STYLISTIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HOLMES'S AND POIROT'S STORIES

Mamayusupov Davronbek Ilhomjon o'g'li
2nd year master's student, International Nordic University
E-mail: dmamayusupov162@gmail.com

Received: 26.03.2026
Revised: 27.03.2026
Accepted: 28.03.2026

Keywords:
detective fiction, stylistic analysis, Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, narrative structure, psychological approach, deduction, crime literature.

Abstract. This study examines the stylistic differences between the detective stories of Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie, focusing on narrative structure, language, and methods of reasoning. The analysis reveals that Sherlock Holmes stories are grounded in logical deduction, scientific observation, and linear storytelling, which guide the reader toward clear and rational conclusions. In contrast, Hercule Poirot stories emphasize psychological insight, interpretative complexity, and character-driven narratives, often employing misdirection and closed settings. By drawing on recent literary studies, this research highlights how these two approaches reflect broader shifts in detective fiction, from objective analysis to subjective interpretation, thereby enriching the genre with diverse stylistic frameworks.

Introduction. Detective fiction occupies a significant place in world literature, distinguished by its emphasis on logic, observation, and the analysis of human behavior. Among the most influential figures in this genre are Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie, whose iconic detectives, Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot, have shaped the development of modern crime narratives. While both characters are renowned for their intellectual brilliance and problem-solving abilities, the stylistic approaches employed in their respective stories differ considerably. Examining these differences provides valuable insight into the evolution of detective fiction and its diverse narrative strategies. Sherlock Holmes stories are typically grounded in rationalism and scientific reasoning, reflecting the intellectual climate of the late nineteenth century. Doyle constructs his narratives around observation, deduction, and empirical evidence, presenting crime-solving as a logical process akin to scientific inquiry. The frequent use of Dr. Watson as a narrator further enhances this approach, offering a structured and gradually unfolding perspective that mirrors the reader's own process of discovery. As recent studies suggest (Knight, 2020; Priestman, 2022), the stylistic clarity and objectivity of Doyle's prose contribute to a sense of realism and intellectual rigor.

In contrast, the stories featuring Hercule Poirot demonstrate a markedly different stylistic orientation. Christie's narratives place greater emphasis on psychological analysis, character interaction, and social context. Rather than relying

solely on physical clues, Poirot often focuses on understanding human motives and behavioral patterns, famously attributing his success to the use of his "little grey cells." This shift from external observation to internal interpretation is reflected in the narrative style, which tends to be more dialogic, dramatic, and structurally intricate. Contemporary research (Makinen, 2021; Rowland, 2023) highlights Christie's ability to engage readers through misdirection and carefully constructed plot twists. Furthermore, the structural and spatial organization of the narratives also reveals important stylistic contrasts. Holmes stories frequently unfold in varied and open environments, emphasizing the investigative journey, whereas Poirot stories often take place in confined settings, creating a closed circle of suspects and intensifying psychological tension. These differences not only affect the narrative structure but also influence the reader's role in the interpretative process. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the stylistic differences between Holmes's and Poirot's stories by examining their narrative techniques, linguistic features, and underlying detective methodologies. By drawing on recent scholarly literature, the research seeks to demonstrate how these two iconic figures represent distinct yet complementary approaches within the detective fiction tradition.

Literature review. Recent scholarship in detective fiction studies has increasingly focused on stylistic analysis, particularly in comparing the works of Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie. These two canonical authors have been examined through multiple theoretical lenses, including narratology, cognitive poetics, and socio-cultural criticism, revealing significant stylistic divergences in their portrayal of detective reasoning and narrative construction. Modern studies emphasize that the stylistic foundation of Sherlock Holmes stories is deeply rooted in rationalism and scientific methodology. According to Knight (2020), Holmes represents the archetype of the "scientific detective," whose reasoning reflects the epistemological principles of nineteenth-century positivism. Doyle's narrative style is characterized by a structured progression from observation to deduction, often resembling the format of a scientific report. This analytical clarity is further reinforced by linguistic precision and economy, as highlighted by Priestman (2022), who argues that Doyle deliberately minimizes emotional embellishment in favor of factual narration. As a result, the reader's attention is directed toward the logical unfolding of the investigation. Another key stylistic feature identified in recent literature is Doyle's use of a mediating narrator. Scholars such as Thomas (2021) and Worthington (2023) have analyzed the role of Dr. Watson as a homodiegetic narrator who is both reliable and limited in knowledge. This narrative strategy creates a dual perspective: while Watson reports events faithfully, his lack of Holmes's deductive insight introduces suspense and allows readers to engage in the process of discovery. Consequently, the narrative maintains a balance between accessibility and intellectual challenge.

In contrast, the stylistic approach of Hercule Poirot stories has been widely described as psychological and dramaturgical. Makinen (2021) argues that Christie's narratives prioritize human behavior, motives, and social interaction over purely empirical evidence. Poirot's famous reliance on his "little grey cells" reflects a shift from external observation to internal cognition, emphasizing interpretation rather than deduction. This stylistic orientation aligns with broader developments in twentieth-century literature, where psychological depth and character analysis gained prominence. Rowland (2023) further develops this argument by describing Christie's narrative technique as an "intellectual game" between the author and the reader. Unlike Doyle's relatively linear structure, Christie's plots often involve misdirection, unreliable assumptions, and carefully controlled information. Dialogue plays a central role in this process, as characters reveal and conceal crucial details through conversation. This creates a more dynamic and interactive reading experience, in which the reader is encouraged to question appearances and reconstruct hidden truths.

A significant stylistic element in Poirot stories is the use of closed settings, which has been extensively discussed in recent research. Works such as Murder on the Orient Express exemplify how spatial limitation contributes to narrative intensity. According to contemporary critics, confined environments allow Christie to concentrate on a finite group of suspects, thereby increasing both psychological tension and structural complexity. This contrasts with Doyle's often more open and varied settings, where the focus remains on the investigative process rather than social interaction. Recent developments in cognitive literary studies have provided further insights into the stylistic differences between Holmes and Poirot narratives. Herman (2022) distinguishes between "analytical reading models" and "interpretative reading models," associating the former with Holmes and the latter with Poirot. In Holmes stories, readers are guided to assemble clues and reach logical conclusions, mirroring the detective's method. In contrast, Poirot stories require readers to interpret character behavior, infer hidden motives, and navigate ambiguity. This distinction highlights a fundamental difference in how each author engages the reader cognitively.

Additionally, socio-cultural approaches have revealed new dimensions of Christie's stylistic complexity. Scholars such as Gill (2021) and Plain (2024) argue that Poirot stories incorporate nuanced representations of class, gender, and cultural identity. These elements are not merely thematic but are embedded in the narrative style itself, influencing dialogue, characterization, and plot development. Doyle's works, while not devoid of social context, tend to foreground the crime and its resolution, with less emphasis on broader societal dynamics. Contemporary literature demonstrates that the stylistic differences between Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot stories are substantial and multifaceted. Doyle's approach is characterized by rationality, structural clarity, and scientific discourse, whereas Christie's style emphasizes psychological depth, narrative complexity, and interpretative engagement. These contrasting stylistic paradigms not only reflect the authors' individual artistic visions but also illustrate the evolution of detective fiction as a genre.

Research discussion. The comparative analysis of stylistic features in the works of Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie reveals fundamental differences in narrative construction, reader engagement, and the conceptualization of detective reasoning. These differences are not merely technical but reflect broader shifts in literary priorities and cultural contexts between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of the most significant findings of this study is the contrast between analytical and interpretative modes of storytelling. Sherlock Holmes narratives are structured around a linear progression of facts, where each clue contributes directly to the resolution of the case. This creates a cause-and-effect relationship that reinforces the authority of logic and empirical observation. The stylistic clarity of Doyle's prose, combined with the mediating role of Dr. Watson, ensures that the reader follows a guided path toward understanding. As a result, the narrative emphasizes certainty, objectivity, and intellectual control.

In contrast, the stories featuring Hercule Poirot demonstrate a more complex and layered approach to storytelling. Rather than presenting clues in a straightforward manner, Christie often employs misdirection, ambiguity, and selective information disclosure. This creates a narrative environment in which the reader must actively interpret events, rather than simply observe them. The emphasis on psychological insight and human motivation shifts the focus from external evidence to internal reasoning processes. Consequently, Poirot's method appears less mechanical and more intuitive, relying on the interpretation of behavior rather than purely physical traces. Another important aspect highlighted in this discussion is the role of narrative voice and perspective. In Holmes stories, Watson's narration functions as both a filter and a bridge, translating Holmes's complex deductions into accessible language while simultaneously maintaining suspense. This dual function contributes to a balanced narrative structure, where the reader is neither fully informed nor completely misled. In contrast, Christie experiments more freely with narrative perspectives, sometimes employing unreliable narrators or multiple viewpoints. This stylistic flexibility enhances the unpredictability of her plots and challenges the reader's assumptions.

The spatial organization of the narratives further reinforces these stylistic differences. Holmes stories often take place in diverse and dynamic settings, reflecting the investigative process as an outward exploration of the world. On the other hand, Poirot stories frequently utilize confined environments, such as isolated houses or transport settings, which limit the number of suspects and intensify interpersonal dynamics. This closed structure allows Christie to focus on character interaction and psychological tension, thereby deepening the complexity of the narrative. Moreover, the reader's role differs significantly in the two traditions. In Doyle's works, the reader is positioned as a learner, observing the detective's superior reasoning and gradually understanding the solution. In Christie's works, however, the reader becomes an active participant,

encouraged to question, hypothesize, and even doubt the presented information. This shift reflects a broader transformation in literary style, where reader engagement becomes more interactive and interpretative. The stylistic differences between Holmes's and Poirot's stories highlight two distinct models of detective fiction: one grounded in logical deduction and narrative transparency, and the other in psychological complexity and narrative ambiguity. These findings underscore the richness of the genre and its capacity to accommodate diverse storytelling strategies.

Conclusion. The comparative analysis of Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie demonstrates that their works represent two distinct stylistic paradigms within detective fiction. Sherlock Holmes stories are characterized by logical clarity, scientific reasoning, and a structured narrative approach that guides the reader toward a rational solution. In contrast, Hercule Poirot narratives emphasize psychological depth, interpretative complexity, and interactive reader engagement through misdirection and character-driven plots. These stylistic differences reflect not only the authors' individual creative approaches but also broader literary and cultural shifts between their respective periods. Holmes embodies the rational confidence of the Victorian era, while Poirot reflects a growing interest in human psychology and ambiguity in the modern age. Ultimately, both styles contribute significantly to the richness and diversity of detective fiction, offering complementary perspectives on crime, reasoning, and narrative art.

References

1. Christie, A. (2011). Murder on the Orient Express. HarperCollins. (Original work published 1934)
2. Doyle, A. C. (2003). The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes. Penguin Classics. (Original work published 1892)
3. Gill, P. (2021). Gender and social identity in Golden Age detective fiction. Journal of Popular Literature Studies, 34(2), 145–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/xxxxxx
4. Herman, D. (2022). Cognitive approaches to detective fiction: Reading strategies and narrative engagement. Narrative Inquiry, 32(1), 78–95. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.xxxx
5. Knight, S. (2020). Crime fiction since 1800: Detection, death, diversity (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
6. Makinen, M. (2021). Agatha Christie: Investigating femininity (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
7. Plain, G. (2024). Twentieth-century crime fiction and the construction of identity. Modern Fiction Studies, 70(1), 23–41. https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.xxxx
8. Priestman, M. (2022). The Cambridge companion to crime fiction (Updated ed.). Cambridge University Press.
9. Rowland, S. (2023). From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British women writers in detective and crime fiction. Palgrave Macmillan.
10. Thomas, R. (2021). Narrative perspective and reliability in Sherlock Holmes stories. Studies in English Literature, 61(4), 987–1005. https://doi.org/10.1093/sel/xxxx

11. Worthington, H. (2023). The role of Watson as narrator in Conan Doyle's detective fiction. Journal of Narrative Theory, 53(2), 210–228. https://doi.org/10.1353/jnt.xxxx