Sherlock Holmes: The Valley of Fear *by* Arthur Conan Doyle
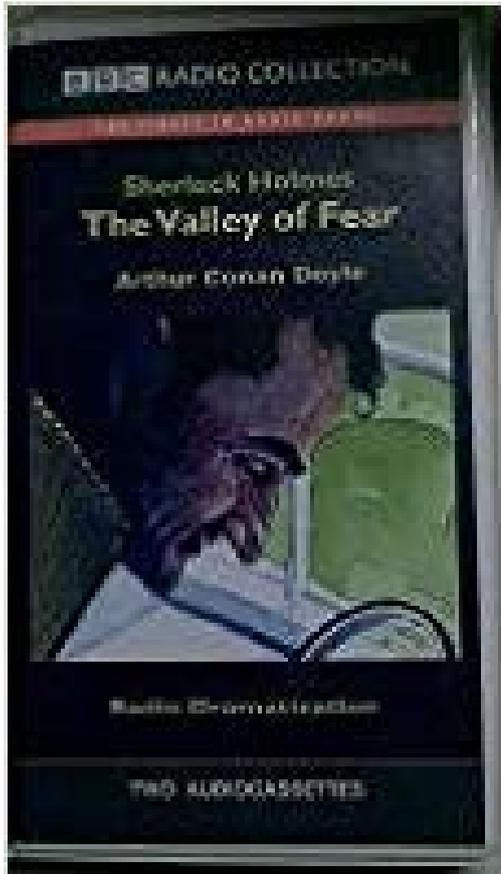
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Reviews of the Sherlock Holmes: The Valley of Fear *by* Arthur Conan Doyle

- **Lemana**

The Sherlock Holmes canon includes a total of 60 stories from the original author, AC Doyle. Of the 60, only four were full novels including this one. The rest are short stories published in five books, totaling 9 books. The first two stories penned by Doyle were the novels, Study in Scarlet (where Holmes and Watson first meet), and A Sign of the Four (which includes Watson meeting his wife). This is followed by short stories in book 3, the Adventures of SH. Ideally the stories are best read in order, but not critical. Unlike the rest of the canon, the two novels, Hound of the Baskervilles and Valley of Fear, can be read at any time - especially since they each defy the chronology. Hound was written about 8 years after the short story, The Final Solution, when Holmes died in a mortal struggle with the Napoleon of crime, Professor Moriarty, who was also killed. (But, Holmes doesn't die and is brought back, very cleverly and very credibly, 10 years later, in the story, The Empty House, written 2 years after Hound. Anyway, 10 years after all that Doyle wrote, The Valley of Fear - which is one of two stories that include Prof Moriarty - this is not a spoiler to the story and the Prof

is only talked about in present tense. I guess my point is, this novel, and Hound of the Baskervilles can be read at any time whereas everything else is slightly better if read in order. Okay, enough of the background on the canon.

Valley of Fear is simply a great read with wonderful twists at the end that the reader will not likely see coming. I would put Valley and Hound as the two best novels, with Hound perhaps slightly better, but better is all about taste and preference. Anyway, this novel is broken down into two main parts, Part 1 is the Murder mystery, who killed...? Part 2 is a backstory, about 20 years earlier and has nothing to do with Sherlock Holmes. The part 2 story provides the motivation for the murder mystery in part 1. This format is the same as found in the first two novels but the backstory here is probably the best of the three - Doyle now has almost 30 years of writing experience. There is a very short part 3, the Epilogue which brings us back to Baker Street for a final update.

The Valley of Fear part 1 mystery the reader gets most of the clues the same time as Holmes does and is more or less free to try to figure things out himself but as I mentioned, there are twists and nothing in Valley of Fear is what it seems!!!! One noticeable difference for myself, who has now read 7 of the 9 books, and possibly fellow Sherlockians, is that the deep friendship between Holmes and Watson is just not there. The first page was almost disturbing in that regard. Watson is more of an object then a subject to Holmes, more like the modern adaptations. It's just something that jumped out at me since other than the Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Granada Television Series series, which is extremely faithful to the original stories, Holmes and Watson have a deep personal friendship and respect. Watson is a friend, gentlemen, medic, soldier, and chronicler - not the bumbling sidekick of the Basil Rathbone movies. Anyway, the story, both part 1 and 2, are excellent and much better than I expected. Highly recommended.

- **Purebinder**

This is actually one of the better Sherlock Holmes books, as far as I'm concerned, because while reading it, I was very much reminded of just how wonderfully well written and incredibly inventive Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's very first story featuring the famous detective really was. Doyle's 'The Valley of Fear' isn't quite the sterling caliber of the seminal 'A Study in Scarlet,' of course, but it comes awfully close, because, in a similar fashion to the earlier work, the story is divided into two distinctly different parts.

Surprisingly enough, the latter portion of the book hardly features the main characters, Holmes and Watson, at all! Even more startling is the fact that the solution of the crime is actually presented at the end of the first half of the book! What's most stunning and truly laudable of all, is that the second half, which is primarily a backstory, manages to be even much, much more of a page turner than the first part. By my way of thinking, that's superb storytelling, no matter how you slice it.

I've seen some reviewers deride this book as being of somewhat lesser quality than other volumes in Doyle's Sherlock Holmes collection, but DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT! The Valley of Fear may not be particularly engaging at first, but if you stick with it, the book is more than well worth reading.

- **Kecq**

In the first part of the book, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson arrive at a manor house to investigate the murder of the man of the house. Sherlock focuses on a single strange clue in the room – a single barbell missing its partner. He solves the mystery, but not why it happened. That backstory is told in the second part when the man of the house lived in America and got mixed up in a gang posing as a respectable men's society.

The way the story was told in the two parts is very effective. The first part is engaging and interesting throughout. The second part is slow-moving for about half of it. The two parts are of equal length so sometimes I felt like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had just added needlessly to the second part to make is as long as the first. Nevertheless, it's a good mystery and I only guessed the answers just a page or two before my guesses were revealed to be correct. I recommend reading The Valley of Fear.

- **Debeme**

Absolutely perhaps the most entertaining Sherlock Holmes novel in my opinion. Faster paced than The Hound of the Baskervilles, more character depth than A Study in Scarlet, and as much a page-turner as The Sign of Four. For the Holmes purist, I think there is less deductive reasoning than some of the other stories, however the story itself appears more cohesive in some ways. I know I often put aside The Hound because it got a bit ponderous at times but TVoF kept my attention.

- **Stoneshaper**

How can you ever go wrong with the author who gave us the greatest detective in the world, Sherlock Holmes. I've read this before a short time ago, but I still enjoyed it since I had forgotten some of the details from the original Holmes case that started it all. It's always great to see good triumph over evil; too bad it doesn't always translate to real life situations.

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