

READ WITH MS HO

This is a **SAMPLE READ WITH MS HO** – a set of observations of themes & ideas & prompts for reflection I designed – to read each Dear Reader Short Story Club story with.

Typically, each RwM contains x3 Reading Points. Here I include x1 for reference.

READ WITH MS HO
THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND BY
ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

LEVEL <i>As determined by accessibility of theme &/or language.</i>	TOPIC(S) IN STORY	CONTEXT &/OR TO TAKE NOTE
2 OF 3	MAN'S EVILNESS & JUSTICE	Murder mystery published in 1892.

READING POINT 1

“...In a fit of anger, however, caused by some robberies which had been perpetrated in the house, he **beat his native butler** to death and narrowly escaped a capital sentence...

...But a terrible change came over our stepfather about this time. Instead of making friends and exchanging visits with our neighbours, who had at first been overjoyed to see a Roylott of Stoke Moran back in the old family seat, **he shut himself up in his house** and seldom came out save to indulge in **ferocious quarrels** with whoever might cross his path. **Violence of temper approaching to mania has been hereditary in the men of the family, and in my stepfather's case it had, I believe, been intensified by his long residence in the tropics.** A series of **disgraceful brawls** took place, two of which ended in the police-court, until at last he became **the terror of the village**, and the folks would fly

at his approach, for he is a man of immense strength, and absolutely uncontrollable in his anger.

Last week he hurled the local blacksmith over a parapet into a stream, and it was only by paying over all the money which I could gather together that I was able to avert another public exposure... He has a passion also for Indian animals, which are sent over to him by a correspondent, and he has at this moment a cheetah and a baboon, which wander freely over his grounds and are feared by the villagers almost as much as their master..."

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For answer Holmes pushed back the frill of black lace which fringed the hand that lay upon our visitor's knee. Five little livid spots, the marks of four fingers and a thumb, were printed upon the white wrist.

"You have been cruelly used," said Holmes.

The lady coloured deeply and covered over her injured wrist. "He is a hard man," she said, "and perhaps he hardly knows his own strength."

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The ejaculation had been drawn from my companion by the fact that our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man had framed himself in the aperture. His costume was a peculiar mixture of the professional and of the agricultural, having a black top-hat, a long frock-coat, and a pair of high gaiters, with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand. So tall was he that his hat actually brushed the cross bar of the doorway, and his breadth seemed to span it across from side to side. A large face, seared with a thousand wrinkles, burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion, was turned from one to the other of us, while his deep-set, bile-shot eyes, and his high, thin, fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey.

- Portrayal of Dr Roylott as entirely violent & brutal, "marked with every evil passion". Ironically despite his training in medicine there isn't in fact any regard for others' lives.

The building was of grey, lichen-blotched stone, with a high central portion and two

curving wings, like the claws of a crab, thrown out on each side. In one of these wings the windows were broken and blocked with wooden boards, while the roof was partly caved in, a picture of ruin. The central portion was in little better repair, but the right-hand block was comparatively modern, and the blinds in the windows, with the blue smoke curling up from the chimneys, showed that this was where the family resided...

...and Holmes, after a careful examination through the open window, endeavoured in every way to force the shutter open, but without success. There was no slit through which a knife could be passed to raise the bar. Then with his lens he tested the hinges, but they were of solid iron, built firmly into the massive masonry. "Hum!" said he, scratching his chin in some perplexity, "my theory certainly presents some difficulties. No one could pass these shutters if they were bolted. Well, we shall see if the inside throws any light upon the matter."...

...There was little difficulty in entering the grounds, for unrepaired breaches gaped in the old park wall...

- Stoke Moran is described as...
 1. Oppressive, predatory with wings shaped "like the claws of a crab" & rooms built as if to imprison ("no one could pass these shutters if they were bolted", hinges of shutters "were of solid iron, built firmly into the massive masonry", these "old-fashioned shutters with broad iron bars... were secured every night").
 2. Partly in state of decline ("a picture of ruin", "few acres of bramble-covered land", with "unrepaired breaches... in the old park wall").
 3. Unsafe for Julia & Helen, for gipsies are strangers to the sisters, Dr Roylott's cheetah & baboon can wander freely around, such that every night they had to secure their windows & lock their doors.
- **Characteristics of Stoke Moran reflect characteristics of Dr Roylott. How are they similar?**
- **Common in stories for characters' houses / places they live in to reflect certain aspects of characters. As is true of reality, in which room (or part of room) of yours often can tell even a stranger a little about who you are. Which aspect of your room do you think best represents an aspect of yourself?**