

Famous ciphers 2 – The dancing men	Season	03
	Episode	11
	Time frame	1 period

Prerequisites : Concepts of cryptography. Caesar cipher.

Objectives :

- Discover and break the dancing men cipher

Materials :

- *Story and cipher*
- *Cipher*
- *Slideshow*

1 – Break the code

55 mins

Students are given some hints about the story and the original ciphers from Arthur Conan Doyle's short story. They have the whole period to break the cipher.

2 – The short story

Homework

Students are given the complete short story to read home, focusing on the part where Sherlock Holmes explains how he managed to break the code.

Synopsis

The story takes place about a year after Mr. Hilton Cubitt married Elsi, a young American lady. She is American, and before the wedding, she asked her husband-to-be to promise her never to ask about her past, as she had had some “very disagreeable associations” in her life.

All is well until Elsie received a letter from the USA, that obviously upsets her, as she throws the letter in the fire. A few days later, pictures of dancing men appear repeatedly, sometimes on pieces of paper, sometimes chalked on a wall, or a door or even a windowsill.

Cubitt calls the famous London detective, Sherlock Holmes. Holmes tells Cubitt that he wants to see every occurrence of the dancing men. He quickly realizes that it is a substitution cipher and cracks it.



Sherlock examining one cipher.
Illustration by Sidney Paget, 1903

The ciphers

