

Enola Holmes: The Graphic Novels Book One

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

SERENA BLASCO

(based on books written by
Nancy Springer)

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Secondary



SYNOPSIS

Sherlock Holmes might be the famous detective, but his sister Enola is about to prove that she's got what it takes and then some.

When Enola's mother goes missing on her fourteenth birthday, Enola knows that something must be wrong. But before she can investigate her two brothers, Sherlock and Mycroft Holmes, show up and are horrified at the state of the manor house and Enola herself. Mycroft is determined to turn Enola into a 'proper young lady' and makes plans to send her off to boarding school. But Enola, dreading this fate, makes her own plans—to escape.

Enola escapes to the one place her detective brother's won't think to look—London. But, just like Sherlock, Enola has a nose for a good mystery and she finds more than she bargained for in London.

Book One in the series includes three thrilling mysteries: *The Case of the Missing Marquess*, *The Case of the Left-Handed Lady* and *The Case of the Bizarre Bouquets*. At the back of the book, readers can explore a portfolio of pages from Enola's secret notebook!

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Serena Blasco was born in France and studied at the School of Applied Arts in Aix-en-Provence, worked as a graphic designer, and published her first comics work in 2014. She began illustrating the adaptation of Nancy Springer's Enola Holmes novels in 2015.

THEMES

- Gender equality
- Family
- Mysteries and solving puzzles
- Visual storytelling
- Freedom
- Secrets

STUDY NOTES

- One of the book's core themes is the difference between the freedoms that men have and the freedoms that women

have. Discuss the time that the original Sherlock Holmes is set, and the differences between the way that men and women were treated during this time. Ask students to share their experiences of where they encounter these differences in their own lives (clothes or toys for boys versus clothes or toys for girls).

- What freedoms do people have now that they didn't have at the time the book was set? What freedoms are still restricted?
- The narrative is drawn from Nancy Springer's original Enola Holmes novels, but is delivered via a variety of forms—dialogue, newspaper articles, codes and Enola's secret notebook. How do these different types of text provide necessary information to the story?
 - Why do you think the author has chosen to convey the story in this way?
 - What other examples of texts can you find or think of?
- Discuss the way that the voice and writing changes between these forms—how is the writing in a newspaper article different to the writing in a letter for example? Answer the following questions for each writing form, and compare your answers:
 - Who is the audience for this piece of writing?
 - Who is the author?
 - What is it about?
 - What is the writing trying to do? (change someone's mind, provide them with necessary information, entertain them, etc)
 - What kind of language does the piece of writing use?
- Turn a chapter from one of your favourite books into a graphic novel. What information will you show in the pictures? What will become speech? Is there anything you'll cut altogether? Make three lists to organise your information under the headings 'dialogue', 'story text', 'images' and describe where you'll put each part of the scene.
- Serena Blasco's watercolour style captures the nostalgia of Sherlock Holmes, and the detailed illustrations set the scene for the mysteries. What information do the illustrations provide? How do the visual elements provide valuable clues to the narrative? Talk about information that Blasco shows in the images that we don't see in the text and vice versa. How do these two elements work together to form the whole?
- Blasco also uses colour to show different parts of the narrative – speech, thought, past and present, dreams, reality. What colours does she use for each of these elements? How else do you see colour used in art to show feelings or emotion?
- Some comics have a standard layout of frames per page. Others, like the images in Enola, use varying frame sizes, or bubbles within larger images to show close up expressions, or zoom in on details from the broader setting. Discuss the way that Blasco uses these techniques to draw our attention to particular parts of the narrative, or reveal specific clues.
- Enola Holmes uses clues to solve the mysteries in the book. Make a list of the clues in the story. What does each clue tell Enola about the disappearance of Dr Watson.
 - Come up with your own clues to write a story in which Enola solves the following mystery—a wealthy widow loses the portrait of her beloved Labrador.
- Draw a picture of the way Mycroft imagines Enola should look. What expression do you think she'd have if she looked this way?
- Use the language of flowers (p 62) to write or draw a coded message to a friend. What other kinds of codes are used in the book to convey secret messages? What other codes can you think of to share a message in secret? Use one of the other ciphers in the book to write a short secret message.
- What do you think Enola would say to her mother if she found her? Write a letter from Enola to her mother that tells her how she's feeling about being left alone on her birthday.

COMPREHENSION

EPISODE ONE

- How old was Enola when she lost her mum?
- How do the townspeople feel about Enola and her mum? Why?

- Enola is 'alone' spelled backwards. Is Enola alone? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?
- 'Enola Holmes', like 'Sherlock Holmes', are mystery stories. What do you know about this genre? What are some of the elements you expect to find in a mystery story?
- What are the names of Enola's brothers? How does Enola feel about seeing them again?
- How does the writer show the difference between speech and thought in the illustrations?
- How are Enola's talents different to her brothers (p 7)? How do these differences show the different opportunities they've had access to?
- What do people expect of Enola's looks and behaviour because she's a 'young lady'?
- How would you describe Mycroft and Sherlock's behaviour when they arrive at the Manor? How would you describe their attitude towards women?
- Why wasn't Enola's mother given control of the estate after her father died? Do you think this is fair? Why/why not?
- What questions does Enola have about her mother's disappearance?
- Make a list of the way that 'proper ladies' should behave (that are in the book).
- What does Enola do to avoid detection as she escapes?
- How are Enola and the young viscount similar?

EPISODE TWO

- How does Enola use her restrictive corset to her advantage?
- What is the mystery that Enola is trying to solve in Episode 2?
- Where does Enola set up her secret base? What are some of the advantages of using this as her base?
- How does Enola know that the message to meet her mother is a trap? Who is really behind the message?
- What does Enola believe is the key to her freedom? Is she right?
- What does the colour grey mean in a wax seal?

EPISODE THREE

- What disguise does Enola use to go and visit Watson's wife? Why can't she use any of her earlier disguises?
- How does Sherlock know that Watson's disappearance isn't an accident?
- How does the flower delivery boy describe the person who paid him to deliver the flowers?
- What clues is Enola able to discover that Sherlock can't?
- What do you think Enola wants to be in the future? What's standing in her way?