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Detecting Genius: Exploring the Methods and Minds of Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot

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Abstract

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie are renowned for their mastery in crafting crime fiction. Holmes and Poirot, their most enduring characters, continue to hold a special place in the hearts of readers globally. This article aims to delve into the quirks and unique characteristics of these two beloved London detectives. The objective is to conduct a comparative analysis between the two greatest crime solvers of all time and evaluate them based on their own merits. It's important to note that there is no rivalry between the two characters, as they are distinctly crafted and belong to different time periods. Drawing direct parallels between them would be a significant mistake and misunderstanding.

Keywords: Holmes, Poirot, Quirks, Unique Characteristics, Parallels.

Introduction

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) and Agatha Christie (1890-1976) are synonymous with the genre of crime fiction. Both children and adults derive equal pleasure from reading their works, immersing themselves in a variety of mysteries and eagerly trying to deduce the culprits behind the troubles presented in their stories. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, renowned as both a physician and a writer, possessed the expertise and creative vision to meticulously craft captivating mystery fiction through the adventures of Sherlock Holmes. On the other hand, Agatha Christie, celebrated as a short-story writer, novelist, and playwright, is primarily remembered for her crime fiction prowess. While she excelled in weaving mysteries, some argue that her work may have lacked the innovative spark found in Doyle's writings. This paper aims to conduct a comparative analysis between the two characters, examining their traits and investigating their approaches to deductive reasoning. A form of mind mapping has been utilised to highlight the successes and shortcomings of the writers in this regard.

Analysis

Sherlock Holmes is a character created in Victorian times by Arthur Conan Doyle. Doyle was ahead of his time, being the first

crime fiction writer to use science and forensic science in his stories. He had clear logic and built Holmes' character accordingly. Holmes, inspired by Doyle's teacher Joseph Bell, is tall, pale, with grey eyes. He's often seen solving cases, playing the violin, doing chemical experiments, and using drugs he calls "artificial stimulants" like cocaine, especially when with Dr. Watson. Holmes is a messy and disorganised person. He also doesn't know much about common everyday things. He likes to ignore or forget about general knowledge and thinks of the mind like an old attic. According to him, one should only keep things in their mind that are useful for their work and get rid of everything else. This way, the important things won't be mixed up with the unimportant ones, making it easier to find what you need when you need it (Doyle). In his words: "A man should keep his little brain attic stocked with all the furniture that he is likely to use, and the rest he can put away in the lumber-room of his library where he can get it if he wants."(Doyle). Holmes' method of approach is characterised by objectivity and logic. His deductive reasoning and keen observation skills allow him to unravel complex mysteries and solve cases that seem inscrutable to others.

Transitioning to Hercule Poirot, he emerges as a stark contrast to Sherlock Holmes. Poirot's demeanour and investigative techniques stand in stark contrast to those of his predecessor. While Holmes epitomised the archetypal Victorian-era detective, Poirot embodied the essence of the Edwardian period's private investigator. In contrast to Holmes' frock suit and hunter's cap, Poirot opts for a more contemporary ensemble of a coat, trousers, and a hat, reflecting the changing times and evolving fashion sensibilities. Their nationalities also differ significantly; Sherlock Holmes hails from Britain, while Hercule Poirot is Belgian. In Captain Hastings' initial description of Poirot, he portrays him as having a head that closely resembles an egg, sometimes tilted to one side, and with striking green eyes. It's worth mentioning that Agatha Christie drew inspiration from Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories in her earlier works. While Christie may not reach the same heights as the legendary master of crime fiction, her Poirot adventures are equally captivating and remain among the finest contributions to the crime and detective fiction genre. Poirot's approach to investigation diverges significantly from Holmes'. He dismisses circumstantial evidence as the sole means of establishing a crime or identifying a criminal. In his own words, "One does not, you know, employ merely the muscles. I do not need to bend down to measure footprints, pick up cigarette ends, or examine bent blades of grass. It is enough for me to sit back in my chair and think. It is this"he tapped his egg-shaped head"this, that functions!" (Doyle) Poirot relies heavily on his cognitive abilities and deductive reasoning rather than physical evidence alone.

Agatha Christie and Arthur Conan Doyle have crafted distinct investigative approaches for Poirot and Holmes in solving mysteries. While Holmes is known for his hands-on methods, utilising tools like magnifying glasses and tape measures to uncover hidden details, and engaging in physical pursuits to catch criminals, Poirot prefers a more cerebral approach. He relies on facts presented to him by the police, using his sharp analytical skills and "little grey cells" to decipher the truth, believing that he doesn't need to physically investigate like others do.

Also Dr. Watson and Captain Hastings are the loyal companions of our detectives, Holmes and Poirot. They both have military experience and occasionally make observations at crime scenes, although they rarely notice anything beyond what their respective detectives do. Unlike Watson, who is a consistent presence throughout the Sherlock Holmes series, Hastings is not featured in every Poirot book or story.

The analysis above indicates that Arthur Conan Doyle is indeed the superior crime fiction writer between the two. While Agatha Christie possesses impeccable storytelling skills, she falls short in terms of innovation and novelty, an area where Conan Doyle excels.

Conclusion

As characters of detective fiction, both Holmes and Poirot continue to captivate their readers, enjoying unprecedented fame. This is evident in Hubbs' portrayal of Sherlock's enduring popularity that Holmes and his exploits live on can often be demonstrated quite simply by referring to maps of many American cities. Arthur Conan Doyle's books often carry a more serious tone, interjected occasionally with humour, whereas Agatha Christie's works are filled with wit, wordplay, and humour throughout. In the Holmes series, there's a notable amount of action, contrasting with Poirot's cases where much of the action has already transpired before his involvement. Conan Doyle's language demands focused attention, while Christie's novels can be enjoyed in a more relaxed setting, like a rainy balcony read. These distinct styles do not detract from the quality of either author's work but showcase their unique approaches. Christie's clever hints to the killer can be spotted upon rereading, adding an additional layer of enjoyment for readers. Overall, both fictional works are beloved and captivating to their readers, with Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes reigning supreme in the realm of crime fiction, reaching the pinnacle of glory in the genre.

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