Camping with Holmes and Watson

Somewhere in Wales two men are on a camping holiday. One is Sherlock Holmes, the world famous detective. The other is, of course, Dr. Watson. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are on holiday, walking across Wales.

They have walked all day. They have walked over many lovely hills. At last they have reached a little valley where there is a small camp site. They have put up their little tent. They have cooked and eaten a simple meal. They have washed up their plates and cups in a stream. The sun has set over the hills. They have sat talking as their little fire slowly goes out for the night. Sherlock Holmes has smoked a pipe. Dr. Watson has written in his diary. They have unrolled their sleeping bags and brushed their teeth.

After a long day’s walking in the brisk fresh air of Wales they are tired. They crawl into their tent and wriggle into their sleeping bags. They lie in their tent, snug in their bags. Above them the wind gently blows on the roof of their tent. The night is very peaceful and quiet. The only sound is an owl calling as he hunts. They fall into a deep sleep.

But then something wakes Sherlock Holmes.

He pokes Dr Watson and says:

Student: Watson, wake up!

*Tutor: What? What? Eh?*

Wake up, Watson!

*Holmes! What’s going on?*

Look up and tell me what you see, Watson!

*But I was asleep, Holmes. Fast asleep!*

Yes, I know. But this is important. Look up, and tell me what you see.

*Why? What’s going on Holmes? I was sleeping so nicely.*

But this really is important, Watson. Look up and tell me what you see.

*I see millions of stars, Holmes.*

Excellent, Watson. Really excellent.

*Good. Can I go back to sleep now, Holmes?*

Not quite, Watson.

*Why? What’s going on? Why can’t I go back to sleep, Holmes?*

You’ve told me you see millions of stars when you look up.

*That’s right. Millions and millions of stars. Can we sleep now?*

Not quite, Watson. Not quite. I want you to tell me what that means.

*How do you mean?*

The fact that you can see millions of stars when you look up. What does that tell you, Watson?

*Can’t this wait until morning, Holmes?*

Watson, this is important. You can see millions of stars when you look up. But what does that tell you, Watson? What does that fact tell you?

*Oh alright. Well, it tells me that the universe is huge, Holmes. It tells me that there are millions and millions of planets like ours, in millions of galaxies.*

Yes, I suppose it does tell you that. Up to a point you are right, Watson. But surely it tells you more than that?

*Well, I suppose it also tells me that Saturn is passing into Leo. That is very lucky for those born under the sign of Leo.*

Hmmm. Let us go a little further, Watson. Doesn’t the fact that you can see millions and millions of stars when you look up tell you anything else?

*Well, so far as time goes, it tells me that it is probably about three o’clock in the morning.*

Well, yes, but …

*Time we should be sleeping, by the way, Holmes. Can I go back to sleep now?*

Soon, Watson, soon. We have to solve the mystery first. It’s really important. What does seeing millions and millions of stars above us tell you?

*Umm…*

Think, Watson!

*Well, it reminds me that our planet is only one among millions and millions of other planets. This reminds me that our lives are tiny compared to all that. We are only a very, very tiny part of a huge universe.*

Yes, I agree. Our planet is only a very, very tiny part of a huge universe. I agree with you. But try to think some more, Watson. What do the stars you can see above our heads tell you?

*They tell me that if there is a God, then He must be truly wonderful to have created such a fantastic universe.*

I’m not sure you quite understand my question, Watson. It’s simple enough, surely? When you look up, you see millions and millions of stars. What does this tell you?

*Well, it tells me that the weather is still very good. The sky is clear. There are no clouds at all. We will probably have a fine and sunny day tomorrow.*

Watson, sometimes you drive me mad. Here we are, camping in Wales. We crawl into our tent and fall asleep. Then, suddenly, we are awake. Now, when we look up, we see millions and millions of stars. But you cannot tell me what that means!

*Well, Holmes, I’m sorry. I know I am not as clever as you. There must be some clue I am missing. There must be something I cannot see.*

Watson, the clues are above your head. Millions and millions of them. You have seen them. They are stars. The question is, what does that mean?

*You’ll have to help me here, Holmes. I know I can see millions and millions of stars above my head. I have told you what that tells me. Now you will have to help me. What does it tell you?*

Watson, I will tell you what that tells me. It tells me that someone has stolen our tent.