



Somebody That I Used to Know: Reading Gendered Silences in the Sherlock Holmes Canon

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Abstract. This article attends to some of the silenced women in Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and recommends ways to encourage students both to think about and to respond to them ethically and imaginatively.

Black Lives Matter has fundamentally changed my teaching practice. On the one hand, this movement has prompted me to diversify my reading lists and to think about how and why I teach familiar texts. On the other, it has encouraged me to re-evaluate my roles as a scholar, a teacher, and an administrator; to involve students in this important conversation; and to illustrate in the classroom how we can perform activism by means of our critical and creative activities. At Dalhousie University, in Halifax, I work with many students, some of whom know (without having read) Sherlock Holmes. I have taught Arthur Conan Doyle's fiction in four undergraduate courses: Reading Popular Culture (2018–19), Foundations of Science Fiction (2018), Modernisms and Masculinities (2019), and Writing for University (2022). In winter 2022, I made Holmes the theme of Writing for University, a first-year offering that introduces students to academic writing. Over 14 weeks, we examined many stories and adaptations. I stress the relevance of genre fiction in the present day, and I encourage students to listen to the voices and the silences of those who are marginalized as a means of responding ethically and imaginatively to these works.

The Holmes canon is rife, for example, with female characters who appear only to disappear. Mary Morstan is first introduced to us in *The Sign of Four* (1890). She is, according

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