

The Second Stain

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Chapter 1

Author: Daniel Barber

Level: Intermediate

Age: Young adults / Adults

Time: 60 minutes

Aims: In this lesson, the students will:

1. discuss what they know about fictional detectives;
2. listen for gist and detail to understand the beginning of the story;
3. become more aware of, and practise, the use of the present perfect for past actions with present results;
4. speculate about the contents of the mysterious missing letter.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (the beginning of Chapter 1) and Track 2 (full audio) downloaded from onestopenglish; one copy of the full transcript per student

Summary: Sherlock Holmes and his assistant, Doctor Watson, are visited by two very important gentlemen: the Prime Minister and the Minister for Europe, Mr Trelawney Hope. They want Holmes's help in an extremely delicate matter. Hope has lost a document, the existence of which, if made public, could threaten the peace and stability of Britain. In Chapter 1, the Prime Minister explains the delicacy of the situation and Hope recounts the events of the last few days, since he received the all-important document.

Speaking

Aim: to get the students thinking about fictional private detectives and their work

1. Write on the board the following names, stopping after each one to see if anyone can tell you what these names have in common:

Stilton – Poirot – Gadget – Columbo – Fletcher – Castle – Marlowe – Holmes

You could specify that they are all famous because of the job that they do. (You may decide to add other names that you think the class will be familiar with because they are more famous in their country.) Hopefully, someone will have recognized that they are all names of fictional detectives. To the right is a list of their full names together with some further details, should students have questions about them.

Hercule Poirot – a creation of Agatha Christie's who solved many mysteries in books such as *Murder on the Orient Express* and *Death on the Nile*

Inspector Gadget – a children's cartoon and movie about a friendly detective with lots of gadgets to help him fight crime

Inspector Columbo – a Los Angeles police detective from a long-running TV series

Jessica Fletcher – star of *Murder She Wrote*, another classic TV series

Richard Castle – star of *Castle*, an American TV series about a crime writer who works with the police to solve crimes in New York

Phillip Marlowe – the hero of the classic American detective novel, *The Big Sleep*, written by Raymond Chandler

Sherlock Holmes – the original fictional detective, creation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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2. Ask them to think of other fictional detectives. Ask them about the sorts of cases they have, what they are like as people, their special qualities for solving or fighting crime and any other information that they know about them. Don't forget to ask which detectives they enjoy reading about or watching and why.

3. Explain that the class is going to listen to a Sherlock Holmes story. Briefly find out what the class knows about Sherlock Holmes and his stories, if you have not done so already.

Vocabulary

Aim: to pre-teach some important words found in the story

1. Hand out the worksheet and direct the class's attention to the first task. Ask the students to read the definitions, then to complete each sentence underneath the definitions with one of the words. Go around the room to help, as necessary. Fast finishers could be asked to write new sentences for each word.

2. When most of the class has finished, ask individuals for their answers.

Key: 1. unguarded; 2. despair; 3. valet; 4. made it public; 5. Minister; 6. diplomatic; 7. dispatch box; 8. reputation; 9. solve

Listening 1

Aims: to listen for gist; to tune in to the narrator's voice before the main listening with a short excerpt and gist questions

1. Ask the students to look at the first listening activity. Then, tell them to listen to the beginning of Chapter 1 and answer the two questions. Play Track 1.

2. When the track has finished, put the students into pairs and ask them to compare their answers. Then, invite volunteers to tell the class what they think.

Key: 1. It is important for the government and the country because it involves a diplomatic secret. It is important for Holmes and Watson because they must protect the reputation of a fine woman.; 2. Most detective stories involve murders, whereas this is about a stolen document. The clients are not normally such important people as the Prime Minister.

Listening 2

Aim: to listen for specific information

1. Explain that the class is going to listen now to the whole chapter. Point out Listening 2 on the worksheet. Give them a couple of minutes to read the summary of Chapter 1 carefully. Check that they understand it, explaining that they will have to choose the correct answers after listening to the whole of Chapter 1.

2. Play Track 2. When it has finished, let the students compare their answers. Let them talk for a few minutes. Then, hand out a copy of the transcript to each student so that they can check their answers. Finally, go through the answers with the whole class to deal with any confusion or queries.

Key: 1. worried; 2. Mr Hope; 3. this morning; 4. want to keep it secret; 5. written by; 6. has stolen; 7. less; 8. at night; 9. bedroom; 10. four (Mr and Mrs Hope, Mrs Hope's maid and Mr Hope's valet); 11. first; 12. only a few people know

Language: present perfect to describe past actions with present results

Aim: to practise and consolidate the use of the present perfect aspect to describe past actions with a present result or consequence

1. Direct the class towards the language activity on the worksheet. Point out that sentences 1 to 4 are things that

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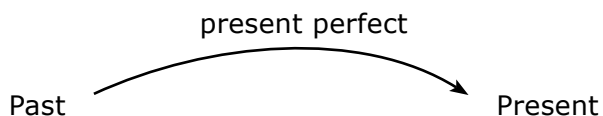
characters say in the story about events that happened in the past. They should match them to the consequence or result of those actions. Give them just a minute for this.

Key: 1. c; 2. d; 3. a; 4. b

Now, ask the class the following questions:

- In sentences 1 to 4, do we know when the actions happened? (*We know they happened in the past but we don't know when exactly.*)
- What tense is used to describe the past actions in sentences 1 to 4? (*the present perfect*)

You may wish to emphasize the relationship between past and present that the perfect aspect reflects with a diagram. The present perfect is a bridge between the past and present:



You may decide that the class need reminding about the form of the present perfect simple (subject + *have / has* (+ *not*) + past participle; In questions, invert the subject and auxiliary verb). Then, tell them to complete the four practice sentences on the worksheet.

Key: 1. 's / *has written*; 2. 's / *has told*; 3. *Has the thief already given*; 4. 've / *have come*

Speaking 2 (optional)

Aim: to predict the contents of the letter, the subject of the next lesson

1. Ask the class to get into groups of three to five students. Get them to list everything they know about the letter. After a minute or two, invite the groups to say what they know.

2. Staying in their groups, students should now look at the list of theories on the worksheet. Tell them that they have five minutes to decide which of the theories is the most probable. They should try to agree by discussing them so that, at the end of the five minutes, they are ready to state their theory. Encourage the groups to come up with their own ideas as well, and to embellish their ideas with extra details if possible.

3. As they talk, you will need to go around listening to their ideas and prompting, if necessary. After five minutes, stop the activity and nominate spokespeople to tell the class what they think the letter contains. Finally, tell them that the next chapter of the story will reveal the contents of the letter.

Follow-up tasks

- The students write the letter as if they were the foreign ruler. In the next lesson, they can compare their versions.
- Students research British foreign policy and/or the British Empire in the late nineteenth century.

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Vocabulary

Read the definitions. Then, complete the sentences below with one of the words in bold.

despair the feeling that a situation is so bad that nothing you can do will change it

diplomatic relating to the profession or skill of preserving or creating friendly relationships between countries

dispatch box a case that a minister in the government uses for carrying documents

make something public to tell everyone about something so that it is not private or secret anymore

minister an official in charge of a government department in the UK and some other countries. Ministers work in a government department called a ministry.

reputation the opinion that people have about how good or how bad someone or something is

solve to find the reason or explanation for something (noun: solution)

unguarded an unguarded place or object is not watched or protected by anyone

valet a man whose job is to look after another man's clothes and be his personal assistant

1. He only left his wallet _____ for a moment, but that was all the time the thief needed to steal it.
2. It was dark and I was alone. To my _____, the car would not start.
3. No rich man ever travelled alone; a _____ came with him to take care of all his arrangements.
4. The actress didn't want anyone to know she was pregnant but the newspapers found out and _____.
5. The army, navy and air force are all under the control of the Defence _____, Michael Brooks.
6. The latest _____ mission to bring peace to the region has failed.
7. The politician was carrying his _____ as he entered the president's palace.
8. The university has a _____ as a centre of excellence.
9. Will they ever _____ the mystery of the plane's disappearance?

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Listening 1

Listen to the beginning of the story and answer the questions.

1. Why is this case important?
2. Is this a typical detective case? Why? Why not?

Listening 2

Read the summary of Chapter 1. Then, listen to the story and choose the correct options.

Sherlock Holmes, the world-famous English detective, has two important visitors to his house: Mr Trelawney Hope is the Minister for *Economic Affairs* / *European Affairs* and Lord Bellinger is the British Prime Minister. They both look ¹ *angry* / *worried* as they present Holmes with a new case.

² *Lord Bellinger* / *Mr Hope* explains that, at 8 o'clock ³ *last night* / *this morning*, he noticed that he'd lost an important document. The men haven't told the police because they ⁴ *don't think the police can find it* / *want to keep it secret*. We know that the letter was ⁵ *about* / *written by* the ruler of another country. The person who ⁶ *has stolen* / *wrote* the document wants to cause problems for Britain.

Mr Hope received the letter ⁷ *more* / *less* than a week ago. He kept the letter at home ⁸ *at night* / *all the time*. The last time that he saw the letter, it was in his dispatch box in his ⁹ *bedroom* / *library*. Only ¹⁰ *three* / *four* people are allowed to enter that room. This is the ¹¹ *first* / *second* time that a document has been lost from his house.

In Britain, ¹² *only a few people know* / *absolutely no one knows* about the existence of the letter.

Language: present perfect to describe past actions with present results

Match the past actions (1 to 4) to their present results (a to d).

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. 'I have lost something.' | a. 'We trust them both completely.' |
| 2. 'We have not told the police.' | b. 'I feel so terrible.' |
| 3. 'My wife's maid and my valet have both been with us for many years.' | c. 'I hope you'll be able to help me find it.' |
| 4. 'It is I myself who have let this secret escape!' | d. 'They know nothing.' |

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Complete the sentences using the present perfect form of the verbs in brackets.

1. A foreign ruler _____ (write) a letter that could end peace in Europe. This is a major crisis.
2. Mr Hope _____ (tell) his wife about the letter. She is worried for him.
3. _____ (the thief / already / give) the letter to the newspapers? And, if so, are they going to make it public?
4. They _____ (come) to Holmes. But how can he help them?

Speaking

What do you know about the letter?

Discuss the following theories about the contents of the document. Try to agree which theory is most likely. Then, invent your own theory.

- The foreign ruler wants another country to return to them a possession that it has taken.
- The foreign ruler has changed his opinion or beliefs about something.
- The foreign ruler wants some land that belongs to another country.
- The foreign ruler supplies resources (energy, raw materials etc) to other countries but wants to stop for some reason.
- The foreign ruler knows about a scandal (corruption, misconduct etc) involving a politician or other ruler.
- The foreign ruler has information about another country's military plans.
- The foreign ruler is angry about something Britain has done.
- ...

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The **case** which I call ‘The Second Stain’ was one of the most important cases of Sherlock Holmes’s career. It was important for our country because it involved a **diplomatic** secret. But it was important to us because the **reputation** of a fine woman was in danger. We thought that Holmes needed to **solve** the case to save our country from a war, but in the end, we realized that in fact he had saved someone’s career and someone’s marriage. This is what happened.

Track 1

One Tuesday morning, Holmes and I were visited in our sitting room in Baker Street by two famous men. One was Mr Trelawney Hope, the **Minister** for European Affairs in our government. He was still quite a young man, and everyone expected great things from him in the future. He was a clever man and a handsome man, although on that morning he looked worried. Our other visitor was even more important and he looked worried too. He was our Prime Minister, the head of our government, Lord Bellinger. He was a thin, elderly man with wonderful eyes. He looked like someone who was used to having great power.

‘Mr Holmes, we have a problem,’ the Minister for European Affairs said. ‘I have lost something, and I hope you’ll be able to help me find it. As soon as I knew that it was missing – at eight o’clock this morning – I told Lord Bellinger about the problem. He suggested that you were the person that we should consult. A document has disappeared from my house, and it is extremely important that we find it quickly. Will you help us?’

‘Have you told the police about this?’ Holmes asked.

‘No, sir, we have not told the police.’ It was Lord Bellinger who answered and he spoke firmly. ‘We have not told them and we will not tell them! Mr Holmes, if we tell the police about this, then soon the newspapers will know about it. If we tell the police, we tell the public. And it is most important that this problem remains a secret. It must not be **made public**.’

Track 2

‘And why is secrecy so important in this case?’ Holmes asked.

‘Because the peace of Europe may depend on it,’ the Prime Minister replied seriously. ‘The person who has taken the document wants to **make trouble** for our country and for several countries in Europe. This person will try to make the contents of the document public as soon as possible.’

‘I understand,’ said Holmes. ‘And now I will ask Mr Hope to tell us all he knows about this disappearance.’

‘There is not much to tell you,’ the Minister said. ‘The document was a letter from the ruler of a foreign country – I must not tell you which country. The letter was received in my ministry six days ago. It was so secret that I kept it in my safe at the ministry during the daytime, and I took it home with me each evening.’

‘I live in Whitehall Terrace, which is close to my ministry,’ he continued. ‘At home, I kept the letter in my dispatch box, which is always locked when I am not working on its contents. The **dispatch box** is kept in my bedroom, which is on the second floor of my house. The letter was in the box last night. I’m sure of that because I looked at it while I was dressing for dinner.’

‘The box is kept on a small table beside my bed,’ he went on. ‘I’m a light sleeper – I wake easily if there is any noise. My wife is also a light sleeper. We’re both sure that no one entered our bedroom during the night. And yet, this morning, the letter was no longer in my dispatch box.’

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‘At what time did you have your dinner yesterday evening? And at what time did you go to bed?’ Holmes asked.

‘We ate at half-past seven,’ Hope replied. ‘And we went to bed at half-past eleven. My wife went out to the theatre after dinner, and I read in my library until she returned.’

‘So, the dispatch box was **unguarded** for four hours,’ Holmes said.

‘Yes, but no one is allowed to enter our bedroom except for two servants – my wife’s maid and my **valet**,’ Hope said. ‘They have both been with us for many years. We **trust** them both completely. And, of course, they didn’t know that there was anything especially important in the dispatch box last night.’

‘Who knew about the letter?’ Holmes asked.

‘No one in our house knew about it,’ the Minister answered. ‘Even my wife knew nothing about it until this morning when I told her that it was missing.’

‘How many people in Britain knew about the letter?’ Holmes asked next.

‘The most important members of our government knew about it,’ Hope replied. ‘And two or three officials who work in my ministry also knew about it. Except for those – and they are all used to keeping important secrets – no one in Britain knew. And now, it is I myself who have let this secret escape!’ For a moment, the sudden **despair** in his voice and on his face showed us his true feelings. Then he continued, more quietly again. ‘And outside Britain, I’m sure that only the writer himself knew about it. I’m in regular contact with his ministers by telegram, and none of them has mentioned the letter. If they had known about it, they certainly would have contacted me.’

‘Have any documents disappeared from your house before this?’ Holmes asked.

‘No, never,’ Hope replied. ‘Never.’

Glossary

case a crime that the police are trying to solve

diplomatic relating to the profession or skill of preserving or creating friendly relationships between countries

reputation the opinion that people have about how good or how bad someone or something is

solve to find the reason or explanation for something (noun: solution)

minister an official in charge of a government department in the UK and some other countries. Ministers work in a government department called a ministry.

make something public to tell everyone about something so that it is not private or secret anymore

make trouble to do or say something that causes someone problems, worries or difficulties

dispatch box a case that a minister in the government uses for carrying documents

unguarded an unguarded place or object is not watched or protected by anyone

valet a man whose job is to look after another man’s clothes and be his personal assistant

trust to be confident that someone is honest, fair and reliable

despair the feeling that a situation is so bad that nothing you can do will change it