

# The Adventures of Shirley Holmes

## Chronological Running Order and Overview

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There are various problems confronting anyone who attempts to establish a chronological running order for the 52 episodes that comprise *The Adventures of Shirley Holmes*. Some of these impediments are specific to individual episodes or confined to certain series; others appear arbitrarily ubiquitous. In any case, a chronological running order must be established on a season by season basis. Such anomalies and inconsistencies are thereby dealt with as they present themselves.

### Series/Season One

The continuity problem that is observable in the first series does not involve the original airing order of the episodes, which, on the surface, is perfectly consistent with the changing seasons and ongoing subplots apparent within said episodes. In fact, it is the only one of the four series which unfolds flawlessly according to such criteria. The continuity problem lies rather in the plot details of at least three of the episodes. More specifically, if we are to focus our attention on dates cited in these three episodes alone, then we must conclude that Season One was filmed in mid to late 1996, originally aired in the spring and summer of 1997, and was set sometimes in the future—the fall and early winter of 1997, and at other times in the past—the fall and early winter of 1996. This is in contrast with the subsequent three series, the episodes of which—again, if we are to base our findings merely on dates referenced in them—all take place some three to six months prior to their original air dates. Therefore, in keeping with the custom of backdating established in the latter three series—and owing to the obvious fact that the actors appear several months younger than what they do in Season Two—I have elected to cite the latter months of 1996 as the setting for Season One.

#### *September, 1996*

SH.101. The Case of the Burning Building

SH.102. The Case of the Ruby Ring

SH.103. The Case of the Liberated Beasts

SH.104. The Case of the Precious Cargo

SH.105. The Case of the Alien Abductions

SH.106. The Case of the Blazing Star

SH.107. The Case of the Maestro's Ghost

This episode proves problematic in the greater scheme of things, for a newspaper story dated November 7th, 1947 is referred to as having had occurred “fifty years ago today”, thus suggesting that the season/series is taking place in the then-future of late 1997. This anomaly can be dismissed if the viewer assumes that Shirley and Bo are merely ‘rounding up’ to a nice even-sounding figure of five decades.

SH.108. The Case of the Mystery Child

SH.109. The Case of the King Of Hearts

SH.110. The Case of the Exact Change

SH.111. The Case of the Cunning Coyote

This episode is problematic, for it establishes ‘indubitably’ that the season/series is taking place

in the then-future. The prescription date on a discarded hives ointment tube belonging to character Nickie Red Deer is 24-05-97. One must assume that she has recently renewed her prescription in (most likely) late November, 1997. Given the fact that episode 113 appears to be set in the past (1996), and all episodes from the subsequent three series are also set in the past, this episode may be deemed non-canonical.

SH.112. The Case of the Singer's Secret

SH.113. The Case of the Second Sight

In this episode, a deadly fire at a theatre—dated September 26th, 1976 in an old newspaper clipping—is described as having taken place “twenty years ago”. The viewer is therefore left to conclude that the episode is set in the past—1996, specifically. This is in conflict with the dates cited and deduced in episodes 107 and 111, but is in keeping with the subsequent three series which are also set in the past. The viewer can also narrow down the date to a certain period of time in a specific month: a poster outside the theatre promoting the play (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) central to the episode features a two-digit date in November—conceivably the 26th or the 28th.

*November 26th(?), 1996*

## Series/Season Two

The fundamental problem with the second series does not involve conflicting dates mentioned or alluded to in the specific plots—indeed, all episodes appear to be set in the summer and early autumn of 1997; but rather the seasonal and other chronological inconsistencies inherent in the original airing order.

I've chosen episodes 203, 212, 208 and 210 as the initial four episodes in my running order on the grounds that they appear to have been filmed the earliest (presumably in late June of 1997) *and* take place when school is out. The subsequent nine listings take place presumably in September and October after school has resumed. The weather, environment and events (e.g., the circus in episode 204) often appear rather summer-like in the first six of these nine episodes (e.g., Bo mentions studying for “midterm exams next week” in ‘The Case of the Wannabe Witch’, which features fully leafed deciduous trees), but this can be explained by the majority of the episodes having been filmed during the summer. An alternative explanation would be that Sussex Academy offers spring/summer semesters. However, this would clash with Bo and Shirley being seen out of class during school hours for consecutive days in episodes 203, 212, 208 and 210. Another explanation would be that summer classes at Sussex do not commence until late July or early August, as they do at some non-fictional private schools. If this is accepted as the case, then said classes would most likely start sometime after July 24th (1997), for Shirley makes it clear in Season Three's ‘Bamboozling Blonde’ episode that July 24th (1998) falls during “school break”. Episodes 211 and 213 are the only ones which were undoubtedly filmed during Autumn, given the decaying foliage and the clothing worn.

*Summer, 1997*

SH.203. The Case of Babyfingers

This episode appears to mark Shirley and Bo's introduction to police detective Tremain.

SH.212. The Case of the Patron Saint

According to the original airing order, Detective Tremain makes his second official appearance in this episode, so it may date from the same filming block as episode 203. The leaves with which Pierre Cayobanda covers his tracks appear to be of the extremely dry and crunchy variety that are found in the spring and early summer; hence my listing of the episode in this slot.

SH.208. The Case of the Missing Marbles

According to an old newspaper article perused by Shirley and Bo, diamond thief Joey Babych

was jailed “fifteen years ago” in 1982. The plot reaches a climax at a ‘Christmas in July’ event. One can therefore establish that this episode takes place in July of 1997.

SH.210. The Case of the Left Thumbprint

*School reopens; Molly returns*

SH.201. The Case of the Wannabe Witch

SH.204. The Case of the Bouncing Baby

SH.205. The Case of the Rising Moon

SH.206. The Case of the Exploding Puppet

SH.207. The Case of the Cryptic Creature

SH.209. The Case of the Mischievous Poltergeist

SH.202. The Case of the Doggone Cats

Given the heavily faded grass and underbrush, and the fact that the teenagers are not attending classes, this episode appears to take place during a school break late in August or over a weekend in early autumn.

SH.211. The Case of the Golden Cave

Considering as how the deciduous leaves are decaying in many scenes, this episode is placed next to last in my running order.

SH.213. The Case of the Broken Oath

Given its obvious autumnal setting and the fact that it gels well thematically with my choice of first episode for the following season/series, this episode retains its position as season closer.

*September or October, 1997*

### **Season/Series Three**

Like the second series, seasonal and other chronological inconsistencies plague the original airing order of Series Three. If anything, the episodes are considerably more jumbled than their predecessors.

To correct this, I have chosen to place Episode 303 at the beginning on the grounds that it compliments No. 213 from the previous series. Nos. 305 and 307 follow because, like No. 303, they focus on Molly’s antics and appear to be set in the late spring or early summer while classes are still in session at Sussex Academy. ‘The Flim Flam Farm’ has been pushed back due to its occurring later in the same school term. Episodes 302, 301, 306, 310 and 311 have been grouped and placed next in the running order because they are set during school break in the summer months. Of these, Nos. 301 and 302 have been switched due to the latter most likely taking place earlier in the summer. Finally, the ‘Miraculous Mine’ / ‘Forbidden Mountain’ story arc has been moved forward owing to Nos. 309 and 308 taking place later in September.

*Alicia Gianelli takes job at the Quazar Cafe*

*Late spring or early summer, 1998*

SH.303. The Case of the Crooked Comic

Given the clothing worn (e.g., shorts, tank tops), this episode takes place in the late spring or early summer of 1998, just prior to ‘The Mysterious Message’ in which this episode is referenced. I’ve chosen to list it as the starting point for Season Three, considering that it references Molly’s online ‘Y’ persona, which is exposed in ‘The Broken Oath’—the final episode in my running order for Season Two. It also marks the final appearance of Stink Patterson, who is expelled from school and assumed to be going on to fame and fortune as a stand-up comic at episode’s end. Stink’s departure would be more logical occurring early in the season/series, as opposed to having the character show up out of nowhere for one episode at a later point.

*Stink Patterson leaves Sussex Academy and disappears from view*

SH.305. The Case of the Mysterious Message

As already mentioned, this episode makes references to the occurrences in episode 303. One must assume that the Redington 'Fun Run' is occurring on a weekend or during a brief school holiday.

SH.307. The Case of the Code of Silence

At the end of 'The Mysterious Message', Bo wonders what underhandedness Molly will be getting up to next. This episode, in which Molly attempts to frivolously expose a prominent young skateboarder's criminal past, supplies the answer.

SH.304. The Case of the Flim Flam Farm

At one point in this episode, Mr Howie awakes Shirley at 5:30 AM and announces that the sun is shining. If we're to assume that the titular family farm of the Howies is located in the same time zone as the Canadian province of Manitoba where the show was filmed, then we must also assume that this episode takes place in late May or early June, 1998, during the latter days of the regular school year. This would be in keeping with the time of sunrise in Manitoba in the spring of 1998.

*End of the school year; Molly assumes lower profile for the duration of summer break*

SH.302. The Case of the Galloping Ghost

Given the weather, the foliage, and the fact that the four teenagers are spending a week at a horse ranch, it is reasonable to assume that this episode takes place in late June or July, after school has closed for the summer.

SH.301. The Case of the Celestial Signal

SH.306. The Case of the Second Take

This episode takes place in early to mid August, 1998. Hype Bravado's performance-art videotape reveals a date of 8 Aug '98.

SH.310. The Case of the Open Hand

Considering as how it features the second appearance of the eccentric would-be performance artist Hype Bravado, this episode may date from the same filming block as No. 306; hence my listing of it in this particular slot.

SH.311. The Case of the Ten Dollar Thief

SH.312. The Case of the Miraculous Mine

A fax sent by Shirley to Pierre Cayobanda in Rwanda is dated "August 23, 98". Obviously, this means that the events of this episode unfold in the latter days of August, 1998.

SH.313. The Case of the Forbidden Mountain

A continuation of the 'Miraculous Mine' episode, No. 313 takes place in the latter days of August and early September, 1998. Given the fact that Joanna Holmes is finally reunited with her family in this episode, bringing a long-running subplot of the show to a close, Nos. 312 and 313 must have been scheduled to conclude the third season/series for the sake of climactic effect.

*Peggy Holmes makes her last official appearance before departing for Fiji*

*Joanna Holmes is reunited with her family*

SH.309. The Case of the Real Fake

Although Shirley and Bo are seen with open notebooks and pencils in the opening scene at the Quazar Cafe, this episode appears to take place while school is out—presumably in the late summer or early fall. The episode unfolds entirely during daylight hours, but at no time are students seen wearing school uniforms or attending classes. As well, Sussex Academy's future is said to be in jeopardy for lack of funds (Molly arranges the Constance Quick reading at the Quazar as a fundraiser). For these reasons, I have chosen to switch its position with No. 308, which shares several of the same guest actors (Sarah Ezer, Marie Stillin, Thomas Milburn Jr), and may originate from the same filming block. One is left to assume that Bo and Shirley are

getting a head start on the upcoming term, keeping up with their studies while the financially challenged school is on hiatus, or attending to non-school-related matters altogether.

*School reopens*

SH.308. The Case of the Bamboozling Blonde

Judging from its growth, Shirley observes that a rare French orchid cutting found in Ms Stratmann's house is "about two months old". The cutting is said to therefore date from late July, so we are left to conclude that this episode is set in the latter days of September, 1998.

*September, 1998*

## **Series/Season Four**

In spite of featuring some intriguing if not essential plots, the much-maligned fourth series of the show suffers on several fronts. The episodes as presented in the original airing order are not only jumbled and 'all-over-the-place' chronologically, but in many cases are also diegetically flawed and simply 'out of character' with the previous three series.

In establishing a chronologically plausible if not entirely satisfying running order, I've chosen to place the two episodes that feature Alicia Gianelli at the beginning. I've grouped the three 'summer break' episodes featuring Joanna Holmes and listed them next. The remaining eight episodes are set during the autumn school term. Of these, I've chosen to bring No. 412 substantially forward, on account of it obviously having been filmed the earliest. I've also chosen to switch Nos. 410 and 411 in order to lend a certain continuity to the Ukrainian theme found in the former and No. 413, which retains its position as season closer and the show's finale. Other than these changes, the latter eight episodes follow the order in which they were originally aired.

*Late Spring, 1999*

SH.402. The Case of the Dead Debutante

This episode is simply non-canonical. Given its ridiculously unbecoming plot (involving an Irish spirit named Megan possessing Alicia Gianelli's body), and the fact that part-time waitress Alicia appears to be living at the dorm again, it does not fit properly into any series/season. I have placed it at the beginning of the series, considering as how it coincides with the latter stages of the school year (i.e., Megan's spirit is returning during the prom season) and features the second to last appearance of Alicia Gianelli, who does not appear in any other school-based episodes in the series.

*End of the school year*

*Summer, 1999*

SH.407. The Case of the Perfect Boyfriend

This episode is also non-canonical. It is obviously based on a script left over from the third series/season, given the references to the World Cup, which had taken place in France the previous year (1998). It follows shakily on the heels of 'The Dead Debutante' if one interprets Bo's quote about watching "game 7 of the Cup finals" as a reference to NHL hockey's Stanley Cup finals in June. This, however, does not explain the French music and Eiffel Tower souvenirs at the Quazar Cafe. Also, Bo is driving already, which seems highly irregular, given the fact that he would have been barely sixteen in June of 1999—at least according to the birth date (May or June of 1983) revealed on his driver's license in Episode 413.

*Alicia Gianelli leaves her job at the Quazar and drops out of sight*

SH.409. The Case of the Puzzle From The Past

Given the fact that 'The Dead Debutante' is the only fourth-season episode excerpted, and the fact that Shirley is wearing the same satiny blouse that she wears in 'The Perfect Boyfriend', it logically follows that this flashback episode should be placed third in the running order.

SH.403. The Case of the Vanishing Virus

Judging from the fading foliage and the jackets and long trousers worn, both Nos. 403 and 406 appear to have been shot in early Autumn. However, they are obviously set during the summer break, judging from the absence of school scenes and uniforms throughout stories that unfold over a number of days. The viewer is left to assume that both episodes take place during a cold spell in late summer.

SH.406. The Case of the Skeleton In The Closet

At one point in this episode Joanna Holmes states, “I thought we agreed: no more secrets”. This is a reference to a family conversation that takes place in ‘The Vanishing Virus’. It therefore makes sense that this episode should immediately follow No. 403 chronologically.

*School reopens; Molly returns*

SH.412. The Case of the King Arthur’s Alibi

Considering as how the leaves on many trees are yellowing, and yet it’s still light out when the opening scene takes place sometime after 8 PM, it’s reasonable to assume that this episode is set sometime in early September. This would be in keeping with the time of sunset in Manitoba in the early autumn of 1998. The teenagers are never seen in class or in uniform in a story that unfolds over a two- or three-day period. However, Bo points out that Mr Howie has warned his class that they will “flunk History” if they don’t put in an appearance at the Arthurian Society’s feast; and Bart mentions making papier mache replicas of the Holy Grail “last week in History club”; so the viewer must assume that the episode takes place over a weekend early in the fall semester.

SH.401. The Case of the Calculated Crime

SH.404. The Case of the Virtual Zeus

Episodes 401 and 404 border on the non-canonical, owing to the fact that they are supposed to take place three months apart despite there having been no obvious change in season. Given the fact that Bo is not seen driving, as well as the proximity of Matt’s second and third appearances to his first, they could have fit nearly as well in the latter half of the previous series/season. I have chosen to list them back to back in this slot on the grounds that Alicia Gianelli is not present (neither at school nor the Quazar Cafe), and by rationalising that Bo’s statement (in ‘Virtual Zeus’) regarding Sussex’s “three months” without Mathematics may be an exaggeration. Both episodes appear to have been filmed in early autumn (Professor Pauling’s discarded ATM receipt is dated 09/03/99—ostensibly referencing the ninth day of September), but Bart mentions mid-term exams taking place “next week” in ‘The Calculated Crime’. This would place the first episode in this two-part story arc sometime in mid October, presumably.

SH.405. The Basket Case

SH.408. The Case of the Falling Star

SH.411. The Case of the Hidden Heart

In this episode, Shirley remarks that Molly has been boarding her horse at Springfield Stables for four years—“ever since she came to Redington” (presumably in 1995). This is in keeping with what we learn of Molly’s dubious antics at a previous Redington school, in Episode 109 (‘The King of Hearts’) from the first series.

SH.410. The Case of the Desperate Dancer

A clipping from a Ukrainian newspaper is dated 1979, and is described by Bo as being “from like twenty years ago”. This helps establish the episode as being set in 1999. By switching its position with No. 411, the focus on the Sawchuk family’s Ukrainian heritage gels better with the latter moments of ‘The Dragon’s Breath’, in which Bo reveals to Shirley that he’ll be finishing his schooling as an exchange student in Ukraine.

SH.413. The Case of the Dragon’s Breath

A closeup of Bo’s driver’s license in this, the final episode, reveals an expiry date of May 31st,

2001. It also states that he was born in 05 or 06 / 83—ostensibly May or June of 1983.  
*Late 1999 (possibly early Christmas season, considering as how trees and buildings are strung with numerous lights in opening street scene)*