO1** Shows a wider knowledge of the text linked to a point about Watson's character; quotation could be embedded more fluently

*Dr Watson is Sherlock Holmes's assistant. He is an interesting character. He is also the narrator of the novel and the story is told through his eyes because he says, 'I sat in the window ...'. In the extract we see that Watson is thinking back over the meeting with Miss Morstan. He is worried about her and thinks she is involved in a 'strange mystery'. This helps us to think about the mystery ahead and how it may be solved.*

*Watson is a close friend of Holmes and knows all of his cases. He is a writer as well as a doctor and has written up some of Holmes's cases as stories. He seems to be more imaginative than some of the other men in the novel because Conan Doyle uses him as a contrast to Holmes who is very methodical and rational, "My dear Watson, try a little analysis yourself," said he' with a touch of impatience and we get the impression Watson is a bit more of a dreamer. In the extract he is thinking about Miss Morstan, not just because of the mystery but because he also finds her attractive. He comments on 'her smiles, the deep rich tones of her voice' and this implies he has paid attention to Miss Morstan. This is different from Holmes's view of her as a client, 'a unit, a factor'. However, he describes his reaction to her using the phrase 'dangerous thoughts' and knows that he should not be thinking of her in this way telling us something about the way middle-class men felt they should behave to middle-class women at the time.*

*As well as caring about Miss Morstan and the case, Watson is very sensitive. He does sometimes feel hurt by how blunt Holmes can be, for example when Holmes is insensitive about Watson's brother's death, 'I sprang from my chair and limped impatiently about the room with considerable bitterness in my heart' and when Watson announces his engagement to Miss Morstan at the end, 'I was a little hurt'.*

**AO2** Useful structural point, simply put

**AO1** Shows knowledge about Watson's character and makes a useful inference

**AO2** Develops the idea of contrast and makes a link to the language choices in the extract

**AO1** Again, quotation not embedded fluently

**AO1** Quotation not embedded, explained or developed

*Conan Doyle also presents Watson as lacking in confidence somewhat. In the extract he uses questions to show Watson's self-doubt, 'What was I, an army surgeon with a weak leg ...'. He feels like he is not good enough for Miss Morstan and that she would not find him attractive. Later in the novel he is worried when he finds out Miss Morstan will inherit the treasure and because of the emphasis on social status at the time, he feels Miss Morstan will end up being of a higher social status than him because of her wealth.*

*Although Watson is nervous, he is still a brave and trusted assistant to Sherlock Holmes. He is always part of the action when tension is high, such as the visit to Pondicherry Lodge and the boat chase along the Thames, 'Jonathan I shall leave to you.' He is there as an assistant to Holmes through the action, "That you, Watson?" he cried.' He is a sensitive and supportive friend to Holmes but to Miss Morstan too which is perhaps what makes her like him.*

**AO1** Informal expression

**AO3** A clearer detail linked to context

## MID LEVEL

## Comment:

This is a sensible response which deals with the key ideas raised in the extract. There are a number of clear points made about Watson's character, most of which are supported appropriately and some of which offer useful inferences or suggestions. There is some mention of method, for example narrative perspective and contrast, but little close analysis of language. The response touches on some contextual issues but does not explore or explain these closely enough.

## For a Good Level:

- Make more connections between the extract and the wider text.
- Embed quotations more fluently, use consistently formal expression and avoid long sentences.
- Develop ideas and inferences.
- Consider context in a more subtle way.

## PART THREE: FURTHER YORK NOTES PRACTICE TESTS WITH SHORT ANSWERS

Here are three further questions on the text in a similar style to the ones you might face in your exam. Taking into account what you have learnt from the mark schemes on pages 7–8, and the sample responses to the other questions, use Questions 5 to 7 as you wish. You may choose to:

- plan ideas
- write opening paragraphs or part answers
- write full answers at your own speed
- write full answers to a set time limit.

Once you have finished, you can check to see if you have covered some of the key points suggested in the Answers section, and make a judgement about what level you have achieved.



### Question 5

Read the following extract from Chapter 6 of *The Sign of the Four* (pages 49–50).

In this extract, Athelney Jones arrests Thaddeus Sholto at the crime scene at Pondicherry Lodge.

‘... How does all that fit into your theory?’

‘Confirms it in every respect,’ said the fat detective, pompously. ‘House full of Indian curiosities. Thaddeus brought this up, and if this splinter be poisonous Thaddeus may as well have made murderous use of it as any other man. The card is some hocus-pocus, 5 – a blind, as like as not. The only question is, how did he depart? Ah, of course, here is a hole in the roof.’ With great activity, considering his bulk, he sprang up the steps and squeezed through into the garret, and immediately afterwards we heard his exulting voice proclaiming that he had found the trap-door.

‘He can find something,’ remarked Holmes, shrugging his shoulders. ‘He has occasional 10 glimmerings of reason. *Il n’y a pas des sots si incommodes que ceux qui on de l’esprit!*’

‘You see!’ said Athelney Jones, reappearing down the steps again. ‘Facts are better than mere theories, after all. My view of the case is confirmed. There is a trap-door communicating with the roof, and it is partly open.’

‘It was I who opened it.’

15 ‘Oh, indeed! You did notice it, then?’ He seemed a little crestfallen at the discovery. ‘Well, whoever noticed it, it shows how our gentleman got away. Inspector!’

‘Yes, sir,’ from the passage.

‘Ask Mr. Sholto to step this way. – Mr. Sholto, it is my duty to inform you that anything which you may say will be used against you. I arrest you in the queen’s name as being 20 concerned in the death of your brother.’

‘There, now! Didn’t I tell you!’ cried the poor little man, throwing out his hands, and looking from one to the other of us.

‘Don’t trouble yourself about it, Mr. Sholto,’ said Holmes. ‘I think that I can engage to clear you of the charge.’

25 ‘Don’t promise too much, Mr. Theorist, – don’t promise too much!’ snapped the detective. ‘You may find it a harder matter than you think.’

Starting with this extract, how does Conan Doyle present the character of Athelney Jones?

Write about:

- how Conan Doyle presents the character of Athelney Jones in this extract
- how Conan Doyle presents the character of Athelney Jones in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]