The Sign of Four

Revision Guide

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Plot summary

1. Miss Mary Morstan arrives and asks for help with a mystery.

2. Holmes and Watson accompany her to Thaddeus Sholto's house and learn about the Agra treasure.

3. Bartholomew Sholto is found dead at Pondicherry Lodge.

4. Holmes investigates the clues and calls the police. Athelney Jones arrests Thaddeus Sholto. Holmes sends Watson to borrow Toby, the dog.

5. Holmes employs the Baker Street Irregulars as spies and eventually puts on a disguise to track down the Aurora launch.

6. Watson, Holmes and Inspector Jones pursue the villains along the River Thames and catch up with them. The treasure chest is empty.

7. Jonathan Small is arrested and confesses his whole story. Watson and Mary Morstan are engaged to be married.

Plot summary

Chapter 1 – The Science of Deduction	• The novel opens with Sherlock Holmes taking cocaine and explaining that he needs it to stimulate his mind. • Watson tests Holmes and he proves his great powers of deduction by explaining how he knew the watch belonged to Watson's older brother • Mary Morstan is introduced.
Chapter 2 – The Statement of the Case	• Miss Morstan explains that her father disappeared 10 years ago. • She contacted her father's closest friend, Major Sholto, who said he didn't know her father was in England. • For the past 6 years, she has received a pearl in the mail on the same day each year. • This morning she has been asked to go to the theatre alone.
Chapter 3: In Quest of a Solution	• Holmes has discovered that Major Sholto passed away 6 years ago. • Holmes thinks Sholto's heirs must know something about the mystery. • Mary shows Holmes a paper with 'the sign of four' and four names written on it. • They are met at the theatre by a man who drives them to a house in southern London.
Chapter 4 – The Story of the Bald Headed Man	• Thaddeus Sholto is introduced as a mysterious character. • Thaddeus is contrasted with his twin brother Bartholomew. • Captain Morstan's death is confirmed. • Dr Watson, in love with Mary, worries that Miss Morstan's inheritance may be an obstacle.
Chapter 5 – The Tragedy at Pondicherry House	• The chapter opens with a descriptions of Pondicherry Lodge • Watson and Mary Morstan seem to be growing closer together • Bartholomew Sholto is found murdered in a 'locked room'
Chapter 6 – Sherlock Holmes Gives a Demonstration	• Holmes explains how a man with one leg is involved and begins piecing together the crime • Athelney Jones is introduced • Holmes tells Jones that the man with the wooden leg is Jonathan Small
Chapter 7 – The Episode of the Barrel	• Watson gets Toby to help with their investigation • Holmes, Watson and Toby search for more clues to help them solve the case
chapter 8 – The Baker Street Irregulars	• Holmes finds out that Jonathan Small is on a steamboat, Aurora. • A newspaper article praised the police's handling of the case • We meet the Baker Street Irregulars
chapter 9 – A Break in the Chain	• Holmes goes to discover Aurora • Watson sees that Holmes has placed an advert in a newspaper offering a reward for information on Mordecai Smith • Holmes tricks Athelney Jones with a disguise
Chapter 10 – The End of the Islander	• There is a chase scene on the River Thames – Holmes and Watson follow Jonathan Small • Tonga is shot dead as he attempts to fire his blowpipe • Jonathan Small tries to escape but sinks into the mud before being captured
Chapter 11 – The Great Agra Treasure	• Holmes questions Small who says that the key to the treasure chest is at the bottom of the river. • Watsons presents Mary with the treasure chest but they open it and find that it is empty • Watson and Mary declare their love for each other
Chapter 12 – The Strange Story of Jonathan Small	• Small confesses his story of meeting Mahomet Singh and Abdullah Khan in India. • He explains how they promised him a share of treasure if he would help them to murder the merchant, Achmet. • The sign of the four represented their oath along with Dost Akbar to share Achmet's treasure. • However, the men were arrested for the murder of Achmet and Small was sent to the Andaman Islands to serve his sentence. • In an attempt to free the treasure, Small told Major Sholto and Captain Morstan where it was hidden, promising them a fifth share. • Sholto did not keep his word however, and stole the treasure. • Eventually, Small escaped and tracked down Sholto and the treasure, proving Holmes' theory to be accurate • Once Small is taken away by Jones, Holmes reaches for the cocaine bottle…

Characters

Sherlock Holmes

The novel's protagonist, a genius detective who hates the "dull routine of existence" and loves to be challenged. Sherlock takes a cold and unemotional approach to his work.

Dr. John Watson

The novel's narrator, an ex-army surgeon and Sherlock Holmes's close friend colleague. He helps the reader to see Holmes's powers of observation from a close perspective.

Mary Morstan

She is a 'damsel in distress' character who brings the case of the Sign of the Four to Holmes and Watson.

Thaddeus Sholto

An eccentric art collector and son of Major Sholto. He leads Holmes on the first steps to finding the treasure.

Jonathan Small

The antagonist of the novel. He is a soldier who had his leg bitten off and became a thief. One of the original 'four'.

Major Sholto

The villain of the novel. He leaves India with the treasure but dies with it.

Captain Morstan

Mary's father, who dies of a heart attack during a dispute with Major Sholto.

Tonga

Jonathan Small's sidekick, who represents savagery.

Themes

In *The Sign of the Four* there are many themes which could be analysed. For example:

- evil and justice
- Victorian fear
- empire and imperialism

These themes are presented through the characters and the layered plot. Other ideas that are dealt with include betrayal, greed, and chance. *The Sign of Four* is a detective story, written and set in late Victorian times. In his Sherlock Holmes stories, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle establishes the conventions of the modern detective novel, in which a rational and intellectual central character investigates and ultimately solves a mystery.

Evil and justice

The themes of evil and justice are closely related in this novel. Evil is present in the form of the murders and crimes that are committed. It is also embodied by the character of Tonga who is depicted as inherently savage and malicious.

Justice is sought on behalf of Miss Mary Morstan. Thaddeus Sholto feels that Miss Morstan has been treated unjustly by his father, Major John Sholto, who kept the Agra treasure, and kept the facts of her father's death a secret. Jonathan Small is upset by the injustice that he will never enjoy the treasure that he believes is rightly his, despite the fact that he acquired it by murdering a man. Holmes is fair and insists that Small will not be accused of murdering Bartholomew Sholto. In *The Sign of the Four*, Conan Doyle shows the theme of evil and justice through:

- Miss Mary Morstan and her missing father
- the character of Tonga
- the sense of injustice that Jonathan Small feels in losing the treasure

Victorian fear

In this novel, a number of Victorian fears are presented. We see the fear of 'the other' or 'foreignness' presented through the character of Tonga, who is depicted as savage and inherently evil. Conan Doyle also shows fear of darkness - much of the novel is set at night-time when murder, theft and betrayal occur. The Victorian preoccupation with social class and the fear of overstepping social boundaries is also evident and is represented by Watson's concerns about Miss Morstan's potential inheritance.

Empire and imperialism

This novel is set against the backdrop of the Victorian Empire. The treasure that is stolen repeatedly through the novel comes from India, which at the time of the story was under British rule. Through the treasure and the luxurious decorations of Sholto's house, Conan Doyle associates luxury with the empire.

There is also a sense of threat to the empire that is conveyed through the mention of the uprising of 1857. In addition to this, the appearance in London of Tonga, the islander, could be perceived as threatening.

Context

London

London had been for centuries the biggest city in England, indeed in Europe. Although the 'industrial revolution' was not instant, there was a continuous drift away from the countryside into manufacturing centres. Tall factory chimneys were supposed to draw the smoke away, but all too often it lay as a thick blanket, smothering any fresh air and blackening the buildings. This led to a smog around London which created a dark and mysterious atmosphere. There was a lot of slum housing in London. Miles of terraced cottages were thrown together cheaply. Many children either lived in slum housing or were orphans in workhouses or had to fend for themselves on the street.

Crime and the police

One topic which touched most citizens was crime. In 1811 there had been a brutal multiple murder in the east end of London, which brought about a debate about policing. Until then the law had been enforced, with varying degrees of efficiency, by unpaid constables and watchmen appointed by each parish. London began to be seen as the haunt of violent, unpunished criminals, which was bad for trade. Crimes were reported in vivid detail in the newspapers. These newspapers described to readers with detailed illustrated accounts of the Jack the Ripper's crime scenes and the failure of police to catch the killer.

At last, in 1829, the Metropolitan Police force was established, with their headquarters in Scotland Yard. Because the police force was newly organised, it was incredibly disorganised. Police officers were poorly paid and took little pride in their jobs. Many police officers were drunk on duty and society was very mistrusting of them. Londoners had little faith in the police force and found them to be somewhat incompetent. A lot of these feelings came from their inability to capture criminals, most notably Jack the Ripper.

The Sign of the Four was published in 1890. To a certain extent, the character of Sherlock Holmes appealed to a sense of superiority amongst the upper social classes of Victorian Britain. They believed that the police were of inferior intellectual capabilities and we see this stereotype in Mr Athelney Jones. Holmes' ability to solve the mystery, where Mr Jones isn't, would amuse a contemporary audience.

Women

Women were seen sto be beneath men in status and had restricted rights. When a woman married, all that she owned, and anything she earned after the marriage, became the property of her husband. A husband could divorce his wife on the ground of a single act of adultery, whereas she had to prove him guilty of other offences such as cruelty, as well as adultery.

When it came to work, there were always places for women in the 'slop trade', producing cheap mass clothing. The pay was pitifully low. A woman might make one shirt in a long day, sewing by hand in poor light – she had to buy her own candles – and she would be lucky to earn six shillings for a dozen. It was no wonder that so many women took

to prostitution, when the alternatives were so grim. Entire streets in the slums of London were inhabited by prostitutes. Many girls viewed a few years 'on the game' as a sensible way to build up a little capital to invest in a small business later, but their future was often cut short by sexually transmitted diseases. In 1888 a series of gruesome murders began in the east end of London. The victims were all prostitutes. The murderer was never discovered, but the public named him 'Jack the Ripper' because of his habit of eviscerating his victims.

The British Empire

At the time the book was first published Britain had a huge empire stretching across the world. The British people were interested in these foreign countries and wanted to know more about them. The average Victorian reader would have little knowledge of other races and cultures. To them, people from these foreign countries would be seen as a savage. This can be seen through the character of Tonga.

When Tonga comes to England it is seen as a threat to society and their morals because he is an outsider. He is seen as the embodiment of evil and plays on Victorian fears. Tonga can also be seen as symbol of imperialism - he is treated like a possession of Small the way Britain treated The Empire like a possession.

Class

There was a clear class divide in Victorian England. The classes were largely separate, living in different areas of London and engaging in very different pastimes and activities. Marriage between the classes would have been uncommon and frowned upon by society.

These class boundaries are what keep Watson from declaring his love for Mary Morstan. Watson comments about his "weak bank account" as he appears concerned about his lack of money. Watson fears that Mary will think that he is only interested in her money. At the end of the novel, when it is revealed that the treasure has been thrown into the river, both Watson and Mary are relieved because they can now be together. Both had seen the treasure as a "golden barrier" between them.

Thaddeus Sholto also represents the theme of class as he is fearful of other classes and wants to keep away from them by living in his sanctum.

Drugs

Opium was widely available in the 19th century, sold by barbers, tobacconists and stationers. The concept of addiction was not understood at this time and it was not until the late 19th century that people fully appreciated the horror associated with habitual use and withdrawal. As the 19th century progressed drug taking changed. Opium in particular could be associated with the criminal underworld as well as with medical use, though many drugs continued to be legal. Sherlock Holmes injects cocaine regularly and is found by Dr. Watson in an opium den in 'The Man with the Twisted Lip'. Speaking to Watson, Holmes refers to his cocaine habit as one of those 'little weaknesses on which you have favoured me with your medical views'.

Key Quotations

Sherlock Holmes

- *"His great powers, his masterly manner"* (Watson's description of Holmes) (ch.1)
- *"I abhor the dull routine of existence"* (ch.1)
- *"Detection is… an exact science"* (ch.1)
- *"Eliminate all other factors, and the one which remains must be the truth."* (ch.1)
- *"No, no: I never guess. It is a shocking habit."* (ch.1)
- *"Hence the cocaine. I cannot live without brain work."* (ch.1)
- *"My mind," he said, "rebels at stagnation"* (ch.1)
- *"You really are an automaton – a calculating machine."* (ch.1)
- *"clear-cut, hawk-like features"* (ch.2)
- *"Holmes rubbed his hands and his eyes glistened"* (ch.2)
- *"Holmes whipped his lens out of his pocket and carefully examined marks."* (ch.5)
- *"He walked slowly… shooting keen glances to right and left."* (ch.5)
- *"There is something devilish in this, Watson,"* (ch.5)
- *"So swift, silent and furtive were his movements, like those of a trained bloodhound"* (ch.6)
- *"For me there still remains the cocaine bottle"* (ch.12)

Dr John Watson

- *"I sprang from my chair and limped impatiently about the room with considerable bitterness in my heart."* (Watson is upset at Holmes' lack of tact) (ch.1)
- *"I was annoyed at this criticism… I was irritated by the egotism"* (ch.1)
- *"What a very attractive woman!" I exclaimed."* (ch.2)
- *"I am ashamed to say that selfishness took me by the soul"* (Watson learns of Mary's fortune) (ch.4)
- *"my heart turned as heavy as lead within me."* (ch.4)
- *"I stooped to the hole and recoiled in horror. Moonlight was streaming into the room, and it was bright with a vague and shifty radiance."* (ch.5)
- *"Miss Morstan seized my wrist, and we all stood with thumping hearts"* (ch.5)
- *"Miss Morstan and I stood together, and her hand was in mine… our hands instinctively sought for each other"* (ch.5)
- *"A wondrous subtle thing is love"* (ch.5)
- *"We stood hand in hand, like two children, and there was a peace in our hearts for all the dark things that surrounded us"* (ch.5)
- *"It sent a little thrill of joy to my heart to notice that she showed no sign of elation at the prospect [of having the treasure]"* (ch.9)
- *"You have done all the work in this business. I get a wife out of it… pray what remains for you?"* (ch.12)

Mary Morstan

- *"What a very attractive woman!" I exclaimed."* (ch.2)
- *"her expression was sweet and amiable… her large blue eyes were spiritual and sympathetic."* (ch.2)
- *"her lip trembled, her hand quivered, and she showed every sign of intense inward agitation."* (ch.2)
  "her sensitive face was composed…her self-control was perfect" (ch.3)
- *"demeanor was as resolute and collective as ever"* (ch.3)
- *"Miss Morstan seized my wrist, and we all stood with thumping hearts"* (ch.5)
- *"Miss Morstan and I stood together, and her hand was in mine… our hands instinctively sought for each other"* (ch.5)
- *"A wondrous subtle thing is love"* (ch.5)
- *"We stood hand in hand, like two children, and there was a peace in our hearts for all the dark things that surrounded us"* (ch.5)
- *"It sent a little thrill of joy to my heart to notice that she showed no sign of elation at the prospect [of having the treasure]"* (ch.9)

Athelney Jones

- *"very stout, portly man in a gray suit strode heavily into the room"* (ch.6)
- *"He was red faced, burly and plethoric"* (ch.6)
- *"he wheezed. It's Mr Sherlock Holmes, the theorist"* (ch.6)
- *"Stern facts here, - no room for theories"* (ch.6)
- *"He can find something," remarked Holmes, shrugging his shoulders"* (ch.6)
- *"Don't promise too much, Mr theorist, - don't promise too much!" Snapped the detective."* (ch.6)
- *"No. I shall probably call Athelney Jones in at the last moment"* (ch.8)
- *"Very different… from the brusque and masterful professor of common sense who had taken over the case so confidently."* (ch.9)
- *"His expression was downcast, and his bearing meek and even apologetic."* (ch.9)
- *Well, half a glass"* (accepting a drink) (ch.9)
- *"I had my net drawn tightly round Mr. Sholto, sir, when pop he went through a hole in the middle of it."* (ch.9)
- *"You have done all the work in this business… Jones gets the credit"* (ch.12)

Thaddeus Sholto

- *"I am a little nervous, and I find my hookah an invaluable sedative."* (ch.4)
- *"the strange, jerky little fellow… puffed uneasily in the centre."* (ch.4)
- *"I feared that you might disregard my request and bring unpleasant people with you."* (ch.4)
- *"I am a man of somewhat retiring, and I might even say refined, tastes"* (ch.4)
- *"I have a natural shrinking from all forms of rough materialism. I seldom come in contact with the rough crowd."* (ch.4)
- *"Thaddeus Sholto's teeth were chattering in his head… his knees were trembling under him."* (ch.5)

Jonathan Small

- *"I was half mad when you came up with us."* (ch.12)
- *"I've had ups in my life, and I've had downs, but I've learned not to cry over spilled milk."* (ch.12)
- *"Justice!" snarled the ex-convict. "A pretty justice!"* (ch.12)
- *"Twenty long years in that fever-ridden swamp… all night chained up."* (ch.12)
- *"you talk to me of justice"* (ch.12)
- *"his eyes blazed."* (ch.12)
- *"I saw the fury and the passion of the man."* (ch.12)

Tonga

- *"a little black man — the smallest I have ever seen"* (ch.11)
- *with a great, misshapen head and a shock of tangled, dishevelled hair"* (ch.11)
- *"face was enough to give a man a sleepless night."* (ch.11)
- *"features so deeply marked with all bestiality and cruelty."* (ch.11)
- *"His small eyes glowed and burned with a sombre light,* (ch.11)
- *"grinned and chattered at us with a half animal fury."* (ch.11)
- *venomous, menacing eyes"* (ch.11)

Setting

- *"the day had been a dreary one"* (ch.4)
- *"a dense drizzly fog lay upon the great city"* (ch.4)
- *"Mud coloured clouds drooped sadly over the muddy streets"* (ch.4)
- *"there was something eerie and ghost-like"* (ch.4)
- *"a questioning and forbidding neighbourhood"* (ch.4)
- *"the monster tentacles which the giant city was throwing out into the country"* (ch.4)
- *"in that still and moonlit room was more jarring to the nerves than any scowl or contortion"* (ch.5)

Read the following extract from **Chapter One** from ***The Sign of Four*** and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the novel we are introduced to Sherlock Holmes for the first time.

> Why should you, for a mere passing pleasure, risk the loss of those great powers with which you have been endowed? Remember that I speak not only as one comrade to another, but as a medical man to one for whose constitution he is to some extent answerable."
>
> He did not seem offended. On the contrary, he put his finger- tips together and leaned his elbows on the arms of his chair, like one who has a relish for conversation.
>
> "My mind," he said, "rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession, — or rather created it, for I am the only one in the world."
>
> "The only unofficial detective?" I said, raising my eyebrows.
>
> "The only unofficial consulting detective," he answered. "I am the last and highest court of appeal in detection.

Starting with this extract, write about how Conan Doyle presents the character of Sherlock Holmes as inquisitive.

Write about:

- How Conan Doyle presents Sherlock Holmes in this extract as an inquisitive character
- How Conan Doyle presents Sherlock Holmes in the novel as a whole

30 marks

Starting with this extract, write about how Conan Doyle presents the character of Sherlock Holmes as inquisitive.

Example 1

Sherlock Holmes is presented as an inquisitive character. This is evident when he says *"I abhor the dull routine of existence". This suggests that Holmes' mind works differently to other characters. Holmes says that life is a "dull routine of existence" which highlights how he is arrogant. The reader might be surprised to see that Sherlock Holmes is taking drugs because he finds life so dull and boring. In the Victorian era drugs were used more commonly as people didn't understand the dangers of them. Holmes is presented as inquisitive throughout the novel and in the opening pages of chapter 1 he is able to work out the owner of Watson's watch just by looking closely as small details that others wouldn't see.*

Example 2

Within the extract, Holmes is presented as an inquisitive character as he *"abhors the dull routine of existence"; this suggests that Holmes' mind works differently to other characters and therefore he is constantly searching for mental stimulation. The fact that he calls life a "dull routine of existence" highlights an arrogance in his character as he speaks with an air of supremacy. The use of the negative verb "abhor" suggests that he detests his "existence" which is perhaps why he fills his time with drug taking and deciphering seemingly unsolvable cases. Although a modern reader may be surprised at Holmes' drug taking, to a Victorian reader this pastime would have been commonplace. It is interesting that rather than taking drugs to improve his enjoyment of the world, Doyle presents Holmes as partaking in drug taking to remove himself from his life, presenting him as a somewhat isolated character. The presentation of Holmes in the extract, being inquisitive and possessing heightened abilities, is confirmed by Watson's later in the opening chapter where he describes him as having "great powers" and a "masterly manner" and is able to deduce information from the smallest of details.*

Your response:

Read the following extract from **Chapter One** from ***The Sign of Four*** and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the novel we are introduced to Sherlock Holmes for the first time.

He put his finger-tips together, and leaned his elbows on the arms of his chair, like one who has a relish for conversation.

"My mind," he said, "rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession, or rather created it, for I am the only one in the world."

"The only unofficial detective?" I said, raising my eyebrows.

"The only unofficial consulting detective," he answered. "I am the last and highest court of appeal in detection. When Gregson, or Lestrade, or Athelney Jones are out of their depths–which, by the way, is their normal state–the matter is laid before me. I examine the data, as an expert, and pronounce a specialist's opinion. I claim no credit in such cases. My name figures in no newspaper. The work itself, the pleasure of finding a field for my peculiar powers, is my highest reward. But you have yourself had some experience of my methods of work in the Jefferson Hope case."

"Yes, indeed," said I cordially. "I was never so struck by anything in my life. I even embodied it in a small brochure, with the somewhat fantastic title of 'A Study in Scarlet.'"

He shook his head sadly. "I glanced over it," said he. "Honestly, I cannot congratulate you upon it. Detection is, or ought to be, an exact science and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner. You have attempted to tinge it with romanticism, which produces much the same effect as if you worked a love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid."

"But the romance was there," I remonstrated. "I could not tamper with the facts."

"Some facts should be suppressed, or, at least, a just sense of proportion should be observed in treating them. The only point in the case which deserved mention was the curious analytical reasoning from effects to causes, by which I succeeded in unravelling it."

I was annoyed at this criticism of a work which had been specially designed to please him. I confess, too, that I was irritated by the egotism which seemed to demand that every line of my pamphlet should be devoted to his own special doings. More than once during the years that I had lived with him in Baker Street I had observed that a small vanity underlay my companion's quiet and didactic manner. I made no remark, however, but sat nursing my wounded leg.

Starting with this extract, how does Doyle present the relationship between Holmes and Watson?

Write about:

- how Doyle presents the relationship between Holmes and Watson in this extract
- how Doyle presents the relationship between Holmes and Watson in the novel as a whole.

Starting with this extract, how does Doyle present the relationship between Holmes and Watson?

Within the extract it is apparent that Holmes doesn't always respect Watson. After Watson proudly reminds Holmes of the piece he wrote about their previous case, Doyle describes how Holmes "shook his head sadly" before remarking how he had "glanced over it". The fact that Holmes tells Watson that he "glanced" at the brochure suggests that he is attempting to belittle his work and undermine his achievements. The reader may recognise that Holmes feels he is far too busy and important to be interested in trivial matters that he considers to be beneath him. It could be argued that Doyle also uses the adverb "sadly" to suggest that Holmes almost pities Watson and sees his actions as insignificant. Doyle therefore highlights some tensions in the relationship between Holmes and Watson.

Your response:

Read the following extract from **Chapter Two** from ***The Sign of Four*** and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the novel we are introduced to Mary Morstan for the first time.

Miss Morstan entered the room with a firm step and an outward composure of manner. She was a blonde young lady, small, dainty, well gloved, and dressed in the most perfect taste. There was, however, a plainness and simplicity about her costume which bore with it a suggestion of limited means. The dress was a sombre grayish beige, untrimmed and unbraided, and she wore a small turban of the same dull hue, relieved only by a suspicion of white feather in the side. Her face had neither regularity of feature nor beauty of complexion, but her expression was sweet and amiable, and her large blue eyes were singularly spiritual and sympathetic. In an experience of women which extends over many nations and three separate continents, I have never looked upon a face which gave a clearer promise of a refined and sensitive nature. I could not but observe that as she took the seat which Sherlock Holmes placed for her, her lip trembled, her hand quivered, and she showed every sign of intense inward agitation.

"I have come to you, Mr. Holmes," she said,"because you once enabled my employer, Mrs. Cecil Forrester, to unravel a little domestic complication. She was much impressed by your kindness and skill."

"Mrs. Cecil Forrester," he repeated thoughtfully. "I believe that I was of some slight service to her. The case, however, as I remember it, was a very simple one."

"She did not think so. But at least you cannot say the same of mine. I can hardly imagine anything more strange, more utterly inexplicable, than the situation in which I find myself."

Starting with this extract, how does Doyle present Mary Morstan's as a traditional female character?
Write about:

- how Doyle presents Mary Morstan in this extract
- how Doyle presents Mary Morstan in the novel as a whole.Starting with this extract, how does Doyle present

Mary Morstan as a traditional female character?

Example A

Mary Morstan is presented as a deprived character. This is evident as she is described as he is described as having "a plainness and simplicity about her costume which bore with it a suggestion of limited means". This suggests that she doesn't have a lot of money but is trying to make a good impression. The words "plainness and simplicity" show the reader that she wasn't able to send money on her appearance. This highlights the importance of money in Victorian society. In the Victorian age, people of different classes wouldn't get married. The introduction of Mary Morstan helps present the theme of class. This links to later in the novel as Watson worries that he won't be able to marry Mary because of the treasure.

Example B

Within the extract it is apparent that Watson, the novel's narrator, focuses on Mary Morstan's physical appearance. When introducing Mary at the beginning of chapter 2 he describes the "plainness and simplicity" of her costume before noting that it suggested "limited means". The "plainness" which Watson describes could symbolise the purity that he sees in Mary during their first encounter; others may argue that she is presented as an effortlessly and naturally beautiful character. It is interesting that Watson comments on her "limited means" as it highlights the fact that Victorian women were often classified based on the wealth that they would bring to a relationship through their dowry. As Doyle introduces Mary he also appear to be introducing a sub-plot: the possible romantic relationship between Mary and Watson. Although detective fiction primarily focuses on murder and mystery, the theme of love is often also associated within this genre. This theme is present throughout the scenes involving Mary and Watson, in particular when they move closer outside Pondicherry Lodge as their "hands instinctively sought for each other".

Your response:

Read the following extract from **Chapter Three** from ***The Sign of Four*** and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the novel Holmes and Watson are preparing to investigate Mary Morstan's case by meeting her at the Lyceum Theatre.

> It was a September evening and not yet seven o'clock, but the day had been a dreary one, and a dense drizzly fog lay low upon the great city. Mud-coloured clouds drooped sadly over the muddy streets. Down the Strand the lamps were but misty splotches of diffused light which threw a feeble circular glimmer upon the slimy pavement. The yellow glare from the shop-windows streamed out into the steamy, vaporous air and threw a murky, shifting radiance across the crowded thoroughfare. There was, to my mind, something eerie and ghostlike in the endless procession of faces which flitted across these narrow bars of light -- sad faces and glad, haggard and merry. Like all humankind, they flitted from the gloom into the light and so back into the gloom once more. I am not subject to impressions, but the dull, heavy evening, with the strange business upon which we were engaged, combined to make me nervous and depressed. I could see from Miss Morstan's manner that she was suffering from the same feeling. Holmes alone could rise superior to petty influences. He held his open notebook upon his knee, and from time to time he jotted down figures and memoranda in the light of his pocket- lantern.

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle creates a sense of mystery. Write about:

- how Doyle create a sense of mystery in this extract
- how Doyle create a sense of mystery in the novel as a whole.

<u>Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle creates a sense of mystery.</u>

Within the extract Doyle creates a sense of mystery through Watson's descriptions of Victorian England. As the extract opens Watson describes how the "mud-coloured clouds drooped sadly over the muddy streets". The repetition of the adjective "mud" suggests a murky atmosphere within the passage; Doyle also creates a sense of juxtaposition through the description of the usually white clouds being "mud coloured". Furthermore, Doyle's personification of the clouds "drooping sadly" suggests that even nature recognises the peculiar feel of the evening and the adverb "sadly" also helps to illustrate an ominous feeling. Doyle's use of pathetic fallacy creates a dark and dreary atmosphere and creates a sense of mystery in the extract.

Your response:

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Read the following extract from **Chapter Three** from ***The Sign of Four*** and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the novel Thaddeus Sholto is introduced for the first time,

"May I offer you a glass of Chianti, Miss Morstan? Or of Tokay? I keep no other wines. Shall I open a flask? No? Well, then, I trust that you have no objection to tobacco-smoke, to the balsamic odour of the Eastern tobacco. I am a little nervous, and I find my hookah an invaluable sedative."

He applied a taper to the great bowl, and the smoke bubbled merrily through the rose-water. We sat all three in a semicircle, with our heads advanced and our chins upon our hands, while the strange, jerky little fellow, with his high, shining head, puffed uneasily in the centre.

"When I first determined to make this communication to you," said he, "I might have given you my address; but I feared that you might disregard my request and bring unpleasant people with you. I took the liberty, therefore, of making an appointment in such a way that my man Williams might be able to see you first. I have complete confidence in his discretion, and he had orders, if he were dissatisfied, to proceed no further in the matter. You will excuse these precautions, but I am a man of somewhat retiring, and I might even say refined, tastes, and there is nothing more unaesthetic than a policeman. I have a natural shrinking from all forms of rough materialism. I seldom come in contact with the rough crowd. I live, as you see, with some little atmosphere of elegance around me. I may call myself a patron of the arts. It is my weakness. The landscape is a genuine Corot, and though a connoisseur might perhaps throw a doubt upon that Salvator Rosa, there cannot be the least question about the Bouguereau. I am partial to the modern French school."

"You will excuse me, Mr. Sholto," said Miss Morstan, "but I am here at your request to learn something which you desire to tell me. It is very late, and I should desire the interview to be as short as possible."

"At the best it must take some time," he answered; "for we shall certainly have to go to Norwood and see Brother Barth- olomew. We shall all go and try if we can get the better of Brother Bartholomew. He is very angry with me for taking the course which has seemed right to me. I had quite high words with him last night. You cannot imagine what a terrible fellow he is when he is angry.

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents Thaddeus Sholto. Write about:

- how Doyle presents Thaddeus Sholto in this extract
- how Doyle presents Thaddeus Sholto in the novel as a whole.

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents the character of Thaddeus Sholto.

Within the extract Thaddeus Sholto is presented as a peculiar and restless character. As Holmes and Watson are introduced to Thaddeus, Watson describes him as a "strange, jerky little fellow" who "puffed uneasily" as he told the story of his father and Major Sholto. Watson's description of Thaddeus being "strange" suggests that he was somewhat apprehensive about him and his irregular mannerisms. The adjective "jerky", used to describe Thaddeus, highlights a nervousness about his character; the reader may be hesitant to believe his account of events due to this anxious and restive behaviour. Thaddeus' agitated behaviour is further emphasised as Doyle uses the adverb "uneasily" to describe his drug taking suggesting that he is attempts to settle himself: this appears to have been commonplace in Victorian England through Doyle's depiction of it throughout the novel. Doyle presents Thaddeus as a rather eccentric character whose emotional behaviour is juxtaposed to that of our protagonist, Sherlock Holmes.

Your response:

Read the following extract from Chapter Four from ***The Sign of Four*** and then answer the question that follows.

This extract is taken from the end of chapter 4. At this point in the novel Thaddeus Sholto has informed Mary Morstan of the treasure that she will have a share in. Holmes and Watson are also present.

> At the mention of this gigantic sum we all stared at one another open-eyed. Miss Morstan, could we secure her rights, would change from a needy governess to the richest heiress in England. Surely it was the place of a loyal friend to rejoice at such news; yet I am ashamed to say that selfishness took me by the soul, and that my heart turned as heavy as lead within me. I stammered out some few halting words of congratulation, and then sat downcast, with my head drooped, deaf to the babble of our new acquaintance.
>
> He was clearly a confirmed hypochondriac, and I was dreamily conscious that he was pouring forth interminable trains of symptoms, and imploring information as to the composition and action of innumerable quack nostrums, some of which he bore about in a leather case in his pocket. I trust that he may not remember any of the answers which I gave him that night. Holmes declares that he overheard me caution him against the great danger of taking more than two drops of castor oil, while I recommended strychnine in large doses as a sedative. However that may be, I was certainly relieved when our cab pulled up with a jerk and the coachman sprang down to open the door.
>
> "This, Miss Morstan, is Pondicherry Lodge," said Mr. Thaddeus Sholto, as he handed her out.

Starting with this extract, write about how Conan Doyle presents the character of Watson.

Write about:

- How Conan Doyle presents Watson in this extract
- How Conan Doyle presents Watson in the novel as a whole

30 marks

<u>How does Doyle present the character of Watson?</u>

Doyle presents Watson as an honest character who, through his narration, admits his failings as he "stammered out some few halting words of congratulations". This implies that Watson was struggling to hide his sadness. It suggests that he feels as though once Mary has the money she will lose interest in him and they will be unable to be together. It is clear that after inheriting the treasure Mary would have significant wealth and they would be from very different classes; in the Victorian era the idea of relationships between classes was looked down upon by society. The verb 'stammered' suggests that he is not in control of what he is saying of doing and we can see that, unlike Holmes, he is an emotional man. Doyle presents the contrast between Watson and Holmes from the very opening of the novel where it is apparent that Holmes is a very scientific character whereas Watson sees the romanticism in things. Within this extract, the reader would recognise that he has fallen in love with Mary and that he is someone who struggles to ignore his feelings, which is something that they may be able to empathise with.

Read the following extract from **Chapter 6** from ***The Sign of Four*** and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the novel Holmes is at Pondicherry Lodge and is investigating the crime scene.

He held down the lamp to the floor, and as he did so I saw for the second time that night a startled, surprised look come over his face. For myself, as I followed his gaze, my skin was cold under my clothes. The floor was covered thickly with the prints of a naked foot -- clear, well-defined, perfectly formed, but scarce half the size of those of an ordinary man.

"Holmes," I said in a whisper, "a child has done this horrid thing."

He had recovered his self-possession in an instant.

"I was staggered for the moment," he said, "but the thing is quite natural. My memory failed me, or I should have been able to foretell it. There is nothing more to be learned here. Let us go down."

"What is your theory, then, as to those footmarks?" I asked eagerly when we had regained the lower room once more.

"My dear Watson, try a little analysis yourself," said he with a touch of impatience. "You know my methods. Apply them, and it will be instructive to compare results."

"I cannot conceive anything which will cover the facts," I answered.

"It will be clear enough to you soon," he said, in an offhand way. "I think that there is nothing else of importance here, but I will look."

He whipped out his lens and a tape measure and hurried about the room on his knees, measuring, comparing, examining, with his long thin nose only a few inches from the planks and his beady eyes gleaming and deep-set like those of a bird. So swift, silent, and furtive were his movements, like those of a trained bloodhound picking out a scent, that I could not but think what a terrible criminal he would have made had he turned his energy and sagacity against the law instead of exerting them in its defence. As he hunted about, he kept muttering to himself, and finally he broke out into a loud crow of delight.

"We are certainly in luck," said he. "We ought to have very little trouble now. Number One has had the misfortune to tread in the creosote. You can see the outline of the edge of his small foot here at the side of this evil-smelling mess. The carboy has been cracked, you see, and the stuff has leaked out."

"What then?" I asked.

"Why, we have got him, that's all," said he.

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle uses language to present Sherlock Holmes as a fascinating character.
Write about:

- how Doyle presents Sherlock Holmes in this extract
- how Doyle presents Sherlock Holmes in the novel as a whole.

Read the following extract from **Chapter 6** from ***The Sign of Four*** and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the novel Athelney Jones has just arrived to Pondicherry Lodge.

"You are not quite in possession of the facts yet," said Holmes. "This splinter of wood, which I have every reason to believe to be poisoned, was in the man's scalp where you still see the mark; this card, inscribed as you see it, was on the table; and beside it lay this rather curious stone-headed instrument. How does all that fit into your theory?"

"Confirms it in every respect," said the fat detective, pompously. "House is 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, — 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 glimmerings of reason. *Il n'y a pas des sots si incommodes que ceux qui ont 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."

"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 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."

"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."

"Not only will I clear him, Mr. Jones, but I will make you a free present of the name and description of one of the two people who were in this room last night. His name, I have every reason to believe, is Jonathan Small. He is a poorly-educated man, small, active, with his right leg off, and wearing a wooden stump which is worn away upon the inner side. His left boot has a coarse, square-toed sole, with an iron band round the heel. He is a middle-aged man, much sunburned, and has been a convict. These few indications may be of some assistance to you, coupled with the fact that there is a good deal of skin missing from the palm of his hand. The other man—"

"Ah! the other man — ?" asked Athelney Jones, in a sneering voice, but impressed none the less, as I could easily see, by the precision of the other's manner.

Starting with this extract, write about how Conan Doyle presents the police.

Write about:

- How Conan Doyle presents Athelney Jones
- How Conan Doyle presents Athelney Jones in the rest of the novel

Starting with this extract, write about how Conan Doyle presents the police.

Example A

In the extract Jones is presented as an arrogant character. This is evident when it says "said the fat detective pompously". This suggests that he was an arrogant character. The use of the adverb "pompously" suggests that he thought what he was saying was very important. The use of the adjective "fat" could show that he is lazy. Jones being lazy is similar to the police in Victorian England as all police were idle and couldn't catch criminals. Throughout the novel Jones is presented as a character who jumps to conclusions and doesn't do his job effectively. The presentation of Jones is similar to how many Victorian readers would have viewed the police and many thought that they were incompetent and couldn't solve crimes. The reader would therefore recognise that Jones is an incompetent character.

Example B

In the extract Jones is presented as an arrogant character. This is evident as Watson describes him as speaking "pompously" discounting the valuable clue as "hocus pocus". The employment of this negative adverb suggests that Jones was full of his own self-importance and saw himself as a higher authority than the other characters. It could be argued that this also highlights his highly dismissive response to Holmes and helps to illustrate his egotism. Watson appears to recognise Jones' conceited nature and the use of the adverb gives the reader a negative first impression of the character. Doyle presents the police here, and throughout the novel, as hopelessly inept and yet having an unfounded self-belief. This is evident when Jones first encounters the crime and has he "net around Thaddeus" despite his clear innocence. This played on Victorian feelings at the time that the police were thought to be ineffective, particularly as at the time the book was published the police had been unable to capture the infamous Jack the Ripper. Doyle has done this so that the reader understands that Holmes' brilliance is quite unique and that the police need him more than they realise. Doyle's negative portrayal of Jones would be symptomatic of the Victorian police force. The reader would recognise that Jones is presented as a foolish character who cannot compare to Holmes.

Your response:

Read the following extract from **Chapter 9** of *The Sign of Four* and then answer the question that follows.
In this extract, Athenley Jones has just arrived at 221b Baker Street looking for Sherlock Holmes.

At three o'clock on the afternoon there was a loud peal at the bell, an authoritative voice in the hall, and, to my surprise, no less a person than Mr. Athelney Jones was shown up to me. Very different was he, however, from the brusque and masterful professor of common sense who had taken over the case so confidently at Upper Norwood. His expression was downcast, and his bearing meek and even apologetic.

"Good-day, sir; good-day," said he. "Mr. Sherlock Holmes is out, I understand."

"Yes, and I cannot be sure when he will be back. But perhaps you would care to wait. Take that chair and try one of these cigars."

"Thank you; I don't mind if I do," said he, mopping his face with a red bandanna handkerchief.

"And a whisky and soda?"

"Well, half a glass. It is very hot for the time of year, and I have had a good deal to worry and try me. You know my theory about this Norwood case?"

"I remember that you expressed one."

"Well, I have been obliged to reconsider it. I had my net drawn tightly round Mr. Sholto, sir, when pop he went through a hole in the middle of it. He was able to prove an alibi which could not be shaken. From the time that he left his brother's room he was never out of sight of someone or other. So it could not be he who climbed over roofs and through trapdoors. It's a very dark case, and my professional credit is at stake. I should be very glad of a little assistance."

"We all need help sometimes," said I.

"Your friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, is a wonderful man, sir," said he in a husky and confidential voice. "He's a man who is not to be beat. I have known that young man go into a good many cases, but I never saw the case yet that he could not throw a light upon. He is irregular in his methods and a little quick perhaps in jumping at theories, but, on the whole, I think he would have made a most promising officer, and I don't care who knows it. I have had a wire from him this morning, by which I understand that he has got some clue to this Sholto business. Here is his message."

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents Athelney Jones and the police in novel.
write about:

- how Doyle presents Athelney Jones and the police in this extract
- how Doyle presents Athelney Jones and the police in the novel as a whole.

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents Athelney Jones and the police in novel.

Within the extract it is apparent that Jones is presented as feeling dejected with the case as Watson notes how he was "very different… from the brusque and masterful professor of common sense who had taken over the case so confidently." The fact that Watson describes his previous behaviours as "brusque" suggests that he initially thought of Jones as abrupt. Watson sarcastically refers to him a "masterful professor of common sense" as he seemingly mocks the deductions that Jones made in the case. The reader would recognise that Jones' "confident" behaviour in assuming Thaddeus' guilt highlighted an arrogance about him, which could be symptomatic of the whole police force. The metropolitan police force were largely disorganised and distrusted and the Victorian reader may have witness the incompetence displayed by officers similar to Jones first hand. This extract highlights the key theme of crime and punishment evident in all of Doyle's Holmes stories, which could be seen as a vehicle to highlight the incompetence of the Victorian police. *The portrayal of Jones in the extract is very different from his introduction to the novel in chapter 6. Jones is first introduced to the reader as an arrogant man as he states to Holmes, "Don't promise too much, Mr theorist, - don't promise too much!" Snapped the detective."*

Your response:

Read the following extract from Chapter 10 of *The Sign of Four* and then answer the question that follows.
In this extract, Sherlock Holmes, Watson and Jones are waiting for the Aurora to come into sight before giving chase.

"But do I see a handkerchief? Surely there is a white flutter over yonder."

"Yes, it is your boy," I cried. "I can see him plainly."

"And there is the Aurora," exclaimed Holmes, "and going like the devil! Full speed ahead, engineer. Make after that launch with the yellow light. By heaven, I shall never forgive myself if she proves to have the heels of us!"

She had slipped unseen through the yard-entrance and passed between two or three small craft, so that she had fairly got her speed up before we saw her. Now she was flying down the stream, near in to the shore, going at a tremendous rate. Jones looked gravely at her and shook his head.

"She is very fast," he said. "I doubt if we shall catch her."

"We must catch her!" cried Holmes between his teeth. "Heap it on, stokers! Make her do all she can! If we burn the boat we must have them!"

We were fairly after her now. The furnaces roared, and the powerful engines whizzed and clanked like a great metallic heart. Her sharp, steep prow cut through the still river-water and sent two rolling waves to right and to left of us. With every throb of the engines we sprang and quivered like a living thing. One great yellow lantern in our bows threw a long, flickering funnel of light in front of us. Right ahead a dark blur upon the water showed where the Aurora lay, and the swirl of white foam behind her spoke of the pace at which she was going. We flashed past barges, steamers, merchant-vessels, in and out, behind this one and round the other. Voices hailed us out of the darkness, but still the Aurora thundered on, and still we followed close upon her track.

"Pile it on, men, pile it on!" cried Holmes, looking down into the engine-room, while the fierce glow from below beat upon his eager, aquiline face. "Get every pound of steam you can."

"I think we gain a little," said Jones with his eyes on the Aurora.

"I am sure of it," said I. "We shall be up with her in a very few minutes."

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle uses language to create a sense of danger, action and suspense.
Write about:

- how Doyle creates a sense of danger, action and suspense in this extract
- how Doyle creates a sense of danger, action and suspense in the novel as a whole.

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle uses language to create a sense of danger, action and suspense.

Within the extract Doyle creates a sense of suspense as the characters chase after the boat. This is evident when Holmes "exclaimed… There is the Aurora… and going like the devil!". This highlights how he's excited about the situation that they are in and shows how he wants to catch the boat in order to bring an end to this puzzling mystery. The fact that he "exclaimed" highlights how he is enthralled by the chase and is finding it difficult to hide the pleasure he gets from ensuring that the criminals do not get away. Doyle's use of the simile to describe the boat as "going like the devil" could potentially link the criminals to evil and helps to present Holmes and Watson as restorers of order against the fiendlike villains. The Victorian reader would recognise that it is Holmes who is solving the crime and pursuing the criminals, and not the police; Victorian society was mistrusting of the police and the fact that the police aren't solving the case confirms their view that they weren't doing a good job. Many readers would recognise that the suspense created here is similar to that created earlier in the novel where Holmes and Watson discover the body of Bartholomew Sholto and Watson describes how his body was "stiff and cold, and had clearly been dead many hours". This element of suspense is a key component of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and is prevalent throughout The Sign of Four.

Your response:

Read the following extract from Chapter 10 from ***The Sign of Four*** and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the novel Holmes and Watson have just caught up with the Aurora and see Tonga for the first time.

> At the sound of his strident, angry cries there was movement in the huddled bundle upon the deck. It straightened itself into a little black man — the smallest I have ever seen — with a great, misshapen head and a shock of tangled, dishevelled hair. Holmes had already drawn his revolver, and I whipped out mine at the sight of this savage, distorted creature. He was wrapped in some sort of dark ulster or blanket, which left only his face exposed; but that face was enough to give a man a sleepless night. Never have I seen features so deeply marked with all bestiality and cruelty. His small eyes glowed and burned with a sombre light, and his thick lips were writhed back from his teeth, which grinned and chattered at us with a half animal fury.
>
> "Fire if he raises his hand," said Holmes, quietly. We were within a boat's-length by this time, and almost within touch of our quarry. I can see the two of them now as they stood, the white man with his legs far apart, shrieking out curses, and the unhallowed dwarf with his hideous face, and his strong yellow teeth gnashing at us in the light of our lantern.
>
> It was well that we had so clear a view of him. Even as we looked he plucked out from under his covering a short, round piece of wood, like a school-ruler, and clapped it to his lips. Our pistols rang out together. He whirled round, threw up his arms, and with a kind of choking cough fell sideways into the stream. I caught one glimpse of his venomous, menacing eyes amid the white swirl of the waters.

Starting with this extract, write about how Conan Doyle presents the character of Tonga as a dangerous character

Write about:

- How Conan Doyle presents Tonga in the extract
- How Conan Doyle presents danger throughout the novel

30 marks

Starting with this extract, write about how Conan Doyle presents Tonga.

Example A

Doyle portrays Tonga as evil and savage. This can be seen with the description: "His small eyes glowed and burned with a sombre light". This suggests that he looks like the devil and they should be scared of him. This is typical of the Victorian times because they were incredibly fearful of anyone from other cultures and so Doyle has therefore only shown him as a negative character. The verbs "glowed" and "burned" are linked to fire and highlight the danger that he could bring. Others may argue that the fire is linked to Hell and therefore Tonga is the devil. He is shown to be evil throughout the novel, such as when he kills Bartholomew Sholto with one of his poisonous darts. Tonga is therefore presented as an evil character.

Example B

Within the extract Doyle presents Tonga as evil and savage. Metaphorical language is used to describe how "his small eyes glowed and burned with a sombre light". The verbs suggest that the character is almost devilish; other readers may argue that he appears possessed and this image would have profound impact on the typically pious Victorian reader. Here Doyle is highlighting how those from The Empire are primitive and savage and by placing this character in London he is highlighting the differences between them and our own developed country. This would have been typical of the imperialist beliefs of the country at the time that we were a superior race; Doyle is clearly using this inherent fear of other cultures to create tension at this key point in the narrative and symbolise Tonga as malevolent. This imperialist narrative is present throughout the novel as we see Tonga is only ever derided or treated as a possession by Small who claims later in the novel that he serves him like "a god". It almost appears as if the people from the countries Britain occupied are only accepted as objects of fear or objects to own and utilise for our own gains.

Your response:

Read the following extract from Chapter 11 of *The Sign of Four* and then answer the question that follows.
In this extract, Watson has taken the recently found Agra treasure to Mary Morstan.

"Pray sit down and tell me all about it, Dr. Watson," said she.

I narrated briefly what had occurred since I had seen her last. Holmes's new method of search, the discovery of the Aurora, the appearance of Athelney Jones, our expedition in the evening, and the wild chase down the Thames. She listened with parted lips and shining eyes to my recital of our adventures. When I spoke of the dart which had so narrowly missed us, she turned so white that I feared that she was about to faint.

"It is nothing," she said as I hastened to pour her out some water. "I am all right again. It was a shock to me to hear that I had placed my friends in such horrible peril."

"That is all over," I answered. "It was nothing. I will tell you no more gloomy details. Let us turn to something brighter. There is the treasure. What could be brighter than that? I got leave to bring it with me, thinking that it would interest you to be the first to see it."

"It would be of the greatest interest to me," she said. There was no eagerness in her voice, however. It had struck her, doubtless, that it might seem ungracious upon her part to be indifferent to a prize which had cost so much to win.

"What a pretty box!" she said, stooping over it. "This is Indian work, I suppose?"

"Yes; it is Benares metal-work."

"And so heavy!" she exclaimed, trying to raise it. "The box alone must be of some value. Where is the key?"

"Small threw it into the Thames," I answered. "I must borrow Mrs. Forrester's poker." There was in the front a thick and broad hasp, wrought in the image of a sitting Buddha. Under this I thrust the end of the poker and twisted it outward as a lever. The hasp sprang open with a loud snap. With trembling fingers I flung back the lid. We both stood gazing in astonishment. The box was empty!

No wonder that it was heavy. The ironwork was two-thirds of an inch thick all round. It was massive, well made, and solid, like a chest constructed to carry things of great price, but not one shred or crumb of metal or jewellery lay within it. It was absolutely and completely empty.

"The treasure is lost," said Miss Morstan calmly.

As I listened to the words and realized what they meant, a great shadow seemed to pass from my soul. I did not know how this Agra treasure had weighed me down until now that it was finally removed. It was selfish, no doubt, disloyal, wrong, but I could realize nothing save that the golden barrier was gone from between us. "Thank God!" I ejaculated from my very heart.

She looked at me with a quick, questioning smile. "Why do you say that?" she asked.

"Because you are within my reach again," I said, taking her hand. She did not withdraw it. "Because I love you, Mary, as truly as ever a man loved a woman. Because this treasure, these riches, sealed my lips. Now that they are gone I can tell you how I love you. That is why I said, 'Thank God.' "

"Then I say 'Thank God,' too," she whispered as I drew her to my side. Whoever had lost a treasure, I knew that night that I had gained one.

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle presents the relationship between Watson and Mary Morstan.
Write about:

- how Doyle presents the relationship between Watson and Mary Morstan in this extract
- how Doyle presents the relationship between Watson and Mary Morstan in the novel as a whole.

Starting with this extract, explore how Conan Doyle uses language to create a sense of danger, action and suspense.

Within the extract it is apparent that Watson has strong feelings for Mary. As he opens the empty chest he describes how "a great shadow seemed to pass from my soul" as the treasure "had weighed me down until now that it was finally removed." This highlights how his feelings for Mary had consumed him and he now feels an overwhelming sense of relief that they could now be together. Doyle's use of the metaphor describing the "great shadow" suggests that a darkness had been plaguing him and causing him great distress. The fact that he comments on the darkness passing from his "soul" illustrates how his feelings for Mary were almost spiritual. The treasure and the wealth, a key theme in the novel, is described as being "finally removed" suggesting that he is relieved that she has not inherited a great fortune as it allows the two of them to be together. The reader may recognise that Watson's fears stem from the social constructs which surrounded Victorian society as men and women were supposed to marry in particular classes and social standings. It was clear that Watson had developed strong feelings for Mary when she was introduced to the reader at the beginning of the novel describing her eyes ad "singularly spiritual" suggesting that he always recognised a purity within her. The extract raises the key theme of love and romance and helps the reader to understand the strong feelings that Watson has for Mary.

Your response:

Read the following extract from Chapter 12 from ***The Sign of Four*** and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the novel Small has just revealed that he has thrown the treasure overboard.

"You are deceiving us, Small," said Athelney Jones, sternly. "If you had wished to throw the treasure into the Thames it would have been easier for you to have thrown box and all."

"Easier for me to throw, and easier for you to recover," he answered, with a shrewd, sidelong look. "The man that was clever enough to hunt me down is clever enough to pick an iron box from the bottom of a river. Now that they are scattered over five miles or so, it may be a harder job. It went to my heart to do it, though. I was half mad when you came up with us. However, there's no good grieving over it. I've had ups in my life, and I've had downs, but I've learned not to cry over spilled milk."

"This is a very serious matter, Small," said the detective. "If you had helped justice, instead of thwarting it in this way, you would have had a better chance at your trial."

"Justice!" snarled the ex-convict. "A pretty justice! Whose loot is this, if it is not ours? Where is the justice that I should give it up to those who have never earned it? Look how I have earned it! Twenty long years in that fever-ridden swamp, all day at work under the mangrove-tree, all night chained up in the filthy convict-huts, bitten by mosquitoes, racked with ague, bullied by every cursed black-faced policeman who loved to take it out of a white man. That was how I earned the Agra treasure; and you talk to me of justice because I cannot bear to feel that I have paid this price only that another may enjoy it! I would rather swing a score of times, or have one of Tonga's darts in my hide, than live in a convict's cell and feel that another man is at his ease in a palace with the money that should be mine." Small had dropped his mask of stoicism, and all this came out in a wild whirl of words, while his eyes blazed, and the handcuffs clanked together with the impassioned movement of his hands. I could understand, as I saw the fury and the passion of the man, that it was no groundless or unnatural terror which had possessed Major Sholto when he first learned that the injured convict was upon his track.

"You forget that we know nothing of all this," said Holmes quietly. "We have not heard your story, and we cannot tell how far justice may originally have been on your side."

"Well, sir, you have been very fair-spoken to me, though I can see that I have you to thank that I have these bracelets upon my wrists. Still, I bear no grudge for that. It is all fair and above-board. If you want to hear my story I have no wish to hold it back. What I say to you is God's truth, every word of it. Thank you; you can put the glass beside me here, and I'll put my lips to it if I am dry.

Starting with this extract, write about how Conan Doyle presents the character of Jonathon Small

Write about:

- How Conan Doyle presents Small in the extract
- How Conan Doyle presents Small throughout the novel

30 marks

Starting with this extract, write about how Conan Doyle presents the character of Jonathan Small

Within the extract Small is presented as a bitter and calculating character as he answered questions "with a shrewd, sidelong look". Doyle's use of the adjective "shrewd" suggests that Small is an intelligent man who is somewhat enjoying revealing his actions to the other characters. It also shows that he is very pleased with himself and how he has been able to deceive them all for so long. Many readers may recognise that Small is driven by revenge and would rather have the treasure lost than anyone other than him keep it. Doyle presents him as a character who is incredibly selfish and one who shows no remorse. The writer also appears to be using Jonathan Small to explore the theme of greed within the novel and presents the reader with a dislikeable character who lacks in typical Victorian morals; the average Victorian reader would have therefore found his actions to be depraved. These presentation of him as a villain is done throughout the novel, specifically as he recounts his story in the final chapter. As he narrates his tale, Watson remarks how he describes the "cold-blooded business" in a "flippant" and "careless" way, suggesting that he had no remorse for what he had done.

Your response: