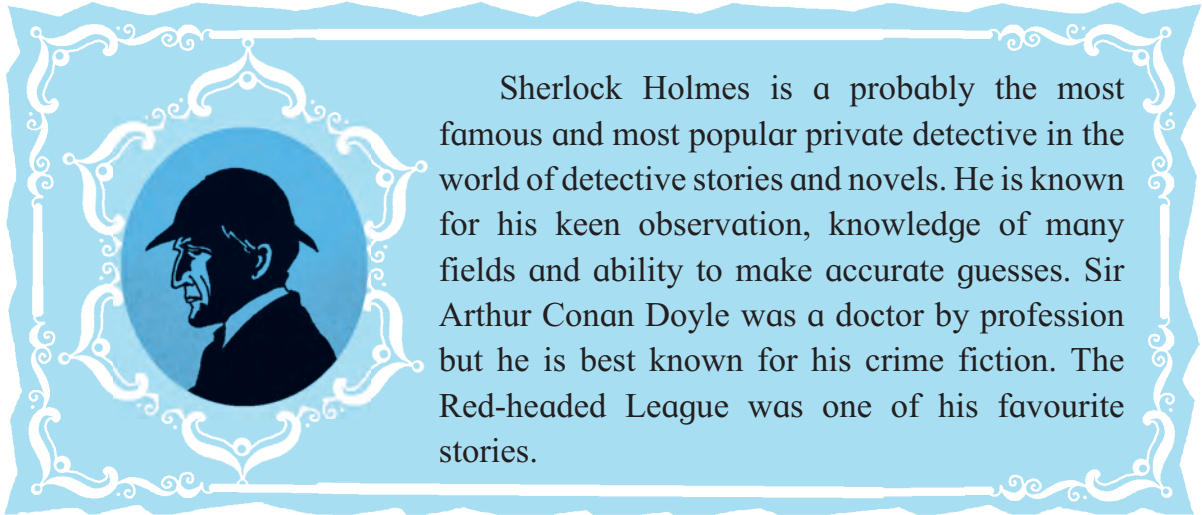


## 3.5 The Red-headed League



### 1. Be a writer!

We come to know about many types of crime through the mass media. We hear/read about theft, burglary, robbery, murder, kidnapping, blackmailing – the list can be very long. It is important to detect crime, find the criminal and prove that he/she is guilty so that justice is done. People of all ages like to read about stories of crime and detection – how a daring, intelligent policeman or detective catches a criminal. Have you read such stories or seen such programmes on TV? Would you like to write such a story?

- Think of interesting titles for mystery stories such as : ‘The Case of .....’. ‘The Mystery of .....’, ‘The Adventure of .....’.
- Form groups and try to write an outline of a detective story in English as a group activity. Discuss and note down the characters, the events, and how your hero/heroine who is detective solved the mystery.

The students may use their mother tongue in the course of the discussion, but the written presentation should be in English.

Encourage the students to ask different questions in English. The focus here is on ‘ideas’ rather than on ‘accuracy’.

2. Divide the class into two groups. Each group writes the description of a crime. Exchange your descriptions. Then prepare a set of ‘probing’ questions to make inquiries about (investigate) the crime. Demonstrate the questions and answers in the classroom.

# THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE

## Part I : Mr Wilson's Story

**W**hen I called upon my friend, Mr Sherlock Holmes, he was conversing with a visitor, who was an elderly man with fiery red hair.

Holmes introduced me to the visitor, Mr Jabez Wilson. He was a pawn-broker. Holmes asked him to repeat his story for me. He began by showing us an advertisement in a newspaper. It read as follows –

### TO THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE

There is a vacancy for a member of the League, and the salary is four pounds a week for nominal services. Red-headed men may apply in person on Monday, at eleven o'clock, to Duncan Ross, at the office of the League, 7 Fleet Street.

The advertisement had appeared in newspaper two months ago. Mr Wilson's assistant, Vincent Spaulding, had shown it to him. Mr Wilson liked his assistant Spaulding. He was smart, efficient and worked for only half the normal wages! But, the assistant also had his faults. Every now and then, he left work and went down into the cellar to develop photographs. Photography was his hobby.

Like other Sherlock Holmes stories, this story, too, is told by his friend, Dr Watson.

- league : an association or a formal group of people
- elderly : old, past his middle age
- fiery : like fire, bright red
- pawn - broker : a person who lends money at interest when valuable things are kept with him till the loan is repaid.
- Red-headed : a person with red hair.
- nominal : easy, simple

### Things to do :

- ✦ Find samples of 'classified ads' from an English newspaper. Where will this advertisement (the one given here) be seen in the classified?
- ✦ Find out what you have to do when you are told to 'apply in person'.
- ✦ Find out how photographs were developed in those days.



Spaulding showed the advertisement to Mr Wilson and explained to him that an American millionaire, Mr Ezekiah Hopkins, had founded the famous Red-headed League, to help all red-heads like himself. Spaulding urged Mr Wilson to apply for the job. So, the two of them went to the address given in the advertisement.

Fleet Street was full of red-headed people. Mr Wilson thought that with so much competition he would not get the job. He wanted to go back, but Spaulding pushed through the crowd and took Mr Wilson to the office.

There was nothing in the office but a couple of chairs and a table. A red-headed man sat behind the table. He was Mr Duncan Ross, a representative of Red-headed League. He was very pleased to see Mr Wilson, and announced immediately that he was well suited for the job. He shook hands with Mr Wilson, congratulated him, and told all other candidates to go back.

Mr Duncan Ross explained that Mr Wilson would have to be in the office from ten to two. If he left the office, he would lose the job. Spaulding assured Mr Wilson that he would look after Mr Wilson's business in his absence. The pay was fixed at four pounds a week.

“And the work?” said Mr Wilson.

“You have to copy out the Encyclopedia Britannica.”

The pay was very good, and the work was light. Mr Wilson accepted the job and began his work the very next day. Mr Duncan Ross was there in the office to see that Mr Wilson did his work properly and did not leave the office. He told Mr Wilson to start with the letter ‘A’. Mr Wilson wrote diligently for four hours without leaving his place. Mr Ross would drop in from time to time to see that all was right with Mr Wilson. At two o'clock, he bade Mr Wilson good-day, and locked the door of the office.

- founded : started
- red-head : a red-headed person

#### **Listen and answer :**

- ⊗ Why was Fleet Street full of red-headed people?
- ⊗ Who was well suited for the job?
- ⊗ Why did Mr Wilson accept the job?
- ⊗ Would you like to do such a job? Why?

“This went on day after day, Mr Holmes,” said Mr Wilson, “and on Saturday I got my salary. It was the same next week, and the same the week after. After a few days, Mr Duncan Ross came in only once in a while and after a time, he did not come in at all”.

Mr Wilson continued “Eight weeks had passed like this, and I had written about Abbots, Archery etc. and hoped that I might get on to ‘B’ soon. And then suddenly the whole business came to an end.”

“To an end?” Holmes asked.

“Yes, sir. This morning, I went to my work as usual at ten o’clock, but the door was shut and locked with a little note nailed on it. It said –

**The Red-headed League is dissolved.**

**Oct 9, 1880.**

I was shocked. I did not know what to do”.

Mr Wilson went on with his story, “I made enquiries at the nearby offices, but none of them knew anything about the League. The rooms had been rented under a false name.

“I went home and asked my assistant Spaulding for advice. But he could not help me in any way. I want to find out about the League, Mr Holmes, who they are and why they played this prank upon me. The whole thing is a mystery. That is why I came to you. I have heard a lot about you”.

Holmes found Mr Wilson’s story very unusual. He asked, “Mr Wilson, this assistant of yours who first called your attention to the advertisement – what is he like?”

“Small, stout, with no hair on his face. He has a white splash of acid on his forehead.”

“I thought as much,” said Mr Holmes. “Is he still with you?”

“Oh, yes, sir.”

“That will do, Mr Wilson. I can give you my opinion on this subject in a day or two. Today is Saturday, and by Monday we may come to a conclusion.”

**Things to do :**

- ⊗ What is the difference between a dictionary and an encyclopedia? Find out.
- ⊗ Suggest a few words that may appear under ‘A’ after Archery in an encyclopedia.

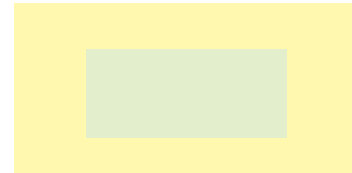


## ENGLISH WORKSHOP

- Find and write the descriptions of different people given in this story.
- Present Mr Wilson's story as it would be shown in a comic strip. (You may write the description of the picture in your mother tongue.) Write the dialogue in English with the help of the story given here. Examples :

Mr Wilson's shop.	Mr Wilson's shop.	Mr Wilson's shop.
Spaulding to Wilson: Will you take me as your assistant? I'll work for half the wages.	Spaulding : Sir, there's no work here. I'll go down to the cellar to develop my photos.	Spaulding to Wilson: Spaulding, Sir, look at this ad. It is for red-headed people.
<b>Frame 1</b>	<b>Frame 2</b>	<b>Frame 3</b>

- This is a story within a story. Show it in the diagram.
  - Dr Watson's story
  - Mr Wilson's story.



### Language Study

#### Auxiliary 'be' and 'have': Negatives

The auxiliary verbs 'be' and 'have' form negatives without the help of 'do'.

##### Be

- I **am not** going.
- She **was not** sleeping./  
She wasn't sleeping.

##### Have

- I have not seen it. / I haven't seen it.
- He has not finished./He hasn't finished.

Note that 'not' is used with the forms of 'be' or 'have'. Without a form of 'be' or 'have', the sentence will be incorrect.

#### Main verb 'be' and 'have'

When 'be' and 'have' are used as main verbs, do is not needed to form questions and negatives. With the main verb 'have', auxiliary 'do' can be used.

##### Be

- Are you hungry?
- Why is he so sad?

##### Have

- Have you a pen?
- Have you got a pen?
- Do you have a pen?

- I am not angry.

- I haven't any money.
- I don't have money.



## Part II : What happened next –

### Dr Watson's Account

- I make nothing of it :  
I do not understand it.

- square : a place where  
two city roads cross  
each other

- Strand : a famous  
place in London.

#### Listen and answer :

- ⊗ Tell the name of the  
young man who opened  
the door to Mr Holmes.
- ⊗ What did Holmes want  
to see?
- ⊗ Guess where  
Mr Merryweather  
took the others.

- cellar : a room used  
for storage under a  
building

“Well, Watson, what do you think of it all?” asked Mr Holmes, after Mr Wilson had left.

“I make nothing of it,” I answered frankly. Holmes sat silently for some time, and then invited me to go out with him. We went to the square where Mr Wilson had his shop. Holmes observed the area carefully. There were many shops and offices in the square, and a bank just behind Mr Wilson's shop. Holmes spent some time outside the shop and thumped upon the pavement two or three times. Finally, he knocked on Mr Wilson's door. A young man opened the door. Mr Holmes asked him the way to the Strand. The Assistant answered the question, and quickly closed the door.

I said, “I am sure that you enquired your way only in order to see him.”

“Not him,” Holmes said, “but the knees of his trousers.”

“And what did you see?”

“What I expected to see. This matter of Wilson's is serious. A crime is being planned. But I hope that we can stop it. Today is Friday. The offices and banks will be closed on the weekend. Now I've to go and make some arrangements, but I shall want your help tonight. Come to Baker Street at 10.00 and bring your revolver.”

I arrived at Holmes' residence in time. There were two other men with him – Mr Jones of Scotland Yard and Mr Merryweather, a banker. Holmes announced, “Tonight we are going to hunt one of the smartest criminals in London!”

We left together in a carriage and reached the road we had visited in the morning. Holmes told us to follow Mr Merryweather who led us through an iron gate. We followed him down a narrow passage. After going down some stone steps, he led us down a dark, earth-smelling passage and into a huge cellar, full of

big boxes. We all sat on the boxes.

“We are in the cellar of the City branch of one of the main banks in London. Mr Merryweather is the chairman of the bank, and he will tell you why a criminal should take an interest in this cellar at present.” said Holmes. Mr Merryweather explained that the bank had borrowed a huge quantity of gold from the Bank of France and the boxes in the cellar were full of gold.

Holmes expected the criminals to act that very night. We had to wait there in total darkness without making any noise to take the criminals by surprise.

“They have but one escape route,” whispered Holmes. “That is back through Mr Wilson’s house. I hope that some men are waiting at Mr Wilson’s door, Mr Jones?”

“I have an inspector and two officers waiting at his door.”

“Then we have stopped all the holes. Now we must be silent and wait.”



- take the criminals by surprise : catch the criminals without giving them a warning.
- stopped all the holes : closed all the routes by which (the criminal) may escape / run away.

**Think, discuss and guess the answer :**

- ❁ How did Mr Merryweather come to know about the crime ?
- ❁ Why did Mr Holmes think the criminals would act that night ?

### Listen and answer :

- ⊗ How did the criminals enter the cellar?
- ⊗ Who were the two criminals?
- ⊗ Who tried to get away? Do you think he was able to escape? Why?

- sprang out : jumped
- seized : caught
- foiled : laid waste, prevented

- grateful : thankful

- object : purpose, reason
- peculiar : strange

### Things to do :

- ⊗ Guess the meaning of 'tunnel'.
- ⊗ Explain the trick of the 'Red-headed League'. How was it related to Mr Wilson's hair?

We waited silently for more than an hour. It was pitch dark in the cellar. Then suddenly, a point of bright light appeared in the floor of the cellar, then a line, and a gash seemed to open, and a hand appeared. A broad stone turned over upon its side, and left a square hole. A boyish face emerged. The man looked about and came out of the hole. He had a companion with him, a man with very red hair. The pair was none other than Spaulding the assistant alias the criminal Clay and the red-headed Mr Duncan Ross! As soon as they climbed out of the hole, Sherlock Holmes sprang out and seized Clay by the collar. The other dived down the hole and disappeared. Clay took out a revolver. But Holmes hit him on his wrist, and the revolver fell on the floor.

"It's no use, John Clay," said Holmes, "we have caught you."

"So I see. But my friend has escaped."

Holmes replied, "He cannot escape. There are three men waiting for him at the other end!"

Then Holmes handed over Mr Clay to the policemen.

Mr Merryweather said, "Really, Mr Holmes, I do not know how to thank you. You have foiled one of the most cunning attempts at bank robbery. The bank is grateful to you."

"You see, Watson," Holmes said, after we reached his home, "it was obvious from the first that the only possible object of the strange advertisement and the peculiar job was to get Mr Wilson away from his shop for some hours every day. The Red-headed League was a clever idea. In Mr Wilson's absence, Clay and his red-headed companion wanted to dig an underground tunnel from Mr Wilson's house to the bank. Then, they would be able to enter the bank and steal the gold without breaking open the doors of the bank. Using the tunnel, they entered the cellar. They planned to steal the gold, and go back to Mr Wilson's house, again through the tunnel, and then get away.



“But how could you guess what their motive was?”

“When I heard that the assistant worked for half the wages, I became suspicious. Using Mr Wilson’s description of his assistant, I made enquiries. I found that he was the criminal Clay. Why was he working in Mr Wilson’s shop? And his habit of going into the cellar every now and then! I inferred that he must be digging a tunnel to some other building. When we visited the shop, I beat upon the pavement with my stick to find out whether the cellar stretched out in front or behind. It was not in front. I saw the bank on the other side of the house and guessed what the criminals had in mind. When Clay answered the bell, the knees of his trousers were wrinkled and stained! It confirmed my suspicion that he was digging. You know the rest of the story.

“You reasoned it out beautifully!” I exclaimed in admiration.

- Adapted from ‘The Red-headed League’  
by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

### Listen and answer :

- ⊗ Why did Holmes become suspicious?
- ⊗ How did Holmes find out that the assistant was a criminal?
- ⊗ How did Holmes guess that he was digging a tunnel?



## ENGLISH WORKSHOP

1. Put the following events in proper order.

- Holmes and others go to the bank.
- Clay digs a tunnel.
- Ross closes the office of the ‘Red-headed League’
- Holmes catches the criminal Clay.
- Clay and Ross enter the cellar to steal the gold.
- The bank received a lot of gold from the Bank of France.
- Holmes visit the area around Mr Wilson’s shop.

I am so quick  
and noiseless!



2. Find the adverbs from this part of the story that end with ‘-ly’. Find the adjective in each of the adverb.



Who stole my  
biscuits so quickly  
and noiselessly?

### 3. Activity: **Live English !**

(a) Do you ride a bicycle? Read and follow the Bicycle User's Manual.

## **A Bicycle User's Manual**

### **Safety First**

Routinely check the condition of your bicycle before every ride - Nuts, bolts, screws and other fasteners.

Familiarize yourself with the braking action of the bicycle. Test the brakes at slow speed.

Always wear footwear that will stay on your feet and will grip the pedals.

### **Riding Safety**

Be predictable. Ride so that other drivers can see you and predict your movements.

Never hitch a ride by holding on to another vehicle.

Obey all traffic rules.

Be alert - Look out for unexpected events / obstacles.

Ride on familiar routes.

### **To fill in air into the bicycle tyre Procedure / Steps**

- (1) Check the air pressure in the tyre by pressing it with your hand.
- (2) Check how much air is needed and fill in air accordingly.
- (3) Check the air pressure again by pressing tyre with your hand.
- (4) Fill in the air only as much as required. Otherwise the tube may burst.
- (5) If the air is more than necessary, reduce it.

### **Servicing / Maintenance (Monthly)**

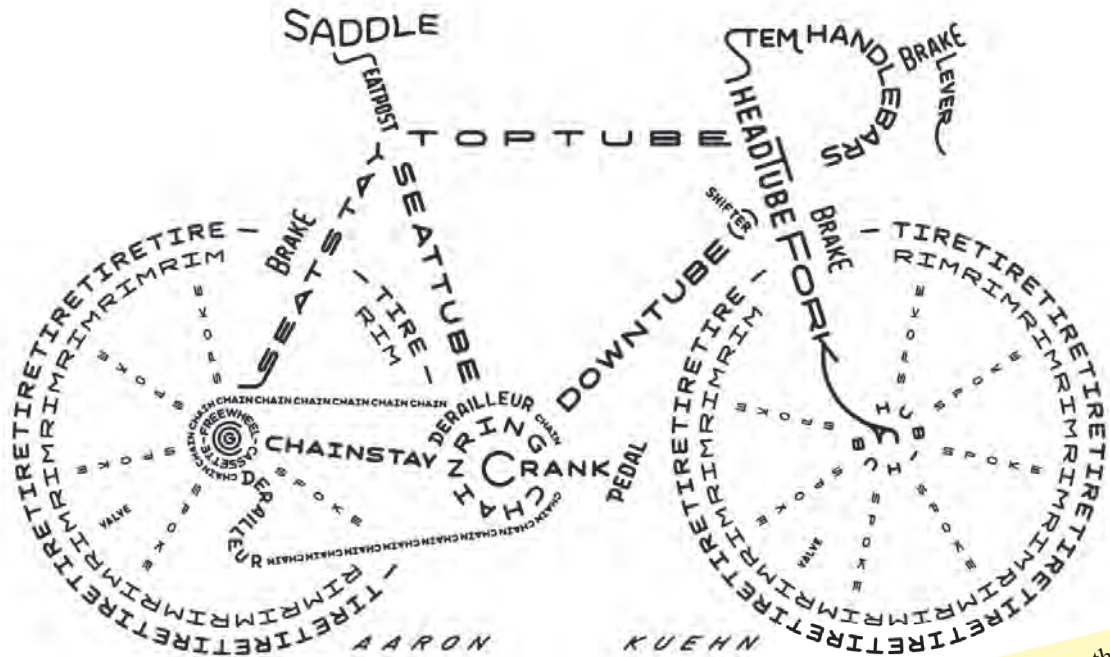
- Clean the bicycle frame with a cloth.
- Check tyre pressure.
- Wipe the chain and lube (lubricate) the brake and chain.

Note that the word 'tire' is spelt as 'tyre' in British and Indian English.

### **How to mend a puncture**

- (1) Get the tube out of the tyre.
- (2) Pump air into the tube with the air-pump.
- (3) Dip the air-filled tube in the water tub. Don't forget to dip every part of the tube. The air bubbles will come on the surface right from the puncture-point.
- (4) Mark the puncture-point with a pen.
- (5) Now remove air from the tube.
- (6) Clean up the puncture-point area and rub it hard with a file.
- (7) Apply rubber solution on the puncture-point.
- (8) Cut a small patch from a scrap tube and paste it to cover the puncture point.
- (9) Press it hard to ensure the patch has been pasted well.
- (10) Set the tube in tyre. Pump air in the tyre.

(b) Read the word picture of a bicycle carefully.



Note that Aaron Kuehn is the name of the artist who has prepared the figure.

- List the words from the diagram.
- Write these words in the proper column in the following table.  
You may add other cycle parts than those shown in the diagram.

Which of these words are used in your mother tongue without any changes?	Which words are used in your mother tongue with a few changes?	Which words have an equivalents (parallel words) in your mother tongue?
..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....	..... ..... .....

- Write other cycle / bicycle related words that you use.
  - Find the compound words used in the diagram.
- (c) Translate any one part of this bicycle user’s manual.
- (d) Collect specimens of other manuals and exhibit them in the classroom.
- (e) Try to draw a similar ‘word picture’ of any object of your choice.

