

## STUDY QUESTIONS for “The Red-Headed League”

### Recalling

1. What conclusions does Holmes draw about Jabez Wilson’s past activities? Upon what evidence does Holmes base these conclusions?
2. What does Watson think the Red-Headed League is? What does it turn out to be?
3. List the clues that enable Holmes to solve the mystery of the Red-Headed League.
4. Describe the bank robbers’ plan, and explain what Holmes does to foil it.

### Interpreting

5. What evidence supports Holmes’s conclusion that Jabez Wilson is “none too bright”?
6. Prove that Holmes is a better observer than Watson. In what other ways are they different?
7. Would you have liked the story better if Holmes had explained his reasoning at each stage of the investigation? Why or why not?
8. Watson says, “I trust that I am not more dense than my neighbors, but I was always oppressed with a sense of my own stupidity in my dealings with Sherlock Holmes.” Explain what makes him feel this way. Do you see any evidence that Holmes enjoys making him feel this way?

### Extending

9. What satisfactions do you think people draw from reading detective stories?

## VIEWPOINT

Sherlock Holmes is probably the world’s best known detective. One writer explains the special appeal of Conan Doyle’s hero in the following way:

The name of the great sleuth has become an international symbol of all that is estimable [admirable],...romantic and glamorous in the pursuit and detection of crime.

—H. Haycroft, *Sherlock Holmes’s Greatest Cases*

1. In what ways does Holmes prove himself to be an “estimable” sleuth in this story.
2. What might be “glamorous” about Holmes and his work?

## COMPOSITION

### Evaluating a Response to a Story

Write an evaluation of “The Red-Headed League.” First decide whether or not you liked the story. Then explain your response, considering the following questions: Does the story arouse your interest at the beginning? What questions does it raise that you want to see answered? Does it sustain your interest and lead toward a logical solution? Support your opinions with specific examples from the story.

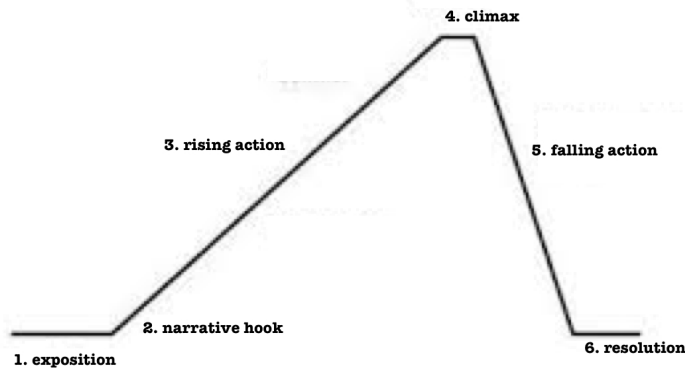
### Writing Dialogue

A friend has misplaced something important – for example, a favorite cd. Write the dialogue for a conversation in which your friend explains the problem and asks you for help. Like a detective, you ask a series of logical questions that lead your friend to remember where he or she left the missing object. Be sure to distinguish clearly between your two speakers.

## LITERARY FOCUS

### Plot Development

The **plot** is the sequence of events in a story. It usually follows the pattern below.



In the **exposition** the author introduces the story's characters, setting, and situation to us. The **narrative hook** is the point at which the author catches our attention and establishes the basic conflict that the story will eventually resolve. The narrative hook marks the beginning of the rising action, which adds complications to the story.

The rising action leads up to the **climax**, the point of our greatest involvement in the story. The climax usually indicates the way in which the story's conflict will be solved. The **falling action** reveals the outcome of the climax, and the **resolution** brings the story to a satisfying and logical conclusion.

### Thinking about Plot Development

In "The Red-Headed League" the narrative hook is Watson's reading of the advertisement for the league. Make a chart identifying the other parts of the plot, filling in the events that represent the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

### Turning Point

The **turning point** in a story is the point in the story at which the end is inevitable, even though that end may not yet be apparent. It may or may not be the same as the climax. For example, the climax of "Little Red Ridinghood" may well be the secret conversation between Little Red and the disguised wolf. The turning point, however, might instead be when Little Red reveals her plans to the wolf along on the path in the woods.

### Thinking about the Turning Point

What is the turning point in "The Red-Headed League" and is it the same as the climax? Explain.