

## The Norwood Builder by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Chapter 1

**Author:** Daniel Barber

**Level:** Intermediate

**Age:** Young adults / Adults

**Time:** 45 minutes (60 with optional activity)

**Aims:** In this lesson, the students will:

1. discuss what they already know about Sherlock Holmes;
2. listen for gist and detail, and fill in a police report;
3. become more aware of, and practise, modals of deduction;
4. conduct an interview with a character from the story (optional).

**Materials:** One picture handout per group of four to five students (but, as a minimum, you will need one set of four pictures); one copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (the beginning of Chapter 1) and Track 2 (the rest of Chapter 1) downloaded from onestopenglish; one copy of the full transcript per student

**Summary:** A young lawyer comes to Sherlock Holmes in desperate need of his help. John Hector McFarlane is the main suspect in the murder of Jonas Oldacre, a builder from Norwood. He claims he did not commit the crime. Holmes is interested and takes on his case. In Chapter 1, McFarlane bursts into Holmes's apartment on Baker Street and begs him for help. The police are chasing him but he has just enough time to pique Holmes's interest before Inspector Lestrade, of Scotland Yard, rushes in.

### Vocabulary

**Aims:** to introduce the main characters of the story; to activate students' prior knowledge; to pre-teach some key words

1. Before the lesson starts, write the following headings on the board, making sure there is space under each item for notes:

his job  
where he lives  
his abilities  
his appearance  
his personality  
stories about him  
other characters  
words you might find in the stories

2. Explain that the class is going to guess the identity of a famous fictional character. Show the class the pictures of objects associated with Sherlock Holmes one by one, starting with the violin (the most difficult). If no one guesses Sherlock Holmes, show them the pipe next, then the magnifying glass and, finally, the deerstalker hat.

3. Ask the class a few basic questions about Sherlock Holmes, in order to gauge their prior knowledge of the stories:

- What is his name?
- What's his job? (*detective*)
- Where does he live? (*London*)
- Has anyone ever seen or read a Sherlock Holmes story?
- Does anyone know who wrote the stories? (*Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*) When? (*1887–1927*)

4. If the class in general have indicated a reasonable familiarity with the character, put them into groups of three or four. If the class shows little awareness, put them in larger groups, ensuring that there are at least one or two people more confident in their background knowledge in each group. Give each group one picture handout and assign a group scribe to take notes. Explain that they have two minutes to write down everything they know about Sherlock Holmes on the handout. Point to the headings you have written on the board, which may help them with ideas.

5. After two minutes, stop the class. Give each group a board pen (or chalk) and ask one of them to copy what they have written onto the board under the corresponding categories. When there are lots of ideas on the board, ask everyone to sit down. Praise them for

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how much they know and respond to some of what they have written, asking questions and checking comprehension. Make sure that they have written 'Dr Watson' under 'other characters' and that they understand he is a friend of Holmes's and narrates the stories.

6. Check understanding of the following key words, using the questions below if you wish:

*case, murder, suspect, victim, detective, inspector*

What is Holmes's job? (*detective*)

Is he an inspector? (*no*)

Why not? (*He is not in the police force.*)

Each story is about one problem? What do we call these kinds of problems, often crimes? (*case*)

What serious crimes are there? (e.g. *murder*)

What do you call someone the police think committed the crime? (*suspect*)

What about the person who is affected by a crime? (*victim*)

### Listening 1

**Aim:** to listen for detail

1. What follows is an easy task for students to tune in to the actor's voice. Explain that the class is going to listen to the beginning of a Sherlock Holmes story called 'The Norwood Builder'. Before they do, they are going to read a summary of what they will hear. Tell them that they should read the summary to find out why the story is called 'The Norwood Builder'. Give each student a copy of the handout and direct their attention to the first activity. Give them 2 minutes.

2. Conduct feedback. (*The story is called 'The Norwood Builder' because the victim is a builder from a place called Norwood. You could mention that Norwood is a suburb of London.*)

3. Now, tell them that the summary is not completely accurate and contains five pieces of information that are not true. They should listen and identify the mistakes. Play Track 1.

4. Put the students into pairs to compare their answers before asking the whole class for the answers.

**Key:** 1. Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson are finishing **breakfast**, not dinner.; 2. The young man comes in through the door very **loudly**, not quietly.; 3. Holmes has **not heard of him** – **he hasn't read the newspaper**.; 4. Holmes guesses that the man is not married because **his clothes are untidy**, not because he is not wearing a wedding ring.; 5. The headline says that the builder from Norwood is **missing**, not that his body has been found.

### Listening 2

**Aim:** to listen for detail and understand the details of the crime scene

1. Explain that the class is going to listen to the rest of Chapter 1. Show them the police report on the worksheet (Listening 2). Ask them to match the six words in bold to their definitions below. They can do this on their own.

**Key:** a. marks; b. walking stick; c. timber store; d. safe; e. housekeeper; f. flesh

2. When you are confident that they understand the difficult vocabulary and have read the report, explain that they need to listen to the story and complete the police report. Play Track 2. When it has finished, let the students compare their answers. Hand out the transcript so that they can confirm their answers.

**Key:** 1. 50–59; 2. his parents; 3. fire ; 4. house; 5. open; 6. bedroom; 7. Mr McFarlane; 8. garden; 9. heavy; 10. wood; 11. office

### Grammar: modals of deduction

**Aims:** to practise using *must*, *could* and *can't* for deduction; to clarify deduction, a key concept in the story; to discuss the possible implications of the evidence

1. Ask the class to read the extract under the next activity. Ask them to underline the parts from the extract that correspond to the three statements a. to c.

**Key:** a. he was certainly a lawyer; b. he was probably unmarried; c. it was obvious that he had an illness of the lungs

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2. Ask the class:

- Which modal verb means *possibly* or *probably*? (*could*)
- Which modal verb means *almost certainly true because nothing else seems possible*? (*must*)
- If I wanted to say 'He certainly isn't married', which modal verb would I use?

He **can't** be married.

He **shouldn't** be married.

He **mustn't** be married. (*can't*)

3. Ask the class:

- Does Sherlock know *for certain* that the man is a lawyer, that he is unmarried and that he has lung problems? (*no*)
- Where is his information from? (*He can see things – evidence*).

Explain that this process is called 'deduction': Sherlock Holmes is able to guess things as a result of considering the evidence that he has. He can 'deduce' facts from what he can see.

4. Put the students in groups of three or four. Ask them to read the newspaper report again in the transcript and make deductions about what happened. Elicit one or two examples to get them started and to check they understand the instructions:

*The walking stick must be the murder weapon.*

*The housekeeper can't be the killer because she's very old.*

Explain that they do not have to write their ideas, just discuss them in groups.

5. Go around the groups, checking that they have some ideas. After a couple of minutes, get the whole class's attention and ask groups for their ideas. Encourage a comparison of their ideas with other groups': *Does anyone disagree with that? How do you explain the blood on the walking stick?* and so on.

### Speaking (optional)

**Aim:** to dramatize the story and activate the language from Chapter 1

1. Tell the class that half of them are going to imagine they are the journalist who wrote the newspaper article and the other half are Inspector Lestrade.

Split the class into two groups and pair up people within those groups. Give them three minutes to make some notes.

- The journalists should note down a few questions that they would like to ask the inspector about the case.
- The inspectors should reread the police report on the worksheet and make notes about what they are doing to investigate.

2. After three minutes, put the class in pairs comprising one journalist and an Inspector Lestrade. Tell the journalists that they will have five minutes to conduct an interview with the inspector. Before they begin, write the following on the board and suggest they start with this line:

*Excuse me, inspector. May I ask you a few questions?*

3. As they are talking, go around the pairs making a note of any interesting language, especially related to modals of deduction and the vocabulary students have learnt in this lesson.

4. When they have finished, give whole-class feedback on their language use, both good use and notable errors.

5. Ask the class for their own ideas about the case. Did McFarlane do it? Why? Why not?

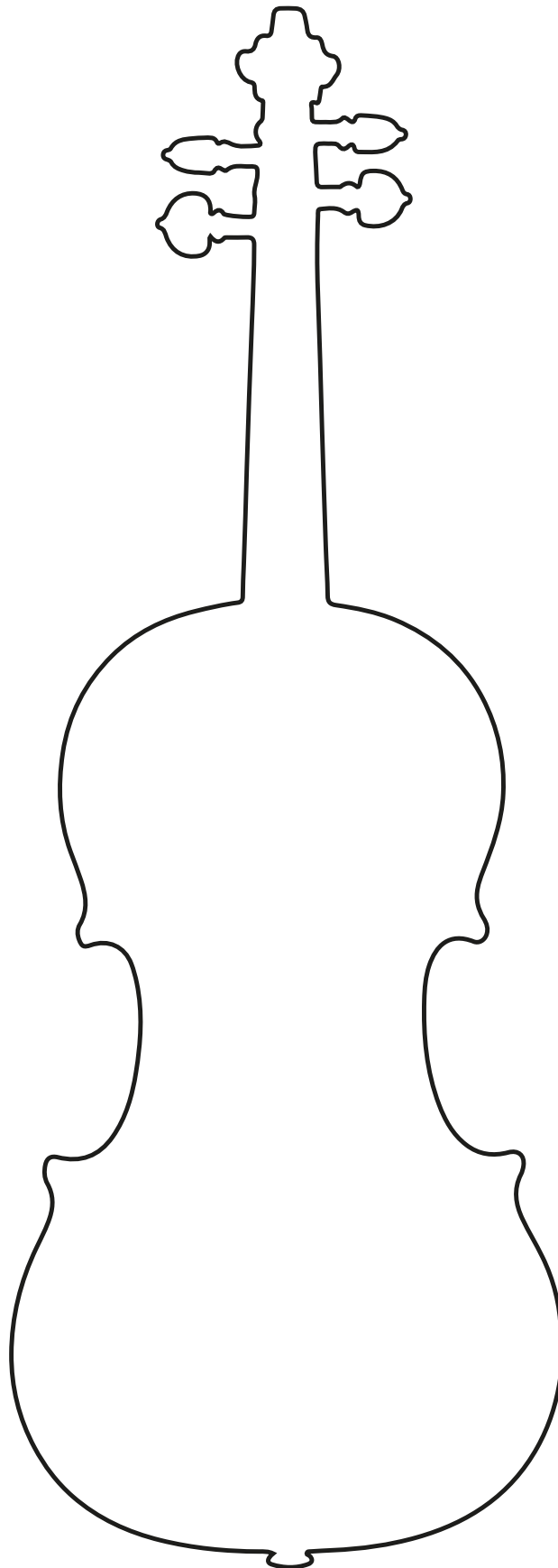
### Follow-up tasks

- The students find out more about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of Sherlock Holmes, and present their findings as a mini-biography the following lesson.
- Set the class the question: how many different actors have played Sherlock Holmes on television and in the cinema? (The answer is not clear, of course, since there have been so many!)



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Pictures



# A Sherlock Holmes story

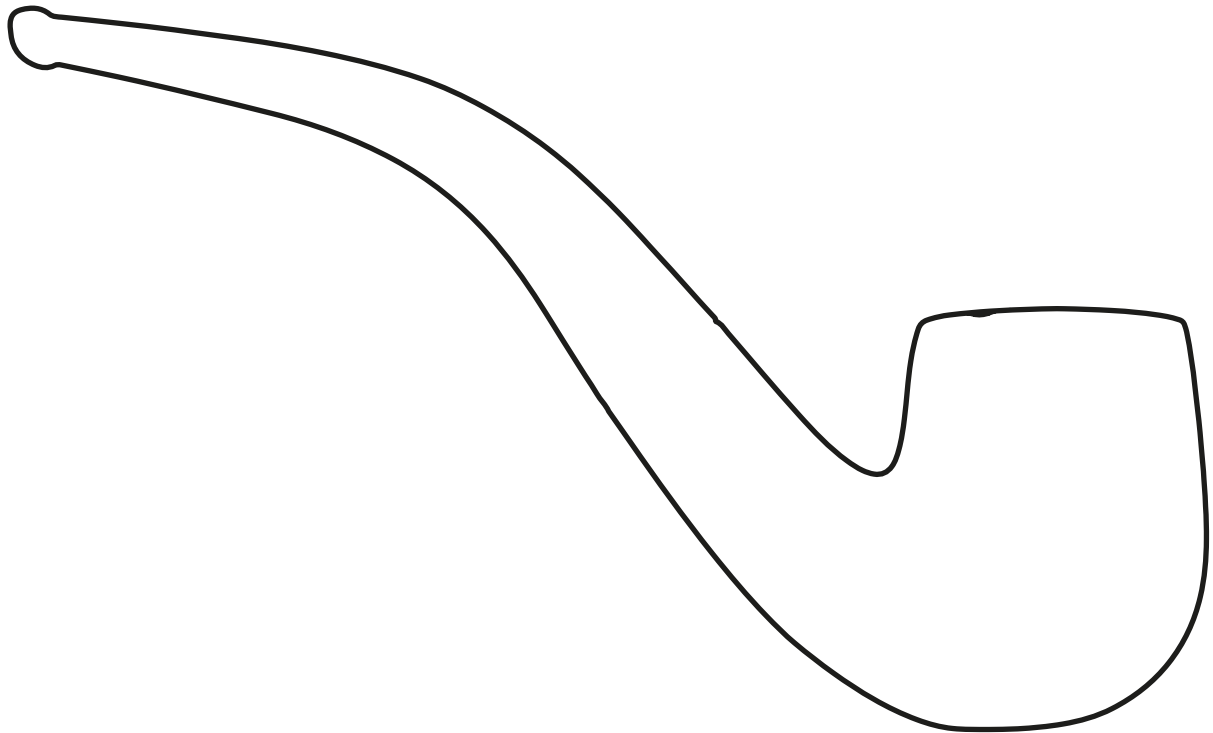
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# A Sherlock Holmes story

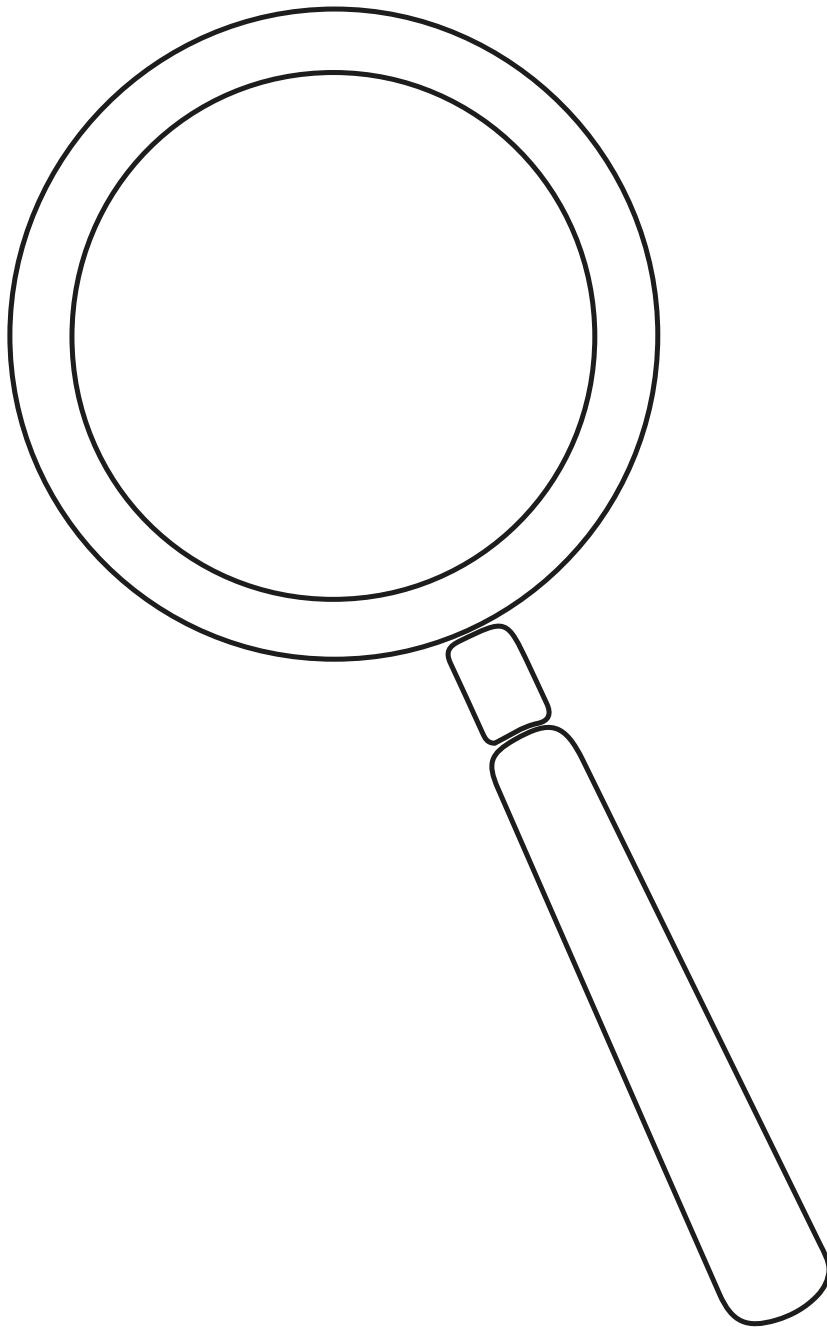
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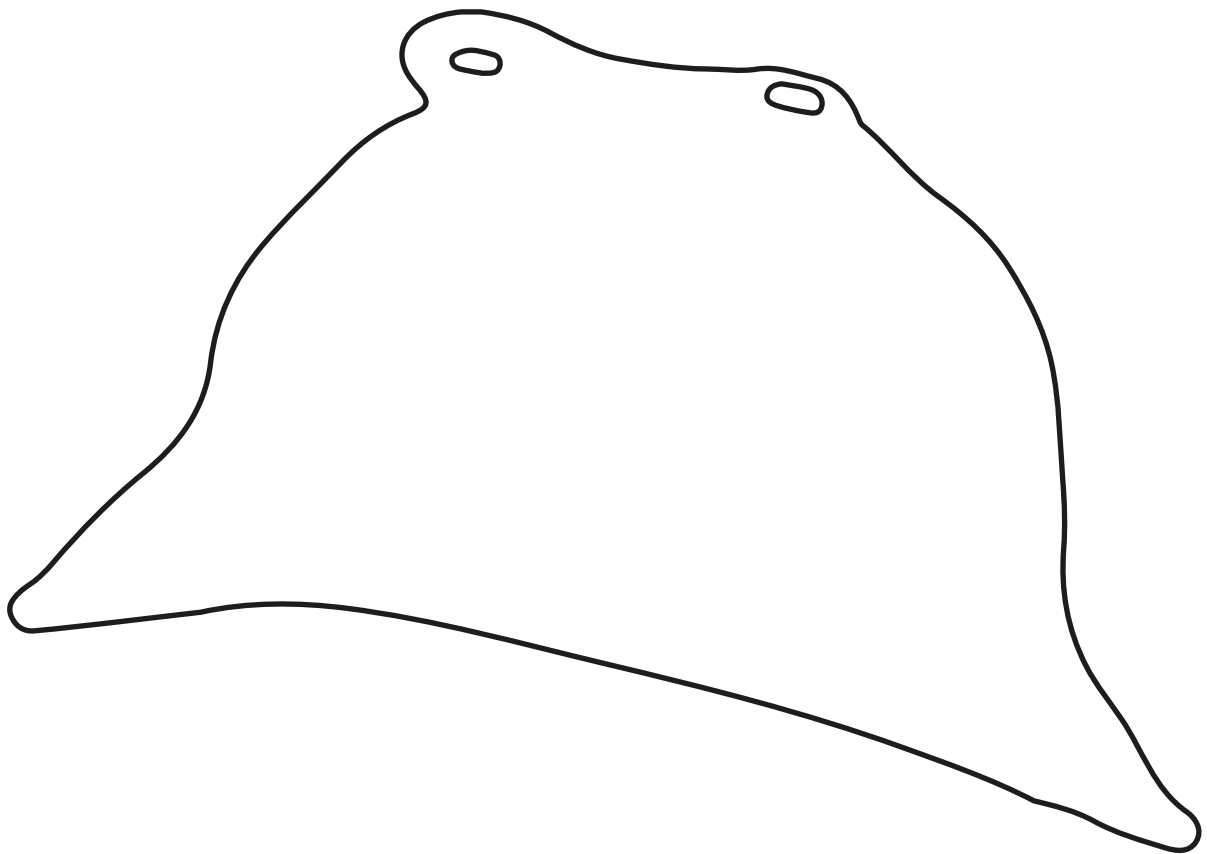
Pictures



# The Norwood Builder

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Pictures



## The Norwood Builder

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

### Chapter 1

#### Listening 1

Read this summary of the first part of Chapter 1. Why is the story called 'The Norwood Builder'?

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson are finishing dinner when a young man quietly comes in through the door. He is frightened and asks Holmes for help. The police want to arrest him because they suspect that he is a murderer. The man's name is John Hector McFarlane. Holmes has heard of him because he read about the crime in the newspaper that morning. He works out some facts about McFarlane by observing his appearance; for example, he guesses that he is not married because he is not wearing a wedding ring. The man points to the story about him in the newspaper. The headline says that the police have found the body of a builder in Norwood and that they are looking for McFarlane. Watson then reads the rest of the article.

Listen to the story. Find five mistakes in the summary.

#### Listening 2

Read the police report. Match the words in bold to their definitions below (a–f).

Location: Norwood

Crime: murder (possible)

Inspector in charge of investigation: Inspector Lestrade

Details of the victim:

Name: Jonas Oldacre

Age: approximately (1) \_\_\_\_\_

Job: builder (owns a building company)

Lives: Norwood, with a **housekeeper** (no family)

Details of the suspect:

Name: John Hector McFarlane

Age: approx. 30

Job: lawyer

Lives: Blackheath, E. London with (2) \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

Last night, Mr McFarlane visited Mr Oldacre. Early this morning, a (3) \_\_\_\_\_ was discovered in a timber store behind Mr Oldacre's (4) \_\_\_\_\_, destroying all the wood. Afterwards, Oldacre was reported missing. He had not slept in his bed and the safe in his bedroom was (5) \_\_\_\_\_. We found blood in the (6) \_\_\_\_\_ and on a walking stick. The stick belongs to (7) \_\_\_\_\_. A door from Mr Oldacre's bedroom towards the (8) \_\_\_\_\_ was open. In the garden, there were marks on the ground between the house and the timber store. We think that a (9) \_\_\_\_\_ object was pulled across the garden towards the store. Also, we found burnt flesh among the burnt (10) \_\_\_\_\_.

Action plan:

Police will search for the suspect at his home and at his (11) \_\_\_\_\_.

- damaged or dirty areas on the surface of something
- a long piece of wood that people use to help them walk
- a place where wood is kept until it is needed
- a strong metal box with a special lock, used for storing valuable things
- someone whose job is to clean someone else's house and cook their meals
- the soft parts of people's or animals' bodies that consists mostly of muscle and fat

Listen to the rest of Chapter 1. Complete the police report.



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#### Grammar: modals of deduction

Read the extract. Underline one part that corresponds to each of the three statements below.

- a. He **must be** a lawyer.
- b. He **could be** unmarried.
- c. He **must have** lung problems.

I knew my friend's methods, and I could understand what he was thinking. The man's clothes were untidy, so he was probably unmarried. We could see that there were **legal** papers in his pockets, so he was certainly a lawyer. We could hear his heavy breathing, so it was obvious that he had an illness of the lungs. Everything that Holmes had said was obvious, but the young man seemed surprised.

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Track 1

The **case** which I call 'The Norwood Builder' began for us in a very dramatic way. Holmes and I had just finished a late breakfast one morning, and we were talking in our sitting room in Baker Street. Holmes was about to open his morning newspaper, when we heard a lot of noise outside. A moment later, someone was knocking at the door, very hard. Then the door opened and a young man **rushed** in. His face was pale and his fair hair and his clothes were untidy. His blue eyes were frightened. He had **obviously** been running, and he was breathing heavily.

'You've got to help me, Mr Holmes,' he said **desperately**. 'The police are following me! Oh, the **scandal** will **break my poor mother's heart**.'

'Sit down, please,' Holmes said. 'This is my friend and helper, Dr Watson. Please tell us who *you* are.'

'I'm that most unhappy man, John Hector McFarlane,' he replied. He obviously thought that we would recognize the name, but we did not.

'Mr Holmes, if the police arrive, please make them wait,' the young man went on. 'Don't let them arrest me until I've told you my story.'

'Why do they want to arrest you?' asked Holmes in surprise. 'What crime will they **charge** you with?'

'They'll charge me with murder, Mr Holmes, but I haven't killed anyone,' he replied. 'But I will be happy to go to prison if I know that Sherlock Holmes is **investigating** my case!'

Holmes is a tall, thin man with long fingers and a long neck. His eyes are like a **fierce** bird's eyes. Now he looked very carefully at our visitor.

'I know that you're not married and that you're a lawyer,' said Holmes. 'I know that your **lungs** are not good. But I know nothing else about you, and I do not recognize your name.'

I knew my friend's methods, and I could understand what he was thinking. The man's clothes were untidy, so he was probably unmarried. We could see that there were **legal** papers in his pockets, so he was certainly a lawyer. We could hear his heavy breathing, so it was obvious that he had an illness of the lungs. Everything that Holmes had said was obvious, but the young man seemed surprised.

'That's amazing,' he said. 'But if you'd opened your newspaper this morning, you would have recognized my name.' The man opened the newspaper which Holmes had put on the table and pointed dramatically to a headline. Then he held the paper up so we could both see it.

MYSTERIOUS CRIME COMMITTED IN NORWOOD! A WELL-KNOWN BUILDER IS MISSING. THE POLICE THINK THAT HE HAS BEEN MURDERED AND THEY ARE **SEARCHING FOR A SUSPECT**.

'And I *am* the suspect,' our visitor said.

'Your case sounds interesting,' said Holmes, looking very pleased. 'Watson, please read the newspaper article.'

I read what was in front of me.

Track 2

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## Chapter 1

Mr Jonas Oldacre, from the **district** of Norwood, has disappeared. The police suspect that he has been murdered. Mr Oldacre is a man in his fifties who has lived in Norwood, on the southern edge of London, for many years. He owns a building **firm** there. Recently he seems to have stopped working as a builder and he rarely meets anyone. Mr Oldacre lives alone **except for** an elderly woman who is his housekeeper. Yesterday evening, he was visited at home by Mr John Hector McFarlane, a lawyer who works in central London. Then, very early this morning, a fire was discovered in a timber store behind Mr Oldacre's house. All the wood in the store was burnt. But when the firemen had put out the flames, no one could find Mr Oldacre. He had not slept in his bed, and a safe which he kept in his bedroom had been opened. The police found some blood in the bedroom and they also found a heavy walking stick, which belongs to Mr McFarlane. There was some blood on the walking stick too.

A door leading from Mr Oldacre's bedroom to the garden was open. There were some marks on the ground outside it which led towards the timber store. The police think that something heavy was pulled across the garden towards the store. This morning, some strange pieces of burnt flesh were found among the burnt wood. The police do not know if the flesh is human, but they **fear the worst**. They are searching for Mr McFarlane. They believe that he killed Mr Oldacre and started the fire to burn his body. Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard is the policeman investigating the case.

'I'm surprised that you haven't been **arrested** already, Mr McFarlane,' said Holmes, when I had finished reading.

'I haven't been to my office this morning,' our visitor replied. 'And I haven't been to my home. It was very late when I left Mr Oldacre last night. I live in Blackheath, on the eastern edge of London, with my parents. I wasn't able to get back there, so I stayed at a hotel in Norwood. This morning, I saw the newspaper and I read about Mr Oldacre's disappearance. And I read that the police were searching for me. I decided to come straight here to consult you. I think that the police were following me when I turned into Baker Street.'

He stopped for a moment, then he added, 'Please help me, Mr Holmes. I need to **protect** my mother from a scandal.'

At that moment there was more noise on the stairs outside and our sitting room door was thrown open. Inspector Lestrade rushed into the room. There were two more policemen behind him.

'Mr John Hector McFarlane, I arrest you for the murder of Mr Jonas Oldacre,' Lestrade said.

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## Chapter 1

### Glossary

**case** a crime that the police are trying to solve, or a problem that someone has

**rush** to hurry in order to get somewhere very quickly

**obviously** in a way that is clear for almost anyone to see or understand

**desperately** in a very worried or angry way

**scandal** talk or reports in the newspapers about shocking events

**break someone's heart** to upset someone very much, especially by doing something bad

**charge** to accuse someone officially of committing a crime. If you commit a crime, you do something legally wrong.

**investigate** to try to find out the facts about something in order to learn the truth about it

**fierce** very angry, or ready to attack

**lung** one of the two organs in your chest that fill with air when you breathe

**legal** relating to the law or lawyers

**search** to try to find something or someone by looking carefully

**suspect** someone who the police believe may have committed a crime. If someone suspects someone of something, they believe that someone has done something, usually something bad.

**district** one of the areas into which a town or country is divided for official purposes

**firm** a business or company

**except for** used for introducing the only person, thing or fact that is not included in your main statement

**fear the worst** to fear that something very bad has happened to someone or that they could be dead

**arrest** If the police arrest someone, they take that person to a police station because they believe he or she has committed a crime.

**protect** to keep someone or something safe from harm, injury, damage or loss