Sherlock Holmes: *The Emerald Crown*

1. Leggi il testo sull’autore. Poi rispondi alle domande.

**The author**

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born on the 22nd May 1859, in Edinburgh, Scotland. He went to the University of Edinburgh and in 1881 he received a degree in medicine. In 1887, while he was still practising as a doctor, Conan Doyle wrote his first Sherlock Holmes story ‘A Study in Scarlet’. He wrote this story in three weeks. In this story we meet the famous character Sherlock Holmes and his friend, Dr Watson, for the first time. Conan Doyle based the character of Sherlock Holmes on a teacher and surgeon from Edinburgh University, Doctor Joseph Bell. Conan Doyle was only 17 when he met the doctor and it is obvious that he greatly impressed the young medical student. In fact, Conan Doyle dedicated his first collection of short stories *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892) to him.

Conan Doyle wrote many short stories, novels, plays and pamphlets but he is most famous for his stories about the great detective Sherlock Holmes. The stories always start at the end of a Sherlock Holmes mystery and work back from there to the solution. Over the years he wrote 56 short stories and four novels about the famous detective who has become more famous than the author. Everyone knows the profile of the famous detective with his magnifying glass, hat and pipe. Conan Doyle gave Holmes a London address – 221B Baker Street. Even today, tourists come and look for this house, even though they know Sherlock Holmes is not a real person.

In 1893, Conan Doyle ‘killed’ Holmes in his story *The Final Problem*. His fans were very unhappy because they wanted to read more stories about Sherlock Holmes. So in 1902 Conan Doyle wrote a new Sherlock Homes story, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. His final novel in the Sherlock Holmes series was *The Valley of Fear* (1915). In 1902 King Edward VII knighted Conan Doyle for public service and he became ‘Sir’ Arthur Conan Doyle. He died on the 7th July 1930, surrounded by his family.

1. Where and when was Arthur Conan Doyle born?
2. What did he study at university?
3. When did he become a writer?
4. Who was Doctor Joseph Bell?
5. What was the name of the first Sherlock Holmes mystery?
6. Why did Conan Doyle write another Sherlock Holmes novel in 1902?
2 Leggi il riassunto della storia e rispondi alle domande.

The story

The Emerald Crown (originally called The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet) is part of the collection of short stories The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes. The story first appeared in May 1892 in Strand Magazine, a popular illustrated magazine that contained both factual and fictional stories. In The Emerald Crown, someone tries to steal some emeralds from a crown belonging to the British royal family. The banker, Mr Holder, who is looking after the crown, asks Sherlock Holmes to solve the mystery and save his good name.

The Queen’s real jewels and crown are known as, The British Crown Jewels. They are kept in the Jewel House in the Tower of London. The Tower is a 900-year-old building near the River Thames in London. The tower is guarded by 36 Yeoman Warders and their chief. They are called ‘Beefeaters’.

You can visit the Crown Jewels from nine o’clock to 5.30 p.m. from Tuesday to Saturday and from ten o’clock on Sundays and Mondays.

In the Jewel House there are many different crowns, famous swords and important jewels, but the most famous crown is the Imperial State Crown. It is gold and it has 2,868 diamonds, 17 sapphires and 11 emeralds!

1 What are the Queen’s jewels called?
2 Where can you see them?
3 Where is the tower?
4 Who guards the tower?
5 When is the tower open?
6 What can you see in the Jewel House?
7 Which is the most famous crown?
8 How many emeralds has it got?
The Emerald Crown


**Narrator**  This is the beginning of the story. One morning, Sherlock Holmes and his friend, Dr Watson, are standing in an upstairs room in the house of the famous detective. Dr Watson is looking out of the window...

**Dr Watson**  Holmes, come over here to the window. There’s a very strange man in the street below. Look. He’s down there in the snow.

**Holmes**  I can see him. How old do you think he is?

**Dr Watson**  He’s about fifty … He’s tall, fat…

**Holmes**  Yes, that long black coat is very expensive. He’s a rich man.

**Dr Watson**  He’s rich, but he’s worried.

**Holmes**  You’re right. Look how he moves his head from side to side. Look how he moves his hands up and down.

**Dr Watson**  What’s wrong with him? He’s looking at the numbers on all the houses.

**Holmes**  Watson, I think he’s coming here.

**Dr Watson**  Here?

**Holmes**  Yes. He’s very unhappy about something and I think he wants me to help him.

**Dr Watson**  You’re right. He’s stopping at our front door.

**Holmes**  There, I told you, Watson. He’s here to see me...

**Maid**  Mr Holder to see you, sir.

**Holmes**  Please sit down. You’d like to tell us your story – is that right?

**Mr Holder**  Yes, I –, I – er…

**Holmes**  We can wait a minute. When you are ready, we can begin.

**Mr Holder**  I look very strange, I know.

**Holmes**  No, no, no. you want to tell us something important, that’s all.

**Mr Holder**  Why did this happen to me? It’s the worst thing … the very worst.

**Holmes**  Please tell me your name, sir, and then you can tell me your story.

**Mr Holder**  Perhaps you know my name. I am Alexander Holder of the Holder and Stevenson Bank of Threadneedle Street.

**Holmes**  Ah yes, one of the oldest banks in London.

**Mr Holder**  I’m sorry, sir. They told me about you and said, ‘You must speak to Sherlock Holmes. He can help you.’ I came to see you at once. I ran from Baker Street Station to get here more quickly. Thank you for waiting, I am ready to begin now.

**Dr Watson**  We are listening!
Mr Holder: Yesterday morning I was in my office at the bank when a man came to see me. When I saw him, I was very surprised. He was a very famous man.

Dr Watson: Who was it?

Mr Holder: I’m sorry, but I can’t tell you his name – because he’s one of the British royal family. ‘Mr Holder,’ he said, ‘people come to you to borrow money, I hear.’ ‘Yes, they do,’ I said, ‘and we always give it to them when we can.’ ‘I see,’ said the man. ‘Well, I need to borrow £50,000 from you at once.’

Holmes: That’s a very large sum of money! But you said he’s one of the royal family.

Mr Holder: Indeed. He said, ‘I can borrow that money many times over from my friends, of course. But I wanted to come to a bank for it. It’s not good to borrow from friends. After you give the money back to them, they always think they can ask you for things.’

Dr Watson: How long did he want to keep the money?

Mr Holder: For six days. He told me, ‘Someone is going to give me a lot of money on Monday, so I can give back the £50,000 to you then. But I need the money now.’

Holmes: Did you ask for anything in return?

Mr Holder: Yes. I told him, ‘For the bank to give you £50,000, you need to leave something expensive with us.’ The man then took out a big black box and put it on the table. Do you know the Emerald Crown?

Dr Watson: It’s one of the most famous crowns in England.

Mr Holder: Exactly. He took the Emerald Crown out of the box. It’s gold with 39 large emeralds – all of the most beautiful colour. I was unhappy about leaving the crown at the bank. So I took it home with me. Last night I lost everything: the emeralds, my son and my good name. You must help me to get them back.