

# Could You Be the Next Sherlock?

A surprising way to sharpen your mental powers **BY KRISTIN LEWIS**



Since Sherlock Holmes first appeared in print in 1887, much has been made of his mind-blowing mental powers and of his **uncanny** ability to solve crimes and untangle mysteries using little more than his brain. And rightly so—the guy is pretty amazing. He is an expert on a wide array of topics. His logical mind works like a machine, making connections more quickly than anyone else. He could probably tell that you overslept just by looking at your socks!

Clearly, not just anyone could be like Sherlock. Or could they?

Turns out, there is an aspect of Sherlock's brilliance that we can all develop: mindfulness. You may have heard the term before. From **neuroscientists** to **psychologists**, more and more people are studying what mindfulness is and how it can sharpen our mental powers as well as improve our health and emotional well-being. In psychology, mindfulness is defined as being alert and aware in the present moment, free from distractions. Mindfulness is what enables Sherlock to observe details that Watson doesn't—and that most of us wouldn't, either. When you are mindful, you experience life as you live it. You smell your mom's morning coffee brewing. You taste each bite of that crisp apple. You read *The Outsiders* with complete and total focus. In other words, you are aware of your surroundings and of your own thoughts.

Studies have shown that being mindful can boost our **immune systems**, make us feel calmer, and improve our concentration and problem-solving skills. There is also evidence that mindfulness is something we can practice and get better at. The human brain can actually grow and change in a way that enables us to focus more, to control our emotions better, and to reduce stress and anxiety. Some people, like athletes Derek Jeter and Kobe Bryant and performer Katy Perry, practice mindfulness by **meditating**. But you don't need to meditate for hours every day to become more mindful. Try this: Sit quietly for five minutes, and focus only on your breathing. If your mind wanders, bring it back to your breathing.

Was it hard? Probably.

We live in a very distracting world. When you are doing your homework, how many times do you stop to check your texts or watch a clip on Vine? Each of these interruptions, these switches between tasks, impedes your ability to be "in the moment" and to focus. You become less aware, you notice less, and you remember less. (Maybe even Sherlock would have been less mindful if he were alive in 2014!)

But that doesn't mean you can't be more mindful. Research has shown that even a few minutes of mindfulness practice a day can benefit you. So try it out. You might just find yourself noticing things that would impress Sherlock Holmes himself. ●

## WRITING CONTEST

How does the author of the essay describe Sherlock Holmes? Does the play support her description? Use details from both texts to support your ideas. Send your response to **SHERLOCK CONTEST**. Five winners will receive *The Clockwork Scarab* by Colleen Gleason.

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