2.24 Literature: The Sign of Four (Arthur Conan Doyle): 10-minute Pack

Total Marks

AQA / EDEXCEL / EDUQAS GCSE Literature 19th-century novel · about 10 minutes

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Early in the novel, Holmes examines a pocket watch that has recently passed to Watson from his late brother, and works out a series of accurate details about the brother's character and habits without having met him. Explain what this scene shows about Holmes's approach to solving cases.

(Total for Question 1 is 6 marks)

2 Explore how Conan Doyle presents greed as a corrupting force in the novel.

(Total for Question 2 is 8 marks)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Mark scheme · 2.24 Literature: The Sign of Four (Arthur Conan Doyle): 10-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies that Holmes reasons from small, physical details on the object itself, such as scratches or marks left by wear, rather than from guesswork (oe)	**B1**
identifies that Holmes builds a chain of separate small conclusions, each depending on the last, rather than jumping straight to an answer (oe)	**B1**
identifies that Holmes states his conclusions with confidence, as near-certainties rather than vague possibilities (oe)	**B1**
identifies that Holmes explains his reasoning afterwards, showing his method is repeatable and logical rather than a lucky guess (oe)	**B1**
links the scene to Holmes's wider claim that careful observation and deduction, not intuition, are the true basis of detective work (oe)	**B1**
any other valid, developed point about the scene or about Holmes's method (oe)	**B1**

Answer: The scene shows Holmes reasoning methodically from small physical evidence to confident, logical conclusions, and explaining his steps afterwards to prove the method is repeatable rather than lucky guesswork.

Question 2

Level 4 Detailed, well-developed exploration of how greed corrupts multiple characters, using precise reference and considering how the theme is dramatised through the plot's structure.	**7-8**
Level 3 Clear explanation of how greed is shown to corrupt more than one character, with relevant reference.	**5-6**
Level 2 Some explanation of one character's greed, with reference.	**3-4**
Level 1 Simple, general comment on greed in the novel, with little development.	**1-2**

Indicative content:

- the treasure's original theft is itself an act of violent greed, since it involves the killing of the merchant transporting it during the chaos of the uprising
- Major Sholto's betrayal of his former partners, keeping the entire treasure for himself instead of honouring the agreement to share it, shows greed corrupting a position of relative trust and responsibility
- Jonathan Small's decades-long pursuit of the treasure, culminating in murder and a dangerous escape across London, shows how greed can dominate a person's entire life and choices
- by having Small throw the treasure into the Thames rather than let anyone else benefit from it, Conan Doyle presents greed as ultimately self-defeating and destructive, since the pursuit ends with nothing gained by anyone
- Mary Morstan and Thaddeus Sholto are presented as more willing to share the treasure fairly, offering a contrasting, less corrupted attitude to wealth against which the other characters' greed can be measured

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk