



Good Fellows

HOLMES IS WHERE THE HEART IS, BUT HE DESERVES SOME COMPANY BY STEVE MIRSKY

Truth is stranger than fiction, it is often said. Well, this is the truth—in October 2002 England's Royal Society of Chemistry granted an honorary fellowship to a fictional character who is no stranger: Sherlock Holmes. A spokesperson for the society was quoted as saying that the recognition was for Holmes's "love of chemistry, and the way that he wielded such knowledge for the public good, employing it dispassionately and analytically."

If any fabricated person deserves membership in a real science organization, Sherlock's surely a (gum)shoo-in. But don't other pretend people and assorted chimerical characters also merit fellowships in various real science societies? In the Holmesian spirit, here are a few nominations.

American Ornithologists' Union: The Road Runner, for research on the predator-prey relationship, specifically within the context of avian flightlessness.

American Institute of Physics: Wile E. Coyote, for his literally groundbreaking studies, performed in collaboration with the Road Runner, on falling objects and rapid deceleration.

International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics: Captain Ahab, for overcoming adversity and maintaining a position of authority despite being differently abled.

American Society of Transplant Surgeons: Dr. Victor Frankenstein, for his innovative research on the art and science of multiple organ, limb, bone—well, pretty much everything—transplantation.

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences: Jean Valjean, for his long-term study of recidivism and techniques involved in successful rehabilitation of convicted felons.

American Society for Adolescent Psychiatry: Holden Caulfield, for his studies of the American postwar adolescent experience.

American Board of Sport Psychology: Mighty Casey, for striking out and thus illustrating the pitfalls of unfounded high self-esteem, while at the same time bringing no joy to Mudville, thereby illustrating the dangers of investment in external sources of gratification.

Society for Endocrinology: Paul Bunyan, for actualizing his personal experience, despite an obvious and potentially debilitating endocrine disorder. (Note: The Sierra Club may protest this citation.)

International Society of Entomology: Gregor Samsa, for his serendipitous study of the social life of the common cockroach.

The International Association for Research in Economic Psychology and the American Society of Agronomy, jointly: Willy Loman, for his enduring efforts to educate others about the importance of being well liked for success in sales and marketing and for his forceful hypothesis that a man is not a piece of fruit.

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy: Anna Karenina, for identifying individualized unhappiness within the family unit.

American Association of Amateur Astronomers: Popeye, for the countless new stars and other celestial objects he discovered—thanks to his spinach-enhanced punches—orbiting Bluto's head.

American Meteorological Society and National Geographic Society, jointly: Dorothy Gale, for employing tornadoes in the discovery of new lands and peoples.

American Heart Association: The Scarecrow, for his tenacious efforts to obtain a heart despite his apparent capacity to get along fine without one.

American Society of Metallurgists: Rumpelstiltskin, for his imaginative insights in the field of transmutation, specifically involving the conversion of common base material into precious metal.

American Podiatric Medical Association: Achilles, for his elucidation of the vital importance of foot health care.

Linguistic Society of America: Presidents Josiah Bartlet (*The West Wing*), Tom Beck (*Deep Impact*), Andrew Shepherd (*The American President*) and James Marshall (*Air Force One*), for their ability to construct complete, grammatically coherent sentences.

And, finally:

Royal Agricultural Society of England: Dr. John Watson, for being the quintessential second banana (and thereby offering evidence disputing the theoretical agronomy of Willy Loman). SA