

## Key Context for The Sign of Four

### **The Victorian Era**

- Victorian patriarchal society (white, upper-middle class men) and their outlook on how society should be.
- Social Darwinism and scientific findings relating to measurements of the size and shape of your skull
- Cocaine and the 1868 Pharmacy Act
- The development of Science in the Victorian era – when was the word ‘Scientist’ invented?
- Child poverty and child labour – orphanages, the workhouse, the poor law
- London in the 1800s – wealth distribution – Charles Booth’s poverty map
- Arthur Conan Doyle – his background, his writing process, his beliefs
- The publication process of the Sherlock Holmes stories and their public reception – serialisation of novels
- The history of the detective/crime writing genre – influences on Doyle – Edgar Allan Poe
- Features of Gothic Literature and its popularity in the 1800s (Victorian Sensation Fiction)
- The invention of the London Metropolitan Police service and public opinion
- Attitudes to race (Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill)
- Attitudes to women (domestic sphere and women’s suffrage – Millicent Fawcett)
- British Imperialism and Empire – influences of the British in India and vice versa (fashion and culture) – The East India Company
- The Indian Mutiny and the Cawnpore Massacre
- Convict colonies in the 1800s