

4. Historians are like detectives.



Being an historian is very much like being a detective. Detectives look for clues to solve crimes and **mysteries**. The clues they use are called **evidence**.

Historians use clues in the same way to solve mysteries of the past. The clues historians use are called **sources**.



Detectives look at crime **scenes** or mysteries and try to piece together a **puzzle**. In the same way, historians often look for mysteries from the past, and try to work out how and why things happened. Detectives use clues such as fingerprints, bloodstains, and bullet casings. Historians use evidence from people's experiences from the past such as diary entries, **ruins** of ancient buildings, **tomb** engravings, or even the stomach contents of a frozen ice age traveller.

The evidence an historian collects, their sources, gives them clues about the way people lived in ancient times, about how and why societies **developed**, and about the **motives** people had for doing the things they did. Being an historian is about asking the right questions and working out how the world has changed.

Sherlock Holmes – The World's Greatest Detective

Of course, the most **famous** detective in the world was Sherlock Holmes. He is so famous, in fact, that this **fictional** detective is often believed to be real. He is featured in a number of books and stories by the author Arthur

Conan Doyle. Sherlock Holmes used his detective skills to solve crimes and mysteries the way an historian uses sources. Holmes had amazing powers of **observation**, carefully looking at the world around him to gather clues. He also had a great **breadth** of knowledge which allowed him to understand his clues better and **enabled** him to find the reasons for why events may have happened – historians use their knowledge of a wide range of areas such as language, maths, science, and psychology to do this as well.

In the stories, he lived at 221b Baker Street and solved crimes with his partner Dr Watson.

You can read about Holmes' adventures in such stories as *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Speckled Band*.

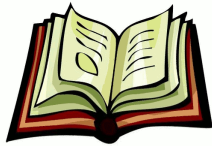


Activities....



Comprehension Questions

Before you start, define the terms in **bold**.



1. What do detectives look for?
2. How do historians use clues?
3. What are the clues an historian uses called?
4. Describe the clues detectives use.
5. Describe the evidence historians use.
6. What kinds of things do the sources an historian uses tell us about the past?
7. Who is Sherlock Holmes?
8. What skills did Sherlock Holmes have?
9. How does breadth of knowledge help detectives and Historians?

Thinking Questions

1. Explain, in your own words, why an historian is like a detective.
2. Write a paragraph describing Sherlock Holmes' skills and how they would help him be a great detective.



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