

Themes

What are the main themes?

Crime



Wealth/Greed



Duality



Friendship



Imperialism



Rationality Vs Emotion



Author's Intent

Why did write the novel?

To highlight the treatment of Women in Victorian London and condemn the class system.

Potentially to criticise the police in Victorian London.

To highlight the destructive nature of greed.

To highlight the notion of otherness that had become normal in Victorian England.

Characters in

Who are the main characters in 'The Sign of Four'?

Sherlock Holmes

Intellectual
Rational
Esoteric
Mercurial
Relentless

Dr. John Watson

Admiring
Honourable
Loyal
Romantic
Pragmatic

Mary Morstan

Innocent
Modest
Femenine

Thaddeous Sholto

Nervous
Eccentric
Reclusive

Athelney Jones

Pompous
Apologetic
Bumbling

Jonathon Small

Calculating
Ruthless
Avaricious
Determined
Vengeful

Key Quotes

What are some useful quotations to know for ?

'I never guess. It is a shocking habit – destructive to the logical faculty'
Sherlock

Your presence will be of great service to me'
Sherlock to Watson

He tried to speak in a cool careless way, but his eyes were shining with excitement and greed'
Small

'Ha! I have a theory. These flashes come upon me at times'
Jones

'The cursed greed which has been my besetting sin through life has withheld her from the treasure'
Sholto

'I have led a retired life and no friends whom I could appeal to'
Mary

Three times a day for many months I had witnessed this performance, but custom had not reconciled my mind to it'
Watson

'My mind rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work'
Sherlock

Plot Summary

What happens in 'The Sign of Four'?

Chapters 1 – 3

The novel opens with Watson witnessing Sherlock's drug use. Sherlock initially displays his deductive skills using Watson's pocket watch. Mary Morstan arrives to ask the pair for help having received a letter telling her she had been wronged. Watson is initially attracted to Mary but worries he is too lower class for her. Holmes, Watson and Mary travel to an unknown neighbourhood to meet the sender of the letter.

Chapters 4 – 6

Thaddeus Sholto is introduced who explains his reason for writing the letter; Mary is owed her share of a treasure. The trio travel with Thaddeus to Pondicherry lodge to Thaddeus' brother, where they discover his body. Jones arrives and decides that Thaddeus is the murderer, Sherlock disagrees and the second mystery begins.

Chapters 7 – 9

Watson takes Mary home whilst Sherlock sets off with a dog on the trail of the scent from the lodge. The dog leads them to a wharf where the owners wife explains that her husband left on the Aurora with a man with a wooden leg. Holmes begins to become frustrated as his usual sources turn up nothing he goes undercover himself and finally has a breakthrough.

Chapters 10 – 12

The Aurora is found and a chase ensues. Tonga is killed by a gunshot as he shoots a poison dart. The treasure chest is recovered. Small is captured and agrees to tell the truth. Mary receives the treasure chest which is actually empty. Small reveals the treasure's past of betrayal and admits to throwing it in The Thames.

Techniques

What techniques does use?

Pathetic Fallacy

The grey and misty sense in London reflected the mystery and suspense of the case as well as the industrialisation of London.

Symbolism

The Great Agra treasure and the deaths surrounding it symbolise the destructive nature of greed.

Foreshadowing

The many clues that Sherlock discovers lead to the 'different' individual that is Tonga.

Imagery

A lot of dark and negative imagery is used to describe Tonga and his 'otherness'

Context

What was going on in society at the time?

Industrial Revolution

London was becoming increasingly industrialised. The city was undergoing a great transformation.

Female Gender Roles

Women were subjected to the patriarchal society. They should have been passive and submissive.

Drug Use

Drug use in the Victorian Era was common although, associated with the fear of foreigners.

Indian Rebellion 1857

India was rebelling against the colonisation by Britain.