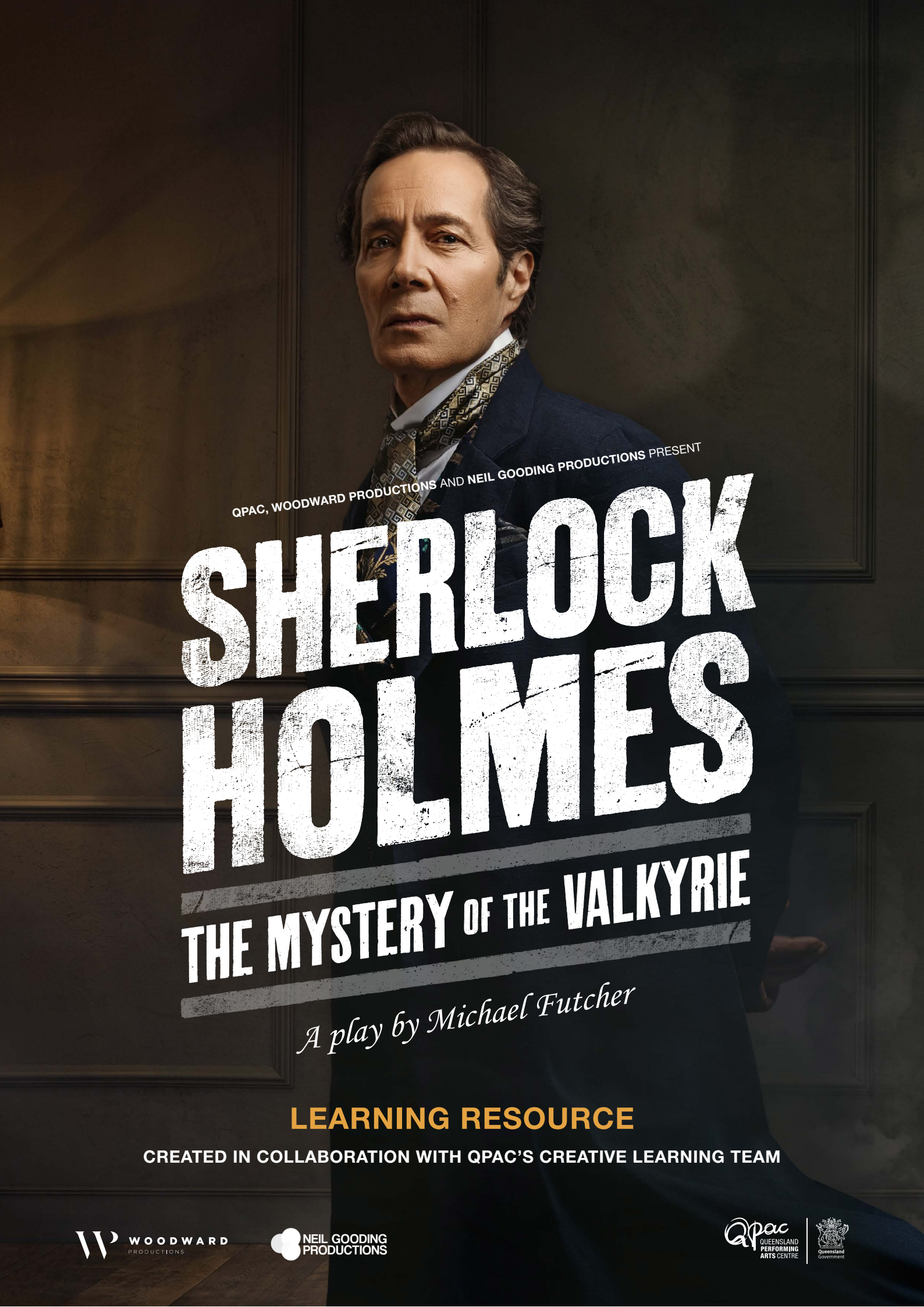


A portrait of a man dressed as Sherlock Holmes, wearing a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a patterned scarf. He is looking slightly to the left with a serious expression. The background is a dark, paneled wall.

QPAC, WOODWARD PRODUCTIONS AND NEIL GOODING PRODUCTIONS PRESENT

SHERLOCK HOLMES

THE MYSTERY OF THE VALKYRIE

A play by Michael Fitcher

LEARNING RESOURCE

CREATED IN COLLABORATION WITH QPAC'S CREATIVE LEARNING TEAM

Program Overview

Journey back to 221B Baker Street with Holmes, Watson, Adler and Moriarty, as this fast-paced dramatic thriller explodes onto the Playhouse stage with spectacular staging and projections.

Written and directed by the extraordinary Michael Futchler, this epic play will have you on the edge of your seat, until *The Mystery of the Valkyrie* is solved.

1890's London – renowned detective Sherlock Holmes, assisted by his trusted friend, Dr Watson, are thrown into a world that is not as it seems as they investigate the grisly murder of a scientist at Birlstone Manor.

What begins as a routine case for the famous sleuth, transforms into a dark web of intrigue, ultimately leading Holmes to an encounter with his greatest nemesis, the infamous Professor Moriarty – a battle he must win. The game is afoot!

The play analyses one of literature's great mysteries, the thorny 'final problem' surrounding the death and return of Sherlock Holmes. The play is a melange of the truths we know from Conan Doyle's novels about his famous sleuth, including most of his characters, as well as some literary fiction and a good chunk of theatrical licence.

It starts in Switzerland at the Reichenbach Falls but playwright Futchler provides a new series of mysteries including a missing toxic pathogen, the theme of *Valkyrie* and the character of Irene who is an opera singer engaged to the scientist who created the pathogen.

Running time: 2 hours and 20 mins

Warnings: This contains flashing lights, loud noises and drug references. For further details visit the Teacher's Guide – What to Expect at [Sherlock Holmes – The Mystery of the Valkyrie - Queensland Performing Arts Centre \(QPAC\)](#)

Suitability: This learning resource is for Years 8 – 10 students in English and Drama.

About Woodward Productions and Neil Gooding Productions

Sherlock Holmes - The Mystery of the Valkyrie is presented by Woodward Productions and Neil Gooding Productions, two of Australia's most prolific independent producing houses, brought together by a shared passion for bold, genre-defining new work.

Woodward Productions is led by Alex Woodward, who has spent nearly two decades building a reputation for creating and touring gateway theatre experiences that draw new audiences into live performances. *Sherlock Holmes - The Mystery of the Valkyrie* began life as a Woodward Productions commission, joining a slate of new Australian tours including *The 39 Steps*, *The Woman in Black*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Pride and Prejudice** (*Sort of), *Shirley Valentine*, *Plied and Prejudice*, and *A Very Naughty Christmas* as well as Woodward's growing international footprint as General Manager and Executive Producers for Trafalgar Entertainment's *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Neil Gooding Productions was established in 2002 by Tony Award-winning producer Neil Gooding, with a commitment to delivering high-quality theatrical experiences to Australian and international audiences and a particular focus on new work. Recent Australian credits include national tours of *Steel Magnolias*, *Pride and Prejudice** (*Sort of), *The Woman in Black*, *The 39 Steps*, and *Shirley Valentine*, alongside a wealth of international work spanning Broadway and the West End including *Back to the Future The Musical*, the Broadway revival of *Gypsy* and *Sunset Boulevard*, and the Australian tour of Helpmann Award-winning *Sweet Charity*.

Together, Gooding and Woodward bring decades of combined producing experience to this thrilling new mystery, continuing their shared mission of bringing ambitious, audience-first theatre to stages around Australia.

Sherlock Holmes - The Mystery of the Valkyrie

**Presented by QPAC, Woodward Productions
and Neil Gooding Productions**

Creatives:

Writer/Director: Michael Fatcher

Set and Costume Designer: Isabel Hudson

Video Designer: Craig Wilkinson

Choreographer and Movement Director: Dan Venz

Lighting Designer: David Walters

Sound Designer and Composer: Phil Slade

Original Fight Direction: Andy Fraser

Cast:

Sherlock Holmes **Eugene Gilfedder**

Dr. Watson **Ian Stenlake**

Professor Moriarty **Bryan Probets**

Mrs Hudson **Helen Cassidy**

Irene Adler **Helen Howard**

Sergeant Turner **Danny Brown**

Nikita Ivanovsky **Stephen Hirst**

Dr Bauman **Rowan Chapman**

Mycroft: **Cameron Hurry**

Male swing: **Jonty Hansen**

Curriculum Links (Summary)

Why is this production relevant to curriculum?

Sherlock Holmes – The Mystery of the Valkyrie provides strong curriculum connections for Years 8–10 English and Drama students through its exploration of adaptation, detective fiction, mystery, characterisation and theatrical storytelling.

The production offers rich opportunities for students to examine how an established literary world is adapted and reimagined for the stage and a contemporary audience. Students can explore the conventions of the crime and detective genres, consider how character and narrative are transformed through performance, and investigate the ways theatrical elements bring Sherlock Holmes' world to life.

The production also provides a springboard for students to create their own stories and dramatic works within the crime genre, applying their understanding of mystery, character, narrative and theatrical storytelling to their own creative practice.

Every crime story assumes a knowledge of this character, and most from this genre play or branch out from it. These resources introduce this pivotal character.

These connections make the production particularly relevant to English and Drama, supporting both critical analysis and creative response and the resource will focus on:

- **English:** How is a crime story constructed?
- **Drama:** How is a crime story transformed into performance?

Dramatic forms and styles

Crime /thriller

Melodrama

Victorian theatre

Detailed Curriculum Connections

Australian Curriculum v9.0 – Curriculum Connections: Years 8- 10

Drama – Year 8

AC9ADR8E01 – Analyse how drama is used to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning, using the elements of drama, conventions and/or performance styles.

AC9ADR8D02 - Reflect on their own and others' drama to inform choices when manipulating elements of drama and/or conventions to shape dramatic action.

Drama – Years 9 - 10

AC9ADR10E01 - Investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

AC9ADR10D02 - Reflect on their own and others' drama or practices to refine and inform their use of elements of drama, conventions and/or approaches to shape and sustain dramatic action

English Years 8 -10

AC9E8LE03 – Explain how language features, literary devices and text structures contribute to the aesthetic qualities of texts.

AC9E8LE05 – Explain how texts reflect and influence contexts, including social and cultural contexts, and how they are interpreted by audiences.

AC9E8LY03 – Analyse how language features are used to represent ideas, identities and perspectives.

AC9E9LA03 – Examine how authors adapt and subvert text structures and language features by experimenting with spoken, written, visual and multimodal elements, and their combination.

AC9E10LE03 – Analyse how the aesthetic qualities associated with text structures, language features, literary devices and visual features, and the context in which these texts are experienced, influence audience response.

AC9E10LE05 – Analyse how text structure, language features and literary devices shape different interpretations of texts.

AC9E10LY03 – Analyse and evaluate how language features are used to implicitly or explicitly represent values, beliefs and attitudes.

Background Information -

Sherlock Holmes and the Detective Genre

The History Behind the Story

Before exploring *Sherlock Holmes – The Mystery of the Valkyrie*, it is useful to understand where Sherlock Holmes came from, why the detective genre became so popular, and how the character has continued to be reinvented for new audiences.

Who was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle?

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) was a Scottish writer and physician. He created Sherlock Holmes, one of the most famous fictional characters in literary history.

Holmes first appeared in *A Study in Scarlet* in 1887 and went on to feature in four novels and 56 short stories published between 1887 and 1927.

Doyle drew inspiration for Holmes from his medical training, particularly from his professor Dr Joseph Bell. Bell was known for his extraordinary powers of observation and his ability to draw conclusions about a patient from small details about their appearance, behaviour and manner. Doyle transformed these skills into Holmes's method of solving crimes through observation, deduction and logic.

Doyle himself was also fascinated by real-life mysteries and cases of injustice. On several occasions, he used his investigative skills and public profile to investigate cases he believed had been wrongly handled by authorities. His involvement in these cases demonstrates an interesting connection between the fictional detective he created and the real-world problems that fascinated him.

Who is Sherlock Holmes?

Sherlock Holmes is not a real person. He is a fictional detective created by Arthur Conan Doyle.

Holmes lives at 221B Baker Street, London, with his friend and chronicler, Dr John Watson. He describes himself as a "*consulting detective*" – someone who is called upon when a mystery is too difficult for the police to solve.

Holmes is characterised by his:

- extraordinary powers of observation
- logical and analytical thinking
- ability to notice details others overlook
- knowledge of science and forensic techniques
- curiosity and determination
- eccentric personality
- complicated relationship with the official police

Holmes and Watson also established a relationship that became a defining feature of detective fiction: the brilliant detective and the trusted companion who helps tell the story and allows the audience to follow the investigation.

Where did the detective story come from?

Sherlock Holmes did not invent the detective story. The modern detective genre is generally traced back to American writer Edgar Allan Poe and his character C. Auguste Dupin, who first appeared in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* in 1841.

Poe established many of the conventions that would become central to detective fiction:

- a mysterious crime
- a seemingly impossible problem
- clues hidden within the story
- a brilliant detective
- a companion or narrator
- suspects and red herrings
- observation and logical deduction
- the eventual revelation of the solution

Doyle developed and popularised these conventions through Sherlock Holmes, helping turn detective fiction into a hugely popular literary genre.

Why were Sherlock Holmes stories so popular?

Holmes appeared at a time when London and other major cities were experiencing enormous social and technological change.

The late nineteenth century saw:

- rapid urban growth
- increasing concerns about crime
- the development of professional police forces
- new scientific and forensic techniques
- growing public interest in science and technology
- increased literacy and mass publishing

Holmes represented the idea that even when the world seems chaotic or frightening, careful observation, evidence and reason can help us make sense of it.

This was particularly powerful in a city such as Victorian London, where newspapers regularly reported sensational crimes and mysteries.

Why are people fascinated by crime?

The late nineteenth century was also a period in which notorious crimes captured the public imagination.

The Whitechapel murders associated with Jack the Ripper in London in 1888 created widespread fear and fascination. At the same time, newspapers increasingly reported crime in sensational ways, turning real cases into stories that people followed closely.

Interestingly, another notorious figure named H. H. Holmes was committing murders in the United States around the same period. Although H. H. Holmes has no connection to Sherlock Holmes, the shared name creates an interesting opportunity to explore how real crime and fictional crime can become confused or connected in popular culture.

From Victorian London to the modern world

Sherlock Holmes has been reinvented many times since Doyle created him.

He has appeared in:

- novels and short stories
- theatre productions
- films
- television series
- radio and audio dramas
- animation
- comics
- video games

Different versions have moved Holmes into different times and places. For example, the BBC series *Sherlock* places him in contemporary London, while *Elementary* reimagines the character in New York. Other adaptations have changed his age, personality, setting, relationships and even the characters surrounding him.

This is one of the reasons Holmes remains culturally significant: the character can change while the essential idea of the detective remains recognisable.

A Cultural Touchpoint

You may never have read a Sherlock Holmes story, but you probably recognise some of the imagery associated with him 221B Baker Street, the magnifying glass, the detective, Dr Watson and the idea of solving a crime through clues and deduction.

Holmes has become a template for countless detectives that followed. Modern crime stories continue to use and reinvent the conventions Doyle helped popularise.

In fact, the phrase “a Sherlock Holmes” has become part of everyday language to describe someone who is particularly good at solving mysteries or noticing details.

A character that keeps being reinvented

Every new version of Sherlock Holmes tells us something about the time in which it was created.

Ask yourself:

Why do we keep returning to Sherlock Holmes?

Perhaps it is because the basic question never changes:

Can we find the truth by following the clues?

That question is at the heart of detective fiction, and it is also at the heart of *Sherlock Holmes – The Mystery of the Valkyrie*.

Classroom Activities

Investigation: When Life Imitates Art

Sherlock Holmes is fictional, but Doyle’s stories were influenced by real people, scientific developments and real-world concerns. At the same time, the popularity of Holmes has influenced the real world.

This creates an interesting question:

Can fiction influence reality?

Research the term “life imitating art.”

Consider:

- Have fictional stories ever influenced the way people behave in real life?
- Have fictional technologies later become real?
- Have crime shows influenced forensic science or police investigations?
- Have fictional detectives changed the way people think about solving crimes?
- Can a television show, film or novel influence public attitudes towards real-world issues?

Research Challenge

Choose one modern film, television series, novel or game and investigate whether it has influenced the real world in some way.

You might investigate:

Fiction to Reality

How has something imagined by a writer or artist affected:

- technology?
- science?
- policing?
- fashion?
- language?
- popular culture?
- people’s behaviour or expectations?

Then consider the reverse:

Reality to Fiction

What real-world event, person, technology or social concern has inspired a fictional story?

Think Like a Detective

After reading the background information, discuss:

1. Arthur Conan Doyle
Who was he? How successful was he as a writer?
What experiences and people influenced his creation of Sherlock Holmes?
2. Sherlock Holmes
What makes Holmes such an enduring character? Which of his qualities make him an effective detective and which make him difficult to like?
3. Reality and fiction
How might real crimes such as the Whitechapel murders have influenced the popularity of detective stories in Victorian Britain?
4. Life imitating art
Can you find an example where a fictional story has influenced the real world?
5. Art imitating life
Can you find an example where a real person, event or social issue has inspired a fictional crime story?
6. The enduring mystery
Why do audiences continue to enjoy stories about crime, clues, suspects and solving mysteries?

Extension Question

Sherlock Holmes was created more than 130 years ago, yet the character continues to appear in new stories, films, television series and theatrical productions.

What does this tell us about the power of a character and the power of a good mystery?

Background Information – The Valkyries

The History of *Valkyrie*

Where does *Valkyrie* come from?

Before exploring *Sherlock Holmes – The Mystery of the Valkyrie*, it is useful to understand the story behind the name *Valkyrie* and the powerful piece of music that has become associated with it.

The Valkyries have their origins in Norse mythology. They are supernatural female figures associated with the god Odin (Wotan in Wagner's version of the story). Their role is to choose which warriors who die in battle are worthy of being taken to Valhalla, the great hall of the fallen warriors.

The idea of the Valkyrie has appeared in mythology, literature, music and popular culture for centuries. One of the most famous interpretations came from German composer Richard Wagner in his enormous four-part music drama, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*).

Wagner's *Die Walküre*

Die Walküre (*The Valkyrie*) is the second part of Wagner's four-part Ring cycle.

The four works are:

1. *Das Rheingold – The Rhinegold*
2. *Die Walküre – The Valkyrie*
3. *Siegfried*
4. *Götterdämmerung – Twilight of the Gods*

Wagner wrote both the music and the words (libretto) for the entire cycle.

The stories draw heavily on Norse mythology and medieval German legends, but Wagner transformed these traditional stories into a much larger drama exploring ideas such as:

- power
- love
- loyalty
- family
- freedom and free will
- duty

- conflict between generations
- the struggle between individuals and authority
- the downfall of the gods

The Valkyries in Wagner's story are the warrior daughters of Wotan, the chief god. They ride through the skies and gather fallen warriors to take them to Valhalla. A very long story!

The *Ring* cycle is enormous. When performed in full, the four music dramas take approximately 15–17 hours, usually spread across several days.

Wagner originally imagined the complete *Ring* being performed as a single festival event in a theatre designed specifically for his work.

The first performance of *Die Walküre* took place in Munich in 1870. The complete *Ring* cycle was first performed at the Bayreuth Festival in 1876.

The Music of the Valkyries

You may not know Wagner's opera, but there is a good chance you have heard one of its most famous pieces of music:

Ride of the Valkyries

This powerful musical theme appears at the beginning of Act III of *Die Walküre*, as the Valkyries ride through the sky gathering fallen warriors.

The music is energetic, dramatic and instantly recognisable.

It has also taken on a life of its own outside the opera house. It has been used in:

- films
- television
- cartoons
- advertising
- sporting events
- popular culture
- comedy and parody

One of its most famous uses is in Francis Ford Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now*, where the music accompanies a helicopter attack.

How can music change meaning when it is taken out of its original context?

For Wagner, the music belongs to a very specific moment in a much larger story. But when filmmakers use it in a completely different context, audiences may associate the music with war, danger, power, excitement, comedy or heroic action.

This is an important idea when thinking about *Sherlock Holmes – The Mystery of the Valkyrie*.

What happens when an old story, character, piece of music or idea is taken out of its original context and reinvented for a new audience?

Classroom Activities

Investigate: The Valkyrie

Now that you know a little about the history behind Valkyrie, become the detective.

1. The Valkyrie

Research the Valkyries in Norse mythology.

Find out:

- Who were the Valkyries?
- What was their role?
- Who was Odin/Wotan?
- What is Valhalla?
- Where do stories about the Valkyries appear?
- How have representations of Valkyries changed over time?

Think about how the image of the Valkyrie has been represented in writing, visual art, music, film and popular culture.

Investigate: Wagner's Ring Cycle

Research Richard Wagner and *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

Find out:

Composer:

Who was Richard Wagner?

When was it composed?

How long did Wagner work on the Ring cycle?

What is the Ring cycle?

What are the four parts and how do they connect?

Performance:

How long does the complete cycle take to perform? Where was it first performed?

Audience:

Who would have experienced Wagner's Ring when it was first performed? Who experiences it today?

Big ideas:

What are some of the major themes or ideas explored in the *Ring* cycle?

Think like a theatre-maker

Why might a contemporary theatre-maker be interested in taking a story that is more than 150 years old and transforming it for today's audience or using it as a reference?

Listen: Ride of the Valkyries

Now listen to Wagner's famous Ride of the Valkyries.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGU1P6IBW6Q>

[WAGNER - Ride of the Valkyries \(Die Walküre Akt 3\)](#)

As you listen, don't worry about knowing anything about opera. Instead, listen like a director, designer or storyteller.

What do you hear?

1. Instruments

What instruments can you hear most clearly? Listen particularly to the strings and brass.

2. Energy

What does the music make you imagine? Does it suggest movement, danger, excitement, battle or something else?

3. The original story

What is happening in *Die Walküre* when this music is performed? Research the scene and compare it with what you imagined while listening.

4. Emotion

What emotions does the music create for you? What kind of action would you expect to see accompanying it?

5. Music and storytelling

If you were directing a film, television show or play, how could you use this music to:

- build tension?
- introduce a character?
- signal danger?
- create excitement?
- create comedy?
- make a scene feel larger than life?

6. Music you recognise

Have you heard this music before? Where?

Try to identify:

- the film, television show, advertisement or game
- the scene in which it was used
- what was happening at that moment
- what the music made you expect or feel

From *The Valkyrie* to *Sherlock Holmes*

The history of *Valkyrie* is a great example of how stories travel through time.

A story from Norse mythology became part of Wagner's nineteenth-century opera. Wagner's music was then taken into twentieth- and twenty-first-century films, television and popular culture.

Now, the idea of *Valkyrie* has been brought into a contemporary Sherlock Holmes mystery.

Consider the journey:

Norse mythology, Wagner's opera, popular culture, contemporary theatre.

At each stage, the original idea is changed, reinterpreted and given new meaning.

Discussion

Why do artists keep returning to old stories?

What can an old story offer a contemporary audience?

And what happens when an artist takes something audiences think they already know – such as Sherlock Holmes, a *Valkyrie* or a famous piece of music and turns it into something unexpected?

This is the process of adaptation and reinterpretation taking an existing story, character, idea or artistic work and transforming it for a new context and audience.

Learning Activities – English

Crime, Mystery and Sherlock Holmes

This sequence of activities is designed to support students studying crime and mystery narratives and genres in English.

The activities move from what students already know, what they observe in the production, how the conventions are used and challenged, creating their own crime narrative.

Students will explore the conventions of crime and mystery, characterisation, point of view, setting, symbolism, suspense and adaptation. They will then apply these ideas to their own creative writing in the crime genre.

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

Activity 1: What Makes a Mystery?

The essential elements of crime and mystery narratives

What makes a crime story a crime story?

Begin by exploring these key words:

- Crime
- Detective
- Investigation
- Clues
- Evidence
- Deduction
- Red herrings
- Motive
- Victim
- Suspects
- Witnesses
- Setting
- Mystery
- Tension
- Suspense

Create a Crime and Mystery Glossary

Find a definition for each term.

Then organise the words into groups. For example:

Evidence and investigation:

Clues, evidence, witnesses, investigation, deduction

Characters:

Detective, victim, suspects, witnesses

Narrative techniques:

Red herrings, mystery, tension, suspense

Think like a writer

Why are these elements important?

Consider:

- What creates suspense?
- Why is it important that the audience does not know everything?
- How can a writer make the audience suspect the wrong person?
- How can clues be revealed without giving away the solution?
- What makes us want to keep reading or watching?

Activity 2: What Do You Already Know About Crime Fiction?

Think about the crime and mystery stories you already know.

List five crime or mystery films, television shows, books or podcasts you have experienced.

For each one, identify as many of these elements as you can:

Clues, red herrings, deduction, evidence, witnesses, motive, investigation, victim

Meet the Detective

The detective is not always a police officer.

For each story:

1. Who is the person solving the crime?
2. What makes them effective as a detective?
3. What are their positive character traits?
4. What are their flaws or weaknesses?
5. What makes them interesting to an audience?
6. What do the detectives in your examples have in common?

Stereotypes and expectations

Now consider:

Are these detectives a stereotype?

What do we expect a detective to be like?

For example, are they usually:

- intelligent?
- observant?
- determined?
- independent?
- unconventional?
- brave?
- flawed?
- emotionally distant?

Discuss:

What are the advantages of using a familiar character stereotype?

What are the disadvantages?

DURING / IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Activity 3: Sherlock Holmes – The Detective Stereotype

Now apply your understanding of detective fiction to *Sherlock Holmes – The Mystery of the Valkyrie*.

Investigate Sherlock Holmes

1. To what extent does Sherlock Holmes fit the stereotype of the detective?
2. Which characteristics make him recognisable as a detective?
3. What characteristics make him unusual or unexpected?
4. How does the production use humour to play with the detective stereotype?
5. How does Holmes compare with the detectives you identified before seeing the production?

Sherlock Holmes as the model detective

Every crime story assumes a knowledge of this character and most from this genre play or branch out from it. These resources introduce this pivotal character.

Sherlock Holmes was created in the nineteenth century and has influenced generations of crime and mystery writers.

Consider:

- How influential has Sherlock Holmes been on modern detective fiction?
- Can you see similarities between Holmes and the detectives in contemporary crime stories?
- Which modern detectives appear to borrow from the Holmes model?
- What happens when a writer deliberately breaks the detective stereotype?

Think like a writer

Why use a stereotype if your audience already knows it?

And:

When is it more interesting to break the stereotype?

Activity 4: Character Comparison

One of the ways a writer creates interest and conflict is by placing very different characters together.

Compare the following pairs:

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson

Sherlock Holmes and Miss Adler

Sherlock Holmes and Inspector MacDonald

For each pair, consider:

- What are their similarities?
- What are their differences?
- What does each character want?
- What are their strengths?
- What are their weaknesses?
- How do they respond differently to problems?
- How does their relationship create conflict, humour or tension?

Writing task

Choose one pair of characters.

Write a paragraph explaining how the contrast between the two characters makes the play more interesting for an audience.

Use specific examples from production.

Extend your thinking

Does a story need conflict to be interesting?

Can you think of a successful story where the characters rarely disagree or clash?

Activity 5: Point of View – Who Gets to Tell the Story?

A key decision for any crime writer is:

Who tells the story?

There are three common choices.

First-person narrator

The story is told by one character using I, me and my.

The reader experiences events through this character's perspective.

We know what this character knows, but we may not know what other characters are thinking or doing.

This can create mystery and suspense because the reader has limited information.

Third-person omniscient narrator

The narrator is outside the story but can tell us what any character is thinking, feeling or doing.

The reader can potentially know much more than any individual character.

Third-person limited narrator

The narrator is outside the story, but the reader experiences events mainly through the perspective of one character.

We know what this character knows, but not everything happening elsewhere.

Apply it to *The Mystery of the Valkyrie*

1. What point of view does the production use?
2. Who controls the information the audience receives?
3. What does the audience know that the characters do not?
4. Does the audience ever know more than Sherlock Holmes?
5. How does controlling information create suspense?

The narrator on stage

Theatre creates a particular challenge.

A narrator can explain information directly to an audience, but what might be lost by showing rather than telling?

Discuss:

- What are the advantages of using a narrator on stage?
- What are the disadvantages?
- What are the advantages of a first-person narrator in a written crime story?
- What might the writer deliberately keep hidden from the reader?

Research challenge

Return to the original Sherlock Holmes stories.

What point of view does Arthur Conan Doyle use?

Why might Doyle have chosen to tell Holmes's stories this way?

Activity 6: Write in Role

Enter the Mind of a Criminal

A crime story is not only about the detective.

What happens when we see the story from the perspective of the person being investigated?

Choose **Professor Moriarty** or another character from the production.

Possible characters include:

- Miss Adler
- Inspector McDonald
- Dr Bauman

Step 1: Build the character

Identify:

- personality traits
- strengths
- weaknesses
- relationships
- motivations
- fears
- ambitions
- secrets

Then research what you can about the character and consider how the production represents them.

Step 2: Choose a moment

Select an important moment from the story.

It might be:

- before the crime
- during the investigation
- when the plan begins to unravel
- when the character is discovered
- after the conclusion of the story.

Step 3: Retell the moment

Retell the scene from your character's point of view.

Ask:

What does this character know?

What do they want?

What are they afraid of?

What are they hiding?

What do they think about the other characters?

You could present your writing as:

- a diary entry
- a letter
- a confession
- a private conversation
- an internal monologue
- a first-person narrative

Activity 7: Setting and Atmosphere

The setting of *Sherlock Holmes - The Mystery of the Valkyrie* is more than a backdrop.

The production moves through evocative locations and environments, including:

- London streets at night
- houses and interiors
- the theatre
- the train
- opium dens

Investigate the setting

Choose one setting from the production.

Describe:

- What did it look like?
- What did it sound like?
- What atmosphere did it create?
- What did you expect might happen there?
- How did lighting, sound, costume, props, or movement contribute to the setting?

Writing challenge

How powerful is an evocative setting in a crime story?

Choose a setting for your own crime story.

Don't simply choose any place. Choose a place that creates a particular mood and builds tension.

For example:

An empty train station at midnight

might create isolation, uncertainty, and danger.

A crowded shopping centre

might create opportunities for secrecy, surveillance, and confusion.

Explain:

How can setting become part of the mystery?

Activity 8: Symbols and Ideas

A strong crime story can operate on more than one level.

It can entertain us with a mystery while also exploring larger ideas.

The Valkyrie

Consider how the idea of the Valkyrie appears in the production.

Think about:

- The Ring cycle
- Wagner's *Die Walküre*
- Brünnhilde
- music
- plot
- imagery
- ideas about power, destiny and conflict

Think like a Writer

Write a paragraph explaining:

How does the idea of Valkyrie contribute to the meaning of the play?

Drugs and Vulnerability

Opium and cocaine appear in the world of the play.

Sherlock Holmes is also presented as vulnerable through his relationship with drugs.

Research:

- How common was the use of opium and cocaine during the period in which the story is set?
- Why were these substances used?
- How were they viewed at the time?
- How does the production use Holmes's drug use to reveal something about his character?

Think like a writer:

What might be a contemporary equivalent for a detective with a serious personal habit or addiction?

What does giving a hero a weakness add to a story?

Moriarty and Contemporary Ideas

Professor Moriarty's crimes are connected to ideas about racial superiority, disease and pandemics.

Consider his speech or rally in the second half of the production.

Discuss:

- What ideas is Moriarty promoting?
- Why are these ideas dangerous?
- Does his language remind you of ideas or rhetoric that exist in the modern world?
- Why might a playwright connect a historical crime story with contemporary concerns?

Think like a writer

A crime story can be entertaining and make us think about the world we live in.

What happens when a writer connects a fictional story to real social concerns?

Can this give a story greater complexity or relevance?

ACTIVITY 9: Create Your Own Crime Narrative

Now it is your turn to become the writer.

A successful crime story is built through a series of deliberate choices.

1. Choose your setting

Where and when will your story take place?

Think about:

- location
- season
- time of day
- weather
- atmosphere

Ask:

What should the audience feel when they enter this world?

2. Choose your detective

Who will solve the crime?

They might be:

- a police officer
- a journalist
- a scientist
- a teacher
- a student
- a private investigator
- an expert
- an ordinary person who becomes involved in something extraordinary

Give your detective strengths and flaws.

3. Choose your crime

What has happened?

Who is the victim?

Who are the suspects?

Who are the witnesses?

What is the motive?

4. Choose your point of view

Who tells the story?

Will the audience know:

everything?

only what the detective knows?

only what one character knows?

Think carefully:

Could limiting information make your mystery more suspenseful?

5. Choose your characters

Keep your cast manageable.

Each character should have a reason for being in the story.

Give your characters different:

- motivations
- personalities
- relationships
- secrets
- perspectives

6. Plant your clues

Decide:

- What clues will the audience discover?
- Which clues are genuine?
- Will you include a red herring?
- When will each clue be revealed?
- Can the audience solve the mystery before the detective?

7. Choose where your story begins

You could begin:

Before the crime – allowing the audience to see what is about to happen.

During the crime – creating immediate tension.

After the crime – making the audience investigate what has already happened.

Final Challenge: Break the Stereotype

Return to the detective you created at the beginning of this unit.

Compare them with your new detective.

Ask yourself:

How closely does my detective fit the traditional detective stereotype?

What have I changed?

Why did I make those choices?

Does breaking the stereotype make my character more interesting?

Finally, share your crime narrative with the class.

As a class, discuss:

As your crime story is shorter, ensure to reduce the number of characters, the number of clues and the number of settings to make it accessible.

What makes a great detective story: the detective, the crime, the clues, the characters, the setting, or the way all of these elements work together?

Learning Activities – Drama

How Does a Crime Story Become a Performance?

Sherlock Holmes - The Mystery of the Valkyrie provides an opportunity for Drama students to explore how a familiar crime and mystery story can be transformed into a theatrical experience and to analyse the world created by the artists.

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

Activity 1: What Makes Crime Dramatic?

A crime story can be told in a novel, film, television series, or podcast.

But what happens when that story is put on stage? What elements of drama and conventions are manipulated to create the performance? Consider below as you watch the performance.

Elements of Drama

Explore:

- Tension - What is the tension engaging you?
- Focus – How was focus created?
- Space and place – Where does it take place, how many places?
- Movement – Consider body language and more obvious movement sequences.
- Time – When is the play set?

- What characteristics were typical of the characters?
What well-known phrases do you recognise?
E.g. I shudder to think.
- Roles and relationships – How would you describe each character?
- Contrast – How did the play change from comedic to serious moments?
- Mood - The mood shifts throughout the play – what are some key feelings?
- Symbol – What are the main symbols in the play?
- Dramatic Conventions
- The production uses a range of theatrical conventions, including:
 - heightened physicality
 - movement sequences
 - chase sequences
 - stage fights
 - projected images
 - clowning
 - stereotyped characters
 - spotlight delivery
 - melodrama
 - comedy
 - music and soundtrack
 - a character providing narrative links.

Activity 2: From Story to Stage

Choose a familiar crime or mystery scene from a film, television show, or book.

Imagine you have to put this scene on stage.

You cannot rely on:

- camera angles
- editing
- close-ups
- special effects
- a change of location through film editing

Instead, you need to use the elements of drama and selected conventions.

In small groups

Choose a short crime scene and decide:

What will the audience see?

What will they hear?

Where will the actors stand?

How will they move?

What will create tension?

What will remain hidden?

How will the audience know that something important has happened?

Present a short version of your scene.

Reflect

Which theatrical choices made the scene more dramatic?

Which choices made it less effective?

Activity 3: Physicality and Movement

Crime stories often involve pursuit, escape, confrontation, and discovery.

How can the body tell the story?

Experiment with:

The Chase

Create a short chase sequence without actually running.

Explore:

- pace
- direction
- levels
- repetition
- freeze
- slow motion
- gesture
- distance between performers
- focus

How can you make the audience believe someone is being chased without showing a realistic chase?

The Fight

Explore how a stage fight can communicate:

- danger
- conflict
- power
- fear
- defeat

Discuss the difference between a realistic fight and a theatrical fight.

Why might a theatre-maker choose to exaggerate movement?

Heightened Physicality

Take an ordinary action – entering a room, opening a door, finding a clue.

Perform it three ways:

1. realistically
2. exaggerated
3. highly stylised

Which version communicates most strongly to an audience?

Why?

DURING THE PERFORMANCE

Your Job as a Drama Detective

As you watch *Sherlock Holmes – The Mystery of the Valkyrie*, don't just follow the mystery. Look for how the performance-makers create the mystery. The key question:

What theatrical choices did the artists make and what did that choice make the audience feel, think or expect?

What did you notice?	What effect did it have?

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Activity 4: How Did They Create the World of the Play?

Scenography: Creating Place on Stage (The art and practice of creating a complete stage environment and atmosphere for a live performance.)

The production uses a range of theatrical elements to create its world.

Think about:

- London streets
- interiors
- the theatre
- the train
- opium dens
- projections
- lighting
- sound
- costume
- props

Choose one setting.

Analyse it as a designer

What did you see?

What did you hear?

How did the space change?

What did the lighting contribute ?

What did the projection contribute?

What atmosphere was created?

Design challenge

Choose one scene from the production.

Create a visual or written design concept for the scene.

You could design:

- lighting
- projection
- set
- costume
- sound

Explain:

How would your design choices help tell the story? What would you do differently?

Activity 5: Character – Realistic or Exaggerated?

The production deliberately plays with different styles of characterisation.

Consider:

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson

How are they physically different?

How do they move?

How do they speak?

How do they relate to one another?

What does one character reveal about the other?

Who has the higher status?

The Police

Inspector Macdonald and Sergeant Turner are played for comedy and exaggeration.

Consider:

- accent
- physicality
- movement
- timing
- repetition
- exaggeration
- incompetence
- relationship to Holmes

Clowning and Stereotype

What makes these characters funny?

How does the production use clowning or exaggerated characterisation?

Why might a theatre-maker deliberately make a character larger than life?

Discuss:

What is the difference between a realistic character and a caricature?

Activity 6: Comedy and Melodrama

Crime stories are often associated with danger and suspense.

So why put comedy into a crime story?

Look for moments of:

- exaggeration
- incongruity
- slapstick

- physical comedy
- irony
- parody
- stereotyped characters
- unexpected behaviour

Melodrama

Melodrama uses heightened emotions, clear conflicts, strong characters, and dramatic situations. It includes reacting to mundane events with extreme emotion, e.g. rage, joy or grief.

Investigate:

What makes something melodramatic?

Find an example from the production.

Then perform a short everyday situation as melodrama.

For example:

Someone discovers that their lunch has disappeared.

Perform it first realistically.

Then perform it as melodrama.

What changes?

Consider:

- gesture
- voice
- movement
- facial expression
- music
- pace
- focus

Why might exaggeration make a serious story more entertaining?

Activity 7: Spotlight and Direct Address

At certain moments, a character appears to speak directly to the audience, almost a soliloquy.

This changes the relationship between performer and audience.

Experiment

One performer stands in front of the class and delivers:

“You are on the wrong track.”

Try it:

1. as if speaking to another character
2. directly to the audience
3. as a warning
4. as a joke
5. as a secret
6. as a dramatic revelation

Discuss

How did the meaning change?

What does direct address allow an actor to do that a realistic conversation does not?

Spotlight

How does a spotlight control focus?

What happens when everything on stage is visible?

What happens when only one person is visible?

Lighting does not simply illuminate the stage; it tells the audience where to look and helps us to understand the mood.

Activity 8: Sound, Music and the Audience

Music can tell an audience how to respond before a character speaks.

Think about the use of:

- soundtrack
- sound effects
- silence
- rhythm
- Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*

Choose one moment from the production.

Experiment

Perform the same short scene three times:

Version 1: no music or sound

Version 2: suspenseful sound

Version 3: comic or unexpected music

Discuss:

How did the meaning of the scene change?

The Valkyrie connection

How does Wagner's music connect the production to the history of The Valkyrie?

What happens when an audience recognises a piece of music?

Does recognition create:

- expectation?
- excitement?
- humour?
- tension?
- a connection to another story?

Activity 9: Creating Tension

A crime story depends on tension.

But how does a theatre-maker create it?

Choose one of these situations:

A detective discovers a clue.

A character hears a noise behind them.

Someone is being followed.

A character knows something the audience does not.

Create a short scene.

You must use at least three theatrical elements to create tension.

For example:

- lighting
- sound
- movement
- space
- silence
- focus
- pace
- proximity
- repetition

The Challenge

Perform the scene twice.

First: create tension through realistic acting.

Second: create tension through heightened or stylised performance.

Which is more effective?

Why?

Activity 10: Clues on Stage

A detective story is built from clues.

But clues do not have to be words.

A theatre-maker can give the audience clues through:

- movement
- costume
- props
- lighting
- sound
- projection
- gesture
- positioning
- repetition
- symbolism

The challenge

Create a **three-clue mystery**.

Your audience must be able to solve the mystery by paying attention to what happens on stage.

You must include:

- a crime or mystery
- a detective
- at least two suspects
- three clues
- one red herring
- a reveal

But here is the rule:

You cannot explain the clues directly to the audience.

You must communicate with them through theatrical choices.

Activity 11: Become the Performance-Maker

Create Your Own Crime Scene

Working in small groups, create a 3–5 minute theatrical crime or mystery scene.

Your scene must include:

Story

- a mystery or crime
- a detective
- suspects

- a motive
- clues
- a red herring
- a reveal

Drama

Use at least five of the following:

- heightened physicality
- movement sequence
- tension
- contrast
- focus
- space
- sound/music
- lighting
- projection
- direct address
- clowning
- melodrama
- stereotyped characterisation
- symbolism

The Challenge

You are not simply telling a crime story.

You are asking:

How can we make the audience experience the mystery through theatre?

Your group should make deliberate choices about:

What the audience sees.

What the audience hears.

What the audience knows.

What the audience does not know.

Where the audience looks.

What the audience expects.

When you surprise them.

Discuss: Mystery is a key aspect of tension and used to hook in an audience. What was the central mystery of the performance? How long did it hold your attention?

Activity 12: Reflection after the performance

After viewing the performance:

1. What theatrical conventions did you notice?
2. Which elements of Drama were most important to creating suspense?
3. What was the staging and how did it help to create meaning?
4. Consider the use of projections – what did they help to create?
5. The visual images are selected to support the scene – what ones worked most effectively?
6. What role did sound, music or lighting play?
7. What were the stereotypes and symbols used to create a detective stereotype?
8. How was comedy created?
9. Were the clues strong enough? Did it become increasingly obvious who was the problem?
10. What did you learn from *Sherlock Holmes – The Mystery of the Valkyrie* about Victorian times?
11. Who was the “baddie” and were you surprised?
12. Are there key messages in the play?
13. Describe your favourite moment and why?
14. Is there anything you would suggest or do to change the performance?