

A Study in Scarlet

Arthur Conan Doyle

What does Holmes's brain-attic metaphor allow him to justify that Watson finds absurd?

TOTAL TIME

PASSAGE

30 minutes	The brain-attic theory
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FIND THE ANCHOR TEXT

Use the Anchor Text Table of Contents in the Enhanced Reader to open the START anchor. Then use the dropdown to select the END anchor.

SECTION / LOCATION	Part I, Chapter II · The Science of Deduction
START	I consider that a man’s brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose.
END	If we went round the moon it would not make a pennyworth of difference to me or to my work.
PASSAGE ID	sec-ss-02

THE MOVE

Test a metaphor by following its consequences

WHY THIS PASSAGE

Holmes compares the brain to an attic with limited storage, which lets him justify deliberately ignoring information unrelated to his work. The metaphor turns a strange knowledge gap into a theory of mental efficiency that Watson can test for consequences.

MARK

Circle each part of the attic metaphor—space, furniture, storage, crowding. Underline the practical rule Holmes draws from it. Star the example Watson finds most absurd.

NOTICE

- What assumption about memory has to be true for the attic metaphor to work?
- What knowledge does Holmes think is safe to exclude?
- Where does the metaphor clarify his method, and where might it oversimplify how knowledge works?

THINK

Answer provisionally: What does Holmes's brain-attic metaphor allow him to justify that Watson finds absurd? Choose the strongest interpretation you can defend from this passage alone.

WRITE

Write a short evidence-based response to: What does Holmes's brain-attic metaphor allow him to justify that Watson finds absurd? Use at least two details from the assigned passage and explain how they support your interpretation.

CLOSE

Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and explain why.

STRONG ANSWER	The brain-attic metaphor lets Holmes justify deliberate ignorance: if mental space is limited, irrelevant facts crowd out useful ones. Watson finds the consequences absurd because the metaphor treats memory like fixed storage.
EVIDENCE	Use the attic/storage comparison, Holmes's rule for selecting knowledge, and the astronomy example Watson finds ridiculous.
WATCH FOR	Do not merely say the metaphor is clever. Test what assumptions it makes and what behavior those assumptions justify.
SOLO	Read the exact passage independently.
SUPPORTED	Use narration and sentence highlighting while reading the same passage.
LISTENING	Listen to the exact passage; visual following is optional. Same question and evidence demand.

STUDENT PAGE · SAME PASSAGE, SAME THINKING

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OPEN THE MARKED PASSAGE IN TUMBLELIT

SOLO: read independently. SUPPORTED: use narration + highlighting. LISTENING: listen to the exact passage. The question and evidence task stay the same.

1. **MARK** - Circle each part of the attic metaphor—space, furniture, storage, crowding. Underline the practical rule Holmes draws from it. Star the example Watson finds most absurd.
2. **NOTICE** - What assumption about memory has to be true for the attic metaphor to work? What knowledge does Holmes think is safe to exclude? Where does the metaphor clarify his method, and where might it oversimplify how knowledge works?
3. **THINK** - Answer provisionally: What does Holmes's brain-attic metaphor allow him to justify that Watson finds absurd?
4. **WRITE** - Write a short response using at least two pieces of evidence from this passage.

Use evidence from the assigned passage. Show what you noticed and how the text supports your interpretation.