

A GAME MOST FOUL

ALISON GERVAIS

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE FOR YOUNG ADULTS, GRADES 7-12

CREATED BY JENNIFER GUYOR JOWETT

"A missing person's report should be filed as soon as you suspect something is wrong" (76).

SUMMARY:

A mystery about a teen writer determined to discover what happened to a missing classmate, who finds herself caught up with a pair of very familiar detectives named Watson and Holmes. All her awakening powers of observation will be put to the test as Jules Montgomery finds that the thing she thought was holding her back just might be her greatest strength.

Attending the prestigious Ashford College's writing seminar is a dream come true for Jules Montgomery, but the summer isn't unfolding as she hoped. Navigating London with her gradual hearing loss is difficult, and hiding it from her classmates is a challenge. Even worse, she can't seem to shake a case of writer's block. When a fellow student goes missing, neither the police nor their teacher, Professor Watson, seem that concerned. Jules and her new friends Percy and Suruthi are determined to get to the bottom of the case and they're not alone; the strange man who frequents Jules's aunt's antique shop is eager to help—and his name is none other than Sherlock Holmes.

Now there are two mysteries to solve. What happened to their missing classmate? And how can it be that Watson and Holmes—two fictional characters from the Victorian era—are alive and well in the 21st century? The only way to find answers might lie in a quote from one of Watson's old stories: "You see, but you do not observe." Jules may not be able to hear well, but without her hearing aids, she can often see more than the average person. And nothing about this case is average.



ALISON GERVAIS is the author of *In 27 Days* and *The Silence Between Us*, for which she received the 2020 Schneider Family Honor Book Award. Alison works at a nonprofit organization that provides services to people with disabilities and writes as often as she can. Currently, she lives in Colorado with her husband and their two daughters.

Discover more about Alison on Instagram at [@alisonauthorgervais](https://www.instagram.com/alisonauthorgervais).



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PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

These pre-reading activities allow students to draw from pre-existing knowledge so they are better able to make connections within the novel.

1. Have students consider the title *A Game Most Foul* and the book's cover to make predictions about the story. They should consider several aspects such as the small details, color choices, font style, and the positioning of the characters. Have them record their predictions for a comparison after completing the reading.
2. Introduce students to the game *Clue* (called *Cluedo* in the UK). Once they draw their cards, have them create an outline of a mystery or write a short story incorporating each of the cards.
3. Ask the class some Would You Rather questions that help place them into Jules's situation. Some examples might be: Would you rather create an outline of a novel to guide your plot or let the story unfold as the characters decide what to do? Would you rather spend the summer in a small village in the English countryside or the bustling city of London? Would you rather be in a Sherlock Holmes mystery or travel through a wardrobe to Narnia? Would you rather travel to a new city without the ability to hear or without the ability to see?

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help students draw from prior experiences and pre-existing knowledge to allow for better connections with the novel. Answers can be written as journal entries or shared with partners or small groups.

1. Describe a time when you've felt anxious or worried.
2. When was the first time you did something or went somewhere alone? Describe how the experience made you feel.
3. If you could design your ideal classroom, what would it include?
4. What advice would you give someone experiencing writer's block?
5. What makes a good mystery story?

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DURING READING

Mystery

One of the important aspects of solving a mystery is keeping track of the behavior of various characters/suspects. Use the chart below to record observations about some of the characters Jules encounters. Choose at least five people that she meets and/or interacts with. Use quotes from the book. Students can discuss their notes to discover which details and motives they had in common. This activity could also be used to compile a list of suspects.

Character	Physical Details	Personality Quirks/Traits	Motives

What Would You Do

Imagine you are the detective when things go foul. What would you do at each of these key moments?

Key Moment	
Ashley calls Jules (74).	
Jules recollects what happened when Ashley disappeared (89).	
Professor Watson takes a phone call (148).	
Watson makes a confession (Chapter 29)	

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Eye Witness

After students finish reading chapter 8, ask them to provide a description of the man who gives the two girls directions to the Narnia door without looking back at the written details. Have the students discuss their descriptions with partners or in small groups to determine which of their details match. Then, have them reread the section of the chapter where the author describes the man. How closely have they remembered the encounter?

Prediction

Before beginning chapter 16, ask students to predict who might be in the office. Have them justify their responses with evidence from the story. They might discuss in pairs or small groups before sharing with the whole group.

[CCSS.ELA-RL.7.1, 8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.B, 8.1.B, 9-10.B, 11-12.B; CCSS.ELA-W.7.10, 8.10, 9-10.B, 11-12.B; CCSS.ELA-SL.7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9-10.A, 11-12.A]

POST-READING QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the author chose to use the word “game” in the title?
2. Jules pays attention to small details. Reread the description of the professor at the beginning of chapter 3. What do Jules’s observations tell you about her? What detail do you find the most interesting? Explain why.
3. Is Jules right to be suspicious of William? What occurs that makes her respond as she does? (34)
4. Why do you think Jules doesn’t want to tell Suruthi about her hearing loss? (40)
5. To what extent do you agree with the quote, “A missing person’s report should be filed as soon as you suspect something is wrong” (76). Explain your reasoning.
6. Why doesn’t Jules tell her aunt about the man in the antique shop after hours? (94)
7. At the end of chapter 14, a figure is seen staring at Jules from a window. Should she be more alarmed by the mysterious happenings around her? Why or why not? Explain (137).
8. Percy uses the phrase “taking the mickey” (165). What does this mean? After researching it, what context clues are in the chapter that help indicate its meaning?
9. Do you agree with the quote, “When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth?” (171). Explain why or why not.

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10. What is your reaction to Professor Watson preventing Jules from entering class? Justify your response. (178)
11. Why is Holmes disappointed in the questions Jules asks him? (186)
12. The title of chapter 22 is “Have You Ever Played Armchair Detective?” (225). Why do you think so many people find this pastime to be interesting?
13. Watson writes, “My military service made it very apparent that no one in life is ever able to save every individual, but by God, do I wish I could” (283). Why does serving in the military allow Watson to have this perspective? Do you believe that he could have come to the same conclusion without having served in the military?
14. To what extent do you agree with the statement, “Rules were meant to be broken”? Explain your reasoning (302).
15. Why do the students continue to find reasons that Watson couldn’t be responsible for what happened to Ashley? (317)
16. Consider again the title of the novel—A Game Most Foul. To what extent do you feel that the title fits now that the mystery is solved?
17. What twist in the mystery surprised you the most? Why?
18. Which character does the most in solving the case? How?
19. How does the setting of London influence the mystery?
20. Look back at the predictions you made based on the cover before you started reading. To what extent were they accurate?

[CCSS.ELA-RL.7.1,8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-RL.7.3, 9-10.3, 11-12.3; CCSS.ELA-RL.7.4, 8.4, 9-10.4, 11-12.4; CCSS.ELA-W.7.2.B, 8.2.B, 9-10.B; CCSS.ELA-W.7.10, 8.10, 9-10.10, 11-12.10; CCSS.ELA-SL.7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9-10.1.A, 11-12.1.A]

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POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Compare/Contrast

Ashley James mentions that she wants to focus her writing on women during the Viking Age. Do some research that explores their autonomy and power (21). Create a chart showcasing the similarities and differences between women in the Viking Age and other significant empires and dynasties, along with countries from today.

Chapter Titles

Several of the chapter titles hold literary significance or connect to the literary world. Create a presentation highlighting the titles with reference to their literary works. An addition to this would be to determine why the author chose that particular title for that specific chapter of the novel.

Chapter Stack Poem

Have students pick 5–10 chapter titles from the novel. Ask them to play with their arrangement until they end up with a poem made solely from the chapter titles. They may add minimal words of their own to join titles together, as needed.

Sherlock Holmes—The Great Detective

Read a Sherlock Holmes mystery by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Examples include *The Hound of the Baskervilles* or *A Study in Scarlet*. How similar is the original character of Sherlock Holmes to the Holmes Alison Gervais portrays? You might use the list (179) as a starting point but dig deeper. Do a compare/contrast chart showcasing their similarities and differences. Be sure to use quotations from the novel to support your reasoning. Students could do the same for the character of Watson. Another option would be to have students write a compare and contrast essay showcasing the similarities and differences, citing evidence from the text.

The Agony of Defeat

Holmes says, “Failure is oftentimes inevitable. But that doesn’t mean one should not make every attempt possible to achieve their goal” (266). Many successful people have tried several times over before attaining success. Research one or several of these people. Write a report highlighting what you learn about failure and success.

[CCSS.ELA-RL.7.1, 8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-RL.7.9, 8.9, 9-10.9; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9-10.A, 11-12.A; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.B, 8.1.B, 9-10.B, 11-12.B; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.C, 8.1.C, 9-10.C, 11-12.C; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.D, 8.1.D, 9-10.1.D, 11-12.1.D; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.E, 8.1.E, 9-10.1.D, 11-12.1.E; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.E, 8.1.E; CCSS.ELA-W.7.7., 8.7, 9-10.7, 11-12.7]