

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Sherlock Holmes, From "The Five Orange Pips"

Sherlock Holmes closed his eyes and placed his elbows upon the arms of his chair, with his finger-tips together. "The ideal reasoner," he remarked, "would, when he had once been shown a single fact in all its bearings, deduce from it not only all the chain of events which led up to it but also all the results which would follow from it. As Cuvier could correctly describe a whole animal by the contemplation of a single bone, so the observer who has thoroughly understood one link in a series of incidents should be able to accurately state all the other ones, both before and after. We have not yet grasped the results which the reason alone can attain to. Problems may be solved in the study which have baffled all those who have sought a solution by the aid of their senses. To carry the art, however, to its highest pitch, it is necessary that the reasoner should be able to utilise all the facts which have come to his knowledge; and this in itself implies, as you will readily see, a possession of all knowledge, which, even in these days of free education and encyclopaedias, is a somewhat rare accomplishment. It is not so impossible, however, that a man should possess all knowledge which is likely to be useful to him in his work, and this I have endeavoured in my case to do. If I remember rightly, you on one occasion, in the early days of our friendship, defined my limits in a very precise fashion."

"Yes," I answered, laughing. "It was a singular document. Philosophy, astronomy, and politics were marked at zero, I remember. Botany variable, geology profound as regards the mud-stains from any region within fifty miles of town, chemistry eccentric, anatomy unsystematic, sensational literature and crime records unique, violin-player, boxer, swordsman, lawyer, and self-poisoner by cocaine and tobacco. Those, I think, were the main points of my analysis."

Holmes grinned at the last item. "Well," he said, "I say now, as I said then, that a man should keep his little brain-attic stocked with all the furniture that he is likely to use, and the rest he can put away in the lumber-room of his library, where he can get it if he wants it. ..."

Define Each Word

deduce: _____

grasp: _____

baffle: _____

imply: _____

eccentric: _____

Write the Correct Word from the Vocabulary

1. Students found it amusing that the mildly _____ professor lived in a small apartment with nine cats, each named Socrates.
2. After weeks of study, the biology student was finally able to _____ genetic theory.
3. Despite intense analysis and observation, the detective was not able to _____ the exact location of the alleged murder.
4. For over 350 years, the proof of Fermat's Last Theorem _____ mathematicians.
5. What a speaker _____ with words, a listener infers with thought; more succinctly, a speaker _____, while a listener infers.

Comprehension and Discussion: Answer Each Question in Complete Sentences

1. According to Holmes, what would the “ideal reasoner” do when “shown a single fact in all its bearings”?

2. Where and how does Holmes access the knowledge that he needs to do his work? What resources do you think he would use today?

