

# Maurice Leblanc

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**Maurice-Marie-Émile Leblanc** (11 December 1864 - 6 November 1941) was a French novelist and writer of short stories, known primarily as the creator of the fictional gentleman thief and detective Arsène Lupin, often described as a French counterpart to Conan Doyle's creation Sherlock Holmes.



Maurice Leblanc.

## Biography

Leblanc was born at Rouen in Normandy. After studying in several countries and dropping out of law school, he settled in Paris and began to write fiction, both short crime stories and longer novels; his novels, heavily influenced by writers like Gustave Flaubert and Guy de Maupassant, were critically admired but met with little commercial success.

Leblanc was largely considered little more than a writer of short stories for various French periodicals when the first Arsène Lupin story appeared in a series of short stories serialized in the magazine *Je Sais Tout*, starting in No. 6, dated 15 July 1905. Clearly created, at editorial request, under the influence of, and in reaction to, the wildly successful Sherlock Holmes stories, the roguish and glamorous Lupin was a surprise success and Leblanc's fame and fortune beckoned. In total, Leblanc went on to write twenty-one Lupin novels or collections of short stories.

The character of Lupin might have been based by Leblanc on French anarchist Marius Jacob, whose trial made headlines in March 1905; it is also possible that Leblanc had also read Octave Mirbeau's *Les 21 jours d'un neurasthénique* (1901), which features a gentleman thief named Arthur Lebeau, and seen Octave Mirbeau's comedy *Scrupules* (1902), whose main character is a gentleman thief. It was not influenced by E. W. Hornung's gentleman thief, A.J. Raffles, created in 1899, whom Leblanc had not read.

By 1907 Leblanc had graduated to writing full-length Lupin novels, and the reviews and sales were so good that Leblanc effectively dedicated the rest of his career to working on the Lupin stories. Like Conan Doyle, who often appeared embarrassed or hindered by the success of Sherlock Holmes and seemed to regard his success in the field of crime fiction as a detraction from his more "respectable" literary ambitions, Leblanc also appeared to have resented Lupin's success. Several times, he tried to create other characters, such as private eye

Jim Barnett, but eventually merged them with Lupin. He continued to pen Lupin tales well into the 1930s.

Leblanc also wrote two notable science fiction novels: *Les Trois Yeux* (1919) in which a scientist makes televisual contact with three-eyed Venusians, and *Le Formidable Evènement* (1920), in which an earthquake creates a new landmass between England and France

Leblanc was awarded the Legion d'Honneur for his services to literature, and died in Perpignan in 1941. Georgette Leblanc was his sister.

## **Selected bibliography**

- *Une femme* (1893)
- *Armelle et Claude* (1897)
- *Voici des ailes* (1898)
- *Les Lèvres jointes* (1899)
- *L'Enthousiasme* (1901)
- *Un vilain couple* (1901)
- *Gueule rouge* (1904)
- *80 chevaux* (1904)
- *La Pitié*, Play (1906)

- *L'Aiguille creuse* (The Hollow Needle) (1909)
- *La Frontière* (1911)
- *Les Trois Yeux* (1919)
- *La Robe d'écaille rose* (1920)
- *Le Formidable Événement* (1920)
- *Le Cercle rouge* (1922)
- *Dorothée, danseuse de corde* (1923)
- *La Vie extravagante de Balthazar* (1925)
- *Le Prince de Jéricho* (1930)
- *Les Clefs mystérieuses* (1932)
- *La Forêt des aventures* (1933)
- *Le Chapelet rouge* (1934)
- *L'Image de la femme nue* (1934)
- *Le Scandale du gazon bleu* (1935)
- *De minuit à sept heures* (1937)

## External links

- Works by Maurice Leblanc at Project Gutenberg

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