DR WATSON

DR WATSON'S ROLE IN THE NOVELLA

Watson is the **narrator** of the story. Everything is seen through his eyes. He is Holmes's patient friend, with whom he shares lodgings at 221b Baker Street. A doctor by profession, Watson has a background in the army as a surgeon. During the **novella** he:

- has concerns about Holmes's health and well-being (Chs 1/9).
- questions Holmes's methods and approaches (Ch. 1).
- acts as Holmes's assistant in solving the case and catching the suspects (Chs 3–7/10).
- shows his romantic nature through his growing love for Miss Morstan (Chs 2/7/11).

EXAM FOCUS: WRITING ABOUT DR WATSON

AO1

Key point	Evidence/Further meaning
Watson knows Holmes, his cases and his methods well and has used them as a basis for story writing.	• 'I even embodied it in a small brochure with the somewhat fantastic title of "A Study in Scarlet"' (p. 3) • Watson takes on the role of narrator and even fictional author, *A Study in Scarlet* also being a novel by Conan Doyle featuring Holmes and Watson.
Watson is more sensitive than Holmes and acknowledges and shows his feelings much more easily.	• 'I sprang from my chair and limped impatiently about the room with considerable bitterness in my heart' (p. 8) • Holmes at times can be hurtful to Watson. He criticises Watson's writing, is insensitive about his brother's death and is dismissive when Watson announces his engagement to Miss Morstan.
Though without Holmes's powers of deduction, Watson is a loyal assistant to Holmes and is keen to take part in the action, even when dangerous.	• '"I should like, however, to see the matter through with you, now that I have got so far." "Your presence will be of great service to me," he answered' (p. 51) • Watson is very much part of the action at Pondicherry Lodge and in the final chase along the Thames where he fires his revolver at Tonga.

TOP TIP: WRITING ABOUT DR WATSON

AO1

Watson can be seen as a contrast to Holmes. He is more conservative and more consistent than Holmes, who switches rapidly between dark depression and frenetic action. Like Holmes, however, Watson is observant. Though he praises Holmes's 'extraordinary genius for minutiae' (p. 5) he too recounts the events of the case in detail. Watson, however, is more humble, 'What was I, an army surgeon with a weak leg and a weaker banking-account, that I should dare to think of such things?' (p. 16).

MISS MORSTAN

MISS MORSTAN'S ROLE IN THE NOVELLA

Mary Morstan is the central female character in the novella and it is through her that the mystery is established. The daughter of Captain Morstan, she is presented as being of good character and extremely sensible. She is also the romantic interest, captivating Watson from his first meeting with her. In the novella she:

- seeks Holmes's help after receiving an anonymous letter (Ch. 2).
- presents a mystery having received a number of pearls on the same date each year for the past six years (Ch. 2).
- has a father who disappeared ten years earlier (Ch. 2).
- travels with Holmes and Watson to meet Thaddeus Sholto.
- is relieved and pleased when the treasure box is empty.
- returns Watson's love.

EXAM FOCUS: WRITING ABOUT MISS MORSTAN

AO1

Key point	Evidence/Further meaning
Miss Morstan earns Holmes's respect by being methodical and organised, having kept hold of all the letters as evidence.	• 'You are certainly a model client. You have the correct intuition' (p. 14) • Holmes praises the qualities in Miss Morstan that he finds useful, in contrast to the way that Watson views her – as a romantic proposition.
Mary is praised for her sensitive nature and calm, composed manner, which were seen at the time as attractive qualities in Victorian women.	• 'She must have been more than woman if she did not feel some uneasiness … yet her self-control was perfect' (p. 18) • Watson finds it almost surprising that a woman can cope with the night's adventures through London.
Mary rejects the corrupting influence of the treasure. She is calm on discovering the box is empty.	• '"The treasure is lost," said Miss Morstan, calmly.' (p. 104) • Mary is shown to be more civilised than the greedy men for whom it has only brought misery.

AIMING HIGH: MORALITY IN THE NOVELLA

Mary acts as a moral yardstick in the novella by which we can measure the behaviour and motivation of others. The fact she has no desire for the treasure and does not anticipate its arrival with greed sets her apart from the four thieves and from her own father and Major Sholto. Mary, however, has not been subject to what many readers at the time would have seen as the 'uncivilising' influence of British India.

RESPONDING TO WRITERS' EFFECTS

The two most important assessment objectives are **AO1** and **AO2**. They are about *what* writers do (the choices they make, and the effects these create), *what* your ideas are (your analysis and interpretation) and *how* you write about them (how well you explain your ideas).

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 1 AO1

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and don'ts
Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to: • Maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response • Use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations	You must: • Use some of the literary terms you have learned (correctly!) • Write in a professional way (not a sloppy, chatty way) • Show that you have thought for yourself • Back up your ideas with examples, including quotations	**Don't write …** *Thaddeus Sholto is really ugly. Conan Doyle uses horrible words to describe him.* **Do write …** *Conan Doyle presents Thaddeus Sholto as rather unattractive with his 'pendulous lip' and 'irregular teeth'. However, he is shown to have a kind and thoughtful character, in that he wants to be fair to Miss Morstan. This is in contrast to his twin brother Bartholomew who has a similar appearance but is ….*

IMPROVING YOUR CRITICAL STYLE

Use a variety of words and phrases to show effects: For example:

Conan Doyle *suggests …, conveys…, implies…, presents how …, explores …, demonstrates .., describes how …, shows how …*

I/we (as readers) *infer …, recognise …, understand …, question …, see …, are given …, reflect …*

For example, look at these two alternative paragraphs by different students about Mary Morstan. Note the difference in the quality of expression.

Student A:

Watson says that Mary is really pretty and it's like love at first sight for him. He is really bothered about her when they go to Pondicherry Lodge as he thinks she will be frightened. We know he tries to protect her as he holds her hand. 'Miss Morstan and I stood together and her hand was in mine.' Mary stays back a bit and looks after the housekeeper Mrs Bernstone who is also frightened. In Victorian times women were seen as much weaker than the men, which explains why Conan Doyle did not make them part of the action.

Treats Watson as the writer and is very chatty

Very informal

The point and quotation are repetitive

Attempts a contextual idea but very simply done

Student B:

Conan Doyle presents Mary Morstan in a stereotypical way. She is described to us through Watson's eyes, who sees her attractive qualities from his first meeting with her. Watson sees it as 'the most natural thing' that Mary should turn to him for 'comfort and protection' at Pondicherry Lodge. Rather than being part of the action, Mary's role is reduced to taking care of another female character, the housekeeper, Mrs Bernstone. Phrases such as 'soothing effect' and 'womanly comfort' help to portray Mary as perfect in Watson's view and help to show how middle-class women were viewed at the time.

The focus here is on the writer

The supporting quotations are blended into the point

Clearly and formally explained

Precise textual details open up a contextual link

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVE 2 AO2

What does it say?	What does it mean?	Dos and don'ts
Analyse the language, form and structure used by the writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.	'Analyse' = comment **in detail** on **particular aspects** of the text or language 'Language' = vocabulary, **imagery**, variety of sentences, **dialogue**, etc. 'Form' = **how** the story is told (e.g. **first-person narrative**, letters, newspaper articles, chapter by chapter) 'Structure' = the **order** in which events are revealed, characters appear, or descriptions are presented 'create meaning' = what can we, as readers, **infer** from what the writer tells us? What is **implied** by particular descriptions, or events? 'Subject terminology' = **words** you should use when writing about **novellas**, such as **imagery**, **setting**, etc.	**Don't write …** *The writing is really descriptive in this bit so you could really imagine how scary Pondicherry Lodge is.* **Do write …** *Conan Doyle **conveys** a sense of drama and **tension** through the **setting** of Pondicherry Lodge. The use of **pathetic fallacy** in the presentation of the 'desolate grounds' and the Lodge itself surrounded by 'gloom and deathly silence' (p. 36) create a **Gothic** feel to the place.*

IMPLICATIONS, INFERENCES AND INTERPRETATIONS

- The best analysis focuses on specific ideas, events or language and considers what is **implied**.
- This means drawing **inferences**. On the surface, Small's desire to reclaim the treasure after he has served his prison sentence may seem justified, but what about where the treasure belonged in the first place and what does it tell us about the treasure if men were driven to murder for it?
- From the inferences you make across the text as a whole, you can arrive at your own **interpretation** – a sense of the bigger picture, a wider evaluation of a character, relationship or idea.