

Detective stories are popular all over the world. Even people who do not like reading books will know the names of fictional detectives such as Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot. These men (and most detectives in novels are male) are famous not so much for the crimes they solve, but for their characters. They are obviously very intelligent, otherwise they would not be successful detectives. They are very good at observing things, seeing small details that escape the attention of others. From these minor details, they are able to make deductions that help solve the murder and bring the killer to justice.

Holmes and Poirot have other things in common. They are single, and seem to have no romantic interest in women. They have few if any friends. They live alone, or share their living space with a male companion. They can be arrogant at times, treating others with contempt. They are intensely proud of their own mental capabilities and consider themselves to be more intelligent than everyone else.

One other important thing they have in common is that they have a sidekick. For Holmes, the sidekick is Doctor Watson. For Poirot, the sidekick is a man called Hastings. These sidekicks are friends but not equals. They are of lower status. They are not particularly intelligent, especially when compared to Holmes and Poirot, but they are faithful and hardworking. Watson and Hastings help as best they can, but they rarely understand what is going on in a case until the final scene when the detective reveals who the murderer is.

In many ways, though, these famous detectives would not be able to function without their sidekicks. Watson and Hastings provide emotional and practical support that ensures that crimes get solved quickly and efficiently. Doctor Watson is also the person who records Holmes's cases, writing them down and publishing them. Without him, the amazing things Holmes does would be lost forever.

For the reader too Watson and Hastings carry out an important role: they are characters that we can identify with. Most of us realize that we will never be like Holmes or Poirot. They are clearly men of genius, and not like us. However, when we read their stories, we can imagine ourselves being Watson, helping the great Sherlock Holmes solve the crime.

(386 words)