

## Section B: The 19<sup>th</sup> century novel

Answer **one** question from this section on your chosen text.

### Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: *The Sign of Four*

Read the following extract from Chapter 1 of *The Sign of Four* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Watson has just challenged Holmes to work out who is the owner of a watch.

5	‘No, no: I never guess. It is a shocking habit – destructive to the logical faculty. What seems strange to you is only so because you do not follow my train of thought or observe the small facts upon which large inferences may depend. For example, I began by stating that your brother was careless. When you observe the lower part of that watch-case you notice that it is not only dented in two places, but it is cut and marked all over from the habit of keeping other hard objects, such as coins or keys, in the same pocket. Surely it is no great feat to assume that a man who treats a fifty-guinea watch so cavalierly must be a careless man. Neither is it a very far-fetched inference that a man who inherits one article of such value is pretty well provided for in other respects.’
10	I nodded, to show that I followed his reasoning.
15	‘It is very customary for pawnbrokers in England, when they take a watch, to scratch the number of the ticket with a pin-point upon the inside of the case. It is more handy than a label, as there is no risk of the number being lost or transposed. There are no less than four such numbers visible to my lens on the inside of this case. Inference, – that your brother was often at low water. Secondary inference, – that he had occasional bursts of prosperity, or he could not have redeemed the pledge. Finally, I ask you to
20	look at the inner plate, which contains the key-hole. Look at the thousands of scratches all round the hole, –marks where the key has slipped. What sober man’s key could have scored those grooves? But you will never see a drunkard’s watch without them. He winds it at night, and he leaves these traces of his unsteady hand. Where is the mystery in all this?’

‘Sherlock Holmes is a brilliant early example of a fictional detective.’ Starting with this extract, how far do you agree with this statement? Write about:

- how Conan Doyle presents Holmes in this extract
- how Conan Doyle presents Holmes in the novel as a whole.

**[30 marks]**