



The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb *by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*



On this PDF you will find a lot of resources to help you learn English with this episode.

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1. Story Text for *The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb*

Part 1

Out of all the strange and fascinating cases brought to my friend Sherlock Holmes over the years we worked together, there were only two that I introduced to him myself: the story of Mr. Hatherley's missing thumb and that of Colonel Warburton's supposed madness.

While the second might have offered more material for someone keen on psychological puzzles, the first case was so bizarre and dramatic that it deserves a proper telling—even though it may not have given Holmes as much room to show off his usual powers of deduction.

Although parts of this story have been published in the newspapers, those versions never quite capture the same effect as hearing the facts unfold step by step. That slow build-up, the mystery gradually unravelling, is what makes the tale so gripping.

At the time, it left a deep impression on me—and even now, two years later, I still remember it vividly.

It all happened in the summer of 1889, not long after I got married. I had returned to civilian life and medical practice, and I no longer lived with Holmes in his Baker Street flat—although I still visited him regularly, and occasionally persuaded him to visit us too.

My medical practice was doing well, and since I lived near Paddington Station, I found myself treating a number of railway employees.

One of them, whom I'd cured of a long-standing illness, became one of my biggest fans and insisted on sending anyone with even the slightest ailment in my direction.

One morning, just before 7 a.m., our maid woke me to say that two men from Paddington were downstairs waiting for me in the consulting room.

I quickly got dressed—railway cases rarely turned out to be minor—and hurried downstairs.

As I reached the bottom, I saw my old acquaintance, the railway guard, coming out of the consulting room, shutting the door firmly behind him.

"I've got him here," he said in a low voice, nodding back toward the room. "He's alright now."

"What is it?" I asked, wondering if he'd captured some wild animal rather than a patient.

"It's a new patient," he replied. "I thought I'd better bring him myself—just to make sure he didn't slip away or anything. Anyway, there he is, safe and sound. Got to go now, Doctor. Duty calls." And off he went before I could even thank him.

I entered the room and found a young man, no older than twenty-five, sitting at the table.

He was dressed neatly in a heather-coloured tweed suit and had a soft cap resting on some of my books.

One of his hands was wrapped in a bloodstained handkerchief. He was pale and looked extremely shaken, like someone fighting to keep himself together.

“I’m sorry to wake you so early, Doctor,” he said, “but I had a serious accident last night. I arrived this morning by train, and someone at Paddington kindly brought me here. I gave your maid my card, but I see she’s left it on the table.”

I picked up the card. It read:

Mr. Victor Hatherley

Hydraulic Engineer

16A Victoria Street (3rd floor)

“I’m sorry to have kept you waiting,” I said, taking a seat. “I understand you’ve just had a night journey, which is never fun.”

“My night was anything but dull,” he replied with a sudden, loud laugh that rang through the room. He laughed so hard he shook in his seat. My instincts as a doctor immediately kicked in.

“Stop that!” I said firmly. “Get a hold of yourself.” I poured some water, but it was useless—he was in the throes of a hysterical fit, the kind that sometimes hits people after they’ve been through a traumatic experience.

Eventually, he calmed down and slumped back, exhausted and pale.

“Sorry. I’ve made a fool of myself,” he gasped.

“Not at all. Here, drink this.” I added a splash of brandy to the water, and slowly, the colour returned to his face.

“That’s better,” he said. “Now, Doctor, would you mind taking a look at my thumb—or rather, what’s left of it.”

He unwrapped the handkerchief and held out his hand. Even I, a seasoned doctor, recoiled a bit.

Four fingers remained, but where his thumb should have been was a raw, red, sponge-like mess. It looked like it had been cut or torn off at the root.

“Good heavens,” I said, shocked. “That’s a nasty injury. It must have bled a lot.”

“It did. I fainted when it happened and must have been unconscious for some time. When I came to, it was still bleeding, so I tied my handkerchief around it and used a twig to keep it tight.”

“Clever. You could have been a surgeon.”

“It was hydraulic logic, really—within my area of expertise.”

I examined the wound more closely. “This was done with something heavy and very sharp.”

“Like a cleaver,” he said.

“An accident?”

“Not at all.”

"You mean it was an attack?"

"Yes. A very deliberate and violent one."

I cleaned and bandaged the wound while he lay back, biting his lip from time to time but otherwise not flinching.

"How's that?" I asked when I was done.

"Excellent. Between the brandy and your bandages, I feel like a new man. I was terribly weak before. I've been through a lot."

"Perhaps you shouldn't talk about it just yet. It seems to have shaken you up."

"No, I must. I'll have to explain it to the police eventually. But honestly, if it weren't for this missing thumb, I doubt anyone would believe my story. And even if they do, the details I can give them are so vague, I doubt justice will be served."

"If it's a mystery you want solved," I said, "then I strongly recommend my friend, Sherlock Holmes. Go to him before the police."

"I've heard of him," he said. "I'd be glad if he took the case—though of course I'll still have to go to the authorities. Could you introduce me?"

"I'll do one better—I'll take you to him myself."

"That would be a huge help."

"We'll call a cab and go together. We'll probably catch him at breakfast. Are you up for it?"

“Yes. I won't be at ease until I've told my story.”

Part 1 summary - Watson meets the injured engineer

- Dr Watson is woken early one morning by a railway guard (a former patient of his) who brings him a badly injured man.
 - The man is **Victor Hatherley**, a young **hydraulic engineer**.
 - Hatherley has lost his **thumb**, which has been cleanly chopped off.
 - He explains that it was not an accident but a **deliberate attack** by someone.
 - Watson treats the wound and realises the story must involve a serious crime.
 - Watson recommends Hatherley to see **Sherlock Holmes**, saying he will be able to make sense of what happened.
 - Watson takes him straight to **221B Baker Street**.
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Part 2

I asked my servant to call a cab and told the maid to let my wife know I'd be out for a while.

Five minutes later, I was in a hansom cab with Mr. Hatherley, heading straight for Baker Street.

As usual, we found Sherlock Holmes in his sitting room, lounging in his dressing gown, smoking a pipe made up of leftover tobacco from the day before, and reading the personal ads in *The Times*.

He greeted us in his calm and friendly way, ordered in some bacon and eggs, and invited us to join him for breakfast.

When we'd eaten, he made Hatherley comfortable on the sofa, propped a pillow under his head, and handed him a glass of brandy and water.

"Clearly, Mr. Hatherley, you've had quite the experience," Holmes said.

"Please make yourself at home. Tell us what you can, but don't push yourself. If you get tired, stop and keep your strength up."

"Thank you," said the young man. "But to be honest, I've felt much better since the doctor treated me, and I think your breakfast has done the rest. I won't waste your time—I'll get straight to the point."

Holmes sank into his armchair, his eyelids half-closed as usual when he was listening, giving the impression he was bored. But I knew better—his sharp mind was fully alert. I sat opposite him, and we both listened in silence as Mr. Hatherley began his story.

"You should know, first of all," he began, "that I'm an orphan and unmarried. I live alone in rented rooms in London. I'm a hydraulic engineer by trade, and I spent seven years apprenticed to Venner & Matheson, the well-known firm in Greenwich.

Two years ago, after my father passed away and left me a small inheritance, I decided to go out on my own. I rented offices in Victoria Street and waited for work.

“I suppose everyone finds the start of their own business to be a slow one. But for me, it’s been especially grim.

In two years, I’ve had just three consultations and one small job. That’s it. My total earnings? Twenty-seven pounds and ten shillings.

I sat in my office every day from nine to four, hoping for a client, until I began to think I’d never get anywhere.

“Then, yesterday evening, just as I was about to pack up for the day, my clerk came in and told me that a gentleman wanted to see me.

He handed me a card that read: ‘Colonel Lysander Stark.’ And right behind him came the colonel himself.

“He was a strange-looking man—just above average height, but extremely thin. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone so lean. His face seemed to narrow down into his sharp nose and chin, and the skin on his cheeks was stretched tight over his bones. But he didn’t seem ill—his eyes were bright, his movements quick, and he had a confident way about him. He was dressed plainly but neatly, and I’d guess he was closer to forty than thirty.

“‘Mr. Hatherley?’ he asked, with a slight German accent. ‘I’ve been told that you’re not only skilled in your profession, but also discreet and good at keeping secrets.’

"I bowed, feeling rather pleased by the compliment. 'May I ask who recommended me?' I said.

"Perhaps it's better if I don't tell you that just now,' he replied. 'I've also heard that you're unmarried, without family, and that you live alone in London.'

"That's true,' I said. 'But I'm not sure how that relates to my work as an engineer. I was under the impression this was a professional matter.'

"Oh, it is,' he assured me. 'But you'll see that everything I say is relevant. I do have a job for you—but absolute secrecy is essential. Total silence, before, during, and after the work. And that's easier to expect from a man who lives alone than from someone with family around.'

"If I give you my word to keep something secret,' I told him, 'you can trust me completely.'

"He stared at me intensely for a moment with his strange, suspicious eyes.

"So you promise?' he said.

"Yes, I promise.'

"Absolute silence—no mention of it to anyone, by word or writing?'

"You have my word.'

"He suddenly leapt up, darted across the room, and flung open the door. The corridor outside was empty. 'Just checking,' he said, returning to his seat. 'Sometimes clerks get curious. Now we can speak freely.'

“He pulled his chair close to mine and gave me that same unsettling stare. I started to feel uneasy. There was something odd about the man, and I even began to feel a little afraid. Still, I didn’t want to lose a rare client, so I tried to stay calm.

“‘Please get to the point, sir,’ I said. ‘My time is limited.’ (A foolish thing to say, in hindsight.)

“‘How would you feel about earning fifty guineas for a night’s work?’ he asked.

“‘That would suit me perfectly.’

“‘Actually, it won’t take the whole night—just an hour or so. All I need is your opinion on a hydraulic stamping press that’s not working properly. Once you tell us the problem, we’ll handle the repairs ourselves. What do you say?’

“‘Sounds easy, and the pay is more than generous.’

“‘Good. We need you to come tonight on the last train.’

“‘Where to?’

“‘A little village called Eyford, in Berkshire. It’s about seven miles from Reading. You can get there on the 11:15 train from Paddington.’

“‘Alright.’

“‘I will meet you at the station with a carriage.’

“‘So there’s a drive involved?’

“‘Yes. Our house is in the countryside—about seven miles from the station.’

“‘Then we won’t get there until midnight. I suppose I’ll have to stay the night?’

“‘Yes, we can put you up. Nothing fancy, but it will be sufficient for your needs, I am sure.’

“‘That’s not ideal. Couldn’t I come at a better time?’

“‘We’d prefer night. And to make up for the inconvenience, we’re offering you a fee that even top professionals would accept. Still, if you’d rather not...’

“‘I thought of the fifty guineas and how much I needed it. ‘No, I’ll come,’ I said. ‘But I’d like a better understanding of what the job involves.’

“‘Of course. I understand that asking for secrecy makes you curious. Let me explain everything. But first, are we definitely alone here?’

“‘Yes, completely.’

“‘Good. You’ve probably heard of fuller’s-earth—it’s a valuable material and quite rare in England?’

“‘Yes, I’ve heard that.’

“‘Recently, I bought a small property near Reading. I discovered a patch of fuller’s-earth on my land, but it was quite small. It lay between two much larger deposits on neighbouring farms. The owners of those lands had no idea what they had. No idea at all.

Naturally, I wanted to buy their fields before they discovered the truth. But I did not have the money.

So, I told a few trusted friends, and we decided to quietly work our little patch, and then use the profits to eventually buy the other properties.

“To do this, we installed a hydraulic press. That press is now malfunctioning, and we need your expert opinion. But we’re keeping all this extremely quiet, you understand. If anyone found out that we had an engineer visiting, they might start asking questions, and that would not be acceptable. It would ruin everything!

That is why I asked for your complete silence—and I trust you understand now. You do understand, Mr Hatherley, don’t you?’

“Yes,’ I said. ‘I do. But I’m curious—how do you use a hydraulic press to dig fuller’s-earth? Isn’t it usually just scooped out of a pit?’

“Ah well,’ he said casually, ‘we compress the earth into bricks to move it more discreetly. But that is just a mere detail. The important thing is that I’ve been completely open with you as you can see, and I hope you will honour our agreement.’

“He stood up. ‘I will see you at Eyford at 11:15 tonight.’

“‘I’ll be there.’

“‘And remember—not a word to anyone.’ He gave me one last intense stare, shook my hand with his cold, damp fingers, and hurried out of the room.

Part 2 Summary - Hatherley explains how it began

- Hatherley is a struggling engineer, barely earning a living. He needs money.
- One evening he is visited by a potential client - a mysterious man calling himself **Colonel Lysander Stark**.
- Stark speaks with a slight **German accent**, is extremely thin, and behaves nervously and secretively.
- Stark offers Hatherley **50 guineas** (a huge sum - maybe £10,000 or €12,000 in today's money) for a single night's work.
- The job is to inspect a **hydraulic press** in a country house near **Eyford**, Berkshire.
- Stark insists on:
 - total secrecy,
 - travelling late at night,
 - and that Hatherley must come alone.
- Stark claims the machine is used to process **fuller's-earth**, a valuable mineral.
- He says that he needs to keep the existence of fuller's-earth on his land a secret, and does not want his neighbours to notice an engineer visiting, which would cause them to start "asking questions". This is why he needs total secrecy.

- Hatherley continues to accept the job, even though things are pretty **suspicious**.



I advise you to drink some water, Luke 💧

Part 3

After he left, I sat and thought about it all. The more I considered it, the stranger it seemed.

On the one hand, I was **thrilled** to finally have some work—and such a well-paid job, too. Fifty guineas for a single night's work! It was at least ten times what I would normally ask. Maybe it would lead to more business down the line.

But on the other hand, the colonel's strange manner, the secrecy, and the odd explanation about the fuller's-earth didn't quite **sit right** with me.

Why the late hour?

Why the insistence on total silence?

Still, I pushed my doubts aside, ate a good dinner, went to Paddington Station, and took care to follow the colonel's instructions **to the letter**—I didn't breathe a word to anyone.

At Reading, I had to switch not just trains but stations as well. I managed to catch the last train to Eyford and arrived at the tiny, dimly-lit station shortly after eleven o'clock. I was the only

passenger to get off, and the platform was empty except for one sleepy porter with a lantern.

As I passed through the gate, I saw the colonel waiting in the shadows. He didn't say a word—just grabbed my arm and rushed me to a carriage, which was already waiting with the door open.

Once we were both inside, he pulled down the blinds and tapped on the wooden panel. The carriage started moving immediately, as fast as the horse could manage.

“One horse?” Holmes interrupted.

“Yes, just one.”

“Did you see what colour it was?”

“Yes, I caught a glimpse of it in the side-lights. Chestnut.”

“Did it look tired or fresh?”

“Fresh. Glossy coat.”

“Thank you. Sorry for the interruption. Please continue.”

So off we went, bumping along the country roads at quite a speed.

Colonel Stark had said the house was seven miles away, but given how long we travelled and how rough the ride was, I'd guess it was closer to twelve.

He sat beside me in silence the entire way, and more than once I noticed him studying me with that same intense stare.

I tried looking out the window, but the glass was frosted, so all I could make out were occasional glows of passing lights.

Now and then I tried to make conversation to break the awkward silence, but he only responded with one-word answers. Eventually, I gave up.

Finally, after about an hour, I felt the road smooth out beneath us—**gravel** instead of dirt—and the carriage came to a stop.

The colonel jumped out, and as I followed, he hurried me into a dark **porch** right in front of the entrance.

I barely had time to glance around before the door slammed shut behind us.

I heard the faint rattle of wheels as the carriage drove off into the night.

Part 3 Summary - The strange journey to the house

- Hatherley travels by train to **Eyford** late at night.
 - Stark meets him and rushes him into a **carriage** pulled by a **single horse, which seemed fresh (not tired)**.
 - The carriage rides for about an hour, with the blinds down, and frosted windows so he can't see outside.
 - They arrive at a **large, isolated country house**.
-

Part 4

It was pitch-black inside. The colonel fumbled around for matches, muttering under his breath. Then, suddenly, a door at the far end of the hallway opened, and a beam of golden light spilled out toward us.

A woman appeared, holding a lamp above her head. She leaned forward, squinting to see us.

She was young and pretty, and the way the light reflected off her dark dress told me the fabric was expensive.

She said something in a foreign language, sounding like she was asking a question.

When the colonel replied with a gruff word, she jumped so suddenly that she nearly dropped the lamp.

He hurried to her, whispered something in her ear, then gently pushed her back into the room she'd come from. Then he returned with the lamp and turned to me.

"Would you mind waiting in here for a few minutes?" he said, opening another door.

I stepped into a small, simply furnished room with a round table in the middle and some German books scattered across it.

He placed the lamp on a harmonium next to the door and said, "I will not be long," before vanishing into the dark hallway.

I glanced at the books—two looked like scientific texts, the others were German poetry. I went over to the window, hoping to get a

sense of where I was, but it was blocked by a heavy oak shutter, and bolted closed.

The silence in that house was eerie. I could hear an old clock ticking somewhere, but nothing else.

The quiet was so complete it was unsettling. I started to feel increasingly uneasy.

Who were these people?

What were they really doing here in the middle of nowhere?

And where was I, exactly?

I knew I'd come about ten miles from Eyford, but in which direction? North? South? I had no idea.

Reading and other large towns might have been nearby, but from the silence alone, I was sure we were in the countryside.

I walked back and forth across the room, humming a tune softly to keep my spirits up.

At that point, I felt like I was earning every penny of my fifty-guinea fee.

Suddenly—without a sound—the door opened slowly. The woman I'd seen earlier stood in the doorway, the darkness of the hall behind her, the lamp's light illuminating her anxious, beautiful face.

She was terrified—I could see it instantly. The fear in her expression sent a chill down my spine.

She raised a trembling finger to her lips to signal silence. Then she whispered in broken English, her eyes darting nervously behind her like a frightened animal.

"I would go," she said softly. "I would not stay. It is no good for you."

"But madam," I replied, "I haven't done what I came here to do. I can't leave without seeing the machine."

"It is not worth it," she said urgently. "Go now. You can go through the door—no one will stop you."

I smiled and shook my head, and she seemed to become desperate. She stepped forward, wringing her hands.

"For the love of Heaven," she whispered, "leave before it is too late!"

But I can be quite stubborn by nature, and the more someone warns me off something, the more determined I become.

I thought of the long journey I'd made, the money I'd been promised, and how foolish it would be to leave without finishing the job. This woman might just be unwell or overexcited.

Despite my unease, I stood my ground and said I would stay.

She was about to plead again when a door slammed upstairs, and we heard footsteps approaching from above.

She listened for a second, threw up her hands in despair, and vanished into the darkness without another word.

4. The woman's warning

- Inside the house, Hatherley briefly sees a **frightened woman**.
 - When Stark leaves Hatherley alone, she secretly comes back and **begs** him to **leave immediately**.
 - She says his life is in danger.
 - Hatherley ignores the warning because he wants his money and to finish the job.
 - Again, like a character in a horror film, Hatherley continues to ignore red flags that clearly signal that there is danger ahead!
-

Part 5

A moment later, the colonel returned—this time accompanied by a short, **thick-set** man with a **bushy beard** that covered his round face. The colonel introduced him.

“This is Mr. Ferguson, my secretary and manager,” he said. “By the way, I thought I’d closed this door earlier. You must have opened it—you probably felt a **draught**.”

“Exactly,” I said. “I opened it myself because the room felt **stuffy**.”

He gave me one of those suspicious looks again. “Well, shall we get down to business?” he said. “Mr. Ferguson and I will take you to see the machine.”

“Let me just get my hat first,” I said.

“There is no need for that—the machine is located inside the house.”

“What, you dig fuller’s-earth indoors?”

“No, no. This is where we compress it. Just come and have a look. All we need is your opinion on what’s wrong, and that will be the end of it.”

We all headed upstairs—Colonel Stark leading the way with the lamp, Mr. Ferguson and I following behind.

The house was like a maze. The corridors twisted and turned, the stairs were narrow and winding, and the doors were small with worn-down thresholds.

There was no carpet, no furniture above the ground floor, and the walls were crumbling in places with green patches of damp seeping through.

I tried to stay calm and act like none of this bothered me, but I remembered the woman’s warning, and watched my two guides carefully.

Ferguson didn’t say much, and though he seemed surly and withdrawn, I could tell from his accent that he was probably English.

Eventually, Colonel Stark stopped at a low door, which he unlocked with a key from his pocket.

Inside was a tiny square room—barely big enough for the three of us. Ferguson stayed outside while the colonel led me in.

“We are now,” said the colonel, “actually inside the hydraulic press. This chamber is directly beneath the piston. If someone were to start the machine while we were in here, it would crush us flat like a pancake.

The ceiling is the bottom of the piston—it comes down with enormous force onto the metal floor.

The pressure is channelled through water in side cylinders. You will of course be familiar with the hydraulic process.

The mechanism works, but there’s a stiffness in it, and we’ve noticed a drop in pressure. We want you to have a look and tell us what is wrong. This is all.”

I took the lamp from him and inspected the machinery closely. It was enormous and clearly built to exert a tremendous amount of force. After examining the inner workings, I stepped outside and tested the levers. I could immediately hear the soft *whish* of water leaking somewhere—it meant pressure was escaping.

I traced the problem to one of the rubber washers. It had shrunk just enough that it no longer properly sealed its socket, letting the water leak through.

That was clearly the issue. I explained everything to the colonel and Ferguson, and they both listened attentively, asking smart, technical questions about how to fix it.

Part 5 Summary - The hydraulic press

- Stark returns with a man called **Mr Ferguson**.
 - They lead Hatherley through the house to a hidden room.
 - The room turns out to be **inside the hydraulic press itself**.
 - Hatherley discovers the fault:
 - a **leaking rubber washer** is reducing the pressure.
 - He explains how to fix it.
-

Part 6

After I finished advising them, I went back into the chamber to satisfy my own curiosity. The machine was so large and powerful, I found it hard to believe it was being used just to compress fuller's-earth.

The walls were wooden, but the floor was made of a solid iron **trough**—and when I inspected it closely, I noticed a crust of metallic **residue** all over it.

I bent down to **scrape** at the **crust** and get a better look when I suddenly heard a muttered word in German behind me. I looked up to see Colonel Stark's pale, hollow face **glaring** down at me.

“What are you doing?” he asked sharply.

I felt a surge of anger. I'd been **taken in** by this ridiculous story about fuller's-earth.

"I was just admiring your fuller's-earth," I said coldly. "I can give you better advice if I understand what the machine's really used for."

The moment I said those words, I regretted it.

His face turned to stone, and a nasty glint appeared in his eyes.

"Very well," he said. "You'll find out exactly what it is used for."

With that, he stepped back, slammed the little door behind me, and locked it with a snap.

I lunged at the door, rattling the handle, kicking and shoving it, but it was solid and didn't budge.

"Hey!" I shouted. "Colonel! Let me out!"

Then, in the sudden silence, I heard something that froze my blood and put a lump in my throat — the hiss of the leaking cylinder and the heavy *clank* of the machine starting up. He had turned the press on.

The lamp I'd used still sat on the floor, and by its light I saw the black iron ceiling beginning to descend—slowly, unevenly, but with unstoppable force.

I knew better than anyone what that machine was capable of. In less than a minute, it would flatten me.

I screamed and pounded the door. I tore at the lock with my fingers, shouting, begging him to stop. But the clanking drowned out everything.

The ceiling was now only a few feet above me. I reached up and felt its cold, rough surface.

A horrible thought struck me: the position I died in would affect how painful it was. If I lay on my stomach, the press would crush my spine. If I lay on my back and looked up at it, would that be easier? Could I face it?

Just then, a sliver of hope appeared.

The walls were wooden—even though the floor and ceiling were iron. And between two of the boards, I noticed a faint line of light. It widened—a panel was sliding open.

At first I thought I was imagining it. But no—it was real. A hidden door!

I didn't hesitate. I threw myself through the gap and collapsed on the other side, half-conscious, my heart pounding.

The panel shut behind me, and a second later I heard the lamp smash and then the horrific clang as the iron plates came together.

If I'd hesitated even a second longer, I would've been crushed.

Part 6 Summary - The murder attempt

- While examining the machine, he notices:
 - the floor is made of **iron**, not wood,
 - and it is covered in **metallic residue**.

- He realises the machine is not used for fuller's-earth, but for something else.
- When Hatherley hints that he understands the truth, Stark suddenly:
 - locks him inside the press chamber,
 - and starts the machine.
- The **iron ceiling begins coming down** and will crush him.
- Hatherley desperately looks for a way out.
- He spots a **hidden sliding panel** in the wooden wall, which is opening.
- He escapes **just in time**, seconds before the press slams shut.



Have some water, Luke 💧 Perhaps a dash of brandy will help clear your mind. 🥃

Part 7

I lay on the stone floor, **dazed**, gasping for breath. Then I felt someone **tugging** at my **wrist**.

It was the same woman—the one who had tried to warn me. She held a candle in one hand and was pulling me with the other.

“Come, come!” she whispered urgently. “They’ll be here in a moment! They’ll see you’re gone!”

This time, I didn’t question her. I staggered to my feet, and together we ran down the corridor, then down a twisting staircase.

At the bottom was another hallway, and just as we reached it, we heard voices shouting—some above us, some below. The woman looked around desperately, then opened a door into a bedroom. Moonlight streamed through the window.

“Your only chance,” she said. “It’s high—but you might survive the jump!”

Just then, we saw a light coming down the corridor—and the lean shape of Colonel Stark running toward us, a lantern in one hand and something like a butcher’s cleaver in the other.



I rushed to the window, flung it open, and looked out.

The garden below looked calm and peaceful in the moonlight—and about thirty feet down.

I climbed onto the sill but hesitated. I didn’t want to jump until I knew the woman would be safe.

The colonel reached the door and tried to force his way past her, but she blocked him.

“Fritz! Fritz!” she cried in English. “Remember what you promised last time! You said it wouldn’t happen again! He’ll keep quiet—I know he will!”

“You’re mad, Elise!” he shouted, struggling to push past. “You’ll ruin everything! He’s seen too much—get out of my way!”

He shoved her aside, rushed at me, and swung the cleaver just as I was about to let go of the window ledge. The blow struck my hand as I still hung from the window sill. I felt a sharp pain, and then I fell.

I hit the ground hard, but luckily I wasn’t seriously hurt.

I scrambled to my feet and ran into the bushes, knowing I was still in danger.

But soon a wave of dizziness and nausea hit me.

I looked down at my throbbing hand—and only then saw that my thumb had been cut off.

Blood was pouring out. I tried to tie my handkerchief around the wound, but before I could, everything went dark and I fainted among the rose bushes.

Part 7 Summary - The escape

- The frightened woman helps him flee through the house.
- Stark chases them with a **cleaver**.

- They reach a bedroom window.
 - The woman blocks Stark while Hatherley jumps out.
 - Stark swings the cleaver and **cuts off Hatherley's thumb** as he is falling from the window.
 - Hatherley falls into the garden, manages to hide in some bushes and faints from blood loss.
-

Part 8

I don't know how long I was unconscious, but it must have been quite a while.

When I finally **came to**, the moon had set, and the sky was turning bright with morning.

My clothes were **soaked** with **dew**, and the sleeve of my coat was **drenched** in blood from my wounded hand.

The sharp pain in my arm **brought everything rushing back** to me.

I jumped to my feet, my heart racing, afraid that the people from the house might still be searching for me.

But as I looked around, I was shocked to see that I wasn't in a garden anymore. I was lying in a **dip** beside a hedge, right next to a road—and just down the road was a long, low building.

As I walked toward it, I realised with astonishment that it was the very same station where I'd arrived the night before.

Somehow, during the night, I'd been carried all the way back here and laid by the road.

If it weren't for the pain in my hand, I might have thought the whole thing had been a bad dream.

Still feeling weak and dazed, I walked into the station and asked when the next train to Reading would be.

There was one due in less than an hour. I recognised the same porter from the night before and asked him whether he'd ever heard of a Colonel Lysander Stark.

The name meant nothing to him.

I asked if he'd seen a carriage waiting at the station for me the previous night.

No, he hadn't.

Was there a police station nearby?

About three miles away, he said.

That was too far to walk in my condition, so I decided to wait until I was back in London to report the incident.

I caught the train, and as soon as I arrived, I went to a doctor to have my wound treated.

Then that doctor—Dr. Watson here—brought me straight to you, Mr. Holmes. I'm ready to do whatever you advise.

Part 8 Summary - Hatherley wakes near the station

- He wakes up near **Eyford station** the next morning.
 - Someone has **carried him back there** while he was unconscious.
 - No one at the station knows anything about Stark or a carriage.
 - He returns to London, gets medical help, and then tells Watson and Holmes.
-

Part 9

We sat in silence for a moment after he finished. Then Holmes stood up and pulled one of his **scrapbooks** from the shelf—the ones where he kept useful **newspaper clippings**.

“Here’s something I think you’ll find interesting,” he said, **flipping through** the pages.

“It appeared about a year ago in all the papers. Listen:

‘Lost, on the 9th of this month, Mr. Jeremiah Hayling, age 26, hydraulic engineer. Left his lodgings at 10 p.m. and has not been seen since. Was dressed in...’ and so on.”

“Good Lord!” gasped Hatherley. “That must be the other man the woman spoke of!”

“No doubt about it,” Holmes said. “This Colonel Stark is clearly a cold-blooded man who will stop at nothing to protect his operation.

He’s like those old-time pirates who left no survivors. Well—if you’re up to it, we should go to Scotland Yard immediately and then head for Eyford to investigate.”

Part 9 Summary - Holmes links it to a previous disappearance

- Holmes finds a newspaper report about another **missing hydraulic engineer**.
 - The man disappeared after going out on a late-night job—just like Hatherley.
 - Holmes concludes Stark and his gang **murder engineers** who learn too much.
-

Part 10

About three hours later, we were on a train from Reading to the little village of Eyford.

Along with Holmes, Mr. Hatherley, and myself were Inspector Bradstreet of Scotland Yard and a **plain-clothes** officer.

On the seat between us, Bradstreet had spread out a large map of the county and was using a compass to draw a ten-mile radius circle around Eyford.

“There,” he said. “You said you were taken about ten miles from the station, right? So the house must be somewhere near the edge of this circle.”

“Roughly an hour’s drive,” Hatherley confirmed.

“And you think they carried you all the way back while you were unconscious?”

“They must have. I vaguely remember being lifted and moved.”

“I just don’t get why they didn’t kill you when they had the chance,” I said. “Maybe the woman convinced them to spare you?”

“I doubt it,” said Hatherley grimly. “I’ve never seen a face as ruthless as the colonel’s.”

“We’ll soon know for sure,” said Bradstreet. “The only question is—where along this circle is the place?”

“I think I can pinpoint it,” Holmes said calmly.

“Really?” said the inspector. “Let’s hear your guess then. I say the house is to the south—quieter country there.”

“I say east,” offered Hatherley.

“West for me,” said the plain-clothes man. “Lots of little hidden villages.”

“And I’ll say north,” I added. “The roads there are flatter—Hatherley didn’t notice going uphill.”

Bradstreet laughed. “Well, that’s the full compass covered. Holmes, whose side are you on?”

“You’re all wrong,” Holmes said with a slight smile. “This is where the house is.” He pointed directly at the centre of the circle.

“What?” gasped Hatherley. “But that’s where the train station is! The house was at least twelve miles away!”

“No,” Holmes said. “Six miles out, six miles back. Think about it—you said the horse was fresh when you got in the carriage. That wouldn’t be the case if it had just done a twelve-mile trip over country roads.

The whole thing was a trick—they took you in a big loop just to make you think you’d gone far from the station.”

“That’s a clever trick,” said Bradstreet, nodding. “And now it all makes sense. We’ve suspected for a while that there’s a large-scale counterfeiting ring operating in the area.

They’ve been turning out fake half-crowns by the thousands.

We traced them as far as Reading, but lost them there. They covered their tracks well.

But this... this might be the breakthrough.”

But he was wrong.

As we pulled into Eyford station, we saw a towering column of smoke rising from a grove of trees nearby, like a huge black feather hanging in the sky.

“Looks like a fire,” Bradstreet said.

“Yes, sir,” said the station master when we asked.

“When did it start?”

“Sometime during the night sir, I believe. But it’s worse now—the whole place is ablaze.”

“Whose house is it?”

“Dr. Becher’s.”

Hatherley jumped in. “Tell me—was Dr. Becher a very thin man? A foreigner? Sharp nose?”

The station master burst out laughing. “No, sir—Dr. Becher’s as English as roast beef and about as **plump**.”

But he *did* have a guest recently—a foreign gentleman. Looked like he could use a few good meals.”

We didn’t wait for more. We headed straight toward the fire.

As we came over a hill, we saw the house—a wide, whitewashed building—completely **engulfed** in flames.

Fire engines were already there, but it was clear they were struggling to contain it.

“That’s the place!” Hatherley shouted. “That’s the gravel drive! And those rose bushes—right there—that’s where I landed after I jumped! That second-floor window is the one I escaped from!”

“At least,” Holmes murmured, “you got your revenge. No doubt your oil lamp smashed when the press closed on it—and that started the fire. I imagine they were too busy chasing you to notice.”

“But keep your eyes open,” he added. “See if you recognise anyone in the crowd.”

But none of the faces were familiar. Holmes had been right—they were long gone.

Part 10 Summary - The police raid fails

- Holmes, Watson, Hatherley, and the police go to Eyford.
- Holmes realises the carriage ride was a **loop**, not a long journey.
- The fresh horse proves they never went far.
- The house must be **close to Eyford station**, not miles away.
- They see a house **burning fiercely** nearby.
- It turns out to be **the same house** Hatherley escaped from.

- The fire was likely started by the smashed oil lamp inside the press.
 - The criminals have already **escaped with their counterfeit coins**.
-

Final part

Later that day, a local farmer reported seeing a **cart** carrying several people and some large **crates** speeding toward Reading early that morning.

After that, no one had seen or heard from them again—not the woman, not the colonel, not Mr. Ferguson.

When the fire was finally out by sunset, the house was little more than a shell. The roof had collapsed, and the machinery inside was twisted wreckage.

The only thing left of Hatherley's ordeal was a severed thumb found on the windowsill of the second floor.

They did find large amounts of **nickel** and **tin** stored in an outbuilding—but no coins. That explained the crates on the cart.

The criminals had escaped with the last of their counterfeit money, leaving behind just enough for us to understand what they'd been doing.

As for how Hatherley ended up by the road, that mystery was solved by the soft earth.

There were **tracks** of two people—one with unusually small feet and one with very large ones—showing that he had been carried from the garden to the roadside, probably by the woman and Mr. Ferguson. Perhaps the Englishman had a bit more **conscience** than the colonel.

“Well,” said Hatherley with a rueful smile as we boarded the train back to London, “it’s been quite an adventure. I’ve lost my thumb and missed out on my fifty guineas. And what did I gain?”

“Experience,” Holmes replied, chuckling. “And an extremely compelling story.”

“If you tell it well, I think people will find you *very* good company for the rest of your life.”

Final Part - Summary

- Police find **nickel and tin**—the metals used to make fake coins.
- The hydraulic press was being used to **mint counterfeit half-crowns**.
- The criminals escaped with the finished money in crates.
- Hatherley’s **severed thumb** is found on the window ledge.
- Footprints show two people carried him to the road:

- probably the woman and Ferguson, who was perhaps less *homicidal* than Stark.
- Stark and his gang are never caught.
- Hatherley loses his thumb and his 50 guineas.
- But he gains:
 - his life,
 - and a dramatic story to tell.
- Holmes wryly comments that the experience will make him **excellent company forever**.

2. Vocabulary List of Highlighted Words & Phrases

1. thumb	51. discreetly	102. budge
2. show off	52. thrilled	103. a lump in my throat
3. unfold	53. sit right with me	104. hiss
4. gripping	54. to the letter	105. flatten
5. left a deep impression	55. Chestnut	106. pounded
6. vividly	56. Glossy	107. tore
7. medical practice	57. frosted	108. drowned out
8. ailment	58. make out	109. spine
9. acquaintance	59. gravel	110. sliver
	60. porch	

10. slip away	61. pitch-black	111. faint
11. safe and sound	62. fumbled around	112. dazed
12. shaken	63. muttering	113. tugging
13. keep himself together	64. squinting	114. wrist
14. Get a hold of yourself	65. gruff word	115. staggered
15. in the throes of a hysterical fit	66. shutter	116. a butcher's cleaver
16. slumped back	67. bolted	117. flung
17. gasped	68. eerie	118. sill
18. recoiled	69. unsettling	119. bushes
19. raw	70. humming	120. dizziness
20. sponge-like	71. sent a chill down my spine	121. nausea
21. torn off	72. wringing her hands	122. throbbing
22. at the root	73. stubborn	123. cut off
23. bled	74. warns me off	124. came to
24. fainted	75. stood my ground	125. soaked
25. came to	76. plead	126. dew
26. twig	77. thick-set	127. drenched
27. bandaged	78. bushy beard	128. brought everything rushing back
28. flinching	79. draught	129. dip
29. shaken you up	80. stuffy	130. scrapbooks
30. up for it	81. worn-down thresholds	131. newspaper clippings
31. a hansom cab	82. crumbling	132. flipping through
32. lounging	83. damp	133. up to it
33. leftover	84. seeping through	134. plain-clothes
34. passed away	85. surly	

35.inheritance	86.withdrawn	135. spare
36.grim	87.piston	136. grimly
37.ten shillings	88.washers	137. ruthless
38.clerk	89.shrunk	138. counterfeiting ring
39.lean	90.sealed	139. half-crowns
40.narrow down	91.socket	140. traced
41.bowed	92.trough	141. covered their tracks
42.under the impression	93.residue	142. breakthrough
43.have my word	94.scrape	143. plump
44.leapt up	95.crust	144. engulfed
45.darted across	96.glaring	145. the gravel drive
46.flung open	97.taken in	146. cart
47.fifty guineas	98.glint	147. crates
48.fuller's-earth	99.lunged	148. nickel
49.scooped out	100. rattling	149. tin
50.pit	101. shoving	150. tracks
		151. conscience

3. A Detailed Vocabulary List

Here are the highlighted vocabulary items from this story, with:

- The vocabulary in full context, with the sentence before, the sentence containing the phrase, and the sentence after.
- A definition of the word or phrase
- Common collocations with the word or phrase
- A comment about the word or phrase
- A discussion question to let you use the word or phrase

1) thumb

Context (prev / target / next):

- “That’s better,” he said.
- **“Now, Doctor, would you mind taking a look at my thumb—or rather, what’s left of it.”**
- “He unwrapped the handkerchief and held out his hand.”

Definition: the short, thick first finger on your hand 👍

Common collocations:

- **injure/hurt your thumb, cut your thumb, lose a thumb**
- **thumb joint, thumbprint, thumb pain**
- **rule of thumb** (idiom)

Discussion question:

Have you ever had an injury (or near-miss) that made you suddenly realise how fragile the body is?

Is the “thumbs up” gesture normal in your country? Does it mean “nice one” or “good”?

2) show off

Context:

- “While the second might have offered more material for someone keen on psychological puzzles, the first case was so bizarre and dramatic that it deserves a proper telling
- —even though it may not have given Holmes as much room to **show off** his usual powers of deduction.”
- “Although parts of this story have been published in the newspapers, those versions never quite capture the same effect as hearing the facts unfold step by step.”

Definition: to try to impress people by displaying your ability, possessions, or knowledge.

Common collocations:

- show off your skills/talent, show off in front of people
- stop showing off, he loves showing off

Discussion question: In your life/work, when does “showing off” become useful (e.g., self-promotion), and when does it become annoying?

3) unfold

Context:

- “Although parts of this story have been published in the newspapers,
- those versions never quite capture the same effect as hearing the facts **unfold** step by step.”
- “That slow build-up, the mystery gradually unravelling, is what makes the tale so gripping.”

Definition: to happen gradually or be revealed little by little (especially events in a story).

Common collocations:

- events unfolded, the story unfolds, as the day unfolded
- unfold gradually, unfold before our eyes

Comment: “Unfold” suits detective fiction: revelation feels like something opening up.

Discussion question: What’s a moment in your life when events “unfolded” in a way you couldn’t control?

4) gripping

Context:

- “Although parts of this story have been published in the newspapers, those versions never quite capture the same effect as hearing the facts unfold step by step.”
- “That slow build-up, the mystery gradually unravelling, is what makes the tale so **gripping**.”
- “At the time, it left a deep impression on me—and even now, two years later, I still remember it vividly.”

Definition: extremely interesting or exciting; hard to stop paying attention to.

Common collocations:

- a gripping story/tale, gripping drama, gripping account
- absolutely gripping, truly gripping

Comment: Classic Watson framing: he sells the narrative experience, not just the facts.

Discussion question: What’s the most “gripping” film/book/podcast episode you’ve experienced recently—and why?

5) left a deep impression

Context:

- “That slow build-up, the mystery gradually unravelling, is what makes the tale so gripping.”
- “At the time, it **left a deep impression** on me—and even now, two years later, I still remember it vividly.”
- “It all happened in the summer of 1889, not long after I got married.”

Definition: affected you strongly and remained in your memory.

Common collocations:

- leave an impression, leave a lasting impression, make an impression on someone

- a strong/deep impression

Comment: This signals trauma + fascination: Watson is still carrying it.

Discussion question: What experience has left a deep impression on you (positive or negative), even years later?

6) vividly

Context:

- “That slow build-up, the mystery gradually unravelling, is what makes the tale so gripping.”
- “At the time, it left a deep impression on me—and even now, two years later, I still remember it **vividly**.”
- “It all happened in the summer of 1889, not long after I got married.”

Definition: in a way that is very clear, detailed, and lifelike in your mind.

Common collocations:

- remember vividly, recall vividly, see vividly
- vividly described, vividly imagine

Comment: Great adverb for storytelling—promises sharp sensory detail.

Discussion question: What do you remember most vividly from your childhood: a place, a person, or a sound?

7) medical practice

Context:

- “At the time, it left a deep impression on me—and even now, two years later, I still remember it vividly.”
- “It all happened in the summer of 1889, not long after I got married. I had returned to civilian life and **medical practice**, and I no longer lived with

Holmes in his Baker Street flat—although I still visited him regularly, and occasionally persuaded him to visit us too.”

- “My medical practice was doing well, and since I lived near Paddington Station, I found myself treating a number of railway employees.”

Definition: a doctor's professional work (and often their clinic/business).

Common collocations:

- **run a medical practice, join a medical practice, private practice**
- **a thriving/busy medical practice**

Comment: Nicely anchors Watson's post-army identity: stable life, then chaos arrives.

Discussion question: If you could “return to” a different kind of work tomorrow, what would it be—and why?

8) ailment

Context:

- “My medical practice was doing well, and since I lived near Paddington Station, I found myself treating a number of railway employees.”
- “One of them, whom I'd cured of a long-standing illness, became one of my biggest fans and insisted on sending anyone with even the slightest **ailment** in my direction.”
- “One morning, just before 7 a.m., our maid woke me to say that two men from Paddington were downstairs waiting for me in the consulting room.”

Definition: a minor illness or health problem (often not serious).

Common collocations:

- **a minor ailment, common ailments, treat an ailment**
- **an ailment like...** (headache, cough, etc.)

Comment: Slightly old-fashioned but very natural in Holmes-era narration.

Discussion question: Are you the type to ignore minor ailments, or do you prefer to get things checked quickly?

9) acquaintance

Context:

- “I quickly got dressed—railway cases rarely turned out to be minor—and hurried downstairs.”
- “As I reached the bottom, I saw my old **acquaintance**, the railway guard, coming out of the consulting room, shutting the door firmly behind him.”
- ““I’ve got him here,” he said in a low voice, nodding back toward the room. “He’s alright now.””

Definition: someone you know a little, but not a close friend.

Common collocations:

- a casual acquaintance, a mutual acquaintance, an old acquaintance
- make an acquaintance

Comment: “Old acquaintance” instantly gives backstory without a detour.

Discussion question: Do you have any “old acquaintances” you bump into occasionally—how do those meetings usually feel?

10) slip away

Context:

- ““What is it?” I asked, wondering if he’d captured some wild animal rather than a patient.”
- ““It’s a new patient,” he replied. “I thought I’d better bring him myself—just to make sure he didn’t **slip away** or anything. Anyway, there he is, safe and sound. Got to go now, Doctor. Duty calls.””
- “And off he went before I could even thank him.”

Definition: to leave quietly or escape without being noticed.

Common collocations:

- **slip away unnoticed, slip away quietly, try to slip away**
- (also) **time slipped away** (meaning time passed quickly)

Comment: Makes the “patient” sound like a prisoner—raises tension immediately.

Discussion question: When have you wanted to “slip away” from a social situation—and what made you want to leave?

11) safe and sound

Context:

- ““What is it?” I asked, wondering if he’d captured some wild animal rather than a patient.”
- ““It’s a new patient,” he replied. “I thought I’d better bring him myself—just to make sure he didn’t slip away or anything. Anyway, there he is, **safe and sound**. Got to go now, Doctor. Duty calls.””
- “And off he went before I could even thank him.”

Definition: not hurt and not in danger; completely fine.

Common collocations:

- **arrive home safe and sound, back safe and sound, keep someone safe and sound**

Comment: The phrase is reassuring—but here it’s oddly comic, given what’s coming.

Discussion question: Who do you most often say “safe and sound” about (kids, partner, friends), and why?

12) shaken

Context:

- “One of his hands was wrapped in a bloodstained handkerchief.”
- “He was pale and looked extremely **shaken**, like someone fighting to keep himself together.”
- ““I’m sorry to wake you so early, Doctor,” he said, “but I had a serious accident last night.””

Definition: upset or shocked, usually after something frightening.

Common collocations:

- **deeply shaken, visibly shaken, badly shaken**
- **shaken by the news/event**

Comment: Great “trauma marker” without melodrama.

Discussion question: What kinds of events leave you feeling shaken: accidents, conflict, bad news, uncertainty?

13) keep himself together

Context:

- “One of his hands was wrapped in a bloodstained handkerchief.”
- “He was pale and looked extremely shaken, like someone fighting to **keep himself together**.”
- ““I’m sorry to wake you so early, Doctor,” he said, “but I had a serious accident last night.””

Definition: to stay calm and in control emotionally; not break down.

Common collocations:

- **try to keep it together, can’t keep it together, keep yourself together**
- **barely keep it together**

Comment: The “fighting” image suggests it’s taking real effort—he’s close to collapsing.

Discussion question: What helps you keep yourself together under pressure: humour, routines, talking, exercise?

14) Get a hold of yourself

Context:

- ““My night was anything but dull,” he replied with a sudden, loud laugh that rang through the room. He laughed so hard he shook in his seat. My instincts as a doctor immediately kicked in.”
- ““Stop that!” I said firmly. “**Get a hold of yourself.**””
- “I poured some water, but it was useless—he was in the throes of a hysterical fit, the kind that sometimes hits people after they’ve been through a traumatic experience.”

Definition: calm down; control your emotions/behaviour.

Common collocations:

- **get a hold of yourself!, pull yourself together** (close synonym)
- **try to get a hold of myself**

Comment: Firm, almost parental—Watson switches into clinical authority.

Discussion question: When you’re stressed, what do you say to yourself to “get a hold of yourself”?

15) in the throes of a hysterical fit

Context:

- ““Stop that!” I said firmly. “Get a hold of yourself.””
- “I poured some water, but it was useless—he was **in the throes of a hysterical fit**, the kind that sometimes hits people after they’ve been through a traumatic experience.”
- “Eventually, he calmed down and slumped back, exhausted and pale.”

Definition: “in the throes of” = in the middle of an intense, uncontrollable experience; here, a severe panic/laughing-crying episode after trauma.

Common collocations:

- in the throes of pain/grief/panic, in the throes of illness, in the throes of labour
- a fit of laughter/panic/coughing

Comment: Slightly Victorian phrasing (“hysterical”), but it fits Watson’s period voice.

Discussion question: Have you ever had an involuntary reaction after stress (laughing, shaking, tears)? What triggered it?

16) slumped back

Context:

- “I poured some water, but it was useless—he was in the throes of a hysterical fit, the kind that sometimes hits people after they’ve been through a traumatic experience.”
- “Eventually, he calmed down and **slumped back**, exhausted and pale.”
- ““Sorry. I’ve made a fool of myself,” he gasped.”

Definition: leaned/fell back heavily in a tired, weak, or defeated way.

Common collocations:

- slump back in a chair, slump against the wall, slump at a desk
- slumped, exhausted

Comment: A physical signal of emotional depletion—nice “show, don’t tell”.

Discussion question: After a hard day, what does your “slump back” moment look like?

17) gasped

Context:

- “Eventually, he calmed down and slumped back, exhausted and pale.”
- ““Sorry. I’ve made a fool of myself,” he **gasped**.”
- ““Not at all. Here, drink this.””

Definition: said something while breathing with difficulty (from shock, pain, exhaustion, emotion).

Common collocations:

- **gasp for breath, gasped out the words, gasp in horror**
- **he gasped, she gasped**

Comment: Works well after the fit—his body is still catching up.

Discussion question: What makes you literally gasp: pain, surprise, laughter, cold water?

18) recoiled

Context:

- “He unwrapped the handkerchief and held out his hand.”
- “Even I, a seasoned doctor, **recoiled** a bit.”
- “Four fingers remained, but where his thumb should have been was a raw, red, sponge-like mess.”

Definition: pulled back suddenly because of shock, fear, disgust, or pain.

Common collocations:

- **recoil in horror/disgust, recoil from the sight, recoil at the thought**

Comment: If Watson recoils, the injury must be brutal—instant credibility.

Discussion question: What’s something you’ve seen (or imagined) that made you recoil instinctively?

19) raw

Context:

- “Even I, a seasoned doctor, recoiled a bit.”
- “Four fingers remained, but where his thumb should have been was a **raw**, red, sponge-like mess.”
- “It looked like it had been cut or torn off at the root.”

Definition: (of skin/flesh) exposed and sore, as if scraped or freshly injured.

Common collocations:

- **raw wound, raw flesh, raw and bleeding, skin is raw**
- (other meaning) **raw data, raw emotion**

Comment: “Raw” is short, simple, and visceral—perfect here.

Discussion question: Do you prefer vivid, direct descriptions in stories—or do you like writers to be more subtle?

20) sponge-like

Context:

- “Even I, a seasoned doctor, recoiled a bit.”
- “Four fingers remained, but where his thumb should have been was a raw, red, **sponge-like** mess.”
- “It looked like it had been cut or torn off at the root.”

Definition: having a texture like a sponge—soft-looking, porous, irregular.

Common collocations:

- **sponge-like tissue, sponge-like texture, sponge-like material**

Comment: It's a smart choice: specific enough to picture, but not overly gory.

Discussion question: When you describe something unpleasant, do you go for precise imagery—or do you avoid detail?

21) torn off

Context:

- “Four fingers remained, but where his thumb should have been was a raw, red, sponge-like mess.”
- “It looked like it had been cut or **torn off** at the root.”
- ““Good heavens,” I said, shocked. “That’s a nasty injury. It must have bled a lot.””

Definition: removed violently by pulling/ripping (not neatly cut).

Common collocations:

- **torn off at the base, torn off completely, nearly torn off**
- (informal) **tear off a piece, tear off a bandage**

Comment: “Cut or torn off” lets Watson deduce the weapon later (heavy + sharp).

Discussion question: Have you ever had a situation where something felt “torn off” metaphorically (a sudden loss, abrupt change)?

22) at the root

Context:

- “Four fingers remained, but where his thumb should have been was a raw, red, sponge-like mess.”
- “It looked like it had been cut or torn off **at the root**.”
- ““Good heavens,” I said, shocked. “That’s a nasty injury. It must have bled a lot.””

Definition: at the base; at the point where something begins or is attached.

Common collocations:

- **cut off at the root, pull out by the root, problem at the root**
- **root cause** (related idea)

Comment: Nicely ambiguous: works for anatomy and for problem-solving language.

Discussion question: In your life right now, is there any problem you'd like to fix "at the root" rather than just treating symptoms?

23) bled

Context:

- "It looked like it had been cut or torn off at the root."
- "'Good heavens,' I said, shocked. 'That's a nasty injury. It must have **bled** a lot.'"
- "'It did. I fainted when it happened and must have been unconscious for some time.'"

Definition: lost blood (past tense of *bleed*).

Common collocations:

- **bled heavily/badly, bled to death** (extreme), **bled a lot**
- **make someone bleed**

Comment: The line is realistic and medical—Watson is assessing danger and shock.

Discussion question: How do you react to blood—calm, squeamish, faint, fascinated?

24) fainted

Context:

- ““Good heavens,” I said, shocked. “That’s a nasty injury. It must have bled a lot.””
- ““It did. I **fainted** when it happened and must have been unconscious for some time.””
- ““When I came to, it was still bleeding, so I tied my handkerchief around it and used a twig to keep it tight.””

Definition: suddenly lost consciousness briefly.

Common collocations:

- **fainted from shock/pain, nearly fainted, fainted dead away** (old-fashioned)
- **make someone faint**

Comment: This makes him more believable: even tough people faint with sudden trauma.

Discussion question: Have you ever fainted—or come close? What were the circumstances?

25) came to

Context:

- ““It did. I fainted when it happened and must have been unconscious for some time.””
- ““When I **came to**, it was still bleeding, so I tied my handkerchief around it and used a twig to keep it tight.””
- ““Clever. You could have been a surgeon.””

Definition: regained consciousness after fainting or being unconscious.

Common collocations:

- **come to slowly, come to with a start, come to your senses** (different meaning)
- **bring someone to** (revive them)

Comment: Clean, natural phrase—very “Watson narration”.

Discussion question: When you “come to” after sleep or a nap, do you feel clear-headed or groggy—and what helps?

26) twig

Context (prev / target / next):

- “It did. I fainted when it happened and must have been unconscious for some time.”
- “When I came to, it was still bleeding, so I tied my handkerchief around it and used a **twig** to keep it tight.”
- “Clever. You could have been a surgeon.”

Definition: a small, thin branch from a tree or bush.

Common collocations:

- a small twig, a broken twig, twigs and leaves
- snap a twig, step on a twig

Comment: A tiny detail that makes the scene feel practical and real (improvised tourniquet).

Discussion question: When have you had to improvise a solution using whatever was nearby?

27) bandaged

Context:

- “An accident?”
- “Not at all.” / “You mean it was an attack?” / “Yes. A very deliberate and violent one.”
- “I cleaned and **bandaged** the wound while he lay back, biting his lip from time to time but otherwise not flinching.”

Definition: covered a wound with a bandage.

Common collocations:

- bandage a wound, bandaged hand/arm, freshly bandaged
- clean and bandage

Comment: “Cleaned and bandaged” is a neat medical pair—efficient Watson.

Discussion question: Do you like being looked after when you're ill/injured, or do you prefer to be left alone?

28) flinching

Context:

- “I cleaned and bandaged the wound while he lay back, biting his lip from time to time...”
- “...but otherwise not **flinching**.”
- “How's that?” I asked when I was done.

Definition: making a small sudden movement because of pain, fear, or surprise.

Common collocations:

- flinch with pain, flinch at a sound, not flinch
- make someone flinch

Comment: Shows Hatherley's toughness (or shock) without saying “he was brave”.

Discussion question: What makes you flinch more—physical pain, jump scares, or emotional awkwardness?

29) shaken you up

Context:

- “Excellent. Between the brandy and your bandages, I feel like a new man. I was terribly weak before. I've been through a lot.”

- “Perhaps you shouldn’t talk about it just yet. It seems to have **shaken you up**.”
- “No, I must. I’ll have to explain it to the police eventually.”

Definition: upset or shocked you; disturbed you emotionally.

Common collocations:

- **really shook me up, shaken up after the accident, a bit shaken up**
- **shaken but okay**

Comment: Very natural spoken English—Watson’s bedside manner.

Discussion question: What sort of experience shakes you up most: danger, uncertainty, embarrassment, or conflict?

30) up for it

Context:

- “We’ll call a cab and go together. We’ll probably catch him at breakfast.”
- “Are you **up for it**?”
- “Yes. I won’t be at ease until I’ve told my story.”

Definition: willing and ready to do something.

Common collocations:

- **Are you up for...?, I’m up for it, not up for it today**
- **up for a challenge/coffee/a walk**

Comment: Good informal contrast against the Victorian setting—makes it feel modern (which suits your adaptation).

Discussion question: What are you usually “up for” at short notice—and what do you almost always refuse?

31) a hansom cab

Context:

- “I asked my servant to call a cab and told the maid to let my wife know I’d be out for a while.”
- “Five minutes later, I was in **a hansom cab** with Mr. Hatherley, heading straight for Baker Street.”
- “As usual, we found Sherlock Holmes in his sitting room...”

Definition: a fast, two-wheeled horse-drawn taxi (common in 19th-century London).

Common collocations:

- **hail a hansom cab, jump into a hansom cab, ride in a hansom cab**

Comment: Period detail that instantly places us in Holmes-world (even in modernised prose).

Discussion question: If you could time-travel for one day in London, what would you most want to experience?

32) lounging

Context:

- “As usual, we found Sherlock Holmes in his sitting room...”
- “...**lounging** in his dressing gown, smoking a pipe made up of leftover tobacco from the day before, and reading the personal ads in The Times.”
- “He greeted us in his calm and friendly way...”

Definition: sitting/lying in a relaxed, lazy way.

Common collocations:

- **lounging on the sofa, lounging around, lounging in bed**
- **lounging about**

Comment: This “Holmes at ease” image is a classic calm-before-the-storm moment.

Discussion question: Where do you lounge best: sofa, chair, bed, or somewhere outdoors?

33) leftover

Context:

- “...lounging in his dressing gown, smoking a pipe made up of **leftover** tobacco from the day before...”
- “...and reading the personal ads in The Times.”
- “He greeted us in his calm and friendly way...”

Definition: remaining from an earlier time; not used or eaten.

Common collocations:

- **leftover food, leftover rice/pizza, leftover ingredients**
- **use up leftovers**

Comment: “Leftover tobacco” adds texture: thrifty, habitual, slightly scruffy Holmes.

Discussion question: Are you a leftovers person — what’s your best (or worst) leftover habit?

34) passed away

Context:

- “You should know, first of all,” he began, “that I’m an orphan and unmarried.”
- “Two years ago, after my father **passed away** and left me a small inheritance, I decided to go out on my own.”
- “I rented offices in Victoria Street and waited for work.”

Definition: a polite/euphemistic way to say “died”.

Common collocations:

- passed away peacefully, passed away suddenly, her father passed away
- after he passed away

Comment: The gentle phrase fits Hatherley's tone—he's factual, not dramatic.

Discussion question: In your culture/family, what words do people use to talk about death—direct or euphemistic?

35) inheritance

Context:

- “You should know, first of all,” he began, “that I’m an orphan and unmarried.”
- “Two years ago, after my father passed away and left me a small **inheritance**, I decided to go out on my own.”
- “I rented offices in Victoria Street and waited for work.”

Definition: money/property you receive after someone dies.

Common collocations:

- receive an inheritance, inheritance tax, a small/large inheritance
- leave someone an inheritance

Comment: Sets up the tragedy: even with a small boost, he's still struggling.

Discussion question: If you unexpectedly received a small inheritance, what would you do with it first?

36) grim

Context:

- “I suppose everyone finds the start of their own business to be a slow one.”
- “But for me, it's been especially **grim**.”

- “In two years, I’ve had just three consultations and one small job.”

Definition: very unpleasant, depressing, or bleak.

Common collocations:

- **grim news, grim reality, grim situation**
- **look grim, sound grim**

Comment: Strong, compact word — perfect for “struggling freelancer” vibes.

Discussion question: What do you do when things feel grim — push through, change plans, or ask for help?

37) ten shillings

Context:

- “In two years, I’ve had just three consultations and one small job.”
- “That’s it. My total earnings? Twenty-seven pounds and **ten shillings**.”
- “I sat in my office every day from nine to four...”

Definition: ten shillings = half a pound in pre-decimal British currency (historical money).

Common collocations:

- **pounds and shillings, a few shillings, ten bob** (informal, historic)

Comment: Period money instantly dates the world — and underlines how tiny his earnings are.

Discussion question: Do you find old currencies charming or confusing — and what modern “small amount” would best match this feeling?

38) clerk

Context:

- “I sat in my office every day from nine to four, hoping for a client, until I began to think I’d never get anywhere.”
- “Then, yesterday evening, just as I was about to pack up for the day, my **clerk** came in and told me that a gentleman wanted to see me.”
- “He handed me a card that read: ‘Colonel Lysander Stark.’”

Definition: an office worker who does administrative tasks (letters, appointments, paperwork).

Common collocations:

- **office clerk, bank clerk, a clerk came in**
- **clerical work**

Comment: The clerk is a simple plot lever: “someone is here” → tension begins.

Discussion question: In your ideal work life, how much admin would you want to do: none, some, or lots?

39) lean

Context:

- “He was a strange-looking man—just above average height, but extremely thin.”
- “I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone so **lean**.”
- “His face seemed to narrow down into his sharp nose and chin...”

Definition: thin in a healthy-looking or wiry way (often suggesting little fat).

Common collocations:

- **lean man, lean build, lean and wiry**
- **lean muscle, lean physique**

Comment: “Lean” can sound athletic—here it becomes unsettling because it’s exaggerated.

Discussion question: When you picture a “dangerous” character, do you imagine them lean, bulky, or ordinary-looking?

40) narrow down

Context:

- “I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone so lean.”
- “His face seemed to **narrow down** into his sharp nose and chin...”
- “...and the skin on his cheeks was stretched tight over his bones.”

Definition: become narrower; (also commonly) reduce options to a smaller number.

Common collocations:

- **narrow down the list/options, narrow it down, narrow down suspects**
- **narrow down to two/three**

Comment: Nice double-meaning near detectives: faces narrow down, and Holmes narrows down suspects.

Discussion question: When you have too many choices, how do you narrow things down?

41) bowed

Context:

- “I’ve been told that you’re not only skilled in your profession, but also discreet and good at keeping secrets.”
- “I **bowed**, feeling rather pleased by the compliment.”
- “‘May I ask who recommended me?’ I said.”

Definition: bent your head/body slightly forward as a formal greeting or sign of respect.

Common collocations:

- bowed slightly, bowed his head, bowed politely
- take a bow (after performance)

Comment: Shows Hatherley's manners—and his vulnerability to flattery.

Discussion question: Are you easily influenced by compliments, or do you stay sceptical?

42) under the impression

Context:

- “‘That’s true,’ I said. ‘But I’m not sure how that relates to my work as an engineer.’”
- “‘I was **under the impression** this was a professional matter.’”
- “‘Oh, it is,’ he assured me.”

Definition: believing something (often later discovered to be wrong or incomplete).

Common collocations:

- be under the impression that..., I was under the impression...
- seem to be under the impression

Comment: Polite pushback—British, restrained, but it signals discomfort.

Discussion question: When was the last time you were under the impression something was one thing, but it turned out to be another?

43) have my word

Context:

- “‘So you promise?’ he said.”
- “‘Yes, I promise.’ / ‘Absolute silence—no mention of it to anyone, by word or writing?’”
- “‘You **have my word**.’”

Definition: you can trust my promise; I guarantee it.

Common collocations:

- You have my word, give someone your word, keep/break your word
- take my word for it (related)

Comment: Irony: he gives his word... to criminals. It increases stakes.

Discussion question: How important is “giving your word” to you—are there situations where you wouldn’t promise?

44) leapt up

Context:

- “‘Absolute silence—no mention of it to anyone, by word or writing?’”
- “‘You have my word.’ He suddenly **leapt up**...”
- “...darted across the room, and flung open the door.”

Definition: jumped up quickly and suddenly.

Common collocations:

- leapt up from his chair, leapt up suddenly, leapt up in alarm
- (AmE often leaped up)

Comment: This physical burst screams paranoia—great “red flag”.

Discussion question: What body language instantly makes you distrust someone?

45) darted across

Context:

- “He suddenly leapt up...”
- “...**darted across** the room, and flung open the door.”

- “The corridor outside was empty.”

Definition: moved quickly and suddenly from one side to the other.

Common collocations:

- **dart across the street/room, darted away, darted a glance**
- **darting movement**

Comment: “Darted” implies nervous energy—like a hunted animal.

Discussion question: Do you tend to move quickly when anxious, or do you freeze and slow down?

46) flung open

Context:

- “He suddenly leapt up, darted across the room...”
- “...and **flung open** the door.”
- “The corridor outside was empty.”

Definition: opened something suddenly and with force.

Common collocations:

- **flung open the door/window, fling it open, door flung open**
- **slam the door** (often paired in narratives)

Comment: Great for creating sound and motion in the reader’s head.

Discussion question: If you’re in a hurry, are you a careful door-opener or a “fling it open” type?

47) fifty guineas

Context:

- “How would you feel about earning **fifty guineas** for a night’s work?”
- “That would suit me perfectly.”
- “Actually, it won’t take the whole night—just an hour or so.”

Definition: a guinea was a British gold coin/value used historically (often for professional fees); fifty guineas = a large sum for the time.

Common collocations:

- **pay a fee of X guineas, charge guineas, worth guineas**
- **a handsome fee**

Comment: This is the bait. The number is specific, tempting, and plot-driving.

Discussion question: What amount of money would make you accept a job that felt slightly suspicious?

48) fuller’s-earth

Context:

- “Good. You’ve probably heard of **fuller’s-earth**—it’s a valuable material and quite rare in England?”
- “Yes, I’ve heard that.”
- “Recently, I bought a small property near Reading.”

Definition: a type of absorbent clay used for cleaning/degreasing (historically in cloth-making and industry).

Common collocations:

- **deposit of fuller’s-earth, fuller’s-earth clay, mining fuller’s-earth**
- **valuable deposit**

Comment: It’s a plausible-sounding technical explanation—perfect for a con.

Discussion question: When someone uses technical jargon, do you tend to trust them more or become more suspicious?

49) scooped out

Context:

- “‘But I’m curious—how do you use a hydraulic press to dig fuller’s-earth? Isn’t it usually just **scooped out** of a pit?’”
- “‘Ah well,’ he said casually, ‘we compress the earth into bricks to move it more discreetly.’”
- “But that is just a mere detail.”

Definition: removed by lifting with a scooping motion (as with a shovel or spoon).

Common collocations:

- **scooped out with a shovel/spoon, scooped out of the ground, scoop out a hole**
- **scoop up** (related)

Comment: Hatherley’s question is smart—and it pokes the weak spot in the lie.

Discussion question: When you suspect someone’s story doesn’t add up, do you challenge them directly or stay quiet?

50) pit

Context:

- “‘Isn’t it usually just scooped out of a **pit**?’”
- “‘Ah well,’ he said casually, ‘we compress the earth into bricks to move it more discreetly.’”
- “But that is just a mere detail.”

Definition: a large hole in the ground (natural or dug), often for extraction or dumping.

Common collocations:

- a deep pit, a mining pit, a gravel pit
- fall into a pit, dig a pit

Comment: Simple noun, but it grounds the scene in real-world extraction.

Discussion question: What's a "pit" you try to avoid in life—financial pit, time pit, social-media pit, work pit?

51) discreetly

Context (prev / target / next):

- “‘But I’m curious—how do you use a hydraulic press to dig fuller’s-earth? Isn’t it usually just scooped out of a pit?’”
- “‘Ah well,’ he said casually, ‘we compress the earth into bricks to move it more **discreetly**.’”
- “But that is just a mere detail.”

Definition: in a careful, quiet way that avoids attracting attention (or avoids embarrassing people).

Common collocations:

- act discreetly, do it discreetly, discreetly ask/inquire
- discreetly dressed, discreetly handled

Comment: Stark’s lie leans on “discreetly”—a word that sounds respectable, but here it’s a cover for crime.

Discussion question: When, if ever, is it sensible (or ethical) to behave discreetly rather than openly?

52) thrilled

Context:

- “After he left, I sat and thought about it all. The more I considered it, the stranger it seemed.”
- “On the one hand, I was **thrilled** to finally have some work—and such a well-paid job, too.”
- “Fifty guineas for a single night’s work! It was at least ten times what I would normally ask.”

Definition: very excited and pleased.

Common collocations:

- **thrilled to bits, thrilled about/with, absolutely thrilled**
- **thrilled to hear/see/meet**

Comment: His thrill is what blinds him—emotion overrides judgement.

Discussion question: When you feel thrilled, do you make better decisions or worse ones?

53) sit right with me

Context:

- “But on the other hand, the colonel’s strange manner, the secrecy, and the odd explanation about the fuller’s-earth didn’t quite **sit right with me**.”
- “Why the late hour?”
- “Why the insistence on total silence?”

Definition: feel acceptable or believable; seem okay (often used in negatives).

Common collocations:

- **doesn’t sit right with me, it sits right with me** (less common)
- **something about it doesn’t sit right**

Comment: Very modern, conversational phrasing—nice for your adaptation.

Discussion question: What’s a recent situation that didn’t sit right with you—and what did you do about it?

54) to the letter

Context:

- “Still, I pushed my doubts aside, ate a good dinner, went to Paddington Station...”
- “...and took care to follow the colonel’s instructions **to the letter**—I didn’t breathe a word to anyone.”
- “At Reading, I had to switch not just trains but stations as well.”

Definition: exactly; without changing anything.

Common collocations:

- **follow instructions to the letter, obey the rules to the letter**
- **by the book** (similar)

Comment: Irony again: he’s being perfectly obedient... to criminals.

Discussion question: Are you a “to the letter” person with rules, or do you interpret them flexibly?

55) Chestnut

Context:

- “Did you see what colour it was?”
- “Yes, I caught a glimpse of it in the side-lights. **Chestnut.**”
- “Did it look tired or fresh?”

Definition: a reddish-brown colour; also a type of nut/tree (here: the horse’s colour).

Common collocations:

- **chestnut horse, chestnut hair, chestnut brown**
- **dark chestnut, light chestnut**

Comment: A precise detail that helps Holmes reason — classic detective move.

Discussion question: Are you good at noticing small details like colours, faces, or sounds? Which ones?

56) Glossy

Context:

- “Did it look tired or fresh?”
- “Fresh. **Glossy** coat.”
- “Thank you. Sorry for the interruption. Please continue.”

Definition: smooth and shiny, reflecting light.

Common collocations:

- glossy coat, glossy hair, glossy magazine
- glossy finish, look glossy

Comment: “Glossy coat” suggests a well-kept horse — supports Holmes’s loop theory later.

Discussion question: What “small sign” tells you someone/something is well looked-after?

57) frosted

Context:

- “I tried looking out the window...”
- “...but the glass was **frosted**, so all I could make out were occasional glows of passing lights.”
- “Now and then I tried to make conversation to break the awkward silence...”

Definition: (glass) made opaque/blurred so you can’t see clearly through it; (also: covered in ice).

Common collocations:

- **frosted glass, frosted window, frosted over**
- **frosted bathroom window**

Comment: Great imprisonment detail: he's in motion, but visually trapped.

Discussion question: Do you prefer knowing exactly what's going on, or are you comfortable with uncertainty?

58) make out

Context:

- "He sat beside me in silence the entire way..."
- "I tried looking out the window, but the glass was frosted, so all I could **make out** were occasional glows of passing lights."
- "Now and then I tried to make conversation to break the awkward silence..."

Definition: to see/hear/understand something with difficulty.

Common collocations:

- **can't make out, make out a shape/figure/word, hard to make out**
- (different meaning) **make out** = kiss (context prevents confusion here)

Comment: Nicely claustrophobic: vision reduced to vague light.

Discussion question: What's harder for you to make out—muffled speech, handwriting, or subtle social cues?

59) gravel

Context:

- "Finally, after about an hour, I felt the road smooth out beneath us..."
- "—**gravel** instead of dirt—and the carriage came to a stop."

- “The colonel jumped out, and as I followed, he hurried me into a dark porch...”

Definition: small stones used on paths/roads.

Common collocations:

- gravel road/drive, loose gravel, crunch on gravel
- gravel path

Comment: Sound detail too: readers can almost hear the crunch.

Discussion question: What sounds instantly place you in a setting (city, countryside, home)?

60) porch

Context:

- “The colonel jumped out, and as I followed...”
- “...he hurried me into a dark **porch** right in front of the entrance.”
- “I barely had time to glance around before the door slammed shut behind us.”

Definition: a covered area just outside the front door of a house.

Common collocations:

- front porch, porch light, sit on the porch
- porch steps

Comment: A porch is “in-between” space—perfect for a threshold into danger.

Discussion question: Do you like houses that feel open and welcoming, or enclosed and private?

61) pitch-black

Context:

- “I heard the faint rattle of wheels as the carriage drove off into the night.”
- “It was **pitch-black** inside.”
- “The colonel fumbled around for matches, muttering under his breath.”

Definition: completely dark; no light at all.

Common collocations:

- **pitch-black darkness, pitch-black night, in pitch-black**
- **black as pitch** (older variant)

Comment: Strong, simple phrase—instant mood.

Discussion question: How do you feel in pitch-black darkness: calm, uneasy, curious?

62) fumbled around

Context:

- “It was pitch-black inside.”
- “The colonel **fumbled around** for matches, muttering under his breath.”
- “Then, suddenly, a door at the far end of the hallway opened, and a beam of golden light spilled out toward us.”

Definition: searched/clumsily handled something with uncertain hands (often in the dark).

Common collocations:

- **fumble for keys/matches, fumble in your pocket, fumble with a lock**
- **fumble around in the dark**

Comment: “Fumbled” suggests nerves, haste, or poor control—fits Stark.

Discussion question: What do you always end up fumbling for (keys, phone, glasses), and why?

63) muttering

Context:

- “It was pitch-black inside.”
- “The colonel fumbled around for matches, **muttering** under his breath.”
- “Then, suddenly, a door at the far end of the hallway opened...”

Definition: speaking quietly and unclearly, often in annoyance or secrecy.

Common collocations:

- **mutter under your breath, mutter something, muttering angrily**
- **mutter to yourself**

Comment: “Muttering” is a subtle threat: private words, private intentions.

Discussion question: When do you mutter under your breath—traffic, tech problems, awkward moments?

64) squinting

Context:

- “A woman appeared, holding a lamp above her head.”
- “She leaned forward, **squinting** to see us.”
- “She was young and pretty, and the way the light reflected off her dark dress told me the fabric was expensive.”

Definition: looking with partly closed eyes to see more clearly (or in bright light).

Common collocations:

- **squint at the screen, squint in the sun, squint to read**
- **squinting eyes**

Comment: Humanises the woman—she’s cautious, not theatrical.

Discussion question: Do you find yourself squinting more at bright light or at screens/text?

65) gruff word

Context:

- “She said something in a foreign language, sounding like she was asking a question.”
- “When the colonel replied with a **gruff word**, she jumped so suddenly that she nearly dropped the lamp.”
- “He hurried to her, whispered something in her ear...”

Definition: a rough, unfriendly-sounding word said in a low harsh voice.

Common collocations:

- a **gruff voice**, **gruff reply**, **gruff manner**
- **say something gruffly**

Comment: “Gruff” implies control and intimidation without spelling it out.

Discussion question: Which affects you more—what someone says, or the tone they say it in?

66) shutter

Context:

- “I went over to the window, hoping to get a sense of where I was...”
- “...but it was blocked by a heavy oak **shutter**, and bolted closed.”
- “The silence in that house was eerie.”

Definition: a solid cover over a window (often wooden), used for security or blocking light.

Common collocations:

- window shutters, close the shutters, shutters bolted
- heavy wooden shutters

Comment: Physical imprisonment again—no view, no easy exit.

Discussion question: Do you like lots of natural light at home, or do you prefer shutters/curtains and privacy?

67) bolted

Context:

- “I went over to the window, hoping to get a sense of where I was...”
- “...but it was blocked by a heavy oak shutter, and **bolted** closed.”
- “The silence in that house was eerie.”

Definition: secured with a bolt (a sliding metal bar/lock).

Common collocations:

- bolt the door, bolted shut, bolt the window
- unbolt it, bolt from the inside

Comment: “Bolted” implies intention: someone planned to keep people in/out.

Discussion question: What makes you feel secure at home—locks, routines, neighbours, technology?

68) eerie

Context:

- “I went over to the window, hoping to get a sense of where I was, but it was blocked...”
- “The silence in that house was **eerie**.”
- “I could hear an old clock ticking somewhere, but nothing else.”

Definition: strange and frightening in a mysterious way.

Common collocations:

- an eerie silence, eerie feeling, eerie atmosphere
- eerie calm

Comment: “Eerie” is classic gothic vocabulary—perfect for this corridor-and-lamp scene.

Discussion question: What places feel eerie to you: empty schools, forests at night, hospitals, old houses?

69) unsettling

Context:

- “The silence in that house was eerie. I could hear an old clock ticking somewhere, but nothing else.”
- “The quiet was so complete it was **unsettling**.”
- “I started to feel increasingly uneasy.”

Definition: making you feel anxious, uncomfortable, or unsure.

Common collocations:

- an unsettling feeling, unsettling thought, unsettling detail
- deeply unsettling, slightly unsettling

Comment: Great stepping-stone word: less dramatic than “terrifying”, but more precise than “bad”.

Discussion question: What do you find more unsettling: loud chaos or unnatural quiet?

70) humming

Context:

- “I walked back and forth across the room, humming a tune softly to keep my spirits up.”
- “At that point, I felt like I was earning every penny of my fifty-guinea fee.”
- “Suddenly—without a sound—the door opened slowly.”

Definition: singing a tune with your mouth closed (soft “mmm” sound).

Common collocations:

- **hum a tune, humming quietly, hum to yourself**
- **humming along** (with music)

Comment: Humming is a brilliant “fear-management” detail—childlike self-soothing.

Discussion question: What do you do to keep your spirits up when you're nervous—music, humour, movement, texting someone?

71) sent a chill down my spine

Context:

- “She was terrified—I could see it instantly.”
- “The fear in her expression **sent a chill down my spine.**”
- “She raised a trembling finger to her lips to signal silence.”

Definition: made you feel sudden fear (a cold shiver) because something was frightening.

Common collocations:

- **send chills down my spine, a chill ran down my spine, spine-tingling**
- **gave me goosebumps** (similar)

Comment: Classic horror-body reaction; works well because it's triggered by her face, not a monster.

Discussion question: What kind of thing gives you “a chill down your spine” in real life: news, intuition, a sound, a look?

72) wringing her hands

Context:

- “I smiled and shook my head, and she seemed to become desperate.”
- “She stepped forward, **wringing her hands**.”
- “‘For the love of Heaven,’ she whispered, ‘leave before it is too late!’”

Definition: twisting your hands together repeatedly because you’re worried or upset.

Common collocations:

- **stand there wringing your hands, wring your hands in despair, hand-wringing** (noun)
- **wring your hands anxiously**

Comment: Strong visual shorthand for panic—almost stage direction.

Discussion question: What physical habits do you have when you’re stressed (hands, jaw, pacing, phone-checking)?

73) stubborn

Context:

- “But I can be quite **stubborn** by nature...”
- “...and the more someone warns me off something, the more determined I become.”
- “I thought of the long journey I’d made, the money I’d been promised...”

Definition: unwilling to change your mind or behaviour, even when it might be sensible.

Common collocations:

- stubborn person, stubborn streak, stubbornly refuse
- too stubborn to admit

Comment: This is the character flaw that drives him into the trap—perfect for suspense.

Discussion question: Where does your stubbornness help you, and where does it get you into trouble?

74) warns me off

Context:

- “But I can be quite stubborn by nature...”
- “...and the more someone **warns me off** something, the more determined I become.”
- “I thought of the long journey I’d made...”

Definition: warns you not to do something; tries to discourage you from going somewhere/doing something.

Common collocations:

- warn someone off, warned off the idea, warned off going there
- warned off by friends/family

Comment: Very British phrasing; it carries that “don’t go there, mate” vibe.

Discussion question: When someone warns you off something, do you listen—or do you get more curious?

75) stood my ground

Context:

- “Despite my unease, I **stood my ground** and said I would stay.”
- “She was about to plead again when a door slammed upstairs...”
- “...and we heard footsteps approaching from above.”

Definition: refused to back down; stayed firm in your position/opinion.

Common collocations:

- **stand your ground, stood his/her ground, refuse to back down**
- **stand firm** (similar)

Comment: Strong phrase, but tragically misapplied here—he’s brave in the wrong direction.

Discussion question: When was a time you stood your ground—and was it worth it?

76) plead

Context (prev / target / next):

- “Despite my unease, I stood my ground and said I would stay.”
- “She was about to **plead** again when a door slammed upstairs...”
- “...and we heard footsteps approaching from above.”

Definition: to beg urgently for something; to ask in an emotional, desperate way.

Common collocations:

- **plead with someone, plead for help/mercy, plead desperately**
- **pleading voice/look**

Comment: “Plead” fits her powerlessness—she can’t force him, only beg.

Discussion question: When you really want someone to do something, do you plead, persuade calmly, or give up?

77) thick-set

Context:

- “A moment later, the colonel returned—this time accompanied by a short, **thick-set** man with a bushy beard that covered his round face.”
- “The colonel introduced him.”
- “‘This is Mr. Ferguson, my secretary and manager,’ he said.”

Definition: broad and solid in build; not tall/slim, but sturdy/heavy.

Common collocations:

- a **thick-set man**, **thick-set build**, **short and thick-set**

Comment: Nice physical contrast with Stark (lean vs thick-set) — two “types” of threat.

Discussion question: In stories, do you picture villains in a particular body type—or can anyone be threatening?

78) bushy beard

Context:

- “...accompanied by a short, thick-set man with a **bushy beard** that covered his round face.”
- “The colonel introduced him.”
- “‘This is Mr. Ferguson, my secretary and manager,’ he said.”

Definition: a thick, full beard.

Common collocations:

- **bushy beard**, **thick beard**, **scruffy beard**, **grow a beard**
- **beard covered his face**

Comment: “Bushy” suggests untamed, rustic, maybe deliberately concealing.

Discussion question: How much do you judge people (if at all) based on grooming and appearance?

79) draught

Context:

- “‘By the way, I thought I’d closed this door earlier. You must have opened it—you probably felt a **draught**.’”
- “‘Exactly,’ I said. ‘I opened it myself because the room felt stuffy.’”
- “He gave me one of those suspicious looks again.”

Definition: a current of cool air in a room (UK spelling; US often “draft”).

Common collocations:

- feel a draught, cold draught, draught coming under the door
- draughty window/room

Comment: Stark is testing him—this “draught” line is basically an interrogation disguised as small talk.

Discussion question: Do you notice draughts/temperature changes easily, or are you oblivious?

80) stuffy

Context:

- “‘You must have opened it—you probably felt a draught.’”
- “‘Exactly,’ I said. ‘I opened it myself because the room felt **stuffy**.’”
- “He gave me one of those suspicious looks again.”

Definition: unpleasantly warm with not enough fresh air.

Common collocations:

- a stuffy room, feel stuffy, hot and stuffy
- stuffy atmosphere (also figurative: overly formal)

Comment: Doubles nicely: literally no air, figuratively “stuffy” secretive environment.

Discussion question: What kind of indoor environment do you hate most: stuffy, noisy, messy, or overly sterile?

81) worn-down thresholds

Context:

- “The corridors twisted and turned, the stairs were narrow and winding, and the doors were small with **worn-down thresholds**.”
- “There was no carpet, no furniture above the ground floor...”
- “...and the walls were crumbling in places with green patches of damp seeping through.”

Definition: thresholds = the strip at the bottom of a doorway; worn-down = rubbed away over time by heavy use.

Common collocations:

- cross the threshold, door threshold, worn threshold, raise/lower the threshold (different meaning)
- worn-down steps/floorboards (similar texture)

Comment: Fantastic “age + traffic” clue: lots of people have used this house.

Discussion question: What physical signs tell you a building has a lot of history?

82) crumbling

Context:

- “There was no carpet, no furniture above the ground floor...”

- "...and the walls were **crumbling** in places with green patches of damp seeping through."
- "I tried to stay calm and act like none of this bothered me..."

Definition: breaking into small pieces; falling apart (literally or metaphorically).

Common collocations:

- **crumbling walls, crumbling building, crumbling plaster**
- **crumbling relationship/authority** (figurative)

Comment: It's an amazing contrast: expensive dress downstairs, decaying house upstairs.

Discussion question: What "crumbling" thing in modern life worries you most: infrastructure, trust, attention spans, the environment?

83) damp

Context:

- "...the walls were crumbling in places..."
- "...with green patches of **damp** seeping through."
- "I tried to stay calm and act like none of this bothered me..."

Definition: slightly wet, often unpleasantly so (moist + cold).

Common collocations:

- **damp walls, damp smell, damp clothes, cold and damp**
- **damp patch**

Comment: "Damp + green patches" is a very British house-horror detail.

Discussion question: What's your tolerance for uncomfortable living conditions—could you cope with damp/cold?

84) seeping through

Context:

- "...the walls were crumbling in places with green patches of damp **seeping through**."
- "I tried to stay calm and act like none of this bothered me..."
- "...but I remembered the woman's warning, and watched my two guides carefully."

Definition: leaking slowly through small holes or cracks.

Common collocations:

- **water seeping through, seep into the walls, seeping out**
- **seepage** (noun)

Comment: "Seeping" is slow, persistent—mirrors the creeping dread.

Discussion question: What problems in life "seep through" slowly until you can't ignore them?

85) surly

Context:

- "Ferguson didn't say much..."
- "...and though he seemed **surly** and withdrawn, I could tell from his accent that he was probably English."
- "Eventually, Colonel Stark stopped at a low door..."

Definition: bad-tempered and unfriendly; rude in a quiet, resentful way.

Common collocations:

- **surly teenager, surly expression, surly manner**
- **a surly grunt**

Comment: "Surly and withdrawn" makes him feel like muscle—silent threat.

Discussion question: When you're in a bad mood, do you go quiet (withdrawn) or become snappy (surly)?

86) withdrawn

Context:

- "Ferguson didn't say much..."
- "...and though he seemed surly and **withdrawn**, I could tell from his accent that he was probably English."
- "Eventually, Colonel Stark stopped at a low door..."

Definition: not sociable; keeping to yourself; emotionally closed off.

Common collocations:

- quiet and withdrawn, become withdrawn, socially withdrawn
- withdrawn manner

Comment: Helps you suspect he has a conscience later—he's not enjoying this.

Discussion question: Do you become withdrawn when stressed, or do you seek people out?

87) piston

Context:

- "We are now," said the colonel, "actually inside the hydraulic press."
- "This chamber is directly beneath the **piston**."
- "If someone were to start the machine while we were in here, it would crush us flat like a pancake."

Definition: a solid piece that moves up and down (or back and forth) inside a cylinder, pushing or compressing something—key part of engines and presses.

Common collocations:

- piston chamber, piston rod, piston moves/descends
- beneath the piston

Comment: The technical clarity makes the later murder attempt terrifyingly logical.

Discussion question: Do you enjoy technical explanations in stories, or do you prefer them minimal?

88) washers

Context:

- “I traced the problem to one of the rubber **washers**.”
- “It had shrunk just enough that it no longer properly sealed its socket...”
- “...letting the water leak through.”

Definition: small rings (often rubber or metal) used to seal joints and prevent leaks.

Common collocations:

- rubber washer, metal washer, replace a washer
- worn washer, washer seal

Comment: A humble, ordinary object causes huge danger—nice realism.

Discussion question: What small “washer-level” problem in your life causes outsized trouble?

89) shrunk

Context:

- “I traced the problem to one of the rubber washers.”
- “It had **shrunk** just enough that it no longer properly sealed its socket...”
- “...letting the water leak through.”

Definition: become smaller (often from age, heat, washing, drying, or pressure).

Common collocations:

- **shrunk in the wash, shrunk over time, shrunk slightly**
- **shrinkage** (noun)

Comment: “Just enough” is perfect—tiny defect, catastrophic consequence.

Discussion question: Have you ever had something shrink (clothes, materials, time!) in a way that caused a real problem?

90) sealed

Context:

- “It had shrunk just enough...”
- “...that it no longer properly **sealed** its socket...”
- “...letting the water leak through.”

Definition: closed tightly so nothing can pass through (air/water etc.).

Common collocations:

- **sealed shut, sealed properly, sealed container**
- **air-tight seal, water-tight seal**

Comment: Great for the counterfeiting theme too—seals, closures, hidden operations.

Discussion question: What do you “seal off” in your life—privacy, time, boundaries?

91) socket

Context:

- “...it no longer properly sealed its **socket**...”
- “...letting the water leak through.”

- “That was clearly the issue.”

Definition: a hollow part that something fits into (a joint/slot), e.g., a washer sitting in a socket.

Common collocations:

- **fit into a socket, socket joint, electrical socket** (common everyday meaning)
- **socket wrench** (tool)

Comment: Technical word, but still easy for readers because “fit into” is intuitive.

Discussion question: In explanations, do you prefer everyday analogies or accurate technical vocabulary?

92) trough

Context:

- “The walls were wooden, but the floor was made of a solid iron **trough**—”
- “—and when I inspected it closely, I noticed a crust of metallic residue all over it.”
- “I bent down to scrape at the crust...”

Definition: a long, narrow container (often for water/food for animals); here, a channel-like basin in the machine.

Common collocations:

- **water trough, feeding trough, iron trough**
- **a long trough**

Comment: “Trough” suggests collecting/holding liquids or slurry—clues us into metal processing.

Discussion question: What detail in a room makes you realise “this place is used for something else”?

93) residue

Context:

- “The walls were wooden, but the floor was made of a solid iron trough—”
- “...and when I inspected it closely, I noticed a crust of metallic **residue** all over it.”
- “I bent down to scrape at the crust and get a better look...”

Definition: a small amount of something left behind after a process (dust, film, remains).

Common collocations:

- **chemical residue, powdery residue, residue left behind**
- **trace residue, remove residue**

Comment: “Metallic residue” is the giveaway: not clay, but coins/metalwork.

Discussion question: Where do you notice residue in daily life (kitchen, bathroom, tech)—and what does it tell you?

94) scrape

Context:

- “...I noticed a crust of metallic residue all over it.”
- “I bent down to **scrape** at the crust and get a better look...”
- “...when I suddenly heard a muttered word in German behind me.”

Definition: rub something hard with a sharp edge to remove material.

Common collocations:

- **scrape off, scrape away, scrape at**
- **scrape your knee, scrape by** (different meaning: barely manage financially)

Comment: “Scrape at” is tactile—you can feel his curiosity turning physical.

Discussion question: Are you a “scrape and investigate” type, or do you prefer not to know too much?

95) crust

Context:

- “...I noticed a **crust** of metallic residue all over it.”
- “I bent down to scrape at the crust and get a better look...”
- “...when I suddenly heard a muttered word in German behind me.”

Definition: a hard outer layer formed on the surface of something.

Common collocations:

- a **crust of dirt/salt/ice**, **thick crust**, **crusty**
- (food) **pizza crust**, **bread crust**

Comment: “Crust” implies repeated heating/processing—another clue.

Discussion question: What kind of “crust” builds up in your life that you keep meaning to clean/remove (literal or metaphorical)?

96) glaring

Context:

- “I looked up to see Colonel Stark’s pale, hollow face **glaring** down at me.”
- “‘What are you doing?’ he asked sharply.”
- “I felt a surge of anger.”

Definition: staring in an angry, hostile way.

Common collocations:

- glare at someone, glare down, glare across the room
- glaring eyes, a glaring look

Comment: “Glaring down” adds dominance—he’s literally above him in that moment.

Discussion question: How do you respond when someone glares at you—back off, confront, laugh, ignore?

97) taken in

Context:

- “‘What are you doing?’ he asked sharply.”
- “I felt a surge of anger. I’d been **taken in** by this ridiculous story about fuller’s-earth.”
- “‘I was just admiring your fuller’s-earth,’ I said coldly.”

Definition: deceived; tricked into believing something false.

Common collocations:

- be taken in by a scam, taken in by appearances, don’t be taken in
- con artist (related idea)

Comment: The moment of realisation is satisfying—and dangerous.

Discussion question: What kinds of lies are easiest to take you in: technical, emotional, social, or “too good to be true”?

98) glint

Context:

- “The moment I said those words, I regretted it.”
- “His face turned to stone, and a nasty **glint** appeared in his eyes.”
- “‘Very well,’ he said. ‘You’ll find out exactly what it is used for.’”

Definition: a small flash of light (or a brief visible sign of an emotion, like cruelty).

Common collocations:

- a glint in his eye, a cold glint, a glint of amusement/anger
- steel glinted (literal)

Comment: “Glint” is elegant menace—tiny, sharp, chilling.

Discussion question: What “look” in someone’s eyes instantly makes you uneasy?

99) lunged

Context:

- “With that, he stepped back, slammed the little door behind me, and locked it with a snap.”
- “I **lunged** at the door, rattling the handle, kicking and shoving it...”
- “...but it was solid and didn’t budge.”

Definition: moved suddenly and violently forward (often to attack or grab).

Common collocations:

- lunge at someone, lunge forward, lunge for the door
- a sudden lunge

Comment: Immediate panic and animal energy—your pacing here is excellent.

Discussion question: In an emergency, do you act first (lunge) or think first (freeze)?

100) rattling

Context:

- “With that, he stepped back, slammed the little door behind me, and locked it with a snap.”
- “I lunged at the door, **rattling** the handle, kicking and shoving it...”
- “...but it was solid and didn’t budge.”

Definition: making a rapid knocking/shaking noise (like metal vibrating).

Common collocations:

- **rattle the handle, rattling noise, rattle the door**
- **rattling windows** (from wind/traffic)

Comment: Sound design again—readers can hear the useless struggle.

Discussion question: What sounds make you feel stressed instantly (rattling, alarms, shouting, silence)?

101) shoving

Context (prev / target / next):

- “I lunged at the door, rattling the handle...”
- “...kicking and **shoving** it...”
- “...but it was solid and didn’t budge.”

Definition: pushing something (or someone) hard and roughly.

Common collocations:

- **shove the door, shove someone aside, shove hard**
- **shove past someone, shove into someone**
- **pushing and shoving**

Comment: “Shoving” suggests panic or aggression rather than strategy — brute force desperation.

Discussion question: When you’re stressed, do you try to force solutions quickly or step back and rethink?

102) budge

Context:

- “I lunged at the door, rattling the handle, kicking and shoving it...”
- “...but it was solid and didn’t **budge**.”
- ““Hey!” I shouted. ‘Colonel! Let me out!’”

Definition: move, even slightly (usually used in negatives).

Common collocations:

- **won’t budge, refuse to budge, not budging**
- **budge an inch**

Comment: Short word, huge frustration — perfect here.

Discussion question: What’s something in your life right now that “won’t budge”, no matter what you try?

103) a lump in my throat

Context:

- “Then, in the sudden silence, I heard something that froze my blood...”
- “...and put **a lump in my throat** — the hiss of the leaking cylinder...”
- “...and the heavy clank of the machine starting up.”

Definition: a tight feeling in your throat caused by fear or strong emotion.

Common collocations:

- **feel a lump in your throat, voice caught in your throat**
- **choked up**

Comment: A physiological fear response — understated but powerful.

Discussion question: What situations give you physical reactions like this rather than just thoughts?

104) hiss

Context:

- "...something that froze my blood and put a lump in my throat —"
- "—the **hiss** of the leaking cylinder and the heavy clank of the machine starting up."
- "He had turned the press on."

Definition: a sharp, continuous sound, like escaping air or steam.

Common collocations:

- a loud hiss, hiss of steam, hiss softly
- snake hiss (origin image)

Comment: Sound-as-danger — readers know exactly what this means before it's explained.

Discussion question: What sound instantly signals danger to you?

105) flatten

Context:

- "I knew better than anyone what that machine was capable of."
- "In less than a minute, it would **flatten** me."
- "I screamed and pounded the door."

Definition: crush completely so something becomes flat.

Common collocations:

- flattened completely, flatten a car, flatten someone

- **get flattened** (informal)

Comment: Brutal, blunt verb — no romance, just physics.

Discussion question: Do you prefer euphemistic language for danger, or very direct wording like this?

106) pounded

Context:

- “In less than a minute, it would flatten me.”
- “I screamed and **pounded** the door.”
- “I tore at the lock with my fingers...”

Definition: hit something repeatedly and forcefully.

Common collocations:

- **pound on the door, pounding heart, pound the table**
- **pound away at**

Comment: Also echoes heartbeat — physical and emotional overlap.

Discussion question: When angry or afraid, do you express it physically or keep it inside?

107) tore

Context:

- “I screamed and pounded the door.”
- “I **tore** at the lock with my fingers...”
- “...shouting, begging him to stop.”

Definition: pulled violently; ripped at something.

Common collocations:

- **tear at something, tear something apart, tear free**
- **tore his clothes** (literal)

Comment: Shows irrational, animal effort — no finesse left.

Discussion question: When things go wrong, do you become more physical or more verbal?

108) drowned out

Context:

- “I tore at the lock with my fingers, shouting, begging him to stop.”
- “But the clanking **drowned out** everything.”
- “The ceiling was now only a few feet above me.”

Definition: made impossible to hear by a louder noise.

Common collocations:

- **noise drowned out voices, music drowned out conversation**
- **completely drowned out**

Comment: Sound becomes the enemy — communication is impossible.

Discussion question: When you feel overwhelmed, what “drowns out” your thinking?

109) spine

Context:

- “If I lay on my stomach, the press would crush my **spine**.”
- “If I lay on my back and looked up at it, would that be easier?”
- “Could I face it?”

Definition: the backbone; the column of bones protecting the spinal cord.

Common collocations:

- spinal injury, spine crushed, send a shiver down your spine
- have a backbone (figurative)

Comment: Clinical thinking under terror — very Watson.

Discussion question: In crisis moments, do you become analytical or emotional?

110) sliver

Context:

- “Just then, a **sliver** of hope appeared.”
- “The walls were wooden...”
- “...and between two of the boards, I noticed a faint line of light.”

Definition: a very small, thin piece or amount.

Common collocations:

- a sliver of hope/light, tiny sliver, not a sliver left
- paper-thin sliver

Comment: Perfect metaphor — hope reduced to geometry.

Discussion question: What gives you a “sliver of hope” when things feel bleak?

111) faint

Context:

- “...between two of the boards, I noticed a **faint** line of light.”
- “It widened—a panel was sliding open.”
- “At first I thought I was imagining it.”

Definition: weak, barely visible or noticeable.

Common collocations:

- faint light, faint sound, faint smell
- faint outline

Comment: Keeps tension tight — visibility is uncertain.

Discussion question: Are you good at noticing faint signs or early warnings?

112) dazed

Context:

- “I lay on the stone floor, **dazed**, gasping for breath.”
- “Then I felt someone tugging at my wrist.”
- “It was the same woman—the one who had tried to warn me.”

Definition: confused and unable to think clearly, usually after shock or injury.

Common collocations:

- look dazed, feel dazed, dazed expression
- stunned and dazed

Comment: Physical aftermath — survival doesn't mean clarity.

Discussion question: What usually leaves you feeling mentally dazed?

113) tugging

Context:

- “I lay on the stone floor, dazed, gasping for breath.”
- “Then I felt someone **tugging** at my wrist.”
- “It was the same woman—the one who had tried to warn me.”

Definition: pulling something with short, quick movements.

Common collocations:

- **tug at someone's arm, tug repeatedly, gentle tug**
- **tug-of-war** (related image)

Comment: Small action, urgent meaning — rescue without words.

Discussion question: When helping someone, are you more verbal or physical?

114) wrist

Context:

- “Then I felt someone tugging at my **wrist**.”
- “It was the same woman—the one who had tried to warn me.”
- “‘Come, come!’ she whispered urgently.”

Definition: the joint connecting the hand to the arm.

Common collocations:

- **grab someone's wrist, wrist injury, watch on your wrist**
- **slit wrists** (sensitive topic; avoid in class unless appropriate)

Comment: Intimate, controlling contact — she takes charge now.

Discussion question: How comfortable are you with physical guidance in emergencies?

115) staggered

Context:

- “This time, I didn't question her.”
- “I **staggered** to my feet, and together we ran down the corridor...”

- "...then down a twisting staircase."

Definition: moved unsteadily, almost falling.

Common collocations:

- **stagger to your feet, stagger forward, stagger under the weight**
- **staggering news** (different meaning)

Comment: Shows how close he still is to collapse.

Discussion question: When exhausted, do you push on or stop completely?

116) a butcher's cleaver

Context:

- "...the lean shape of Colonel Stark running toward us..."
- "...a lantern in one hand and a **butcher's cleaver** in the other."
- "I rushed to the window..."

Definition: a large, heavy knife used for cutting meat.

Common collocations:

- **swing a cleaver, meat cleaver, raise a cleaver**
- **butcher knife** (general)

Comment: Domestic object turned weapon — very unsettling.

Discussion question: Why do everyday objects used as weapons feel more frightening than guns?

117) flung

Context:

- “I rushed to the window...”
- “...**flung** it open, and looked out.”
- “The garden below looked calm and peaceful in the moonlight...”

Definition: opened or threw something suddenly and violently.

Common collocations:

- **fling open, fling aside, fling yourself**
- **flung wide**

Comment: Mirrors earlier “flung open” — escalation through repetition.

Discussion question: When in danger, do you act decisively or hesitate?

118) sill

Context:

- “I climbed onto the **sill** but hesitated.”
- “I didn’t want to jump until I knew the woman would be safe.”
- “The colonel reached the door...”

Definition: the flat ledge at the bottom of a window.

Common collocations:

- **window sill, sit on the sill, stand on the sill**
- **dusty sill**

Comment: Literal edge between life and death.

Discussion question: What kinds of “sills” (decision points) do you hesitate at most?

119) bushes

Context:

- “I scrambled to my feet and ran into the **bushes**, knowing I was still in danger.”
- “But soon a wave of dizziness and nausea hit me.”
- “I looked down at my throbbing hand...”

Definition: low, dense plants; shrubs.

Common collocations:

- **hide in the bushes, thick bushes, hedges and bushes**
- **rustle in the bushes**

Comment: Primitive survival — back to nature, no shelter.

Discussion question: In danger, do you prefer hiding or running?

120) dizziness

Context:

- “I scrambled to my feet and ran into the bushes...”
- “But soon a wave of **dizziness** and nausea hit me.”
- “I looked down at my throbbing hand...”

Definition: a sensation that you might faint or lose balance.

Common collocations:

- **feel dizzy, sudden dizziness, dizziness and nausea**
- **light-headedness**

Comment: Physiological realism — blood loss consequences.

Discussion question: What physical warning signs tell you that you need to stop and rest?

121) nausea

Context:

- “But soon a wave of dizziness and **nausea** hit me.”
- “I looked down at my throbbing hand...”
- “...and only then saw that my thumb had been cut off.”

Definition: the feeling that you are going to vomit.

Common collocations:

- feel nausea, overcome with nausea, nausea and vomiting
- wave of nausea

Comment: Pairs well with “wave” — sickness rising.

Discussion question: What situations make you feel nauseous: physical pain, stress, smells, fear?

122) throbbing

Context:

- “I looked down at my **throbbing** hand—”
- “—and only then saw that my thumb had been cut off.”
- “Blood was pouring out.”

Definition: beating or pulsing with pain.

Common collocations:

- throbbing pain, throbbing headache, throb painfully
- throb in time with heartbeat

Comment: Pain becomes rhythm — bodily focus narrows.

Discussion question: How do you cope with persistent pain: distraction, medication, rest?

123) cut off

Context:

- "...only then saw that my thumb had been **cut off**."
- "Blood was pouring out."
- "I tried to tie my handkerchief around the wound..."

Definition: removed completely by cutting.

Common collocations:

- **finger cut off, cut off at the base, cut off supply/access** (figurative)
- **cut off suddenly**

Comment: Simple phrasing makes it more shocking.

Discussion question: How much detail do you want when people describe injuries to you?

124) came to

Context:

- "I don't know how long I was unconscious..."
- "When I finally **came to**, the moon had set..."
- "...and the sky was turning bright with morning."

Definition: regained consciousness.

Common collocations:

- **come to slowly, came to in hospital, come to your senses** (different meaning)

Comment: Echoes earlier usage — narrative symmetry.

Discussion question: Do you wake up gradually or suddenly when you regain awareness?

125) soaked

Context:

- “When I finally came to, the moon had set...”
- “My clothes were **soaked** with dew...”
- “...and the sleeve of my coat was drenched in blood.”

Definition: completely wet.

Common collocations:

- soaked through, get soaked, soaked clothes
- soaking wet

Comment: Cold, wet, injured — misery stacked efficiently.

Discussion question: What's worse for you: being cold and soaked, or hot and trapped?

126) dew

Context (prev / target / next):

- “When I finally came to, the moon had set, and the sky was turning bright with morning.”
- “My clothes were soaked with **dew**...”
- “...and the sleeve of my coat was drenched in blood from my wounded hand.”

Definition: tiny drops of water that form on grass or surfaces overnight.

Common collocations:

- morning dew, covered in dew, dew-soaked grass
- dew forms

Comment: Quiet, peaceful image sharply contrasted with violence.

Discussion question: Do you associate early morning with calm or exhaustion?

127) drenched

Context:

- “My clothes were soaked with dew...”
- “...and the sleeve of my coat was **drenched** in blood from my wounded hand.”
- “The sharp pain in my arm brought everything rushing back to me.”

Definition: completely wet, often with a specific liquid.

Common collocations:

- **drenched in rain/sweat/blood, get drenched, absolutely drenched**

Comment: “Soaked” → “drenched” escalates intensity.

Discussion question: What’s the worst situation you’ve been drenched in something unpleasant?

128) brought everything rushing back

Context:

- “My clothes were soaked with dew, and the sleeve of my coat was drenched in blood from my wounded hand.”
- “The sharp pain in my arm **brought everything rushing back to me.**”
- “I jumped to my feet, my heart racing...”

Definition: suddenly made you remember everything clearly and vividly.

Common collocations:

- bring it all back, memories came rushing back, everything flooded back

Comment: Memory returns violently, not gently.

Discussion question: What sensory trigger brings memories rushing back for you most often?

129) dip

Context:

- “I was shocked to see that I wasn’t in a garden anymore.”
- “I was lying in a **dip** beside a hedge, right next to a road—”
- “...and just down the road was a long, low building.”

Definition: a shallow hollow or low place in the ground.

Common collocations:

- a dip in the road, lie in a dip, a shallow dip
- dip and rise (terrain)

Comment: Explains concealment — someone placed him deliberately.

Discussion question: Have you ever woken up somewhere unexpected and disorienting?

130) scrapbooks

Context:

- “We sat in silence for a moment after he finished.”
- “Then Holmes stood up and pulled one of his **scrapbooks** from the shelf—”
- “—the ones where he kept useful newspaper clippings.”

Definition: books where items like newspaper cuttings are collected and kept.

Common collocations:

- keep a scrapbook, newspaper scrapbook, scrapbook of clippings
- personal scrapbook

Comment: Holmes's analogue database — proto-Google.

Discussion question: How do you organise useful information: digitally, physically, or not at all?

131) newspaper clippings

Context:

- “Then Holmes stood up and pulled one of his scrapbooks from the shelf—”
- “—the ones where he kept useful **newspaper clippings**.”
- “‘Here’s something I think you’ll find interesting,’ he said...”

Definition: pieces cut from newspapers, usually saved for reference.

Common collocations:

- old newspaper clippings, press clippings, collect clippings

Comment: Reinforces Holmes's methodical habits.

Discussion question: Do you ever save articles “just in case”—and do you ever reread them?

132) flipping through

Context:

- “‘Here’s something I think you’ll find interesting,’ he said...”
- “...**flipping through** the pages.”

- “‘It appeared about a year ago in all the papers.’”

Definition: turning pages quickly, scanning rather than reading carefully.

Common collocations:

- **flip through a book/magazine, flip pages, flip back and forth**

Comment: Shows confidence — he knows it's there.

Discussion question: Do you skim information or read everything carefully?

133) up to it

Context:

- “‘He's like those old-time pirates who left no survivors.’”
- “‘Well—if you're **up to it**, we should go to Scotland Yard immediately...’”
- “‘...and then head for Eyford to investigate.’”

Definition: physically or mentally capable of doing something.

Common collocations:

- **not up to it today, are you up to it?, feel up to it**

Comment: Holmes shows rare consideration for Hatherley's condition.

Discussion question: How do you decide when you're “up to” something difficult?

134) plain-clothes

Context:

- “‘Along with Holmes, Mr. Hatherley, and myself...’”
- “‘...were Inspector Bradstreet of Scotland Yard and a **plain-clothes** officer.’”
- “‘On the seat between us, Bradstreet had spread out a large map...’”

Definition: (police) wearing ordinary clothes, not uniform.

Common collocations:

- **plain-clothes officer, working in plain clothes, detective in plain clothes**

Comment: Signals undercover work and seriousness.

Discussion question: Do uniforms make authority feel more trustworthy or more intimidating to you?

135) spare

Context:

- “‘I just don’t get why they didn’t kill you when they had the chance,’ I said.”
- “‘Maybe the woman convinced them to **spare** you?’”
- “‘I doubt it,’ said Hatherley grimly.”

Definition: not kill or harm someone; show mercy.

Common collocations:

- **spare someone’s life, spare no one, spare the rod** (idiom)

Comment: Raises the moral question of conscience vs calculation.

Discussion question: When do you think mercy is weakness—and when is it strength?

136) grimly

Context:

- “‘Maybe the woman convinced them to spare you?’”
- “‘I doubt it,’ said Hatherley **grimly**.”
- “‘I’ve never seen a face as ruthless as the colonel’s.’”

Definition: in a serious, bleak, or pessimistic way.

Common collocations:

- grimly aware, grimly determined, grimly smile

Comment: No hope or comfort left in his tone.

Discussion question: What situations make you speak grimly rather than optimistically?

137) ruthless

Context:

- “‘I doubt it,’ said Hatherley grimly.”
- “‘I’ve never seen a face as **ruthless** as the colonel’s.”
- “‘We’ll soon know for sure,’ said Bradstreet.”

Definition: completely without mercy or pity.

Common collocations:

- ruthless killer, ruthless efficiency, ruthless ambition

Comment: Moral judgement, not just fear.

Discussion question: Is ruthlessness ever justified in your opinion?

138) counterfeiting ring

Context:

- “‘We’ve suspected for a while that there’s a large-scale **counterfeiting ring** operating in the area.’”
- “‘They’ve been turning out fake half-crowns by the thousands.’”
- “‘We traced them as far as Reading...’”

Definition: an organised group producing fake money.

Common collocations:

- criminal ring, smuggling ring, counterfeiting operation
- break up a ring

Comment: Retrofits all earlier clues into one revelation.

Discussion question: Why do you think organised crime often relies on secrecy and isolation?

139) half-crowns

Context:

- “‘They’ve been turning out fake **half-crowns** by the thousands.’”
- “‘We traced them as far as Reading...’”
- “‘But lost them there.’”

Definition: old British silver coins worth half a crown (2 shillings and 6 pence).

Common collocations:

- silver half-crown, mint half-crowns, fake half-crowns

Comment: Metallic residue finally explained.

Discussion question: What modern equivalent would best convey “mass counterfeit money” today?

140) traced

Context:

- “‘They’ve been turning out fake half-crowns by the thousands.’”
- “‘We **traced** them as far as Reading...’”

- “‘But lost them there.’”

Definition: followed clues or evidence to find where something came from.

Common collocations:

- trace back, trace movements, trace evidence
- trace someone's steps

Comment: Classic investigative verb — precise and procedural.

Discussion question: When solving problems, do you trace causes backward or jump to solutions?

141) covered their tracks

Context:

- “‘We traced them as far as Reading, but lost them there.’”
- “‘They **covered their tracks** well.’”
- “‘But this... this might be the breakthrough.’”

Definition: hid evidence to avoid being discovered.

Common collocations:

- cover your tracks, erase tracks, leave no trace

Comment: Echoes literal tracks found later — nice symmetry.

Discussion question: Why do you think humans are so fascinated by hidden trails and secrets?

142) breakthrough

Context:

- “‘They covered their tracks well.’”
- “‘But this... this might be the **breakthrough**.’”
- “‘But he was wrong.’”

Definition: a sudden important discovery or success.

Common collocations:

- **major breakthrough, scientific breakthrough, big breakthrough**

Comment: Quickly undercut — hope rises, then burns.

Discussion question: Have you ever thought you'd had a breakthrough... only to be disappointed?

143) plump

Context:

- “‘Was Dr. Becher a very thin man? A foreigner?’”
- “‘No, sir—Dr. Becher's as English as roast beef and about as **plump**.’”
- “‘But he did have a guest recently...’”

Definition: pleasantly fat; slightly overweight.

Common collocations:

- **plump man, plump cheeks, plump and healthy**

Comment: Comic relief — and sharp contrast with Stark.

Discussion question: How much do physical stereotypes influence your expectations of people?

144) engulfed

Context:

- “As we came over a hill, we saw the house...”
- “...completely **engulfed** in flames.”
- “Fire engines were already there...”

Definition: completely cover or surround.

Common collocations:

- **engulfed in flames/smoke/darkness, engulfed entirely**

Comment: Total destruction — no evidence left behind.

Discussion question: When something ends dramatically, do you prefer closure or mystery?

145) the gravel drive

Context:

- “‘That’s the place!’ Hatherley shouted.”
- “‘That’s **the gravel drive!**’”
- “‘And those rose bushes—right there!’”

Definition: a driveway covered with gravel.

Common collocations:

- **gravel driveway, crunch along the drive, drive up the gravel drive**

Comment: Memory locks onto texture and sound again.

Discussion question: What physical detail helps you recognise places instantly?

146) cart

Context:

- “Later that day, a local farmer reported seeing a **cart**...”
- “...carrying several people and some large crates...”
- “...speeding toward Reading early that morning.”

Definition: a simple vehicle used for transporting goods, usually pulled by animals.

Common collocations:

- **horse-drawn cart, load a cart, push/pull a cart**

Comment: Old-tech getaway — fitting the period.

Discussion question: What's the slowest form of transport you've ever relied on?

147) crates

Context:

- “...a cart carrying several people and some large **crates**...”
- “...speeding toward Reading early that morning.”
- “After that, no one had seen or heard from them again.”

Definition: large wooden boxes used for transporting goods.

Common collocations:

- **wooden crates, pack crates, shipping crates**

Comment: Innocent container, criminal contents.

Discussion question: What everyday object do you think hides the most secrets?

148) nickel

Context:

- “They did find large amounts of **nickel** and tin stored in an outbuilding—”

- "...but no coins."
- "That explained the crates on the cart."

Definition: a silver-coloured metal used in alloys and coins.

Common collocations:

- **nickel alloy, nickel coins, nickel content**

Comment: Scientific confirmation of Holmes's theory.

Discussion question: How much technical detail do you enjoy in explanations like this?

149) tin

Context:

- "They did find large amounts of nickel and **tin** stored in an outbuilding—"
- "...but no coins."
- "That explained the crates on the cart."

Definition: a soft metal often mixed with others (e.g., in alloys).

Common collocations:

- **tin alloy, tin plating, tin ingots**

Comment: Completes the counterfeit recipe.

Discussion question: Do you find it satisfying when scattered clues finally connect?

150) tracks

Context:

- “As for how Hatherley ended up by the road...”
- “...there were **tracks** of two people—one with unusually small feet...”
- “...showing that he had been carried from the garden to the roadside.”

Definition: marks left on the ground showing where someone or something has moved.

Common collocations:

- **footprints/tracks, follow tracks, animal tracks**

Comment: Literal proof — and moral nuance (someone helped him).

Discussion question: Do you believe actions always leave “tracks,” even when people try to hide them?

151) conscience

Context (prev / target / next):

- “There were tracks of two people—one with unusually small feet and one with very large ones—showing that he had been carried from the garden to the roadside, probably by the woman and Mr. Ferguson.”
- “Perhaps the Englishman had a bit more **conscience** than the colonel.”
- “‘Well,’ said Hatherley with a rueful smile as we boarded the train back to London, ‘it’s been quite an adventure.’”

Definition: the inner sense of right and wrong that guides a person’s moral decisions and makes them feel guilt or responsibility.

Common collocations:

- **have a conscience, clear conscience, guilty conscience**
- **prick someone’s conscience, act according to your conscience**
- **moral conscience**

Comment: This single word softens the ending: not all villains are the same. Ferguson may be complicit, but he’s not entirely lost. It introduces moral grey rather than pure evil—very Holmesian, and very human.

Discussion question: Do you believe people can do terrible things and still have a conscience—or does crossing certain lines destroy it?

4. A Vocabulary Memory Quiz

Use these questions to help you remember the vocabulary in the list. Don't worry if you can't remember them all. 150 items is a lot! You don't have to get 100%. But using this quiz will definitely help you remember more words and phrases.

Answers are included below the quiz.

1)

Clue A: What finger does Hatherley lose when Stark attacks him at the window?

Clue B: It's the short, strong finger that lets you grip things.

→ He loses his _____

2)

Clue A: Watson says this case didn't give Holmes much chance to _____ his powers of deduction.

Clue B: To impress people by demonstrating how clever you are.

→ _____

3)

Clue A: Watson says the facts don't have the same effect unless you hear them _____ step by step.

Clue B: To be revealed gradually, like a story opening up.

→ _____

4)

Clue A: Watson describes the story as so exciting that it is truly _____ .

Clue B: So interesting you can't stop listening or reading.

→ _____

5)

Clue A: Watson says the case _____ on him, even years later.

Clue B: It stayed strongly in his memory and affected him emotionally.

→ to _____ on someone

6)

Clue A: He says he still remembers the events very v_____.

Clue B: Clearly and in great detail, almost like seeing it again.

→ v_____

7)

Clue A: Watson had returned to civilian life and m_____ p_____.

Clue B: *His work as a doctor, running his own clinic.*

→ ****

8)

Clue A: The railway guard sent Watson anyone with even the slightest a_____.

Clue B: A minor health problem, not a serious illness.

→ an a_____

9)

Clue A: Watson recognises the railway guard as an old a_____.

Clue B: Someone you know, but not very well.

→ an a_____

10)

Clue A: The guard brings the patient himself so he doesn't s_____ a_____.

Clue B: Leave quietly or escape before being treated.

→ to s_____ a_____

11)

Clue A: The guard says the patient is now s_____ and s_____.

Clue B: Completely fine and not in danger.

→ s_____ and s_____

12)

Clue A: When Watson first sees Hatherley, he looks extremely s_____.

Clue B: Emotionally shocked and badly affected by what happened.

→ s_____

13)

Clue A: Hatherley looks like he's trying to k_____ himself t_____.

Clue B: Stay calm and stop himself from breaking down.

→ to k_____ yourself t_____

14)

Clue A: Watson firmly tells him to "g_____ a hold of yourself."

Clue B: Calm down and control your emotions.

→ g_____ a hold of yourself

15)

Clue A: Watson says Hatherley is in the t_____ of a hysterical fit.

Clue B: In the middle of something intense and uncontrollable.

→ in the t_____ of something

16)

Clue A: After calming down, Hatherley s_____ back in his chair.

Clue B: He falls back heavily, exhausted.

→ s_____

17)

Clue A: He apologises and g_____ for breath as he speaks.

Clue B: He struggles to speak normally because he's overwhelmed.

→ g_____

18)

Clue A: Even Watson r_____ slightly when he sees the injury.

Clue B: He pulls back instinctively in shock.

→ to r_____

19)

Clue A: The flesh where the thumb was is described as r_____ and red.

Clue B: Exposed, sore, and freshly injured. (also, *not cooked*, like sushi)

→ r_____

20)

Clue A: Watson says it looks s_____ -like.

Clue B: Porous and uneven in texture, like something you clean with.

→ s_____

21)

Clue A: The thumb appears to have been cut or t_____ off.

Clue B: Removed violently rather than neatly.

→ t_____

22)

Clue A: Watson says it was removed at _____ .

Clue B: At the base, where it joins the hand. Like a tree.

→ at the r_____

23)

Clue A: Watson remarks that it must have b_____ a lot.

Clue B: Lost a large amount of blood.

→ to b_____

24)

Clue A: Hatherley says he f_____ when it happened.

Clue B: He lost consciousness suddenly.

→ to f_____

25)

Clue A: When he regained consciousness, he c_____.

Clue B: He woke up after being unconscious.

→ to c_____

26)

Clue A: He used a t_____ to tighten the handkerchief around his wound.

Clue B: A small thin branch from a tree.

→ a t_____

27)

Clue A: Watson cleaned and b_____ the wound.

Clue B: Covered it with medical cloth to protect it.

→ to b_____ something

28)

Clue A: Hatherley hardly moves and doesn't f_____ during treatment.

Clue B: He doesn't jerk or pull away in pain.

→ to f_____

29)

Clue A: Watson says "the experience seems to have s_____ you _____".

Clue B: Emotionally disturbed or shocked him.

→ to s_____ someone ____

30)

Clue A: Watson asks if Hatherley is u_____ f_____ it — meaning ready to go.

Clue B: Willing (wanting to) and physically able to do something.

→ _____

31)

Clue A: Watson and Hatherley travel to Baker Street in a hansom c_____.

Clue B: A fast, two-wheeled horse-drawn taxi from Victorian London.

→ a hansom c_____

32)

Clue A: Holmes is found l_____ in his dressing gown.

Clue B: Sitting or lying in a relaxed, lazy posture.

→ to l_____

33)

Clue A: Holmes smokes a pipe made from l_____ tobacco.

Clue B: Tobacco left over from the previous day.

→ l_____

34)

Clue A: Hatherley says his father p_____ a_____ two years earlier.

Clue B: A polite way of saying "died."

→ p_____ a_____

35)

Clue A: His father left him a small i_____.

Clue B: Money received after someone dies.

→ i_____

36)

Clue A: Hatherley describes the start of his business as especially g_____.

Clue B: Bleak, depressing, and unpleasant.

→ g_____

37)

Clue A: His total earnings include twenty-seven pounds and ten s_____.

Clue B: A small amount of old British money.

→ s_____

*To be honest - I don't think you need to worry about this one! It's an old fashioned word that's not really used any more.

38)

Clue A: A c_____ enters Hatherley's office to announce a visitor.

Clue B: An office worker who handles admin tasks.

→ a c_____

39)

Clue A: Stark is described as extremely l_____ in build.

Clue B: Very thin and wiry.

→ l_____

40)

Clue A: His face seems to n_____ d_____ into a sharp chin and nose.

Clue B: Become more focused and narrower in shape.

→ to n _____ d _____

41)

Clue A: Hatherley politely b_____ after being complimented.

Clue B: He bends slightly forward in respect.

→ to b _____

42)

Clue A: He says he was u_____ the impression it was a professional matter.

Clue B: He believed something that later seems questionable.

→ to be u_____ the impression that...

43)

Clue A: Hatherley promises secrecy by saying, "You h_____ my word."

Clue B: A serious personal promise.

→ "you h_____ my word"

44)

Clue A: Stark suddenly l_____ up from his chair.

Clue B: He jumps to his feet quickly.

→ to l_____

45)

Clue A: He d_____ across the room to the door.

Clue B: He moves very fast and suddenly.

→ to d_____

46)

Clue A: He f_____ open the door to check the corridor.

Clue B: Opens it suddenly and forcefully.

→ to f_____ something (open)

47)

Clue A: Stark offers Hatherley fifty g_____ for one night's work.

Clue B: A very large professional fee in old British money.

→ a g_____

*Again, this one is probably important in your life, but I highlighted it because I expected it needed explaining

48)

Clue A: Stark claims the machine is used for f_____ 's-_____.

Clue B: A rare clay-like substance used in industry.

→ f_____ - _____

*Again, not very important because people rarely talk about it. In fact, I have never heard of this, except in this story.

49)

Clue A: Hatherley says that material is usually s_____ out of a pit.

Clue B: Removed with a shovel-like motion - like ice-cream.

→ to s_____

50)

Clue A: He mentions it's normally taken from a p_____.

Clue B: A large hole dug in the ground.

→ a p_____

51)

Clue A: Stark says the earth is moved more d_____.

Clue B: Quietly and without attracting attention.

→ to do something d_____

52)

Clue A: Hatherley says he was t_____ to finally have some work.

Clue B: Very excited and pleased.

→ to be t_____

53)

Clue A: He says the colonel's story didn't quite s_____ r_____ with him.

Clue B: It didn't feel right or believable.

→ to (not) s_____ r_____ with you

54)

Clue A: Hatherley follows the colonel's instructions t____ t_____ l_____.

Clue B: *Exactly, without changing anything.*

→ t____ t_____ l_____

55)

Clue A: Holmes asks what colour the horse was, and Hatherley says it was c_____.

Clue B: A reddish-brown colour, often used for horses. Also a kind of nut from a tree which is common in England.

→ c_____

56)

Clue A: The horse's coat is described as g_____.

Clue B: Shiny and well cared-for.

→ g_____

57)

Clue A: The carriage windows are f_____, so Hatherley can't see out.

Clue B: Opaque or blurred glass.

→ f_____

58)

Clue A: He says he could barely m_____ o_____ shapes outside.

Clue B: See or distinguish something with difficulty.

→ to m_____ something o_____

59)

Clue A: He feels the road change from dirt to g_____.

Clue B: Small stones used on paths or driveways.

→ g_____

60)

Clue A: Stark rushes him into a dark p_____.

Clue B: A covered area just outside the front door.

→ a p_____

61)

Clue A: Inside the house, it is completely p_____ -b_____.

Clue B: Totally dark, with no light at all.

→ p_____ -b_____

62)

Clue A: Stark f_____ around for matches in the dark.

Clue B: Searches clumsily with his hands. Also refers to doing anything clumsy with your hands.

→ f_____

63)

Clue A: He does this while m_____ under his breath.

Clue B: Speaking quietly and irritably to himself.

→ to m_____

64)

Clue A: The woman leans forward, s_____ to see them.

Clue B: Looking with narrowed eyes to focus better, like when you look into the dark, or when light is blinding you.

→ to s_____

65)

Clue A: Stark replies to her with a g_____ word.

Clue B: Rough, unfriendly, and intimidating in tone.

→ g_____

66)

Clue A: The window is blocked by a heavy oak s_____.

Clue B: A solid wooden cover over a window.

→ a s_____

67)

Clue A: The shutter is b_____ closed.

Clue B: Secured firmly with a metal bar or lock.

→ to be b_____ closed

68)

Clue A: The silence in the house is described as e_____.

Clue B: Strange, creepy, and mysterious.

→ e_____

69)

Clue A: The quiet is so complete that it feels u_____.

Clue B: Making him anxious and uncomfortable.

→ un_____

70)

Clue A: Hatherley walks around the room, h_____ a tune softly.

Clue B: Singing quietly with his mouth closed.

→ to h_____

71)

Clue A: The fear on the woman's face sends a c_____ down his spine.

Clue B: A sudden cold shiver of fear.

→ a c_____

72)

Clue A: The woman stands there, wr_____ her hands in distress.

Clue B: Twisting her hands together nervously.

→ to wr_____ your hands

73)

Clue A: Hatherley admits he can be quite s_____ by nature.

Clue B: Unwilling to change his mind, even when warned.

→ to be s_____

74)

Clue A: He says the more someone w_____ him o_____ something, the more determined he becomes.

Clue B: Tries to discourage him from doing it.

→ to w_____ someone _____ something

75)

Clue A: Despite the warning, he s_____ his ground and refuses to leave.

Clue B: Stays firm and does not back down.

→ to s_____ your ground

76)

Clue A: The woman is about to p_____ again when footsteps are heard.

Clue B: Beg urgently.

→ to p_____

77)

Clue A: Ferguson is described as short and t_____ -s_____.

Clue B: Broad and solidly built.

→ t_____ -s_____

78)

Clue A: He has a b_____ beard covering his face.

Clue B: Thick and full.

→ b_____

79)

Clue A: Stark suggests Hatherley opened the door because of a d_____.

Clue B: A current of cold air in a room.

→ a d_____

80)

Clue A: Hatherley says the room felt s_____.

Clue B: Unpleasantly warm with no fresh air.

→ s_____

81)

Clue A: The doors have w_____ -down thresholds.

Clue B: Worn smooth from years of use.

→ w_____ -down

Thresholds are the steps or borders between rooms - the line raised wooden board that divides two rooms, in a doorway

82)

Clue A: The walls upstairs are c_____ in places.

Clue B: Falling apart or breaking down, a bit like an old cake.

→ c_____

83)

Clue A: There are green patches of d_____ on the walls.

Clue B: Slight wetness, often cold and unpleasant.

→ d_____

84)

Clue A: The damp is s_____ through the walls.

Clue B: Slowly leaking through cracks.

→ to s_____ through

85)

Clue A: Ferguson seems s_____ and withdrawn.

Clue B: Bad-tempered and unfriendly.

→ s_____

86)

Clue A: He is quiet, distant, and w_____.

Clue B: Emotionally closed off and unsociable.

→ w_____

87)

Clue A: Stark explains they are standing beneath the p_____.

Clue B: The heavy part of the press that moves up and down.

→ the p_____

88)

Clue A: Hatherley finds the fault in one of the rubber w_____.

Clue B: Small rings used to seal joints.

→ w_____

89)

Clue A: The washer has s_____ slightly.

Clue B: Become smaller over time.

→ to s_____

90)

Clue A: It no longer properly s_____ the socket.

Clue B: Closes it tightly so nothing leaks out.

→ to s_____

91)

Clue A: The washer no longer fits properly in its s_____.

Clue B: The hollow part it sits inside. Like the thing in the wall that you plug an electrical cable into.

→ a s_____

92)

Clue A: The floor of the press is a solid iron t_____.

Clue B: A long, narrow container or channel.

→ a t_____

93)

Clue A: He notices a crust of metallic r_____ on the floor.

Clue B: Material left behind after a process.

→ r_____

94)

Clue A: He bends down to s_____ at the crust.

Clue B: Rub it off using something hard.

→ to s_____ something

95)

Clue A: The residue has formed a hard c_____ .

Clue B: A tough outer layer on the surface, like what you have on the surface or edge of bread, or the earth.

→ a c_____

96)

Clue A: Stark stands above Hatherley, g_____ down at him angrily.

Clue B: Staring in a hostile, threatening way.

→ to g_____

97)

Clue A: Hatherley realises he has been t_____ i_____ by the fuller's-earth story.

Clue B: Deceived or tricked into believing something false.

→ to be t_____ i_____ by something

98)

Clue A: A nasty g_____ appears in Stark's eyes.

Clue B: A brief flash of light showing cruelty or anger. It can also mean the shine that happens when light reflects off metal.

→ a g_____

99)

Clue A: Hatherley l_____ at the door when he is locked inside.

Clue B: He throws himself forward suddenly and violently.

→ to l_____ (also done in pilates and gym exercises, when you step one leg forward and stretch)

100)

Clue A: He grabs the handle, r_____ it desperately.

Clue B: Shaking it so it makes a rapid knocking noise.

→ to r_____

101)

Clue A: He kicks and s_____ the door with all his strength.

Clue B: Pushes it hard and roughly.

→ to s_____

102)

Clue A: The door doesn't b_____ at all.

Clue B: It refuses to move, even slightly.

→ to b_____

103)

Clue A: He feels a l_____ in his t_____ as the machine starts.

Clue B: A tight emotional feeling in the throat caused by fear.

→ to feel a l_____ in your t_____

104)

Clue A: He hears the h_____ of the leaking cylinder.

Clue B: A sharp, continuous sound like escaping air, or the sound a snake makes.

→ h_____

105)

Clue A: He realises the machine will f_____ him completely.

Clue B: Crush him flat.

→ f_____

106)

Clue A: He screamed and p_____ the door in panic.

Clue B: Hits it repeatedly and forcefully.

→ p_____

107)

Clue A: He t_____ at the lock with his fingers.

Clue B: Pulls violently, trying to rip it open.

→ to tear at something

108)

Clue A: The clanking noise d_____ o_____ his shouting.

Clue B: Makes it impossible to hear anything else.

→ to d_____ something o_____

109)

Clue A: He thinks about how the press might crush his s_____.

Clue B: The backbone.

→ your s_____

110)

Clue A: Just then, a s_____ of hope appears.

Clue B: A very small, thin amount.

→ a s_____

111)

Clue A: He notices a f_____ line of light between the boards.

Clue B: Weak and barely visible.

→ f_____

Also when this word is a verb it means to lose consciousness - like what happens to Hatherley when he loses his thumb and passes out in the bushes.

112)

Clue A: After escaping, he lies on the floor, d_____ and gasping.

Clue B: Confused and unable to think clearly.

→ d_____

113)

Clue A: Someone is t_____ at his wrist to pull him up.

Clue B: Pulling in short, urgent movements.

→ to t_____

114)

Clue A: The woman grabs his w_____.

Clue B: The joint between the hand and arm.

→ your w_____

115)

Clue A: He s_____ to his feet, barely able to stand.

Clue B: Moved unsteadily, almost falling.

→ to s_____

116)

Clue A: Stark charges down the corridor with a b_____’s cleaver.

Clue B: A large knife used for cutting meat - used by a person who sells meat.

→ a b_____’s cleaver

117)

Clue A: Hatherley f_____ the window open in desperation.

Clue B: Opens it suddenly and violently. To f_____ means to throw something quickly.

→ to f_____

118)

Clue A: He climbs onto the window s_____.

Clue B: The flat ledge at the bottom of a window.

→ the s_____

119)

Clue A: After landing, he runs into the b_____.

Clue B: Low plants and shrubs.

→ b_____

120)

Clue A: A wave of d_____ hits him from blood loss.

Clue B: A spinning, light-headed feeling.

→ d_____

121)

Clue A: He also feels intense n_____.

Clue B: The feeling that you're going to vomit.

→ n_____

122)

Clue A: He looks down at his t_____ hand.

Clue B: Beating with pain in time with his heartbeat.

→ t_____

123)

Clue A: He realises his thumb has been c_____ o_____.

Clue B: Completely removed by a blade.

→ c_____ o_____

124)

Clue A: The next morning, when he c_____ t____, *it is daylight*.

Clue B: Regains consciousness.

→ to c_____ to

125)

Clue A: His clothes are s_____ with dew.

Clue B: Completely wet.

→ s_____

126)

Clue A: The moisture on the grass and clothes is d_____.

Clue B: Tiny water drops formed overnight.

→ d_____

127)

Clue A: His sleeve is d_____ in blood.

Clue B: Soaked completely in liquid.

→ d_____

128)

Clue A: The pain b_____ everything rushing b_____ to him.

Clue B: Suddenly makes him remember everything clearly.

→ to b_____ something (rushing) b_____

129)

Clue A: He finds himself lying in a d_____ beside the road.

Clue B: A shallow hollow in the ground.

→ a d_____

130)

Clue A: Holmes keeps old newspaper stories in his s_____.

Clue B: Books where newspaper items are collected.

→ a s_____

131)

Clue A: These books contain old newspaper c_____.

Clue B: Cut-out articles kept for reference.

→ c_____

132)

Clue A: Holmes is f_____ t_____ the pages confidently.

Clue B: Turning pages quickly while scanning.

→ to f_____ t_____ something

133)

Clue A: Holmes asks if Hatherley is u_____ t_____ it physically.

Clue B: Capable of doing something difficult.

→ to be u_____ t_____ it

134)

Clue A: One officer is a _____ - _____ policeman.

Clue B: A detective not wearing uniform.

→ a p_____ - c_____ police officer

135)

Clue A: Watson wonders why they chose to s_____ Hatherley.

Clue B: Show mercy and not kill him (or do something else bad).

→ to s_____ someone

136)

Clue A: Hatherley replies g_____, *with no optimism*.

Clue B: In a bleak, serious tone.

→ to say something g_____

137)

Clue A: Hatherley describes Stark as completely r_____.

Clue B: Having no mercy at all.

→ r_____

138)

Clue A: Police suspect a large c_____ r_____ operating nearby.

Clue B: An organised group producing fake money.

→ a c_____ r_____

139)

Clue A: The criminals were making fake h_____ -c_____.

Clue B: Old British coins worth two shillings and sixpence.

→ h_____ -c_____

*Here is another one you don't need to bother with. I just wanted to explain it, as it might have been confusing in the story.

140)

Clue A: The police had t_____ the gang as far as Reading.

Clue B: Followed evidence to locate them.

→ to t_____ someone/something

141)

Clue A: The criminals had c_____ their t_____ well.

Clue B: Hidden evidence to avoid being caught. It literally refers to your footprints in the ground, but is used like an idiom to mean *hiding any evidence so you don't get caught*.

→ to c_____ your t_____

142)

Clue A: Bradstreet believes this case might be a b_____.

Clue B: A sudden major discovery that leads to more progress.

→ a b_____

143)

Clue A: Dr Becher is described as rather p_____.

Clue B: Slightly fat, round and soft. We use it to describe food as well - a p_____ chicken, a p_____ fruit. It is not as negative as just saying "fat", but it's still not polite to use it to talk about someone to their face.

→ p_____

144)

Clue A: The house is completely e_____ in flames.

Clue B: Totally surrounded and covered. It's usually used with *flames* when something is completely on fire.

→ to be e_____ in flames

145)

Clue A: Hatherley recognises the g_____ drive.

Clue B: A driveway made of small stones.

→ g_____

146)

Clue A: A farmer sees a c_____ heading toward Reading.

Clue B: A simple vehicle pulled by animals.

→ a c_____

147)

Clue A: The stolen money is carried in large wooden c_____s.

Clue B: *Big boxes used for transport. E.g. c_____ of beer*

→ c_____s

148)

Clue A: Police find large quantities of n_____ stored in an outbuilding.

Clue B: A silver-coloured metal used in coins.

→ n_____

149)

Clue A: They also find t_____ mixed with the metal.

Clue B: A soft metal often used in alloys, or traditionally for making cans (for storing food)

→ t_____

150)

Clue A: Foot t_____ in the earth show Hatherley was carried.

Clue B: Marks left on the ground by people walking. You cover these when you don't want to be found.

→ t_____

151)

Clue A: Watson suggests Ferguson may have had some c_____.

Clue B: An inner sense of what is right and wrong.

→ your c_____

5. Answer Key – Vocabulary Quiz

1. thumb	51. discreetly	101. shoving
2. show off	52. thrilled	102. budge
3. unfold	53. sit right with me	103. a lump in my throat
4. gripping	54. to the letter	104. hiss
5. left a deep impression	55. chestnut	105. flatten
6. vividly	56. glossy	106. pounded
7. medical practice	57. frosted	107. tore
8. ailment	58. make out	108. drowned out
9. acquaintance	59. gravel	109. spine
10. slip away	60. porch	110. sliver
11. safe and sound	61. pitch-black	111. faint
12. shaken	62. fumbled around	112. dazed
	63. muttering	

13. keep himself together	64. squinting	113. tugging
14. get a hold of yourself	65. gruff word	114. wrist
15. in the throes of a hysterical fit	66. shutter	115. staggered
16. slumped back	67. bolted	116. a butcher's cleaver
17. gasped	68. eerie	117. flung
18. recoiled	69. unsettling	118. sill
19. raw	70. humming	119. bushes
20. sponge-like	71. sent a chill down my spine	120. dizziness
21. torn off	72. wringing her hands	121. nausea
22. at the root	73. stubborn	122. throbbing
23. bled	74. warns me off	123. cut off
24. fainted	75. stood my ground	124. came to
25. came to	76. plead	125. soaked
26. twig	77. thick-set	126. dew
27. bandaged	78. bushy beard	127. drenched
28. flinching	79. draught	128. brought everything rushing back
29. shaken you up	80. stuffy	129. dip
30. up for it	81. worn-down thresholds	130. scrapbooks
31. a hansom cab	82. crumbling	131. newspaper clippings
32. lounging	83. damp	132. flipping through
33. leftover	84. seeping through	133. up to it
34. passed away	85. surly	134. plain-clothes
35. inheritance	86. withdrawn	135. spare
36. grim	87. piston	136. grimly
37. ten shillings	88. washers	

38. clerk	89. shrunk	137. ruthless
39. lean	90. sealed	138. counterfeiting ring
40. narrow down	91. socket	139. half-crowns
41. bowed	92. trough	140. traced
42. under the impression	93. residue	141. covered their tracks
43. have my word	94. scrape	142. breakthrough
44. leapt up	95. crust	143. plump
45. darted across	96. glaring	144. engulfed
46. flung open	97. taken in	145. the gravel drive
47. fifty guineas	98. glint	146. cart
48. fuller's-earth	99. lunged	147. crates
49. scooped out	100. rattling	148. nickel
50. pit		149. tin
		150. tracks
		151. conscience

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