

Reading these cases out loud

One page for the grown up. Ages 7 to 10.

A case takes about ten minutes out loud. That is the whole plan. Here is what is worth knowing before you start.

- 1 **Take your time with the first line.** Sherlock is usually doing something ordinary when the knock comes: watering the tomatoes, putting the kettle on. The ordinary part is what makes the strange part strange.
- 2 **Every case stops and asks the reader a question.** Stop with it. Somewhere near the end there is a line like “What do you think is under that statue?” That line is not narration. It is addressed to the child sitting next to you. Read it, look up, and put the book down on your knee.
- 3 **Then wait.** Wait longer than feels comfortable: count to ten in your head. A seven year old thinks slowly on purpose. That silence is the part of the book that does the work, and if you fill it, you have read them a story instead.
- 4 **Take the wrong answer seriously.** If they say it was a ghost, ask why a ghost would be so careful to put the statue back in the same place every morning. A wrong answer that gets a real question back is worth more than a right answer that gets a yes.
- 5 **Do not give it away before the page does.** No nodding, no knowing face, no “interesting”. They watch you far more closely than they watch the book.
- 6 **If they are stuck, give the clues again, not the answer.** Read the three facts back to back: it only happens at midnight, it never happens at any other hour, and by morning the statue is always in exactly the same place. Three facts in a row is usually enough.
- 7 **Read the ending even if they solved it.** Knowing who did it is not the point of the ending. Somebody explains why they did it, and that explanation is the part worth hearing out loud.
- 8 **You are allowed to stop at the question and finish tomorrow.** Children carry a question overnight much better than adults do. And once in a while, let them read a case to you, so that you can be the one who guesses wrong.

The puzzle after the case can always wait until another day.

The question cannot.