

THE SIGN OF FOUR

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

The Sign of the Four is the second of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes novel series. In it the detective and his companion Dr Watson unravel a mystery of hidden treasure and murder.

Miss Mary Morstan arrives at Baker Street to request help with the mystery of her missing father, her anonymous gifts of pearls and a letter requesting her to meet an unknown person that evening. Holmes takes on her case and the adventure begins.

Key points of the novel:- The Sign of Four

1. Miss Mary Morstan arrives and asks for help with a mystery.
2. Holmes and Watson accompany her to Thaddeus Sholto's house and learn about the Agra treasure.
3. Bartholomew Sholto is found dead at Pondicherry Lodge.
4. Holmes investigates the clues and calls the police. Athelney Jones arrests Thaddeus Sholto. Holmes sends Watson to borrow Toby, the dog.
5. Holmes eventually puts on a disguise to track down the Aurora launch.
6. Watson, Holmes and Inspector Jones pursue the villains along the river Thames and catch up with them. They throw the treasure in the sea. The treasure chest is empty.
7. Jonathan Small is arrested and he confesses his whole story.
8. Watson and Mary Morstan decide to marry.

Questions:

Q. 1. Explain the theme of Greed in Sign of Four.

Answer:

Greed is the main theme of the novel 'The Sign of Four'. Greed of Agra treasure leads to all mysteries and mishaps in the story. Major Salto and Mr. Morstan became the first victim of the greed. Major Salto betrayed his friend as soon as he gets the treasure. It leads to the death of Mr. Morstan. Greed also brings disaster in the life of Major Salto. He died due to illness and burden of betrayal.

Both the Salto brothers wasted six years of their life in search of treasure. Finally, as they got the treasure, Bartholomew was murdered due to treasure. It is the greediness of Jonathan

Small that spoiled the life of all the major characters in the story. He was responsible for all the deaths in the novel. He also killed Tongo. Finally Small was arrested. In short, all the events in the plot revolve around the theme of Greed.

Q.2. Sketch the character of Miss. Morstan.

Answer:

Miss. Morstan is the protagonist of the novel. She is the centre of all the events. It is her search for her father that resolves all the mysteries in the story. She is the bold and attractive woman. She is ready to face challenges of life. She is not afraid when she receives the letter from the stranger. She is very intelligent.

She handles logically the situation. When she meets Sherlock Holmes, he is also impressed with the proofs which she has brought. Though she is not rich, she assures Holmes to pay the money. She appears in the novel as a common woman. She is not greedy about treasure. She just wants to know about the culprits who are responsible for her father's mishap.

THE NOVEL: THE SIGN OF FOUR:

'The Sign of Four' is the second novel of Arthur Conan Doyle in which Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson solve the mystery of the hidden treasure and murder. This story has references of Indian places. In the text book the story begins from Chapter II. Here the suspense of the invitation and the journey to find out the reality are given.

Characters:

Sherlock Holmes: He is the story's protagonist. He is the famous detective. He has a supreme or almost superhuman intelligence that allows him to solve the difficult cases.

Mary Morstan: A young woman who needs Holmes' help. Miss Morstan comes to Sherlock Holmes to see if he can help her find out what happened to her father, Captain Morstan, who disappeared a few years previously.

Thaddeus Sholto: Thaddeus Sholto is one of Major Sholto's sons. He is brother of Bartholomew Sholto. He is an unusual character. Thaddeus is the one who decides to contact Miss Morstan and asks her to meet him.

Toby: Trained Dog

Dr. John Watson: He is the narrator of the story and Sherlock Holmes' loyal assistant. He is a doctor by profession.

Major Sholto: Guard of Andaman, criminal

Tonga: He is a native of the Andaman Islands who was helped by Jonathan Small when suffering from ill health. So, he is loyal to Small. (Criminal)

Jonathan Small: He is the wooden-legged man who seeks revenge on Major Sholto for the theft of the Agra treasure. He is one of "the four" original men who acquired the treasure. A wooden legged man, criminal

Captain Morstan: Captain Morstan was an officer in the British army who served in India. He is Mary Morstan's father, and his unexplained disappearance is the catalyst for the novella's plot. He was a friend of Major Sholto.

Major Sholto: He is the father of Bartholomew and Thaddeus Sholto. He was a friend of Captain Morstan, with whom he served in India.

Abdullah Khan: He is an Indian man and one of the signatories of "the sign of the four" and the man who told Jonathan Small about the Agra treasure.

Dost Akbar: He is an Indian man and one of the signatories of "the sign of the four." He lures the merchant—the man who is carrying the Agra treasure—into the trap set by the other men.

Mahomet Singh: He is an Indian man and one of the signatories of "the sign of the four." He colluded with Jonathan Small, Abdullah Khan and Dost Akbar to seize the Agra treasure.

ESSENCE OF SIGN OF THE FOUR:

It has a complex plot involving service in India, the Indian Rebellion of 1857, a stolen Agra treasure, and a secret pact among four convicts ("the Four" of the title) and two corrupt prison guards. It also introduces Dr. Watson's future wife, Mary Morstan.

THEME OF THE EXTRACT:

The theme of the novel revolves around the Agra treasure. Throughout the story, the appearance of the treasure leads to a direct and often tragic change in the lives of the characters. Because of this, it is important that the removal of the treasure would cause the characters to return to their previous position. The shallowness of wealth and the destruction that can come through it is also seen prevailing throughout the novel. As the Agra treasure directly and adversely affects almost everyone. In the course of the story, the Sheik's emissary and Bartholomew are both murdered for the treasure, Tonga is killed while fleeing with it, and Small is sentenced to life imprisonment. Additionally, both Thaddeus and his father spent their lives constantly in fear about wooden legged men, and about strangers in general.

मराठी सारांश:

ही एक रहस्यमय कादंबरी आहे. तिचा काही भाग येथे दिला आहे.

कादंबरीच्या उताऱ्याची सुरुवात मेरी मॉर्स्टनच्या प्रवेशापासून सुरू होते. निटनेटके हातमोजे आणि योग्य पोशाख केलेली ती एक नाजूक तरुणी होती. मेरीला एक समस्या आहे जिथे तिला शेरलॉक होम्सच्या मदतीची आणि सल्ल्याची गरज होती. होम्सचा मित्र वॉटसन सुद्धा तेथे हजर होता. दहा वर्षांपूर्वी लंडनला सुट्टीवर गेले असतांना अचानक तिचे वडील गायब होण्याबद्दल मेरीने होम्सला सांगितले. त्यांनी मेरीला हॉटेलमध्ये भेटण्यास यायला सांगितले होते, पण भेट होण्यापूर्वीच ते गायब झाले होते. त्यावेळी लंडनमध्ये त्यांच्या ओळखीची एकमेव व्यक्ती होती ती म्हणजे त्यांचा मित्र मेजर शॉल्टो.

काही वर्षांनंतर मेरीचा पत्ता मागणारी एका वर्तमानपत्रात एक जाहिरात प्रसिद्ध झाली. तेव्हापासून, वर्षाच्या त्याच दिवशी, तिला एक दुर्मिळ आणि महागडा मोती प्राप्त होत राहिला. असे सहा वर्षे चालले. ज्या दिवशी ती होम्सला भेटायला आली त्या दिवशी सकाळी तिला एक निनावी पत्र मिळालं. त्यात तिला भेटायला बोलवले होते.

या पत्रात मेरीने पोलिसांना आपल्याबरोबर न आणण्याचा इशारा दिला होता; पण ती दोन मित्र आणू शकणार होती. मेरी घाबरून गेली होती. तिने होम्स आणि वॉटसनला तिच्याबरोबर येण्याची विनंती केली. त्यांना ती मान्य केली. वॉटसन मेरीकडे आकर्षित होतो.

होम्स या प्रकरणात संशोधन करण्यासाठी बाहेर जातो. परत आल्यानंतर होम्स वॉटसनला सांगतो की लंडनमध्ये मेरीच्या वडिलांचा एकुलता एक मित्र असलेल्या मेजर शॉल्टो च्या मृत्यूचा तिला दरवर्षी मिळणाऱ्या रहस्यमय मोत्याशी काही संबंध आहे असा त्याचा विश्वास आहे. होम्सला वाटते की शॉल्टो च्या वारसांना हे माहित आहे की मेरीवर अन्याय झाला आहे आणि ही त्याचे निवारण करण्याचा ते प्रयत्न करीत आहेत.

त्याच दिवशी संध्याकाळी मेरी ठरल्याप्रमाणे बेकर स्ट्रीटवर आली. होम्स आणि वॉटसन दोघेही तिच्याबरोबर त्या गूढ पत्रलेखकाला भेटायला जातात. आपल्या वडिलांच्या खिशात तिला सापडलेला एक कागद मेरीने आपल्याबरोबर आणला होता, ज्याचा तिला उलगडा करता आला नाही; तिला वाटले की कदाचित हा पेपर या प्रकरणाशी संबंधित असेल. होम्स त्या पत्राची तपासणी करतो आणि सुरक्षित ठेवतो.

तो, वॉटसन आणि मेरी पत्रात नमूद केलेल्या जागी जातात. तेथून त्यांना कोचमन एका गरीब, कामगार वस्तीत घेऊन जातो. शेवटी ते अंधारलेल्या घरात पोहोचतात, जेथे त्यांना भारतीय नोकर आत घेऊन जातो. कादंबरीचा शेवट येथे दिलेला नाही. हा कादंबरीचा एक भाग दिलेला आहे जो रहस्य व रोमांच यांचा अनुभव देतो.