

Was Sherlock Holmes a Vulcan?
PP & RB

The critical studies of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes have ranged from an examination of his musical taste¹ to the "truth" about the great detective's relationship with Dr. Watson.² Yet little has been written examining the possibility of Sherlock Holmes' being a Vulcan.³

That this obvious fact has been ignored for so many years is astounding in itself. For, while almost all critics have noted that Holmes is not an ordinary man, very few have questioned ~~that~~ his being, ~~a~~ in fact, a man at all. This oversight can probably be explained by the fact that few men knew of the existence of the planet Vulcan until a few years ago.

Perhaps the most obvious indication of Holmes' Vulcan origins is his physical appearance. He is tall and "excessively lean,"⁴ with sharp, piercing eyes, and a thin, hawk-like nose, all traits typical of Vulcan males generally. Watson states that the detective's hands are "discolored with strong acids"⁵ and "invariably blotted with ink and stained with chemicals."⁶ The good doctor (for reasons of his own, which will be examined presently) has obviously chosen to overlook (or cover up) the fact that the "discoloration" was caused by occasional damage to the sleuth's skin makeup, allowing the faintly green tinge of his skin to show through.

Another clue to Sherlock Holmes' alien beginning is his manner of dress. He is almost always pictured either in a heavy dressing gown indoors or an overcoat outdoors. For example, in A Study in Scarlet, he "hustled on his overcoat," but told Watson only, "Get your hat."⁷ Holmes naturally needed more protection ~~fr~~ than Watson did from the chilly, damp air of March in England, if he came from the hot, dry planet Vulcan.

Sherlock Holmes' "unemotional character,"⁸ which almost "approaches coldbloodedness"⁹ and considers "all emotions... abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind"¹⁰ is typical of the Vulcan. Holmes' choice of career allows him to make use of his training in logic and reasoning and to earn a living among humans without being forced into close contact with them. Apart from the fact that the emotional content of most human relationships would be difficult for Holmes to learn to accept, he is unfamiliar with the norms of behavior in such situations. As ~~Watson says~~, "he is a little queer in his ideas,"¹¹ and he himself states that "I was never a very sociable fellow."¹² What Holmes calls his bad habit of getting "in the dumps at times and [not opening] my mouth for days on end"¹³ may in reality be the Vulcan custom of private meditation.

Watson's list of Holmes' knowledge in various subjects, made in the first weeks of their rooming together, is revealing. Literature and philosophy are nil, as is to be expected in one who has not had any Terran education, but it would be very odd in ~~anyone who had the "Oxbridge" education Holmes~~

* St John tells Watson

likely that he is merely a fellow-Vulcan, bearing a general resemblance to Sherlock because they are of the same people. His heavysset build may be natural, although it would be unusual in a Vulcan, or it may be his attempt at keeping warm. ("Dr. Verner" is probably genuine, but deceived as to the existence of a tie between the "Holmes" and Vernet families.)

There are three possible reasons for the presence of Sherlock and Mycroft on Earth: exile, accident, and exploration. It is possible that the "insance," those who are hopelessly emotional by Vulcan's standards, are sent to Earth; however, the general demeanor of Sherlock and Mycroft is similar to that of such a respected Vulcan as Sarek and, if anything, rather more logical than the demeanor of Stonn. It is possible that an occasional ship intended for some other destination could malfunction and strand its passengers on an out-of-the-way planet such as Earth; however, it is unlikely that two Vulcans, apparently arriving at different times, should be stranded on Earth and in England. Moreover, in the case of either exile or accident, it would be odd for a Vulcan to stay in England, instead of moving to a warmer, drier climate. It seems most likely, then, that they are Vulcan scouts, exploring Earth and, in particular, England, which was then a world-power (Sherlock, however, managed to work in a vacation in warmer countries -- and it is to be doubted that he went to Tibet at all during that period, although he may indeed have adopted the name of S'Igerson during the two years he spent avoiding the Moriarty gang). It seems probable that other Vulcan scouts over the years have infiltrated themselves into other Terran societies. Perhaps...Gene Roddenberry? Isaac Asimov? Maureen Palanker....?19