

Shaggy Dog Stories

From a dog's point of view his master is an elongated and abnormally cunning dog

– Mabel L Robinson

1. John Steinbeck's *Travels With Charley* sees him cross America with a standard poodle. It was to be one of the most commercially successful works of his entire career. Charley shows his appreciation for the bravery of General Custer and Sitting Bull during a visit to Little Big Horn by urinating on the memorial 'with great respect'.
2. Although Sherlock Holmes never had a dog of his own (possibly believing that Baker Street was no place for an animal), he did borrow other people's canines on occasions. For example, he used Toby (half-spaniel, half-lurcher) to track Shelto's killer in *The Sign of Four*. In *The Adventure of the Creeping Man*, he even contemplates penning a monologue on the dog's role in detective work. (And to think you assumed this entry was going to be about *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.)
3. *Three Men in a Boat* are joined by an unruly fox terrier named Montmorency. Unfortunately, as is noted before they set off, he had never cared much for the river, for 'To hang about a stable, and collect a gang of the most disreputable dogs to be found in the town, and lead them out to march round the slums to fight other disreputable dogs, is Montmorency's idea of "life"'. He thus makes 'an awful ass of himself' bathing in it near Marlow.
4. Dickensian crook Bill Sikes has a 'white-coated, red-eyed dog' called Bullseye in *Oliver Twist*. There is no evidence it was related to Jim Bowen, although it did have a nasty temper: 'Dogs are not generally apt to revenge injuries inflicted upon them by their masters; but Mr. Sikes's dog, having faults of temper in common with his owner, and labouring, perhaps at this moment, under a powerful sense of injury, made no more ado but at once fixed his teeth in one of the half-boots. Having given it a hearty shake, he retired, growling, under a form; just escaping the pewter measure which Mr Sikes levelled at his head.'
5. The unnamed narrator of Kafka's short story '*Investigations of a Dog*' is, of course, a dog. Very probably a German dog at that. Naturally, it is a more thoughtful creature than most of our canine heroes, musing 'Every dog has like me the impulse to question, and I have like every dog the impulse not to answer.'
6. There is no record of Jesus having a dog. However, in Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, Pontius Pilate has one called Banga. At the climax of the novel, he follows his master up a moonbeam towards the light, although he probably cocked his leg at it first.

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