Sherlock Holmes & Hercule Poirot

Analysation, similarities and differences

Ritgerð til BA-prófs í Ensku
Rósa Björk Blöndal
Maí 2014
Sherlock Holmes & Hercule Poirot  
*Analysation, similarities and differences*
Abstract

Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot are two of the world’s most famous, well known and well-loved detectives. Their stories have been translated into many languages and have been made into many television series and movies. Both stories are famous for their characters and clever plots. Both being detective stories, they share many similarities, yet are different, but how? The purpose of this thesis is to take stories of these two famous characters and analyse them. The main characters and important recurring characters from each story will be taken a look at and analysed. The purpose of these analyses is that both stories have characters that are in many ways similar yet different, and by analysing them first individually, and then in comparison to each other, the reader will be aware of both the characters themselves and the similarities they may have and their differences. The stories plot and structure is also very similar in many regards, yet both authors, Doyle and Christie, are able to make use of the same basic structure and make it their own.
Table of Contents

1. Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 3
2. Arthur Conan Doyle .................................................................................................................. 5
3. Agatha Christie .......................................................................................................................... 7
4. Sherlock Holmes ......................................................................................................................... 9
   4.1 Sherlock Holmes .................................................................................................................... 9
   4.2 Dr. John H. Watson ............................................................................................................. 10
   4.3 Mrs Hudson ........................................................................................................................ 11
   4.4 Inspector G. Lestrade ......................................................................................................... 12
5. Poirot ........................................................................................................................................ 14
   5.1 Hercule Poirot ..................................................................................................................... 14
   5.2 Arthur Hastings ................................................................................................................... 15
   5.3 Miss Lemon ......................................................................................................................... 16
   5.4 Inspector Japp ..................................................................................................................... 16
6. Similarities and Differences – Characters ................................................................................. 18
   6.1 Sherlock Holmes – Hercule Poirot ....................................................................................... 18
   6.2 Dr. John H. Watson – Arthur Hastings .............................................................................. 20
   6.3 Mrs Hudson – Miss Lemon .................................................................................................. 22
   6.4 Inspector Lestrade – Inspector Japp .................................................................................. 23
7. Similarities and Differences – Story ......................................................................................... 25
8. Conclusion .................................................................................................................................. 27
9. Bibliography ............................................................................................................................... 31
1. Introduction

The stories about the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Poirot, by Agatha Christie are well known throughout the world, and have been translated into many languages. As time has changed and science and technology have rapidly improved through the decades, the style of literature has also changed. Today, both literature and television are now more about crime drama rather than detective stories. Many televised crime drama, such as BBC’s (British Broadcasting Corporation) “The Fall”, although feature a detective solving murders is portrayed differently today. Laws have become stronger with each year. Both Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot have broken into houses in order to get evidence. Today their evidence would be made invalid because they did not have a search warrant. This also goes for the modern crime literature. Many of today’s crime novels are not about detectives but rather about unfortunate persons who are thrown into an unfortunate situation.

Sherlock Holmes and Poirot are detective stories from a simpler time, where law and order have yet to be strong and technology was limited.

Sherlock Holmes was written at the time when this technology was just being discovered, and Poirot was written during the time where this technology where just being tested and not reliable yet. Crime solving was there for base on evidence, connections and interviews, without the technology, and while crime dramas today are popular, some of them can be quite gory and the technology can be unbelievable, for example: zooming in on a very blurred photo yet see perfectly. Therefore novels such as Sherlock Holmes and Poirot can be a breath of fresh air from all of the gore and technology and read about cases that are like puzzles.

Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot share many similarities yet are different in their own way. Agatha Christie, who began writing Poirot two decades after Arthur Conan Doyle started, did not steal or imitate his ideas. Their styles are unique but happen to share some ideas. This thesis will be about the similarities and differences two authors had.

For this thesis all of the Sherlock Holmes’s novels and short stories have been read as well as many of Poirot’s novels and short stories.

Before being able to describe the differences and similarities, the reader must first be introduced to Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot and their cases. A chapter will be given to each of them to briefly analyse the story, timeline and setting.
A chapter will then follow with similarities that some of the major characters have in common. Some of them may seem very different, for example the main characters Holmes and Poirot. However, though being very different they do share some similarities.

However before analysing Sherlock Holmes and Poirot, an introduction to the authors is necessary. Who were Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Dame Agatha Christie?
2. Arthur Conan Doyle

Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh in 1859. He was born into a noble family and his mother would tell him stories about the coats of arms, his ancestors and tales of chivalry as a child. Because of this Doyle would often dream about knights, sacrifices and battles, and started to follow the code of a chivalrous knight, ‘fight for what is right and defend the weak’ (Davies, 2005.Biography. p.325), (Pascal, 2000. p.11), (O'Brien, 2013. p.1-11).

In 1885, Arthur Conan Doyle got a degree in medicine at Edinburgh University (Davies, 2005.Biography.p.325). He opened a clinic in Southsea, than later in London, however, received no patients in either place. To kill time Doyle would often create characters and was influenced by a character of Edgar Allan Poe, the France detective Auguste Dupin, and wanted to create his own detective character. Doyle started his first detective novel. In 1887, Doyle’s first Sherlock Holmes novella, titled ‘The Study in Scarlet’ was published. However, at the time, it was not a noticeable success. It was not until 1891, when the the first six Sherlock Holmes short stories where published that Sherlock Holmes became a hit. The likely reason for this immediate popularity was that short stories were more favourable to the public than novels at the time. (Fitzgibbon, 1980.p.5-6), (Davies, Scarlet, 2005.Afterword.p.319-321) (O'Brien, 2013. p.1-11).

Although Arthur Conan Doyle wrote many other works besides Sherlock Holmes, he was only known for that particular work, and the works he wrote that he found were more important, never got the attention he thought they deserved. Because of this Doyle often wanted to kill off the famous detective, which he did. In the short story “The Final Problem” published in 1893, Sherlock Holmes and his arch nemesis Professor Moriarity both died after going over Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland. Readers were outraged by the death of Sherlock Holmes, however Doyle expressed a grim satisfaction saying ‘Thank God, I’ve killed the brute’. (Pascal, 2000. p.7-8), (Davis, Memories, 2005. Afterword .p.301-309), (Doyle, Memoirs, 2005 p.277-300).

After writing his history works, Arthur Conan Doyle wanted to write a ‘real creeper’, a story that featured a phantom hound but saw that he would need a detective. Instead of creating a new detective Doyle brought back Sherlock Holmes for this novel, making it take place before the events in “The Final Problem”. Readers were hopeful that the detective was back
and would continue his adventures. When the New York publisher of Collier’s magazine offered him four thousand dollars per story, Doyle accepted, and in 1903, Sherlock Holmes remerged alive and well in “The Empty House”. Despite his problems with his creation, the stories are never lacking. All of the stories are well written and clever. After his “death” Sherlock Holmes chances slightly for the better, opened up more and learned from his mistakes. This may indicate that Doyle had a sort of a love-hate relationship with his creation. (Davis, Return, 2005. Afterword p.625-634), (Doyle, Memoirs, 2005 p.277-300). (Doyle, Return, 2005 p.9-37)

Sherlock Holmes is one of the most familial figures in modern culture, being well known not only in English-speaking countries but around the world, and is believed in by more people than any other fictional character. From the day Sherlock Holmes first appeared in 1887 and even to this day, he still receives about 200 letters a month to his well known address 221B Baker Street, which is now a well visited museum dedicated to the famous detective. Sherlock Holmes has also appeared in many various media, such as picture books, comics, television and motion picture, and even appeared on the science fiction television series Star Trek or been referred to in a Japanese anime. (Anime is the Japanese word for animation regardless of country of origin however is generally used in English context to refer especially to the Japanese animation style (Thompson, 2007. p.495)). Sherlock Holmes’s existence is so strong that even people who have never read about him, know that a character wearing an inverness cape and a deerstalker cap, smoking a pipe is a detective because that is Sherlock Holmes popular image (Pascal, 2000. p.8), (O’Brien, 2013. p.1-11).
3. Agatha Christie

Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller was born on September 15, 1890, in Devon. She was the youngest of three siblings and was educated at home by her mother, who encouraged her to write. In 1914, she married Colonel Archibald Christie, a Royal Flying Corps pilot, and took up nursing during World War I. During that time she began writing her first detective novel. Six years later, in 1920, her first book *The Mysterious Affairs at Styles* was published, which introduced one of the world’s famous detectives, Hercule Poirot. Some years after, Agatha and Archibald divorced and she later married archaeologist Sir Max Mallowan, whom she accompanied on expeditions to countries that would also serve as the settings for many of her novels. (Agatha Christie) (Christie, *The A.B.C. Murders*, 2011, About the Author)

Poirot was not Agatha Christie’s only creation, another well-known creation of hers is Miss Jane Marple, along with many other characters and stand-alone novels, short stories and plays.

Agatha Christie makes is clear in her autobiography that, in her childhood, her family’s servants were happy because Christie’s mother showed them respect. When a visiting child said to a servant “You’re only a servant”, Christie’s mother reprimanded the child, saying “you must not be rude to servants because their position forbids them to be rude to you in return”. Being raised by happy and respectful servants yet knowing of other servants who were not respected may have had an effect on her writing. In many of Christie’s novels, it shows the various ways how servants are treated and their relationship to their masters; from them being loyal and respectful to their masters to them outright despising them. (Zemboy, 2008. p.19)

In May 1954 Agatha Christie wrote briefly about herself saying that she spends three weeks to nine months thinking up a plot and the actual time of writing and typing are approximately three months. She spent four months a year going on archaeological expeditions with her husband. She did nursing in the 1914-18 war but never became a qualified nurse. (Christie, About me, 1954)

When writing *The Mysterious Affairs at Styles*, Agatha Christie had no idea that she would write another novel and therefor did not imagine writing another Poirot story. She soon regretted that she had made Hercule Poirot so old because as the years and decades go by and
Poirot’s story popularity among readers never decreasing. In the end Hercule Poirot must be aging inordinately. (Zemboy, 2008. p.16)

Aside from Poirot, Agatha Christie created other characters, such as Miss Marple and Tommy and Tuppence, as well as writing various other novels, short stories and plays.

Agatha Christie achieved one of Britain’s highest honours in 1971, when she was made a Dame of the British Empire. She died in 1976 at the age of 85, but her legacy is still continuing to this day as she is the most widely published author of all times in any language, outsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare. (Agatha Christie) (Christie, The A.B.C. Murders, 2011, About the Author)
4. Sherlock Holmes

Arthur Conan Doyle wrote sixty stories about the cases of Sherlock Holmes. In these stories the reader is introduced to many different characters; murderers, victims, thieves, witnesses etc. Aside from the main characters, Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, the stories have many recurring characters that are very important in these stories as well.

4.1 Sherlock Holmes

In the first Sherlock Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*, he is described as being over six feet tall, very lean, with piercing grey eyes, black hair and a thin hawk-like nose. His age is never mentioned but one can believe that he is in his early-mid 30s. He has a very closed off personality and likes to keep to himself, because of this very little is known about his background which makes him mysterious. It is not until the 24th story, “The Greek Interpreter“, that readers are given more information about his family where they are introduced to his older brother Mycroft. Sherlock Holmes is very untidy; he keeps his cigars in a coal scuttle, his tobacco in the toe of a Persian slipper and, when on a case, can go days without washing. Although he never exercises, choosing rather in his spare time to play the violin or expand his knowledge, he is a good runner and is very strong. There are mentions in a few stories about Sherlock Holmes being a boxer and his strength is demonstrated in *The Speckled Band* when Dr. Grimsby Roylott bends Holmes’s fire poker to intimidate Holmes before he leaves, which Holmes straightens back to normal. (O'Brien, 2013. p.16-25).

Sherlock Holmes may come off as a cold and hard person based on several of his own statements, such as stating “I do not encourage visitors (“The Five Orange Pips”)” making clear that he wants to be left alone. “I have never loved” (“The Devil’s Foot”), “Love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things” (*A Study in Scarlet*) and “I use my head, not my heart” (“The Illustrious Client”), these sentences indicate that emotions, especially love and caring are things are a waste of time and cannot be bothered with. However, as much as he thinks he does not care, he does care in his own way about those closest to him especially Dr. Watson and Mrs. Hudson, and this is shown especially in “The Empty House”. Three years after his supposed “death” Sherlock Holmes arrives at Dr. Watson’s clinic asking for his help and explain why he faked his death and how no one could know his whereabouts. Holmes expressed that he was very sorry about keeping Watson in the dark and knew that Watson would be in danger if
he were to tell him; “several times during the last three years I have taken up my pen to write
to you, but always I feared lest your affectionate regard for me should tempt you to some
indiscretion which would betray my secret” and “I was in danger at the time…” (“The Empty
House”). (O’Brien, 2013. p.16-25), (Doyle, Scarlet, 2005.), (Doyle, Adventures, 2004 p.127-

4.2 Dr. John H. Watson

John Watson is Sherlock Holmes’s trusty companion and they are one of the greatest duos in
literature. Watson is a very open and kind man. He got a degree in medicine in 1878 from the
University of London. After graduating, he worked as a staff surgeon at St. Bartholomew’s
Hospital; he then joined the army medical department, and took additional training as a
military surgeon during the Afghan War. After being shot, Watson was forced to return to
England. In the first Sherlock Holmes story (A Study in Scarlet) the wound is in the shoulder,
however in the second story (The Sign of the Four) the wound is in the leg, making him have
a weak foot which is sometimes mentioned in other stories. At this time, Watson is described
as being extremely thin and well-tanned. Being unemployed and having no family in London,
he knew that he could not continue to afford living in the private hotel on the Strand. After
meeting a man named Stamford and mentioned that he is looking for a cheaper lodging,
Stamford told him that he knew of another person doing the same. Watson is then introduced
to Sherlock Holmes, and not long after that, in Watson’s case, strange meeting, Watson and
Holmes move into their lodging at 221b Baker Street. Watson very quickly starts to get
involve in Holmes’s cases. He later marries Mary Morstan, who was Holmes client in the
second story The Sign of the Four, but she dies sometime during the three years Holmes was

The partnership between them is very strong. They do tend to get on each other’s nerved, for
example: Watson’s worry and pestering Holmes about his health when he is too involved in a
case and has not slept or eaten, or how Holmes does not always appreciate Watson’s writings.
They acknowledge each other’s strength and weaknesses and knowingly and unknowingly
help each other. Holmes gives Watson excitement in life which he can write about and
teaches him some of his detective skills, while Watson teaches Holmes to be a little more
open around people and to be able to rely on someone other them himself. Watson’s
appearance changes in the stories, going from tan and thin, and becoming paler and regaining
his weight. He is also described as being middle sized, strongly built, with a square jaw, thick
neck and a moustache. Watson is also very aware of women and will often compliment to Homes about their appearances and kindness to which is replied by Holmes as being annoying and short-sighted, meaning that women are liars and Watson should not be deceived by their beauty. (O’Brien, 2013. p.29-33).

No one is perfect and neither are Sherlock Holmes or John Watson; Holmes is addictive to drugs, mostly morphine and cocaine and Watson has a gambling problem, which he admits in the second-to-last story “Shoscombe Old Place”, this has been hinted at in an earlier story (“The Dancing Men”) when it is learned that Holmes has Watson’s check book locked in his drawer. (O’Brien, 2013. p.29), (Doyle, *Case-book*, 2004 p.253-274), (Doyle, *Return*, 2005 p.70-102).

### 4.3 Mrs Hudson

Mrs Hudson is Sherlock Holmes’s and Dr Watson’s landlady at 221b Baker Street. She is most likely a widow because her husband is never mentioned. Although not a main character, as their landlady she is featured in many of the stories and lends a hand in many of them, for example; sending notes, telegrams and letters, show clients in, etc. She is never physically described, save for having a “stately” tread (*The Study in Scarlet*), and later in “His Last Bow”, she referred to as “old woman” and her first name finally revealed. Even so, one can imagine her being older than Holmes and Watson, and the relationship between them can be seen as a sort of a “mother-and-sons”. She cooks meals and does laundry for them and is annoyed whenever Holmes is in his “too busy to eat” phases. Holmes has criticised her cooking as being “limited” however enjoys eating her meals. Tolerance is Mrs Hudson’s strongest suit, which serves Holmes well; because of his personality he is in the habit of snapping at people, and saying hurtful things without necessary meaning to. It may seem that Mrs Hudson is a doormat; however that is not so. She may have tolerance but she has her limits and when the line has been crossed she does not hesitate to scold and argue with the stubborn man. If Holmes is the “tolerable son” then Watson would be the “behaved son”, since Watson is more open and has a kinder personality he does not cause as much trouble as Holmes does. He is always pleasant to her and she to him, asking occasionally how his wife is doing. (O’Brien, 2013. p.42-43), (Doyle, *Return*, 2005 p.603-623)

Because of his habits, Mrs Hudson is often worried about Holmes’s health. In “The Dying Detective”, Sherlock Holmes gets very sick and Mrs Hudson sends out for Watson to come
and have a look at him. She is terribly worried and tells Watson that Holmes has been sick for three days but did not let her call a doctor. “This morning when I saw his bones sticking out of his face and his great bright eyes looking at me I could stand not more of it”. This shows that while she is tolerable, she does have her limits and will go against Holmes’s orders if she does not agree with them. Another example is in “The Empty House” when Holmes returns to Baker Street, that Mrs Hudson is thrown into a “violent hysterics”, and later in the story she places herself in danger to assist Holmes. (O'Brien, 2013. p.44), (Doyle, Return, 2005 p.9-37, 523-542).

In “The Lion’s Mane” Sherlock Holmes as retired and moved in to a villa in the Sussex that he purchased. In the story he mentions that he, his old housekeeper and his bees have the estate all to themselves. Although the old housekeeper is never mentioned by name, it is very likely that it is Mrs Hudson, that Holmes took her with him because of her services and loyalty and being to only woman he is able trust and let into his life. (O'Brien, 2013. p.45), (Doyle, Case-book, 2004 p.214-237),

4.4 Inspector G. Lestrade
Lestrade is an inspector for the Scotland Yards. Although Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson meet a few detectives from Scotland Yards, Lestrade is the most recurring one. He is briefly described as being lean and ferret-like. Lestrade’s relationship with Holmes is best described as that of a rivalry and admiration. In the first story (Study in Scarlet) Holmes shows his dislike of the police, when they arrive at a crime scene and tells Watson “If a herd of buffaloes had passed along, there could not be a greater mess.” He also states that even though he is superior to the Scotland Yarders, they are the ones that take all the credit after he solves the cases. Holmes likes to sometimes laugh or poke fun of Lestrade when he is going the wrong way, or misinterpret something at a case. In “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” Holmes finds out that Lestrade has arrested the wrong man for the murder. He informs Lestrade about the real murder describing detailed yet vague description, to confuse him. Despite his dislike of the Scotland Yard he does often assist in many cases. As the time passes and events happen in the stories, Lestrade becomes less as an annoyance to Holmes and becomes a friend. In “The Six Napoleons” Lestrade says that they in Scotland Yard are not jealous of Holmes but are very proud of him (O'Brien, 2013. p.45-48), (Doyle, Adventures, 2004 p.95-126), (Doyle, Return, 2005 p.218-246)
The characters in Sherlock Holmes are flawed; Holmes’s drug addiction and his poor people-skills, Watson’s gambling, Mrs Hudson could speak for herself a little more and Lestrade’s pride. Flaw is good, it means that they are human and make mistakes and have problems readers can relate to and sympathise with. If Sherlock Holmes was this overly perfect detective with no flaws there would be nothing for him to learn or except. It is the way he evolves from this closed off person to letting people in and learning to rely on others that make the character so great.

How are the characters in Agatha Christies Poirot?
5. Poirot

The character of Hercule Poirot has made an appearance in thirty-three novels and sixty-five short stories. Since Poirot has almost twice as many books as Sherlock Holmes, and the habit of having many suspects in each story, there are a lot more people in Poirot than in Sherlock Holmes. However, like in the chapter about Sherlock Holmes, only the main characters and the recurring characters will be analysed.

5.1 Hercule Poirot

Poirot is a detective formally of the Belgian police force. In the first Poirot novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* he is temporarily residing in the village of Styles St. Mary along with other Belgian refugees. He would later move to London and became a private detective, turning his spacious apartment at 56B Whitehaven Mansions into a home/work office where he meets with clients. He is described as a small man, no more than five feet five inches tall, with a “perfectly egg-shaped head” and a stiff military moustache. He is also obsessed with neatness, symmetry and “order and method”. He is always nicely groomed and neatly dressed and his apartment/office is always very clean and tidy. Because of this obsession he is often subconsciously straitening and fixing things around him, for example, straightening Hastings’s necktie, rearranging the ornaments on a mantel and flicking a microscopic bits of dust of himself, and feels restless if he does not. Because of his appearance and thick accent he is very often mistaken for being French, which really irritates him and to which he always reply’s “I am not French, I am Belgian”. His English is punctuated with French expressions which lead to him sometime using Belgian sentence structure, for example; “What magnificent chance! (Quelle chance magnifique – What magnificent luck!). This is not very noticeable at first, however in later novels Poirot will sometimes thicken his accent more and use more punctuated English, putting more of a “foreignness” in order to get on the nerves of the people that see him as “a mere foreigner”. He is also a very picky person, expressing his dislike of water (boat) and air (airplane) travel, whiskey, beer and English cooking. (Zemboy, 2008. p.16), (Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, 1920)

His trademark saying: “little grey cells”, is Poirot’s term for using his mind to piece together a case, and when stuck he laments that his “little grey cells” are not working. (Zemboy, 2008. p.16), (Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, 1920)
Poirot’s age is a tricky subject; it is believed that in his first novel, *Mysterious Affairs at Style*, Poirot is roughly 62 years of age, and is believed to have lived to be 125 by the time of his last novel. (Hobbs, Poirot's Age)

In the last Poirot story *Curtain: Poirot's Last Case*, Hercule Poirot and Arthur Hasting’s appear to solve their last case together before Poirot dies from a heart condition, seemingly having moved his heart medication out of reach out of guilt – possible suicide (Christie, *Curtain: Poirot's Last Case*, 2011).

### 5.2 Arthur Hastings

Arthur Hastings is thirty years old and served in the Great War, although his military service is not specifically mentioned. In the first Poirot novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* he is wounded from the war and is living in a convalescent home not far from Styles St. Mary. There he meets up with his old friend, Poirot, (having meet before the novel takes place) and joins him on his case. In the 13th Poirot story, *The A.B.C. Murders*, Hastings visits his good friend Hercule Poirot at his home/office at 56B Whitehaven Mansions, after having returned to England from Argentina. Hastings then becomes Poirot’s companion and helps him with cases in many other stories. (Zemboy, 2008. p.16), (Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, 1920) (Christie, *The A.B.C. Murders*, 2011)

Hastings has an easy going personality; he enjoys telling others of his adventures, and is easily swayed by the charms and beauty of women. In *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, Poirot expressed that Hastings has “a nature so honest and countenance so transparent that –enfin– to conceal your feelings is impossible”. This explains why Poirot seldom reveals to Hastings facts about the case however does give his friend hints which Hasting’s often never gets. Although he is not much of a detective he does assist Poirot in other ways. Because of his background as a former British Army officer, Hastings is physically fit and brave and often aids Poirot in various physical duties such as capturing and restraining criminals. He is also often sent by Poirot to interview various people such as witnesses or possible suspects, and report back to him. He does not appear in every Poirot novel but rather comes-and-goes, as he has his own private life to attend to, such as his wife, Dulcie Duveen, whom he meet in *Murder on the Links*. (Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, 1920), (Christie, Murder on the Links, 2010)
Arthur Hasting’s relationship with Hercule Poirot is that of an old and best friend. Both have traits that the other find mildly irritating, such as Poirot’s obsession with cleanliness and Hastings weakness for women.

5.3 Miss Lemon
Miss Felicity Lemon is Poirot’s secretary. She is described as a young, ugly woman with excellent sense of fashion. She works well with her employer because she herself is very obsessed with planning and creating the perfect filing system. She does her job very well; her only mistakes are when typing errors and mis-mailing of an electricity bill in the beginning of the novel *Hickory Dickory Dock*, because she is worried about her sister. As Poirot’s secretary she assists Poirot in various ways, such as; answering the phone, handling finances and bills, booking train tickets, filling old cases etc. However she does take on other jobs that are usually not related to her job. She does care for her older employer and cares about his health and often cooks healthy meals for him. She is not afraid to speak up to Poirot and will scold him about his stubbornness and health. (Christie, *Hickory Dickory Dock*, 2000),

Her relationship with Poirot is an admirable one, maybe even as a little crush, however this is never played out or admitted because of Poirot’s lack of interest in women. Although she mostly stays at the office, she has on very few occasions accompanied Poirot on cases. She is also always ready to come back and work for him after his numerous ‘retirements’ as a detective.

5.4 Inspector Japp
In many of his cases Poirot meets and works with many of Scotland Yard’s inspectors. His opinion on them varies from finding them irritating to decent, however, since he is a far better detective than they are, Poirot has the habit of looking at them as being inferior to him.

Among the many inspectors in Poirot stories, inspector Japp is the most well-known one.

James Japp is a detective inspector for the Scotland Yards and is introduced in the first Poirot story *The Mysterious Affairs at Styles*. He is described as a little, sharp, dark and ferret-faced man. He is a British man through and through and is generally astonished when he finds out
that Poirot cannot stand anything typically English, such as the food and cricket. Mostly he is a minor character in his feature stories; however plays major part in Lord Edgware Dies, Death in the Clouds One, and Two, Buckle My Shoe before disappearing and never featured again. (Christie, The Mysterious Affair at Styles, 1920) (Christie, Lord Edgware Dies, 2011) (Christie, Death in the Clouds, 2011) (Christie, One, Two, Buckle My Shoe, 2011)

Inspector Japp’s relationship with Hercule Poitor is like Lestrade to Holmes that of rivalry and admiration. While he is a good detective he is bitterly aware that he is not as good as Poirot. However, while he acknowledges his inferiority, he is amazed and admires Poirot’s detective skills.

Agatha Christie is known for writing good stories with brilliant and cleaver plots. However that is not the only reason why her novels are so popular. While clever plots are necessary in a good story, it is not as enjoyable unless the characters are enjoyable as well. Hercule Poirot’s obsession of cleanliness and order is a funny quirk, and Hastings’s trusting nature and love of women, are weaknesses that prevent him of seeing the bigger picture of many cases.

Both Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Dame Agatha Christie cheated some of the world’s most well-known and beloved detectives. However, if placed back to back, how are the main characters and side characters in compare to each other? What similarities and differences do they have from each other?
6. Similarities and Differences – Characters

In both of The Sherlock Holmes and Poirot, the main characters and the recurrent characters, may have different personalities, however they do share many similarities between them. Their roles and purpose in the stories are very similar, but that is not to say that both titles are sharing one basic character structure. In this chapter, characters from each title will be compared to each other. Each comparison will be discussing the differences and similarities that these characters have to one another.

6.1 Sherlock Holmes – Hercule Poirot

Sherlock Holmes and Herucle Poirot are the main and title characters in the stories. Both of them are very famous and beloved detectives, known by readers around the world.

When comparing the physical outlook of these characters, they are as different as night and day. Sherlock Holmes is tall, lean, physically built, roughly 30-35 years of age with piercing grey eyes, black hair and a thin hawk-like nose. Hercule Poirot is short, in his 60s, and has a “perfectly egg-shaped head” and a stiff military moustache because of his obsession of cleanliness, does no physical labours. To put it simply, Holmes being young tall and strong while Poirot is short, old and frail.

Their personalities are different as well; Holmes is very untidy and can go days without bathing, while Poirot cannot start a day without proper grooming. Holmes is very closed off and does not allow many people in and trusts only few, because of this he does not speak a lot to other people, if he has to, and he is in the habit of being be blunt and being straight-to-the-point. He also has the habit of snapping at others when irritated. However, he can control his temper, and be kind (in his own way) if the situation calls for it, being calmer and softer when the witnesses are visibly upset. Poirot is more open; he is soft spoken and can easily strike up a conversation and speaks kindly to everyone, however he does get irritated easily if the right buttons are pushed. Although not interested in women romantically, he does respect them and will often be understanding and comforting to them, as well as children, when upset. As opposed to Holmes who mostly find them irritating.
Their detective methods are also different. Holmes does a lot himself, in order to gain more information. In a few cases he has disused himself and gone undercover for some time. He will also run after or fight the suspects if needed, using both his intelligence as well as his physical strength to solve cases. Poirot usually has others for the physical part of the job, choosing rather to use his “little grey cells” in order to solve cases. Poirot also likes to keep thing in order, his office is more professional, with a secretary who files his cases. As opposed to Holmes who meets his clients in his and Watson’s living room. He has no secretary, rather filing his own cases until Watson comes along, who then documents his cases as a writing hobby. Poirot is very proud of himself and will be flattered when people know of him and mildly irritated if they do not. Holmes on the other hand does not particularly care whether people know him or not.

While Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot may seem very different, they are in many ways very similar. The obvious being that they are both detectives and that their living space serves both as a home and office where they meet clients. Both of them have very trusting companions and friends. Watson and Hastings, who accompany them on many of their cases. They both see themselves as superior to the Scotland Yard inspectors and will often aid them on difficult cases and have stricken a rival/admiration relations with a few of the inspectors. While of their social skills are different, they only have a few people they allow close and trust, and value those few greatly, even if they do not express it often, in Holmes case.

Holmes nor Poirot marry nor do neither of them have any interests in romantic relationships what so ever. While both had different opinion on women, Holmes finding love a waste of time and found them mostly irritating and Poirot, though aware of their charm, was never charmed. Both only had one woman in their lives, Holmes’s landlady, Mrs Hudson and Poirot’s secretary Miss Lemon. Although they had no romantic feelings for them, they both cared a lot about these women. However, while Mrs Hudson and Miss Lemon were the only women in their lives, both had women that they got interested in. Irene Adler and countess Rossakoff are both criminals that were able to outsmart and escape both of them, something that has not happen often, and the fact that they were women amazed them. While Holmes and was interested and fascinated by Adler, it was never in a romantic way, more of a fascination because she, a woman, was one of the few that was able to outsmart him. Poirot’s feelings for Rossakoff is similar to Holmes’s, however he might have been a little smitten.
Although Holmes is a private person he does share lodgings with his good friend Watson, which they rent from Mrs Hudson. Poirot lives alone, but his secretary, Miss Lemon, is there most of the time for work.

While Holmes and Poirot have different feelings about their popularity, the former not particularly caring, and the latter proud, they both get flattered and a little smug when they are complimented for their brilliance on other cases. They are both prideful men and will get offended and angry when they get ‘useless’ requests, thinking them insulting and below them, both of them get such cases and learn that those small ‘unimportant’ cases sometimes have deeper meanings. In Holmes’s short story “The Copper Beeches” he is approached by a young woman who asks for advice whether to accept a job asked of her. Holmes feels insulted and claims that his business has “touched bottom at last”, however the seemingly ‘pointless’ request quickly turns sinister. In Poirot’s short story “The Adventure of the Clapham Cook” he is approached by a very rude woman demanding him to find her cook who as disappeared, while irritated by her rudeness and the smallness of the case he does take it, but finds that there is more to the disappearance than an unhappy cook. They also tend to get bored and agitated if they do not get a ‘good’ case after some time. (Doyle, Adventures, 2004 p.335-367), (Christie, Hercule Poirot: The Complete Short Stories, 1999. p. 251-262)

6.2 Dr. John H. Watson – Arthur Hastings

Dr. Watson and Hastings are Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot’s “sidekicks”, partners that accompany them on their cases and assisting in any way they can.

While Watson is featured in every one of the Sherlock Holmes’s stories, Hasting appears mostly the short stories and only appears in eight of the novels. In the other novels and short stories Poirot is either accompanied by various other characters or is alone.

Watson is an educated doctor, while Hastings does not seem to have higher education. While both are very aware of women’s beauty and charm, they handle it differently. Watson though admirable, kind, and will often reassure them when seeking Holmes’s aid, he is aware of what women are capable of, and does keep an open mind when a woman is a possible suspect. Hastings on the other hand is often blinded by women’s charm and grace, and finds it often unbelievable that they are capable of committing crimes. Hasting has a very caring nature and tends to be to loyal and honest, which resolves in Poirot seldom keeping Hasting updated on
cases until the revealing at the end. Watson on the other hand, while kind and understanding, does keep an eye out for possible suspects and even suggests his ideas to Holmes. Watson enjoys learning various detective skills from Holmes and will often try his hands at using Holmes tactics to try to keep up with his friend but often fails to see or understand as much as Holmes. Because of this, Holmes likes to keep him somewhat updated by sometimes giving Watson hints in order to see if he can figure it out. Hastings, although also active and tries to wrap his head around the cases, even coming up with suggestions, he does not try as hard as Watson to keep up. The fact that Watson is sharing lodgings with Holmes makes him more involved in the cases.

In the first Sherlock Holmes story *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes ans Watson meet for the first time and the reader is made aware of their growing partnership and friendship. In Poirot’s first story *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, Poirot and Hastings are old friends reuniting after some time, and the reader is introduced to their already friendship and the beginning of a partnership.

Watson and Hastings have a lot in common, and it may be believed that Agatha Christie based Hasting character by using Watson as an inspiration, and when describing the character it is often said that he is “Poirot’s Watson” (Hobbs, Narrators of Agatha Christie).

Both Watson and Hasting serve as the narrator of stories. Watson always writes the stories in the first person perspective. Hasting does so as well with the exertion of few novels, for example *The A.B.C. Murders*, combines Hastings first person perspective with a third person perspective.

Both served in the army, and after being wounded, return to England before becoming Holmes’s and Poirot’s partners on cases. They could possibly be roughly the same age, with similar built, tall and physically strong. Both have easy going and kind personalities. They are understanding, trusting and charmed by women although their levels differ from each other. They both fell in love and eventually married women that they meet during one of Holmes’s and Poirot’s cases. Watson marries early in the Sherlock Holmes novels, and as a married man does not get charmed by other women but does compliment them. Later, after becoming a widower he continues to acknowledge and compliment women’s charms but does not seek
another romantic relationship. Hasting does not marry until later in the Poirot novels, because of this he has been attracted to and charmed by other women before meeting his wife.

Both of them are very good and loyal friends of Holmes and Poirot. Both are not afraid of scolding their prideful friends when needing to. Watson tells his friend to take better care of himself, and Hastings trying to open Poirot’s mind about things and give them a chance.

6.3 Mrs Hudson – Miss Lemon

While both of these women do not appear much in the stories, they do play a big part in the main characters, Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot’s lives.

Similar with Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot, when comparing these women physically they are very different. Mrs Hudson is Sherlock Holmes’s landlady while Miss Lemon is Hercule Poirot’s secretary. While neither are described in detail in the stories one can piece together an image of them whit what is given in the books. Mrs Hudson is obviously married seeing that she is a “Mrs”, however her husband is never mentioned which could mean that she is a widow, and that she is sometimes referred as “old woman” makes is obvious that she is older than them, a rough idea could be that she is around 60 years of age during the first stories. Miss Lemon has never married seeing that she is a “Miss”. Being unmarried, passionate, working and her sense for style makes her seem younger, roughly 30 years of age.

Mrs Hudson’s and Miss Lemon’s relationship with Holmes and Poirot respectably can be interpreted as being different. The way Mrs Hudson worries about, get irritated at, and scolds Holmes and Watson has a motherly feel to it. Miss Lemon tends to do more for her employed than she has to. She admires Poirot and she somewhat shares his obsession on keeping things in order. There might be a change that she has some feelings for her older employer, but it is never expressed in any detail.

Mrs Hudson and Miss Lemon are the only women in Holmes’s and Poirot’s lives. Holmes not interested in women or particular trust them, does not tent to involve himself around them unless it involves a case. Although he has been impressed by some women’s intelligence and wit, such as Irene Adler; “A Scandal in Bohemia”, he has never shown interest in romance. Mrs Hudson is the first and only woman who Holmes was allowed close and trusted. Poirot
on the other hand while polite and kind has some female friends but none of them are as close to him as Miss Lemon. Both of them have assisted Holmes and Poirot on cases in some way.

They personalities, though different do share some similarities. Both are kind women with tolerance for their friends. However, when irritated they are not afraid to stand up to themselves, and will sometimes scold their stubborn friends.

Their relationship with Holmes and Poirot, although different, Mrs Hudson’s landlady - motherly like care or Miss Lemons’ admiration, either it being a crush, friendship or as a respected employer, it is clear that both of these women care deeply about Holmes and Poirot despite their flaws.

6.4 Inspector Lestrade – Inspector Japp

As with Mrs Hudson and Miss Lemon, inspector Lestrade and inspector Japp do not appear in many of the stories, therefore not all that much is known about them.

With what little is known about them, neither are all that different from each other. Leastrade seems more prideful, and finds it harder to admit that he is inferior to Sherlock Holmes detective skills. Japp, although prideful, is aware of his detective skills is inferior to Poirot’s. Lestrade is also described as being lean while Japp is little and sharp.

Lestrade and Japp are both described having ferret-like looks. Both are Scotland Yard detectives, and while both stories feature a variety of inspectors, Lestrade and Japp are the most well-known of them. They are prideful men who are good at their jobs however both are inferior to Holmes and Poirot and therefore have to sometimes seek their aid with difficult cases.

Despite being rival detectives, both Lestrade and Japp admire Holmes and Poirot for their detective skills. After some time both of them become on friendly terms with Holmes and Poirot.

The stories and adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Poirot have introduced many likable and clever literary characters, that will always be known and loved by readers. One reasons for
this is how humane they are. Holmes and Poirot, despite their knowledge and detective skills are humans that have flaws. As said in the book *Alternative Scriptwriting*: “Characters are expected to make mistakes – that’s part of life.” Without flaws and mistakes, the character has nothing to learn from. A good example is when both Holmes and Poirot learn the typical “don’t judge a book by its covers”. Both get cases that they think is below their level but learn that there can be more to something’s that are seem small (Dancyger, 2007. p.25).

The main characters and some of the well-known reoccurring characters in these stories may seem but have many similarities to each other. Characters that may seem different as black and white (Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot) are in various ways similar. Hastings may sometimes be called “Poirot’s Watson”, however, both works are unique from each other. Agatha Christy may, or may not, have based Hastings on Doyle’s Watson; however he is his own character.
7. Similarities and Differences – Story

Both the stories about Sherlock Holmes and Poirot are well-known all around the world. Both stories have likable characters and clever plots. Being both detective stories, with good characters and storyline, how are they compared to each other? What differences do they have, and what do they have in common?

To build a good story, no matter what it is, being a novel or a move, the plot has to have the three basic steps called “The three act structure”. (Bell, 2004. 23-25).

1. Introduction: The main character has a dilemma that he/she needs to solve.
2. Progressing to solve the dilemma.
3. Conclusion: the dilemma has been overcome.

The story structure in Sherlock Holmes and Poirot are very similar.

1. Both start with a problem that needs to be solved, such as client with a request, a murder or something has been solved.
2. They proceed to solve said problem; find clues, interview people etc.
3. Conclusion: the problem has been solved; murderer captured or lost object found.

The stories are narrated by others rather than the main characters. Arthur Conan Doyle created Dr John Watson because he thought it would be inappropriate and awkward for Sherlock Holmes to relate his own investigations. He wanted a storyteller that was a comrade who was an educated man of action and who would follow and narrate the events of the story. He does so in a first point perspective. Agatha Christie changes the narration in her stories so that it will work with the plot. In many books the story is narrated in the first point perspective, to which Hastings narrates some of them. Others are in the third perspective and others switch between first and third perspective. (Davies, Scarlet, 2005.Afterword.p.319-321).

Agatha Christie has written many books, and with these books come many characters. However, aside from Poirot, she has the habit of writing out old character and bringing in new ones, either she wanted to change or got bored of them is unknown. Even Hastings and Japp seem to just disappear after a while. Arthur Conan Doyle, although introducing many characters, does not change beloved characters, such as Watson, for someone else. He only separated the duo twice (Holmes “death” in “The Final Problem” and briefly in The Hound of
the Baskervilles) but always reunites them. (Doyle, Memoirs, 2005 p.277-300), (Doyle, Baskervilles, 2004).

The three act structure, although share the same basics, are sometimes different in what happen during each stage. In Agatha Christie’s Poirot the plot structure is very often the same and can be easily noted:

1. Introduction to the setting and character and Poirot gets a case.
2. Agatha Christie loves to be mysterious and keep the reader in the dark. The reader is being lead through what is happening but is not shown key details and is always behind Poirot.
3. The conclusion in Poirot mostly consist of all of the major characters in the story in the same room where Poirot summarises the case and the clues he has found until revealing the criminal.

The plot in Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes on the other hand has varieties of ways the story is set up. Some are similar to Agatha Christie’s setup but some of them have different approaches. Sometimes, it is clear who the suspect is, but the ‘how’ is and ‘why’ are a mystery. For example in “The Speckled Band”, it is obvious that the young woman’s father is up to no good but, what happened to her sister, and now her, and why is a mystery (Doyle, Adventures, 2004. p.213-246).

The stories of Sherlock Holmes and Poirot are both well written stories with memorable characters and good plot with mystery and suspense. Although they may seem in many ways similar, with the story structure and the characters, they are also in many ways different as well. Both have unique ways in how to plush out the plot, and how the characters handle themselves in their stories.
8. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse, and discuss the similarities and differences of the main and reoccurring characters in Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie’s Poirot, two of the world’s most famous detectives.

Arthur Conan Doyle was tormented by his creation. He did not like how the Sherlock Holmes stories where overshadowing what he felt was his more important works, and decided to kill the character off. After a while he wanted to write a ‘creepy’ story and decided to briefly bring back Sherlock Holmes, until reviving him completely and continuing the stories. This may indicate that he had a sort of a love-hate relationship with his character, because the plot never lacks and makes Sherlock Holmes learns from his mistakes and learns to trust others.

Agatha Christie on the other hand enjoyed her creation, Poirot, judging by the sheer number of books, and writing about him until her death. While it may seem that she got tired of using the same character, making many of them disappear and replacing them with new ones. Hercule Poirot did not disappear nor was he replaced, but was instead given an emotional death.

When analysing the characters from Sherlock Holmes, it is revealed that:

Sherlock Holmes is a private detective who is very intelligent and likes to have his privacy and has trust issues. His social skills are limited by choice and he had a habit of being straight-to-the-point when speaking to others. He later softens up a little and allows himself to trust others after befriending Dr. Watson. Watson is Holmes’s opposite; kind, understanding and somewhat naive. His hobby is writing and takes it upon himself to document Holmes cases. He is Holmes’s best friend and is one of the very few people he trusts. Among other trusted people are Mrs. Hudson; Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson’s landlady, who cares a great deal about her stubborn tenants in an almost motherly way, and Inspector Leastrade; who is an inspector for Scotland Yard and has a strained relationship with Sherlock Holmes, but later becomes a friend.

When analysing the characters from Poirot, it is revealed that:

Hercule Poirot is a private detective who was formally of the Belgian police force. He is kind but is quickly irritated when people look down at him for being a foreigner. He is very
intelligent and has an obsession for cleanliness, symmetry and “order and method”. His partner, Arthur Hastings, a former military officer, is an old friend of his. He is very kind, however his caring nature makes him over trusting at times and has a weakness for women’s charms. He is Poirot’s best friend and is one of the people Poirot cares deeply for. Among other people that Poirot cares about are: Miss Lemon, who is Poirot’s secretary and is the only woman involved in his life, and Inspector Japp, who is an inspector for Scotland Yard. Because Japp is well aware of Poirot’s superior detective skills, he will sometimes ask for Poirot’s aid on difficult cases.

When comparing the characters from Sherlock Holmes and Poirot to one another, both the similarities that they shared to one another was analysed as well as the differences.

The most noticeable similarities between Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot is that they are both private detectives who are very intelligent and prideful men, who tend to view themselves above other people. Both have strange quirks and habits and while Poirot knows many people, he, like Holmes only has a few people that he trusts. They are not drawn to women romantically and have no interest in love or relationships. Holmes finds love to be unnecessary, and while he was interested in Irene Adler, it was not romantic. Poirot might have been smitten by countess Rossekoff, however it never went deeper than admiration. Both Holmes and Poirot remain bachelors throughout the stories, and beyond that (in Holmes case, Poirot dies in his last novel).

The most noticeable differences between Holmes and Poirot is their physical appearance. Poirot is short, old and has no physical strength, while Holmes is younger, taller and stronger. Another important difference between them is their character development as the stories go on. Poirot has a well-balanced and kind personality from the beginning, and therefore did not really change all that much. His quirks and habits are not flaws for him to change but are a part of his personality. Holmes, on the other hand, is more flawed than Poirot is. In the beginning of his story, Holmes was a bitter man who had little trust to give and relied only on himself. However as the stories continue, especially after his “death”, Holmes has overcome some of his flaws and has become more open.

Dr. John Watson and Arthur Hastings have a lot in common. They are Holmes’e and Poirot’s best friends and trusted partners, and serve as the narrators, retelling the cases of their dear
friends. They both served in the military before joining Holmes and Poirot on their cases, and later fell in love with a woman while on cases, and later married.

While Watson and Hastings have many similarities, they do have many differences. Hastings already knew Poirot and was already a good friend before the events in the first story, while Watson and Holmes were strangers meeting for the first time in their first story. Watson shows to be more intelligent than Hasting, giving that he is a doctor and that he tries his best at learning various methods from Holmes, while Hastings appears to be more naive, have no continuing education and will often not understand the progression of cases. Watson also married early on in the stories and then became a widower. Hastings, however married later and did not lose his wife.

Mrs Hudson and Miss Lemon are not featured a lot in the stories but do make a brief appearance in many of them. Both are the only women in Holmes’s and Poirot’s lives that they care deeply for. Both Mrs Hudson and Miss Lemon are caring, loyal, and are not afraid of speaking up and scolding Holmes and Poirot.

As with Holmes and Poirot, the most noticeable difference is their physical appearance. Mrs Hudson was old, while Miss Lemon was young. Mrs Hudson was Holmes’s landlady and married (might have been a widow), while Miss Lemon was Poirot’s secretary and unmarried.

Both Inspector Lestrade and Inspector Japp are Scotland Yard inspectors who have a rival/admiration relationship with Homes and Poirot. They are also both described as having ferret-like features.

Lestrade seems to have more pride than Japp, making it more difficult for him to accept that he is inferior to Holmes. Japp seems to be aware of his inferiority to Poirot.

This concludes that while the characters have many similarities to one another, they are also different in many ways as well. Even though Agatha Christie wrote her works after Arthur Conan Doyle, and may have used his creations as a base for some of her characters (Hastings). Both Doyle’s and Christie’s characters have their own identity.

The stories of Sherlock Holmes and Poirot are famous for having clever plots and well defined characters.

The structure of the stories is quite simple: It starts with Holmes and Poirot getting a case. They then prose to gather evidence and solve it, and end with them unveiling the truth behind
the said case. Although it may seem simple, both Doyle and Christie were able to come up with very clever story plots that work with this simple structure.

Although they have a similar basic structure for their stories, Doyle and Christie use them differently. Christie liked to use the same mystery elements for most of her stories, choosing to remain mysterious until the end, such as who the suspect’s identity is. Doyle liked to twist around the mysterious elements in his stories, such as the reader knowing who the suspect is but does not know why. Another difference is the way the story is told. Christie changes narrations and point of view’s in many of her stories, for example: Hastings being a narrator in one novel while another novel has another character narrating in first person perspective, and the story is written in third person perspective. Doyle does not change this at all; Watson is always the narrator and is written in the first person perspective.

By analysing the characters and the plot of Sherlock Holmes and Poirot, one can see why they are so famous. They both feature enjoyable characters, mysterious and clever plots that keep the readers guessing and unable to stop reading.
9. Bibliography

Academic sources & Books


**Websites:**


