# Table of Contents

Preface 11  
Introduction: Elementary, My Dear Wilson 13  
The *House* Online Fan Community 16  
Finding a Holmes in (the) House: An Interview with a *House*-Loving Holmesian 17  

Differential Diagnosis: A Character Study Wrapped in a Mystery Wrapped in a Medical Procedural 21  
Department of Diagnostic Medicine? 21  
Chasing Zebras 22  
Case in Point: A Closer Look at “Sports Medicine” 26  
Formulas Are Made to Be Broken 30  
Drama vs. Medical Accuracy: A Balancing Act 31  
Diagnostic Medicine: Life Imitating Art 33  

Words on the Page: Crafting *House, M.D.* 35  
When It Doesn’t “Fit” 36  
Plucking Threads 37  
A Script Is Born 38  
A Flair for Their Characters 40  

From Bach to Eddie Van Halen: The Music of *House, M.D.* 47  
An Emotional Language 47  
Musical Diagnosis 49  
The *House* Soundtrack 50  
Sometimes You Might Get What You Need 51  

House’s Haunts 53  
House’s House 53  
House at Work 55  
The “Ball of Unknown Origin” 56  
House’s Inner Sanctum 57  
The Mutual Admiration of Stephen Colbert and Dr. Gregory House 58  
Around the Corner to Wilson’s Place 58  
The Dean’s Domain 59  

God, Religion, and Hypocrisy 61
Mad, Bad, and Dangerous to Know: Dr. Gregory House 63
A Literary Hero on Prime-Time TV 64
House’s Genius 65
Is It Luck — Or Is It Memorex? 67
In the Orbit of House’s Energy Field 68
House’s Troubled Past and Painful Present 70
The Disillusioned Idealist 72
The Buraku of Princeton-Plainsboro Teaching Hospital 74
Survival 101: Change and Adaptability 75
Rebel with a Cause: The Maverick of Princeton-Plainsboro 77
The Fine Line Between Right and Wrong 78
A Sacred Calling: House’s Passion for Medicine 80
When House’s Objectivity Fails Him 81
Feeling Too Little — Or Too Much? 83
Mad and Bad . . . 85
. . . And Dangerous: House’s Self-Destructiveness 87
House the Linguist 88
. . . Yet Vulnerable 89
Broken: House, Pain, and Drugs 91
Doing the Right Thing: House and Ethics 99
House’s Influence 101
The Case of Ezra Powell 102
Boy Wonder Oncologist: Dr. James (“Jimmy”) Wilson 105
Wilson’s Defining Moment 106
Symbiosis or Codependence? 108
Amber and House 110
Wilson in Love 111
The Impact of Amber’s Death: A Closer Look at “Dying Changes Everything” 112
It’s Not All About the Neediness 114
Smart, Funny, and Full of Sass: Dr. Lisa Cuddy 117
Managing Dr. House 119
Enter Rachel 123
An Overcapacity for Caring: Dr. Allison Cameron 127
Cameron’s First Husband 129
Cameron’s “Insane Moral Compass” 130
House and Cameron 133
Cameron and Chase 135
His Father Made a Phone Call: Dr. Robert Chase 137
   The Transformation and Redemption of Robert Chase 138
   Family Matters 140
   Chase and Cameron 140
Like House, But Nicer: Dr. Eric Foreman 143
   Looking Out for Number 1 144
   A Welcome Thorn in House’s Side 146
   Ready for Prime Time? 147
   House’s Fellows: Imprinting on the Daddy Doc 149
   The Love Doctor 149
The Enigmatic, Unlucky 13: Dr. Remy Hadley 151
   “Some People Take Pills; I Cheat”: Dr. Christopher Taub 155
   The Tragedy of Lawrence Kutner: Dr. Lawrence Kutner 159

Guide to the Guide 163
   Cast of Characters 165
Season 1: Patients Make Us Miserable 169
   An Odd Sort of Humility: A Closer Look at “DNR” 182
   Struggling to Do the “Right Thing”: A Closer Look at “Role Model” 194
   Before the Leg 201
Season 2: Settling into the Story 205
   House and Medical Mistakes 217
   House’s Windmill — Death: A Closer Look at “All In” 233
   Ketamine: A Closer Look at “No Reason” 243
Season 3: Finding Meaning 245
   Setting Up the Downfall: A Closer Look at “Meaning” 247
   The Happiness Scale: A Closer Look at “Lines in the Sand” 254
Season 4: A Shake-up at Princeton-Plainsboro Teaching Hospital 287
   Learning to Be a Doctor from a Doctor Like House 298
   Diagnostics Team 2.0 304
   Truth Begins in Lies: A Closer Look at “It’s a Wonderful Lie” 307
   People Don’t Change: A Closer Look at “Don’t Ever Change” 311
   A Truth Just Beyond His Grasp: A Closer Look at “House’s Head” 317
   To the Limit: A Closer Look at “Wilson’s Heart” 320
Season 5: Upheaval and the Ultimate Escape 323
   Coincidence vs. Divine Intervention: A Closer Look at “Unfaithful” 345
   On the Edge of Reality: A Closer Look at “Under My Skin” 358
   It’s a Nice Story: A Closer Look at “Both Sides Now” 362
   From the Writer’s Mouth . . . 364
   Kutner’s Death and House’s Crash 365
Season 6: People Don’t Change . . . Or Do They? 367
   A New Journey Begins: A Closer Look at “Broken” 370
   Diagnosing Dr. House: A Conversation with a Clinical Psychologist 374
   On the Couch with Dr. House: A Closer Look at “Baggage” 411
   Redemption: A Closer Look at “Help Me” 416

Appendix A: And When It’s Very, Very Good: Awards for House, M.D. 421
Appendix B: “Time Is Not a Fixed Construct”: Continuity and the Series
   Timeline 423

Acknowledgments 428
Dr. Gregory House is an unrepentant jerk. He’s rude, brusque, and harsh — suffering no fools and taking no prisoners. He’s not conventionally pretty; he’s not young. In addition, he’s crippled, limping along with a cane. Yet, he’s the central character on the hit television series, *House, M.D.* (just *House*, for short). It’s a completely unlikely proposition. How do you sell the network on a series created around such an irredeemable bastard? Who would even want to watch it? Millions do.

*House* is one of the highest-rated television series on American television. More than that, it’s a hit around the world — from the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Eastern Europe to the Middle East, and in lands as far flung as Australia and Hong Kong. In Canada, *House* has even outranked *American Idol*! Eurodata TV Worldwide, which tracks and ranks television across the globe, reported in June 2009 that *House* was the most-watched television show worldwide, with nearly 82 million viewers tuning in from 66 countries.

Why would more than 80 million viewers tune in week after week to see Dr. Gregory House verbally spar with his patients, staff, and colleagues at Princeton-Plainsboro Teaching Hospital? There has to be something more to it (and to him) than just a brilliant jerk packing a stethoscope and a toxic tongue.

Is it the bizarre medical cases? That’s probably one reason, and the starting point for most episodes. Inspired by physician Lisa Sanders’ *New York Times* feature “Diagnosis,” the *House* writing team, with creator David Shore at the helm, conjure the most unusual of cases, fitting for an elite Department of Diagnostic Medicine.

Perhaps the series owes its success to the snappy dialogue: the quick wit and rapid-fire pace of the writing. The show’s scripts are certainly dense and swiftly paced: a stark counterpoint to the physically disabled and slow-of-foot Gregory House. And the humor, with its one-liner “House-isms” and snarky banter, supplies balance to the intensity of the weekly medical and character stories.

Or do people simply live vicariously through House’s unfiltered voice? He
is certainly capable of saying things the likes of which we normal, well-adjusted worker bees can only dream. Some may be intrigued by House’s uniquely personal code of ethics. Or perhaps House’s personal struggles resonate with us.

Much credit in making *House* compelling television goes to the nuanced and genuine performance of Hugh Laurie, who stars as the genius diagnostician with serious personality issues. Through his expressive eyes and masterful acting, Laurie’s flawless interpretation of House’s frustrations, fears, hopes, and hurts guides us through House’s morass of bullshit and elaborate game playing and deep into his heart and soul.

“Hugh has contributed not only in front of the camera — and has contributed in a way nobody else could — he is such a partner. Contributing in so many ways from the very beginning, which is why the show is so successful.”

— Showrunner/executive producer/director Katie Jacobs, January 2009 interview

It’s ironic that executive producer Bryan Singer, the director of the *House* pilot, had difficulty casting the role of the quintessentially American Gregory House with an American actor. It was not until Laurie, legendary British comedian (and novelist, musician, and actor), sent in an audition tape, complete with perfect American accent, that Singer found an “American” actor capable of handling the complex role. But perhaps that’s because Dr. Gregory House has more in common with a particular English literary hero than he has with any American television character.


Like his Victorian ancestor, House applies logic, reasoning, an encyclopedic knowledge (of everything), plus his intuition to solve medical mysteries and save lives. Holmes uses cocaine to forestall boredom; House uses Vicodin for more than just the pain in his leg.

Unlike the British Sherlock Holmes, House is very much American. Yet, the Eton- and Cambridge-educated Laurie — a quintessentially British actor —
completely captures the character. It’s no accident that Holmes fans have often suggested Laurie as the heir apparent to the role of Holmes.

But Sherlock Holmes isn’t House’s only literary or pop culture ancestor. House’s heritage includes a long history of literary and cinematic heroes and antiheroes. Part Byron, part Sherlock, a bit of Quincy, M.E., perhaps a hint of Dr. Kildare’s mentor Gillespie, some of the The Dark Knight’s Batman, and a generous dollop of truth-seeking antihero Fox Mulder (The X-Files), House joins the ranks of classic dark angels and iconoclasts.

Conceived by David Shore (Hack, Family Law, and Law & Order), a Canadian former corporate attorney, House was intended to fit into a network need for a new “procedural” series. Shore’s partner in this venture, writer Paul Attanasio (Quiz Show, The Sum of All Fears, The Good German) “came up with this medical idea that was like a cop procedural. The suspects were the germs,” Shore noted in an interview with Dylan Callaghan for the Writers Guild of America. Or, as Shore put it in an interview for the House season one DVD set, they were “trying to do a cop kind of show in a medical setting . . . a group of doctors trying to diagnose the undiagnosable.” But astutely, Shore recognized that a “procedural” was simply not enough.

“I quickly began to realize that we needed that character element. I mean, germs don’t have motives,” he said in the Callaghan interview. Shore told John Doyle of Canada’s Globe and Mail, House is “not about the medical stories as much as it is about that character who’s so clever, philosophical, and ethical.” Around that character, Shore and company — Attanasio, executive producer Katie Jacobs, and Bryan Singer — constructed a well-realized universe where this tough, clever, strangely ethical, abrasive, and wounded Dr. Gregory House could play.

House debuted November 16, 2004, with an audience of slightly more than 7 million, and ranked 62nd in the ABC Medianet Weekly Television Rankings. Critics generally liked the show, but most wondered how long a show about bizarre illnesses — and featuring such a cranky, even misanthropic, doctor — could really last on network television.

The series viewership dropped below 7 million by its second week and stayed there until January, when an a little show called American Idol premiered its fourth season in January 2005. The coveted post-Idol spot on Fox’s schedule was a welcome elixir to the fledgling series. Curious American Idol viewers stayed tuned to watch the new series and got hooked. Following Idol, House nearly doubled its viewership to more than 12 million viewers, and soared from 53rd to 25th in the national rankings.

Produced by NBC Universal, House was nearly rejected by Fox, which had
purchased the rights to the show nearly a year before it went on the air. Fox’s viewership is typically young, and the network “powers that be” were concerned about airing a series about a craggy middle-aged misanthrope, according to Shore.

Although the show seemed to have hit its peak in United States in season three, especially with its coveted post–American Idol slot, the show has maintained a viewership well above 12 million for Fox Network’s first-run broadcast, with many more tuning in for the rebroadcast on the Universal-owned USA Network the following week. Although the numbers dipped somewhat when House moved to Monday nights at 8 p.m. after losing the American Idol lead-in entirely, they have remained consistently strong. Even in its sixth season, the series has the ability to draw 14 million (“Remorse,” 6.12) to 16 million viewers (“Broken,” 6.01, 6.02), even without the lead-in.

No one knows how much longer House will remain on the air. Entering its seventh season as this book goes to press, the series seems to still be going strong. There appear to be no end to bizarre medical cases, and the tireless Hugh Laurie continues to pour his soul into every performance, even directing an episode during season six (“Lockdown,” 6.17). But every series ends eventually, and whether it’s Laurie’s desire to return to the U.K. or to go on to other things (or if the series simply runs out of steam, which would be a terrible shame), it will end someday.

Will House go riding off into the sunset on his motorcycle with Dean of Medicine Lisa Cuddy sitting behind him? Perhaps ex-girlfriend Stacy, former fellow Dr. Allison Cameron — or maybe even best friend James Wilson? Or will the series end on a more somber note? No one knows, but until that time, we’ll sit mesmerized by one of television’s most compelling characters, hoping the journey never ends.

The House Online Fan Community

The Internet is host to dozens (if not hundreds) of places where you can explore your House passion. Medicine your thing? PoliteDissent.com takes apart the medicine of each episode, grading it for accuracy as well as story quality. Interested in one or another of the relationships on the show? Explore the numerous Live Journal communities that specialize in everything from “Hameron” (House/Cameron) and “Huddy” (House/Cuddy) to “Hilson” (House/Wilson) and any other pairing your imagination can conjure. Fox.com
hosts the official *House, M.D.* site with an active discussion forum, videos, links, and a *House* wiki. And of course for in-depth discussion of everything *House*, you must visit *Blogcritics* magazine’s *House* feature “Welcome to the End of the Thought Process: An Introspective Look at *House, M.D.*”

There are a multitude of other blogs and comprehensive websites provide the discerning *House* fan with endless hours of entertainment and much opportunity to talk, read, debate, and argue with fellow fans about everything from House’s latest scheme to Cuddy’s latest hairstyle. For those so inclined there are places where you can find “spoilers” to divulge what’s coming up on the series, and fan fiction sites where you read some excellent (and even novel-length) stories about the show’s characters with content ratings from “G” to “Adults Only.”

The online community is incredibly diverse, with pre-teens to grandparents participating in the discussion. The community is admittedly skewed female, but you’ll find fans from all over the globe with whom to share your interest in the series. It’s easy to locate the perfect group for your specific interest in the show: just Google, click, and shop around.

---

**Finding a Holmes in (the) House**

*An Interview with a *House*-Loving Holmesian*

As you might imagine, a television series (however loosely) based on the Sherlock Holmes stories might incorporate a nod or two (or 10) to the famed literary series. For example, observant viewers might have noticed *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* on House’s living room end table during seasons four and five.

The show creators have scattered numerous subtle — and not so subtle — Holmesian references throughout the series fabric since episode one. However, the most interesting connection between the two characters originates in the creation of Sherlock Holmes himself.

Holmes’ creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a physician as well as a writer, trained at the University of Edinburgh under Dr. Joseph Bell (a physician to Queen Victoria). Bell would often amaze and amuse his friends at parties by diagnosing a roomful of people on the spot, using only his keen observational skills. Conan Doyle, of course, later went on to write the Sherlock Holmes stories and novels, loosely basing his creation on his amazingly observant mentor.

Dr. House has also occasionally demonstrated the same flair, for example, diagnosing a clinic waiting room full of patients in the series’ third episode.