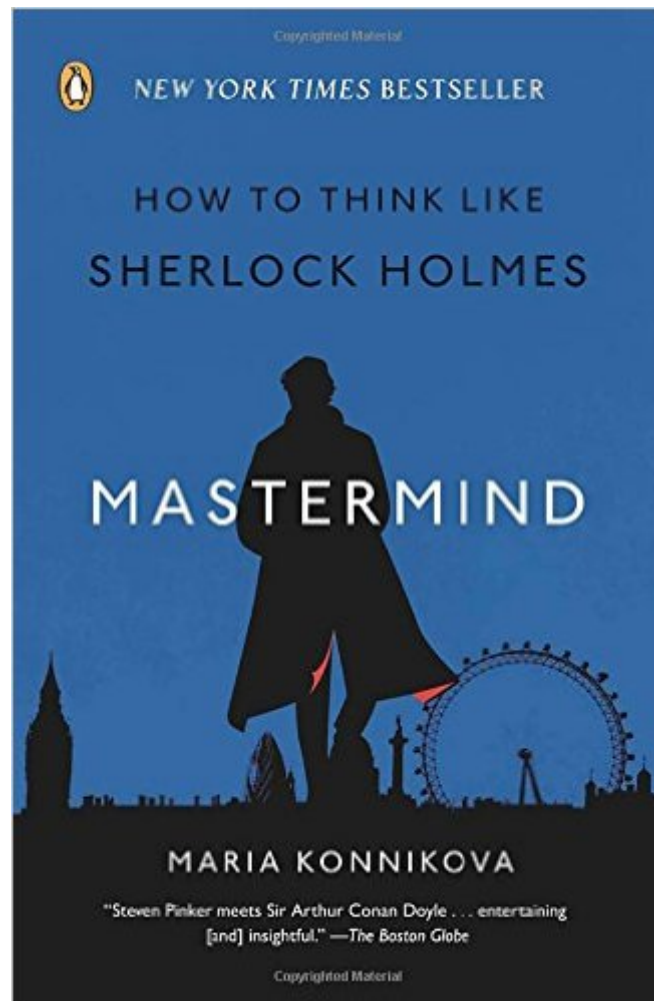


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# Mastermind: How To Think Like Sherlock Holmes



## Synopsis

The New York Times bestselling guide to thinking like literature's greatest detective. No fictional character is more renowned for his powers of thought and observation than Sherlock Holmes. But is his extraordinary intellect merely a gift of fiction, or can we learn to cultivate these abilities ourselves, to improve our lives at work and at home? We can, says psychologist and journalist Maria Konnikova, and in *Mastermind* she shows us how. Beginning with the "brain attic" — Holmes's metaphor for how we store information and organize knowledge — Konnikova unpacks the mental strategies that lead to clearer thinking and deeper insights. Drawing on twenty-first-century neuroscience and psychology, *Mastermind* explores Holmes's unique methods of ever-present mindfulness, astute observation, and logical deduction. In doing so, it shows how each of us, with some self-awareness and a little practice, can employ these same methods to sharpen our perceptions, solve difficult problems, and enhance our creative powers. For Holmes aficionados and casual readers alike, Konnikova reveals how the world's most keen-eyed detective can serve as an unparalleled guide to upgrading the mind.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The first thing that strikes you as you read through the book is that it feels like a collection of essays and articles stretched into a book more than a fluid book itself. Indeed, *Mastermind* was based on a series of articles that the author wrote for two different web sites: Big Think and Scientific American. Another issue with the book is that it isn't quite sure if it wants to be a psychology book,

explaining key cognitive concepts through the framework of Sherlock Holmes, or a pop culture book, looking at what Sherlock Holmes can tell us about cognition and psychology. As a result, it fails to really be either. The book alternates between analyzing the deductive prowess of Sherlock Holmes and explaining current research in cognitive psychology, but the switch between the two is sometimes jarring. There isn't a fluid amalgamation of the two. Furthermore, it struggles to be an elaborate analysis of Holmes' deductive reasoning, with latter chapters reframing concepts from earlier ones. The book takes a very long time to explain too few concepts that require less detail than what is actually given. The book ultimately might be mistitled. One would expect a book subtitled "How to Think Like Sherlock Holmes" to actually have instructive steps and exercises, but it does not. The only clear recommendation is to maintain a journal. Other elements are analyzed, but no actual instructions are given on how to successfully implement them in daily life. For example, after reading extensively about mindfulness, you really only come away with the idea that you have to be more mindful, and very little on how exactly to set up a successful regimen to train yourself to be more mindful.

Sherlock Holmes is the epitome of the mystery genre and the private detective. He uses his senses, his expansive knowledge, and his cunning skill to seek out the truth behind the crimes that come to his door. But what goes on in Sherlock Holmes mind? How does he think? And can we get anywhere near the skill of the Master Detective? While I like Sherlock Holmes well enough, reading two books and seeing a couple movies based on the stories (including the more recent Sherlock Holmes movie with Robert Downey Jr.) is not enough to call me a fan. The primary reason I read this book was for my book club. And honestly, it did sound intriguing - COULD I learn to think like Sherlock Holmes, to see every detail in my surroundings and process it efficiently? I honestly think that people who will adore this book will come in two flavors: 1) Sherlock Holmes fans (don't worry - none of the cases are spoiled whatsoever!). 2) People who can read about how Holmes thinks and figure out how to start thinking like Holmes with little direction from the author. This wasn't a bad book. There were some really interesting psychological concepts. Unfortunately, I already read a book that discussed almost every single one with nearly the same exact examples, called *You Are Not So Smart*. And the latter book, I found to be much better - mostly because it didn't say in the title it would help you to think like Sherlock Holmes and then fail to tell you how to think like Sherlock Holmes (unless the last chapter of steps, using "The Hound of the Baskervilles" was supposed to be the "How To" portion). I guess that one thing is what trips me up the most about this book, what sent this book from "Okay, but really nothing special" to "frustratingly befuddling".

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