"The Science of Deduction" in *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of the Four*: Revision Notes and Questions

- Overall, character/description of Holmes:
    - Genius (superior observation and analytical skills)
    - Excessive-obsessive, possibly a dark side (his boredom, interest in crime solving for intellectual stimulation often in excess to any moral duty of bringing justice, cocaine use)
    - Different from the generic types (a consulting detective, not a police inspector)
    - Eccentric (Solar System)
    - Romantic, solitary (violin)
    - Modern, ahead of his time

- Holmes' method (see more details below):
    - *Book of Life*
    - Science of Deduction
    - Three qualities necessary in a detective (see the chapter from The Sign of the Four, p. 3; find at least one other quote)

- Holmes' attitude to earlier literary detectives (Poe's Dupin)
    - a claim of difference
    - a claim of greater realism?

- Pay special attention to the example of the "watch". Which other puzzles does Holmes crack in these two chapters?

Sherlock Holmes' Method
(Ref. C. Bayard, *Sherlock Holmes Was Wrong*, p.30-31)

Three steps: Observation, Deduction (a general long-list of possibilities), Reasoning backward (refining and narrowing down of possibilities to singular answers)

Observation
- Categories of material elements
    - identifying signs: various physical elements that help us recognize an individual

- o print or trace left directly by the body of the criminal (example, blood, saliva, fingerprint, footprint)
  - o indirect trace left by the criminal (example, tobacco ashes, a torn fabric)
  - o the written document
  - o clues concerning objects (belongings or otherwise: a watch etc.)
- Psychological behaviour (in a broad sense: including instinctive behaviour, habits etc.)

Deduction
- Preliminary knowledge that makes the clues descipherable (kinds of tobacco ash, for example)
- Comparison (within plurality of clues)

Reasoning Backwards
- Elimination of possibilities

Bayard's Thesis:
- The three steps together open up many more possibilities than the ones the detective mentions and bases his deduction on.
- Subtly maintained confusion between scientific law and statistical generality
  - o (what Holmes reasons are probable, may even be highly likely, but individual, specific possibilities of what actually happens are infinite)
- Pseudo-scientific elimination of individual psychology
- Therefore, far from a closed-system, alternative solutions are always possible (even if not 'credible' in a literary narrative)

Therefore, 'Narrative Contract' between the reader and the writer, narrative pleasure of 'a closed system'