

A Scandal in Bohemia by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Chapter 1

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Level: Intermediate

Age: Young adults / Adults

Time: 45 minutes (60 with optional activity)

Aims: In this lesson, students will:

1. listen for detail to a summary of the story;
2. do a dictogloss intensive listening activity (optional);
3. become more aware of, and practise using, comparative structures such as *as* + adjective + *as*;
4. listen for gist to the rest of the chapter and label an illustration;
5. describe a character from memory.

Materials: One copy of the illustration from the book to beam up or hand out (optional); one copy of worksheets 1 and 2 per student; Track 1 (the first paragraph of Chapter 1), Track 2 (an extract from the first paragraph of Chapter 1), Track 3 (the rest of Chapter 1), Track 4 (a short extract from Chapter 1) and Track 5 (full audio) downloaded from onestopenglish

Summary: This is a rare case for Sherlock Holmes; the visit to his Baker Street residence from a worried foreign gentleman heralds the beginning of a mystery in which Holmes, for once, meets his match and fails to outwit an impressive and surprising adversary. In Chapter 1, Holmes shows Watson a letter he has just received. There is no name on the letter but it advises them of the imminent arrival of a visitor with a problem. Sure enough, at a quarter to eight, there is a knock on the door.

Listening 1

Aims: to activate the students' prior knowledge of Sherlock Holmes; to listen to the introduction

1. Explain that the class is going to listen to a Sherlock Holmes story. Ask them to describe Sherlock Holmes. Accept a physical description but encourage them to describe his personality. In particular, make sure you ask them for their opinions on the following questions, with a view to highlighting some key vocabulary and ideas:

- What is special about Holmes's mind? (*Elicit the words intelligent and logical.*)
- What is his attitude to other people's intelligence? (*Suggest that he sees others' intelligence as inferior to his own.*)
- What about love? Is there anyone Holmes might love?

- What kind of person impresses, or would impress, him?

2. Tell the class that they are going to listen to a short introduction to the story. Hand out Worksheet 1 and get them to read the three questions in the first activity.

3. Play Track 1. When it has finished, nominate students to offer their answers to the class.

Key: 1. *There was no scandal because it was avoided.; 2. He calls her 'the woman' or 'the only woman'. She is the only woman that Holmes thinks about or thinks was important or significant in some way.; 3. She defeated him. She was as intelligent and logical as he is.*

Writing (optional)

Aims: to get students using comparative forms before they study them; to get the students interested and involved in the story from the start

A Scandal in Bohemia by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Chapter 1

1. Explain that, now, the students are going to listen to part of the introduction again. This time they are going to write down as much of the introduction as they can. Reassure them that, although the audio is very fast, too fast to get every word, they should try to write as much as they can, even if it is just single words. Make sure that they have some paper and a pen or pencil ready.

2. Play Track 2. As soon as it has started, some students may give up on the task because of the delivery speed. Watch their reactions carefully and if this happens, immediately stop the listening, reassure them again that it's OK not to write much but it is important that they write what they can. Start again from the beginning, encouraging them all to write.

3. Tell the class that, in a minute, they are going to rewrite the whole text. Ask them whether they are ready for this yet (they will most likely say 'No!') and ask them whether they would like to listen again. Concede a second listening but tell them that this is the last time they will hear it. Encourage them again to write as much as they can. Play Track 2 a second time.

4. Get the class into groups of four and let them share what they have noted down in the previous activity. Tell them to work together to reconstruct the text from their notes and from what they remember. Reassure them that the text doesn't have to be exactly the same as the original but to do their best. Suggest that just one of them writes, while the others contribute ideas, corrections and so on, using their own notes for reference. They will need about ten minutes for this, during which you can visit each group making suggestions and corrections. Pay special attention to the comparative structures in the text.

5. Nominate students to read out their texts, one sentence at a time. Have them compare their sentences, before reading out the original sentence. Make a note

of any notable differences or points of linguistic interest. Finally, ask them what they thought of the activity and what they learnt from it.

Grammar 1

Aim: to become more aware of comparative structures, including *as* + adj + *as*

1. Write the following on the board:

A person who impresses Sherlock Holmes is ...

Prompt for the missing word: *rare*. Below it, write:

A woman who ... is ...

Elicit the answer: *A woman who impresses him is rarer*. Ask the class if they think the writer, or perhaps Sherlock, is being sexist by making this remark. Field their answers and a short discussion if one develops.

2. Direct the class to the first grammar activity on the worksheet. Indicate that the comparative form of *rare* – that is, *rarer* – goes in the first gap. Give them a minute to fill in the others. Let them share their answers with the whole class.

Key: *rarer, safer, lovelier, more logical, more intelligent, more impressive*

3. Put the students in pairs to complete the rules. Elicit the rules.

Key:

- To make comparative adjectives, we add **-er** when the adjective has one **syllable** or when it has two **syllables** and ends in **-y**.
- We use **more** + adjective when the adjective has more than **two syllables**.
- To say that two things are the same, we can say one thing is **as** + adjective + **as** the other.

A Scandal in Bohemia by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Chapter 1

If the class is very familiar with these rules, consider extending them to include the following complexities:

- Include modifiers to say how big the difference or close the similarity is.
 - *much* adjective + *-er* / *more* adjective
 - *a little* / *slightly* adjective + *-er* / *more* adjective
 - *at least as* adjective *as*
 - *just as* adjective *as*
 - *less* adjective *than*
- Use the structure *not (quite / nearly) as* adjective *as* to mean *less* adjective *than*.

Then, when it comes to the practice activity (Grammar 2), encourage them to use these structures.

Listening 2

Aims: to listen for specific information; to learn some clothes vocabulary by labelling a picture

1. Show the class the second listening activity on the worksheet. Give them a minute to read the summary before playing Track 3, the rest of the chapter. They may ask you for the meaning of monogram – it is a design using the first letter of each of someone's names, usually sewn onto clothing or decorating an object.

2. Play Track 3. When it is finished, give the students a minute to compare answers. Read out the completed summary so that they can check their answers.

Key: 1. letter / note; 2. mask; 3. problem; 4. signature / name; 5. Bohemia / Germany; 6. tall; 7. rich; 8. real / his real name; 9. king; 10. secret

3. Beam up the illustration of the king, or hand out a copy of the picture for students to pass round. Then, hand out the second worksheet and ask the class to use the

words in the box to complete the labels on the worksheet picture. Tell them not to worry if they're not sure of the answers because they will listen to the description again in a minute.

4. Play Track 4. Then, ask individuals to share their answers with the rest of the class.

Key: 1. mask; 2. wide; 3. collar; fur; 4. cloak; 5. brooch

5. Put the students in pairs. Tell them to hide their papers and describe the King of Bohemia to each other from memory.

Grammar 2

Aim: to practise using comparative structures, including *as + adj + as*

1. Direct the class's attention to the second grammar activity. Give them a couple of minutes to rewrite the sentences using comparative structures. You may decide to do the first one with the whole class to clarify instructions. Encourage stronger groups or students to look for alternatives using a variety of comparative structures (see the key below).

Key: 1. *Holmes is (much) more intelligent than Watson. / Watson isn't (nearly) as intelligent as Holmes.;* 2. *Adler is (even / slightly / a bit / a little) more logical than Holmes (and so manages to defeat him). / Holmes isn't (quite) as logical as Adler (and so is defeated by her).* 3. *The last case was more successful for Holmes than this one. / This case isn't as successful as the last one.* 4. *Watson tries to be as logical as Holmes.* 5. *The visitor is (much) taller than Holmes. / Holmes isn't (nearly) as tall as the visitor. / The visitor is half a foot taller than Holmes.*

Follow-up tasks

- The students find out where Bohemia was and what it is called today.
- Class members find photos of people and write descriptions of their clothing.

A Scandal in Bohemia
by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Chapter 1



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Listening 1

Listen to the beginning of the story. Answer the questions.

1. Why is the title of the story inaccurate?
2. What does Holmes call Irene Adler? Why?
3. How does Irene Adler impress Holmes?

Grammar 1

Write the comparative forms of these adjectives. Then, complete the rules.

rare _____

safe _____

lovely _____

logical _____

intelligent _____

impressive _____

Comparative adjectives

- To make comparative adjectives, we add -____ when the adjective has one _____ or when it has two _____ and ends in -y.
- We use _____ + adjective when the adjective has more than _____.
- To say that two things are the same, we can say one thing is _____ + adjective + _____ the other.

Listening 2

Listen to the rest of the chapter. Complete the summary.

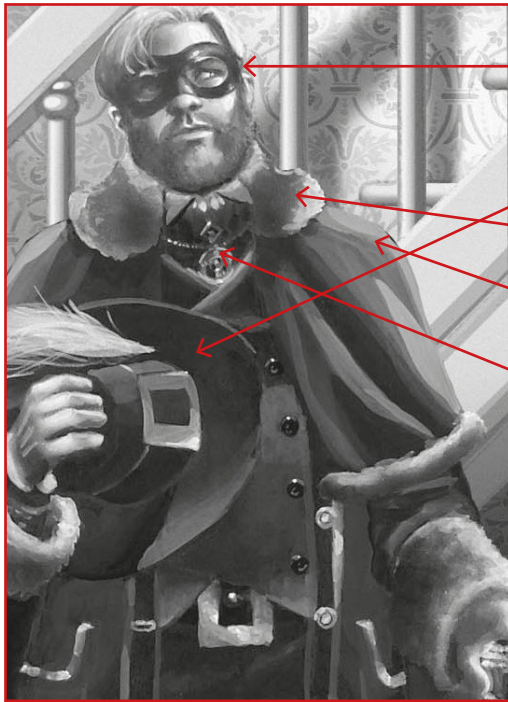
Holmes shows Watson a _____. It says that, at 7.45pm, a visitor wearing a _____ will arrive to discuss a serious _____. It is strange because there is no _____. The paper and monogram indicate that the person is from a country in _____.

There is a knock on the door. The visitor is very _____. His clothes indicate that he is very _____. He gives Holmes his name but it is not _____. In fact, he is the _____ of his country. His visit to London is a _____.

A Scandal in Bohemia by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Chapter 1

Complete the picture labels with the words from the box.

brooch cloak collar fur mask wide



1. a black _____

2. a _____ hat

3. a _____ made of _____

4. a _____

5. fastened with a _____

Listen to check.

Grammar 2

Rewrite the sentences using comparative structures.

1. Watson is quite intelligent but Holmes is *extremely* intelligent.

2. Holmes is very logical. Adler is so logical that she defeats Holmes.

3. The last case was successful for Holmes. This case is not successful.

4. Holmes is very logical. Watson tries to be equally logical.

5. Holmes is about six feet tall. The visitor is at least six and a half feet tall.

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I like to call this last case ‘A **Scandal** in Bohemia’ although, in the end, a scandal was avoided. In fact, the case wasn’t really one of Holmes’s successes. But during the case, he met a person who **impressed** him, which was a rare thing. That person was a woman, which was an even rarer thing. Afterwards, he always called her ‘the woman’ or ‘the only woman’. He still calls her that when we talk about the case, although she is dead now. He rarely uses her name, which was Irene Adler. He was not in love with her. There has never been any room in Holmes’s logical mind for love. The woman impressed him because she **defeated** him. At last, he said, he had met someone who was as intelligent and logical as him ...

Track 1 & 2 end

One evening, I visited Holmes in Baker Street. He still lived there, in the flat I had shared with him before I was married. As soon as I arrived, he showed me a letter.

Mr Sherlock Holmes,

*Tonight, at a quarter to eight, you will be visited by a gentleman. He has heard about your great skill as a detective. He has also heard about your great **discretion** – he knows that you can be trusted with secrets. He wishes to consult you about a serious problem. The problem must be solved with great discretion. The gentleman will be wearing a mask on his face. Please do not be **offended** by this. Please be at home when he comes.*

There was no signature.

‘What does this strange note tell you, Watson?’ Holmes asked me.

I tried to be as logical as my friend. ‘Well, the first thing I noticed is that the writing paper is very unusual,’ I said. ‘And it must be very expensive.’

‘You’re right, Watson,’ said Holmes. ‘The writing paper is unusual. It isn’t British paper. Hold it up to the light and look carefully at it.’

The light showed that there was a **watermark** in the paper – the name of a famous German paper-maker followed by a monogram. The **monogram** was formed by two letters twisted together – a large ‘E’ and a small ‘g’.

‘What does the monogram stand for, Holmes?’ I asked. ‘Does it stand for the writer’s name?’

‘No,’ he replied. ‘It stands for “Egria”, a German-speaking country in Bohemia. I think that our masked visitor must be from that country. And I think that we are about to meet him.’

As he spoke, we heard footsteps on the stairs outside Holmes’s door. A moment later someone knocked on the door and entered the room. It was a man – a very large man, who was at least six and a half feet tall. The top part of his face was covered with a black mask, and he was carrying a wide hat. There was fur on the collar of his coat and round the tops of his boots. Over his coat he wore a cloak **fastened** with a brooch made of gold with a single large jewel in the centre. The man’s clothes told us that he was very rich, and that he was not an Englishman.

‘I hope you got my note,’ he said. He had a strong German accent.

‘Yes, I got it,’ said Holmes. ‘Please sit down. This is my colleague, Dr Watson, who helps me with my work. And what is your name, sir?’

‘You may call me Count von Kramm,’ the large man said as he sat down. ‘I am a Bohemian **aristocrat**. I hope you will excuse my mask. The royal person that I **represent** today wishes me to be unknown to you. In fact, the name I just gave you is not really my own name.’

Track 1

Track 2

Track 3

Track 4

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‘Yes,’ said Holmes again. ‘I know that.’

The man paused for a moment in surprise. Then he went on.

‘Have you heard of the Ormstein family, Mr Holmes?’ he said. ‘The kings of Bohemia have always been Ormsteins. The royal person needs to consult you about a serious problem for the great Ormstein family.’

‘Yes, I know that too,’ Holmes said. ‘And I’ve known since you entered the room that you are Wilhelm Sigismund von Ormstein, Duke of Cassel and King of Bohemia. If you will tell me what your problem is, **your Majesty**, I will tell you if I can help you.’

The man jumped up and walked quickly around the room. He was obviously anxious, and he was obviously trying to make a decision. Finally he took off his mask.

‘You are right,’ he said. ‘I am the king. Why should I hide it from you? But I have travelled secretly from Prague to consult you. Nobody in my country knows that I am in London. Nobody must find out that I have come here.’

‘We will keep your secret. Now, please sit down and tell us what has happened,’ Holmes said.

The man sat down and told us his story.

Glossary

scandal talk or reports in the newspapers or on television about shocking events involving important people

impress if someone or something impresses you, you admire them

defeat to win against someone in a game, fight or competition

discretion careful and sensitive behaviour that does not upset or offend people

offended upset or angry because of something that someone has said or done

watermark a hidden design on a piece of paper that you can only see when you hold the paper up near a light

monogram a design using the first letter of each of someone’s names, usually sewn onto clothing or decorating an object

fasten to close something such as a piece of clothing

aristocrat a member of the aristocracy (the people in the highest class of society, who usually have money, land and power, and who often have special titles, such as *countess* or *duke*)

represent to speak or act officially for another person, group or organization

your Majesty used for talking formally to a king or queen