

PETS PEEVED

"it was his pet fad" [3GAR]

Pets are a central part of many people's lives. Whether the standard cat or dog, or goldfish or hamsters, or even something more exotic, domesticated animals are a comforting part of existence.

They're also a window into our souls. As Holmes observed in the opening of "The Creeping Man":

"Whoever saw a frisky dog in a gloomy family, or a sad dog in a happy one? Snarling people have snarling dogs, dangerous people have dangerous ones. And their passing moods may reflect the passing moods of others."

*For years, Sherlockians have debated the presence of a pet dog when Watson said "I keep a bull pup" in **A Study in Scarlet**.*

The debate is whether he meant he literally owned a dog, if it was a reference to a kind of pistol, or if it was a euphemism for having a

short temper.

That aside, we know Holmes and Watson didn't keep a pet while at 221B Baker Street.

*However, there was a canine present in **A Study in Scarlet**—one that was in the care of the unnamed landlady:*

"Now would you mind going down and fetching that poor little devil of a terrier which has been bad so long, and which the landlady wanted you to put out of its pain yesterday."

Other pet dogs didn't fare so well in the Canon (see this key to the four-letter abbreviations):

- *Jephro Rucastle's dog Carlo went hungry: "We feed him once a day, and not too much then, so that he is always as keen as mustard."
[COPP]*

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"it was his pet fad" [3GAR] (continued)

- *Sir Eustace Brackenstall was a brute to his wife's dog: "There was a scandal about his drenching a dog with petroleum and setting it on fire—her ladyship's dog, to make the matter worse—and that was only hushed up with difficulty." [ABBE]*
- *Another dog named Carlo was mistreated but this time with poison: "That's what puzzled the vet. A sort of paralysis. Spinal meningitis, he thought." "And the dog! If one were to use such a poison, would one not try it first in order to see that it had not lost its power?" [SUSS]*
- *The hound was maltreated in order to make it more ferocious and menacing: "The beast was savage and half-starved. If its appearance did not frighten its victim to death, at least it would paralyze the resistance which might be offered." [HOUN]*

There's no record of cats being mistreated in the Sherlock Holmes stories, although there were only two instances on record of cats being kept as pets (aside from Dr. Roylott's cheetah):

- *Milverton's household had one: Something rushed out at us, and my heart sprang into my mouth, but I could have laughed when I realized that it was the cat. [MILV]*
- *And Holmes's elderly housekeeper Martha, "a dear old ruddy-faced woman in a country cap. She was bending over her knitting and stopping occasionally to stroke a large black cat upon a stool beside her." [LAST]*

No signs of penguins, though. Not that Baker Street Elementary didn't attempt it...

**WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE IDEA OF
GETTING A PET FOR OUR RESIDENCE AREA...**



**A SMALL DOG
MIGHT BE NICE...**

**NOT SURE I WANT A
CRITTER THAT SNIFFS
OTHER DOGS' REAR
ENDS AND MY CROTCH...**

**IT'S OUR
GREETING**



**WHAT ABOUT A
CAT ?**

**... AND I'LL FIND A DEAD
BIRD OR MOUSE ON MY BED
EACH NIGHT AS A PRESENT...**

**NOT
LIKELY...**



**I GUESS A
PENGUIN IS OUT
OF THE
QUESTION...**

**I WOULD REQUIRE
TWO POUNDS OF
FISH, KRILL, OR
SQUID EACH DAY...
AND A VERY SMALL
ICE FLOE...**

