Sherlock Holmes: A Warning

Comprehension & Vocabulary Worksheet

1. Vocabulary — Match the Words to Their Definitions

The following words all appear in the story you are about to read. Match each word (A–H) to its correct definition (1–8). Write the letter in the space provided.

A clue	**B** witness	**C** weapon	**D** prevent
E warning	**F** victim	**G** mastermind	**H** footprint

1. _____information that helps you find the answer to a problem or mystery

2. _____somebody who makes perfect plans for a very difficult activity, often a crime

3. _____an object used to hurt or kill someone

4. _____something that tells you about possible danger in the near future

5. _____to stop something from happening

6. _____someone who has been hurt or killed

7. _____the mark left by a shoe

8. _____a person who sees an event happening (often a crime)

2. Comprehension Check (FCE)

For questions 1–7, choose the correct answer — A, B, C or D.

1. Who is telling this story?

A) Dr Watson
B) Sherlock Holmes
C) John Douglas
D) Inspector MacDonald

2. Who wrote the letter to Sherlock Holmes?

A) a man who worked for Professor Moriarty
B) England's greatest criminal mind
C) a man who knew a lot about Mr Douglas
D) a famous criminal called Porlock

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3. Why is Inspector MacDonald surprised about the names 'Douglas' and 'Birlstone'?

- **A)** Mr Douglas of Birlstone Manor House was the murderer.
- **B)** They were the name and address of the victim.
- **C)** Only Scotland Yard had those names.
- **D)** No one could know those names except Moriarty.

4. Why did Holmes disagree with the inspector about going to London?

- **A)** It would be impossible to find Professor Moriarty.
- **B)** They could not be sure of finding the writer of the letter.
- **C)** He wanted to go to Birlstone immediately.
- **D)** The crime had happened in Birlstone, not in London.

5. Which of these sentences best describes the position of the house?

- **A)** It was in the centre of a small village.
- **B)** It was on a small island near a castle.
- **C)** It was next to a castle in the countryside.
- **D)** It was about half a mile from a small village.

6. What do we learn about Cecil Barker?

- **A)** He was Mr and Mrs Douglas's closest friend.
- **B)** He had a strange friendship with Mrs Douglas.
- **C)** He was the only person that knew about John Douglas's past.
- **D)** He was unknown to John Douglas.

7. According to Barker, how did the man get into the house if the drawbridge was up?

- **A)** He waded through the moat.
- **B)** He climbed through the window.
- **C)** Barker did not know.
- **D)** He hid behind a curtain.

3. Word Formation — A Great Criminal Mind: Jonathan Wild

Read the text below. Use the word given in capitals at the end of each line to form a word that fits in the space in the same line. There is an example at the beginning (0).

One of the (0) _____ criminal minds in England's history was a man named Jonathan Wild. **[GREAT]**

Jonathan Wild (1) _____ in the early 18th century. Many people wrote about him during his time and after it. **[LIVE]**

He was one of the first men to use other (2) _____ to commit crimes for him while keeping his position as a respected member of society. **[CRIME]**

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...while keeping his position as a (3) _____ member of society. **[RESPECT]**

Jonathan Wild came to know many criminals during the time he spent in prison for a minor (4)_____. **[OFFEND]**

Wild (5) _____ a gang of thieves. They stole things and Wild paid them. **[CONTROL]**

He waited until the newspapers reported the theft and then contacted the (6) _____ of the objects. **[OWN]**

He also told them that they had an (7) _____ to pay some money for the cost of finding the objects. **[OBLIGE]**

...to pay some money for the cost of finding the (8) _____ objects. **[STEAL]**

He became rich and (9) _____ and the public thought he worked with the police. **[SUCCESS]**

Eventually he was caught, but only when the (10) _____ decided it was time to put an end to his criminal genius. **[GOVERN]**

4. Key Vocabulary — Uncommon Words, Phrasal Verbs & Dependent Prepositions

The following 15 items appear in the story and are useful for FCE-level exams. Study them before doing the exercises below.

Word / Expression	Type	Significado
to be in touch with (someone)	*dependent preposition*	estar en contacto con alguien
to stare at	*phrasal verb*	mirar fijamente / con intensidad
to wade across	*phrasal verb*	cruzar caminando por el agua
to blow something to pieces	*expression*	destrozar algo por completo
to saw something off	*phrasal verb*	cortar el extremo de algo con una sierra
to rush out	*phrasal verb*	salir corriendo o de forma apresurada
to point to / at	*phrasal verb + dependent preposition*	señalar algo con el dedo o un gesto
to climb out (of)	*phrasal verb*	salir trepando (por una ventana, etc.)
to irritate	*low-frequency verb*	molestar o incomodar levemente a alguien
to be alarmed	*adjective + state*	sentirse asustado o preocupado ante algo inesperado
to be in control (of)	*dependent preposition*	tener el control o manejo de una situación
to pull back (a curtain)	*phrasal verb*	correr o abrir una cortina
to get away	*phrasal verb*	escapar, huir de un lugar
to put an end to (something)	*dependent preposition*	hacer que algo termine definitivamente

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Word / Expression	Type	Significado
to be involved in	*dependent preposition*	estar relacionado o implicado en algo

5. Reading — FCE Part 5 (Multiple Choice)

You are going to read an extract from a short mystery story, "The Silent Guest". For questions 1–6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

The Silent Guest

Detective Sergeant Elena Marsh had worked in the countryside for eleven years, but she had never grown used to the particular silence of Thornfield Hall. It was not the silence of an empty house; it was the silence of a house that was listening.

She had been called out just after dawn. The housekeeper, a thin, anxious woman named Mrs Pryce, had found the study door locked from the inside and no answer to her knocking. When the local constable finally forced the door, they discovered Mr Aldous Whitfield, the owner of the house, slumped over his desk. He was alive, though barely, and could not remember how he had come to be in that state.

What troubled Marsh was not the injury itself, but the room. Nothing appeared to have been disturbed. The window was closed and locked from within. A half-finished letter lay on the desk, the ink already dry, addressed to a solicitor in London. The last visible words read: 'I am afraid that what I discovered about my brother's business dealings cannot remain secret much longer, and I fear the consequences of—' There the sentence stopped.

Marsh questioned everyone who had been in the house that night. The housekeeper insisted she had heard nothing until the early hours, when she thought she detected a soft, dragging sound along the corridor outside her room, though she had been too frightened to investigate. The gardener, a quiet man called Thomas Reid, claimed to have been asleep in the cottage at the far end of the grounds, though Marsh noticed that his boots, drying by the kitchen fire, were unusually clean for a man who supposedly had not left his bed.

It was Whitfield's business partner, a smooth-talking man named Gerald Voss, who unsettled Marsh the most. Voss arrived within the hour, apparently informed by a telephone call from the housekeeper, and immediately offered to 'take care of everything', from contacting the family solicitor to managing the household staff. His concern seemed genuine enough, yet something in the way he avoided looking directly at the locked study door made Marsh uneasy. When she asked him about the brother's business dealings mentioned in the unfinished letter, Voss claimed to know nothing about any dispute, although his hand, she noticed, tightened visibly around the handle of his briefcase.

By midday, Marsh had reached a single, uncomfortable conclusion: whoever had entered that locked room had not needed to force the window or break down the door, because they had never needed to use either. There was another way in and out of the study, one that had nothing to do with keys or locks at all, and finding it, she suspected, would reveal a great deal more about Thornfield Hall than anyone currently living there wished her to know.

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1. What impression of Thornfield Hall does the writer create in the first paragraph?

- **A)** It was a house that had been abandoned for many years.
- **B)** It felt as though the house itself was watchful or aware.
- **C)** It was unusually noisy compared to other houses nearby.
- **D)** It had a reputation for frightening the local police.

2. What detail about the study puzzled Sergeant Marsh most?

- **A)** Whitfield could not explain who had attacked him.
- **B)** The letter on the desk was addressed to Voss.
- **C)** The room showed no signs of a struggle or forced entry.
- **D)** The housekeeper refused to unlock the door herself.

3. What can we infer about Thomas Reid, the gardener?

- **A)** He was afraid of being blamed for the attack.
- **B)** His account of the night may not be entirely truthful.
- **C)** He had a poor relationship with Mr Whitfield.
- **D)** He had already left his job before the incident.

4. Why did Gerald Voss's behaviour make Marsh 'uneasy'?

- **A)** He refused to help with any of the arrangements.
- **B)** He seemed overly eager to avoid a particular subject and location.
- **C)** He accused the housekeeper of lying to the police.
- **D)** He demanded to see the unfinished letter immediately.

5. What does the phrase 'tightened visibly around the handle of his briefcase' suggest about Voss?

- **A)** He was cold and wanted to leave quickly.
- **B)** He was nervous about the question he had just been asked.
- **C)** He was preparing to hand the briefcase to Marsh.
- **D)** He was uninterested in the conversation.

6. What conclusion had Marsh reached by the end of the passage?

- **A)** The attacker must have had a key to the study.
- **B)** Someone in the house was protecting the real attacker.
- **C)** There was likely a hidden or unconventional way into the room.
- **D)** Whitfield had injured himself accidentally.

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