HOW DID A SCOTTISH DOCTOR HELP CREATE SHERLOCK HOLMES?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Sherlock Holmes was a fictional detective, but his unusual way of solving crimes was inspired by a real Scottish doctor called Joseph Bell. Bell worked as a surgeon at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh in the late 1800s. He trained students to notice tiny details in a person's clothes, shoes, movements and speech. From these clues, he could make surprisingly accurate guesses about their lives. One of the students watching him was Arthur Conan Doyle, who later became the author of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Doyle used Bell's powers of observation as a model for Holmes, who first appeared in print in 1887. Bell also helped police investigate real crimes and became involved in the early development of forensic science. A new book about his life has brought attention to the doctor who inspired one of the most famous detectives in the world.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

Famous fictional characters often grow out of real people and real historical settings. Sherlock Holmes reflects Victorian interest in science, medicine, crime and careful observation. The story also shows how one teacher's methods influenced a writer and then shaped films, television and detective stories for more than a century.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"Which details might Joseph Bell have noticed about a stranger?"

Source: Smithsonian Magazine

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/arthur-conan-doyle-based-sherlock-holmes-on-a-real-life-scottish-surgeon-who-used-deduction-to-diagnose-patients-and-