

# **Research Report on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Red Headed League" *Sherlock: Interactive Adventure* Project Application by Stephen Da Costa Guimaraes**

## **Summary**

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective novel, "The Red-Headed League" is re-imagined by the *Sherlock Interactive Adventure* application produced by HAAB entertainment. 3D animation and artwork is juxtaposed to the actual text and is complete with sound effects and an interface that allows the user to manipulate the scene's architecture. Not only that, but it goes as far as permitting the user to interact and experience the narrative in real-time. Interaction is accomplished through swipe and slide motions which affect the program. The aspirations of the team that created this application are projected by the website; the project strives to "telegraph [their] approach to interactive storytelling and signifies [their] emphasis on the promotion of book-reading perse." The application is an attempt at reforming literature to an extent that engages as well as inspires innovation to digress from a traditionalist template. *Sherlock: Interactive Adventure* is a refreshing multimedia collaboration that yearns to re-vitalize reading and challenge the monotony of literature.

## **Description**

*Sherlock: Interactive Adventure* features about six different interfaces. Tapping on the icon of the application brings it into a portrait view upon startup that features the title page of the novel. In this case, the novel is "The Red-Headed League" and each page's content is word for word from the actual novel. Immediately apparent, is the music which pervades from the background. Swiping the page from right to left is synchronous with turning of the page and also produces a sound effect. Beyond the title page is the start of the novel which utilizes multiple interfaces in the UI. 3D animation is juxtaposed to the text of the novel and serves as its own separate interface. Tilting of the iPad or iPhone transitions the animation into a landscape view that brings fills out the screen. When in this view, reading of the text is not possible, but an additional interface is presented to the user to interact with the animation. A single play button on the left of the frame allows the user to initialize the scene. By implementing the animation, the dialogue of the page plays out. The user is able to track the progress of the scene through a timeline that inhabits the bottom of the page. Furthermore, manipulation of the animation is allowed through swiping which affects the architecture of the image which is often in the form of a panorama. Swiveling the iPad or iPhone back into portrait view brings back the text which is below the animation. Interfacing with the text is accomplished by swiping their fingers in an upward and downward motion, this enables the user to read the entire page of text.

Beyond the content of the text itself, swiping upward at the bottom of any page permits user access to additional interfaces. The first is a row of three buttons labeled "unlock, share, and settings". Like their names suggest, the pressing of any of these names will project additional information. In the case of "unlock" it allows the user to upgrade from the free version of the app for full content. "Share" allows the user to share the app via social media platforms, rate the app itself, and contact the developers. The "settings" page features language control, as well as sound, music, and font manipulation. Below said buttons, are portraits of the pages, which serve

as a timeline. This timeline is an interface that facilitates easy access for the user to specific content within the novel. Tapping on an individual portrait will lead the user to that specific page. Swiping the portraits will reveal the full extent of the timeline.



Figure 1:  
Application Icon



Figure 2: Landscape View of 3D  
Interactive Map



Figure 3: Portrait View of Text  
and Animation (Tablet)



Figure 4: Interactive  
Map and Text (iPhone)



Figure 5: Screenshot of Artistic Content and Research Context

## **Research Context**

The Sherlock: Interactive Adventure app is a paragon of what would be considered “Comparative Media Studies”. This field has been established in attempt to study and contrive potential synergies between literature and digital media. It is an attempt at arguing over the finite nature of the “book” and is realized in the manifestation of this app. The app rejects traditionalist perspectives on literature and cultivates itself as an intriguing schema for future interdisciplinary novels to follow. It is an interjection in the debate over the future of reading as a discourse because the app transcends the barriers that define digital and print media. With this application, mankind takes a step toward refining an ideal template which will embody the convergence of these forms of media.

## **Technical Analysis**

Sherlock: Interactive Adventure was created by HAAB Entertainment with their United States division known as Encore Digital Group. They are a marketing firm that specializes in “three areas of multimedia: digital magazines, digital books, and 3D visualizations optimized for smartphone and tablets”. This application is the first interactive book application designed by HAAB, a firm that predominantly designs interactive magazines. As the title of the app suggests, it combines a classical text with cutting edge navigational technology as well as in depth historical research with provocative 3D animations that accurately depict Doyle's visualization of the novel.

Architecturally speaking, the application upon startup resembles that of a regular novel which separates it substantially from the ebook format. Upon interaction with the application, the user interface of the application transitions into a juxtaposition of text with 3D animation in portrait view. This juxtaposition is initially confusing because it does not define the object exclusively as an eBook or as an interactive application. Landscape view situates the user with an interface that utilizes a collaboration of research, artistry, and impressive animation.

From the perspective of a novel, this app is in danger because of its innovation. The user interface and its juxtaposition of text with animation straddles a very fine line that could potentially label the app as gimmicky. However, the app's impressive utilization of scroll and touch navigation enable it to accomplish an impressive collaboration for multimedia. Sound effects such as music and page-turning provide an immersive atmosphere that is substantial in appropriating the application as a novel, especially through a tablet interface. Unfortunately, the app's innovation itself threatens its genre's practicality.

In portrait view, the layout of the user interface is very close to being cluttered by the animation and the text. Scroll and touch navigation attempt to compensate for the lack of space that is provided for the text. Despite the restrictive environment the app lends itself to, the smooth design and artistry push it more towards being acceptable. Unfortunately, putting the app in landscape view only seems to expand the animated content. So if a user is frustrated with the compacted nature of the actual text, then they are out of luck. That being said, the landscape orientation of the animation does provide a stimulating interaction that connects the content of the text to the author's imagination. In addition to this expanded view, a pleasant dialogue is initiated by this same interface that gives the user access to the audiobook of the novel. Scroll and touch navigation in portrait view reveal additional interfaces at the bottom of the screen map. These interfaces include an illustrative timeline, a settings page, an “unlock” page, and a “share” page. Having the ability within this app to switch between the eBook format, the audiobook format, and the interactive animation provides an adequately engaging experience for such a provocative template.

### **Evaluation Opportunities in Bookwork After New Media**

Sherlock: Interactive Adventure is a very meticulous and daring collaboration of multimedia. With this in mind, it only goes to show how impressive the resources of HAAB Entertainment actually are to combine all these mediums within an acceptable paradigm. It is important to realize however that it may be the case that the sheer complexity of such an application will

render itself impractical. Furthermore, the acquisition of the necessary resources and technology to mass-produce this type of application would be nearly impossible for the average consumer. Despite these reservations, the future of the book within the digital space is in many ways pioneered by this application because it seeks to redefine the finite nature of a book within a limitless digital medium. In terms of the app's design, it could very well establish itself as a stepping stone to the invention of a new multimedia genre.

### **Citations and Further Resources**

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