

The Hound of the Baskervilles Study Guide

The Hound of the Baskervilles by Arthur Conan Doyle

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Overview

For many years, the region around the Baskerville estate was poor and backward, but when Sir Charles Baskerville returns to claim his estate, the region again begins to prosper. By devoting his vast fortune—earned in business—to better the community, Sir Charles fills the long-empty role of leadership that is the duty of the Baskervilles. But into this otherwise happy and orderly society comes disorder in the form of two utterly evil men. One is a convicted mass murderer escaped from prison, who lurks about on the moors; the other is Seldon, a clever criminal, who is insidious enough to corrupt the faithful Baskerville servants into the service of evil.

Even more unsettling is the terrible Hound of the Baskervilles. When the good Sir Charles Baskerville is murdered, an ancient curse on the family is revealed that now threatens Sir Henry, the new heir. For generations, the Baskerville family has been victimized by a giant, spectral hound that prowls the moors. The hound now seems to be loose again; it has claimed Sir Charles and appears ready to strike again. Is this a supernatural creature or merely part of someone's devious plot to supplant the rightful heirs of Baskerville Hall?

Sherlock Holmes is called upon to solve the mystery, and the intricate story builds to an extraordinary climax when the hound attacks: "Fire burst from its open mouth, its eye glowed with a smoldering glare, its muzzle and hackles and dewlap were outlined in flickering flame." A fiend from hell seems loosed upon Sir Henry.

About the Author

Arthur Conan Doyle was born on May 22, 1859, in Edinburgh, Scotland.

As a young man he seemed destined for a career in medicine. In 1876 he attended the University of Edinburgh Medical School. There he met Joseph Bell, whose deductive powers and dramatic flair he would later embody in the character of Sherlock Holmes. In the early 1880s he served as a medical officer on an Arctic whaling ship and ship's surgeon on a voyage to West Africa. By the summer of 1882, he had settled in the town of Southsea in the south of England. In 1885 he received his medical degree. Even after he was a well-established writer, he continued to pursue his medical education, becoming an eye specialist. His medical practice was unsuccessful, leaving him plenty of free time to write.

His first story was "The Mystery of Sarassa Valley," published in October 1879 in Chamber's Journal. He had trouble finding a publisher for his first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, which eventually appeared in Beeton's Christmas Annual for 1887. It and its successor, the novel *The Sign of Four*, published in 1890, were not popular at first. Conan Doyle himself regarded these early Holmes novels as mere entertainments to bring in some money while he concentrated on historical novels. He hoped to become a new Walter Scott, who had earned fame and respect with such novels as *Ivanhoe* (1820).

In 1891 Conan Doyle agreed to supply the new magazine *the Strand* with a series of Sherlock Holmes short stories.

"A Scandal in Bohemia" appeared in the magazine's July 1891 issue and was a popular sensation. For the rest of his life Conan Doyle was pressured by publishers and the general public to write more stories about Sherlock Holmes.

He tried to stop writing the stories a number of times. After his initial contract with *the Strand* was fulfilled, he demanded an outrageously large amount of money for new stories, hoping that *the Strand* would refuse. Instead, the magazine eagerly met his asking price. Then he tried killing Holmes off in "The Final Problem," the last of his second run of Holmes stories for *the Strand*. He received hate mail for killing Holmes and was besieged by publishers offering him huge sums of money to write more about Holmes. An American publisher finally offered more money than Conan Doyle could resist, and he agreed to write *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Writing about Holmes offered Conan Doyle a ready way to earn money for the rest of his life. But it was the character of Professor Challenger rather than Sherlock Holmes that was Conan Doyle's favorite creation. In 1912 he published a science-fiction adventure, *The Lost World*, featuring the professor.

The death of his son during World War I led Conan Doyle to seek out spiritualists and inspired in him a religious dedication to the spiritualist movement.



This embarrassed friends and business associates. Spiritualism found its way into nearly all of Conan Doyle's writings of the 1920s, and even the hardheaded Professor Challenger is converted in *The Land of Mist*. Conan Doyle died on July 7, 1930, at Crowborough, Sussex.

Many critics have pointed out the similarities between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson and their creator Arthur Conan Doyle. In real life, Conan Doyle sometimes employed detection techniques similar to those of Holmes to solve mysterious crimes. In the most famous such case, he proved that George Edalji, a lawyer, had been wrongfully convicted of a crime he could not have committed. Conan Doyle used such evidence as Edalji's astigmatism and the difference between the mud of roads and that of fields to demonstrate beyond doubt that Edalji was innocent and to expose the real criminal—a feat of detection worthy of Holmes. In addition, Dr. Watson shares characteristics with Conan Doyle. Both were robust men who were physically active for most of their lives. Both were physicians who served overseas. The tall and thicknecked Watson fits the description of Conan Doyle himself. Even so, readers should not take the similarities between the characters and the author beyond the superficial. Holmes and Watson are well-imagined figures with traits all their own.



Plot Summary

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson share rooms at 221B Baker Street in London. Holmes is the world's only consulting detective. Watson accompanies Holmes on his investigations and then publishes accounts of them.

A client has accidentally left behind his walking stick but not his calling card. Holmes deduces from the stick that his client is an unambitious country doctor who is popular with others. He continues that the doctor is recently retired from Charing Cross Hospital, under thirty years of age, and the owner of a medium-sized dog.

Dr. James Mortimer is all of those things. He has a strange tale to tell about a former patient who "died of fright." Sir Charles Baskerville was an elderly man recently returned from Canada to claim a vast family estate and fortune. He became terrified of the family legend of the Hound of the Baskervilles. The story is that one of his ancestors, a godless and profane man, was mauled by a terrible dog-like beast while he was about to rape a young woman. Since that time Baskerville heirs are forbidden to cross the moor at night. Local peasants often see a huge monster surrounded by flickering lights at night.

Dr. Mortimer is worried about Sir Henry Baskerville, who arrives in London that evening. Holmes advises him to meet Sir Henry as planned. When Watson and Holmes follow Sir Henry, another cab follows them. Later the cab driver tells Holmes that the passenger said his name was Mr. Sherlock Holmes. At Sir Henry's hotel one of his boots is missing. Holmes assigns Watson to accompany Dr. Mortimer and Sir Henry to Devonshire, but he himself will remain in London.

Baskerville Hall is surrounded by moorlands, which are dark and foggy at night, and full of strange noises. Selden, a depraved murderer recently escaped from prison, lives on the moor. The mansion itself is gloomy; two servants, Mr. and Mrs. Barrymore, are the only inhabitants and they wish to leave.

Watson and Sir Henry meet two neighbors, a brother and sister called the Stapletons of Merripit House. Beryl Stapleton warns Sir Henry to stay away from the moor and then retracts her warning. Her brother is an odd character and a famous entomologist. Sir Henry falls instantly in love with Beryl Stapleton, but her brother puts obstacles up to an immediate marriage, a puzzling fact because Sir Henry is wealthy and a gentleman.

Watson discovers that Mrs. Barrymore's brother is Selden. She has been feeding him on the moor. In exchange for ignoring Selden, the Barrymores tell Sir Henry that Sir Charles was meeting a woman the night of his death whose initials were LL.

Watson tracks down Laura Lyons, who says she never kept her meeting with Sir Charles. She is the daughter of Frankland, an eccentric neighbor of the Baskervilles. Her father has disowned her and she was appealing to Sir Charles for money.



Watson learns that still another stranger is living on the moor. He finds out it is Sherlock Holmes. Holmes says that Stapleton is their killer but he does not have enough clues to close the case. Stapleton is actually married to Beryl.

A terrible scream pierces the night, and Holmes is afraid they are too late. They find the body of a terrified Selden dead from a fall. Selden was dressed in Sir Henry's clothes. Holmes tells Sir Henry about it and also that they will go to London the next day. Sir Henry is to visit the Stapletons and walk home alone on the moor.

Holmes and Watson visit Laura Lyons, who says she was to marry Stapleton. She was trying to get money from Sir Charles to pay for her divorce. Holmes and Watson ride to Merripit House with Lestrade, a Scotland Yard detective.

As Sir Henry crosses the moor alone, Stapleton lets the hound loose. Holmes shoots it. Lestrade, Watson, and Holmes find Beryl Stapleton tied up at Merripit House. They pursue Stapleton, who apparently drowns in Grimpen Mire.

It turns out that Stapleton is the son of Sir Rodger Baskerville. He planned to claim his inheritance after he killed the other heirs in an ingenious plan using the family legend. As the case ends, Holmes and Dr. Watson retire to their lives in London.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

At the turn of the twentieth century, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson are roommates at 221B Baker Street, a rental residence in London. Holmes is the world's only consulting detective; over the years Dr. Watson has accompanied him on his investigations and written books about their adventures in crime.

Holmes is a genius of deductive reasoning. His mind is always logical and well organized. He never gives into the emotionality of a case. Dr. Watson is an "everyman" kind of person who tries to be as detached as his friend but never manages to disengage his emotions. They are perfect complementary characters.

Holmes has developed his habits of observation to an amazing degree. He can look at a person and deduce his profession and other things about his background by scrutinizing details of his clothes, face, and so forth. Holmes never guesses, but draws his every conclusion based on factual data.

On the morning the story begins, a potential client of Holmes has accidentally left behind his walking stick. Watson, trying to use Holmes' methods, first reads the inscription on the stick: "To James Mortimer, M.R.C.S., from his friends of the C.C.H." Watson knows that "M.R.C.S." is the British equivalent abbreviation of "M.D." in the United States. Watson believes that the man who owns the stick is an elderly country doctor, because the stick is worn out from walking. He believes he was a member of a hunt; the "H" in CCH probably stands for "Hunt" (hunting club). Holmes praises Watson for his attempt, but says everything Watson has deduced is wrong.

Holmes says the owner of the stick is an amicable, absent-minded, and an unambitious house surgeon less than thirty years of age, who owns a dog smaller than a mastiff but bigger than a terrier. "CCH" stands for Charing Cross Hospital, so the doctor received the stick when he left the city practice to retire to the country. That makes him unambitious but amicable enough to get rewarded with a present from colleagues when he quits a position he has not held for a long time. The doctor's dog has left teeth marks on the stick; that is how Holmes determined the size of the animal. Absent-minded people leave their sticks when they should leave behind their calling cards.

Holmes looks in the British medical directory and finds a Dr. James Mortimer who did recently retire as house surgeon from Charing Cross Hospital and is under thirty years of age. A few minutes later Dr. James Mortimer does indeed arrive at 221B Baker Street. He tells Holmes that he actually retired from Charing Cross Hospital after his marriage. He and his new wife wanted to make a real home in the country: the stick was a wedding present from colleagues. He has come to Holmes with a pressing problem. Decisions have to be made within the next hour or two, and it is a matter of life or death. Dr. Mortimer is impressed with Holmes, whom he considers the second most intelligent



detective in London. When he meets him, he notices Holmes's dolichocephalic skull; studying skull formations is a hobby of Dr. Mortimer.

Holmes expresses disappointment that he was not 100% correct in his deductions about the walking stick. However, Dr. Mortimer does have a spaniel with him (a dog smaller than a mastiff and larger than a terrier).

Chapter 1 Analysis

Holmes is extremely fond of Watson and calls him a "conductor of light." In the Holmes books and short stories, Holmes's light often does shine through Watson. Watson is never jealous of Holmes and always attempts to be more like him.

It is very important to note that Sherlock Holmes never guesses. Everything he says comes from facts and observation. He would not label Dr. Mortimer as absent-minded and amicable unless he had empirical evidence of those traits. The clues to solving the mystery will be presented to the reader who must put them together the way Holmes does.

Doyle does not give the reader many descriptions of Holmes and Watson or 221B Baker Street. This novel was one in an extremely popular series; most readers would have already read several Holmes books.

Studying skull formations was popular in the Victorian era. People believed, for example, a high forehead was a sign of great intelligence.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Dr. Mortimer wants Holmes to examine a manuscript he has with him. Holmes says it's circa 1730. Holmes has actually written a monograph on the subject of dating manuscripts. The 1742 manuscript is a statement of the legend of the Baskerville family, written by Sir Hugo Baskerville as told to him by his father and grandfather. The original Sir Hugo Baskerville was a "wild, profane and godless" man. One night he and six companions were very drunk. They kidnapped the daughter of a yeoman and kept her in an attic as they drank and became even more out of control. The terrified girl managed to escape by climbing down an ivy vine.

The outraged Sir Hugo Baskerville ordered the dogs to go after her. He gave them her scent from her kerchief and then he and his friends saddled their horses and rode out after her on the moorland. After a few hours Sir Hugo's black horse came riding back alone. The horse was frothing at the mouth and seemed frightened. The men found the hounds also disoriented and frightened before they came across Sir Hugo's body. A huge black beast was tearing out Sir Hugo's throat. When the monster turned to them, they shrieked in terror and one died of fright.

This story became the legend of the Hound of the Baskervilles. Henceforth all Baskerville descendants were cautioned not to cross the moor in the dark hours of the night "when the powers of evil are exalted." Through the years many Baskervilles have had sudden, bloody, and mysterious deaths.

Holmes dismisses the story as a "fairy tale," and is more interested in the newspaper accounts of the death of Sir Charles Baskerville on May 14. Sir Charles had made a fortune in South Africa and returned to Baskerville Hall only two years before. He planned to renovate the old place, where he lived with two servants who were a married couple named Barrymore.

Sir Charles was not in good health and had a heart condition. Dr. Mortimer was his doctor but they also became close friends. The night Sir Charles died he took his usual walk down the yew alley of Baskerville Hall. Barrymore got worried when Sir Charles did not return and went looking for him at midnight. He found his body at the entrance of yew alley. The article went on to say that Sir Charles had no children and the next of kin was Sir Henry Baskerville, the son of Sir Charles's brother.

Dr. Mortimer augments the story by saying that Sir Charles's heart condition was getting so bad that the doctor recommended that he move to London and get away from the mysterious moor. Sir Charles was very frightened of the legend of the hound. When Holmes asks Dr. Mortimer if he believes in the hound, Dr. Mortimer says that he did see "a large black calf" on the moor. When he examined the yew alley where Sir Charles died, he saw "the footprints of a gigantic hound."



Chapter 2 Analysis

Sir Doyle skillfully builds suspense in this chapter. He uses the old mystery writer's trick of ending on a high point so that the reader continues reading to the next chapter. He makes Dr. Mortimer's call a "pressing matter" that must be settled within two hours. He uses images of hell like "Sir Hugo became as one who had a devil; the hound of hell with blazing eyes and dripping jaws;" and "the black mare dabbled with white froth." The warning "do not cross the moorland in the dark hours of the night" is only the first of several such warnings to Baskerville heirs, thus building suspense.

This chapter is also a perfect example of the juxtaposition of the reasoning rational man (Holmes) confronting the supernatural. Likewise Dr. Mortimer is totally spooked by the legend of the hound but like Holmes, he thinks of himself as a man of science who should keep only to the facts and evidence of the physical world.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Holmes begins an extensive questioning of Dr. Mortimer about the night of Sir Charles's death. He asks about the logistics of the yew bridge, the shape of both Sir Charles's and the hound's footprints, and other empirical details. When Dr. Mortimer mentions that he believes Sir Charles must have stood at the bridge for between five and ten minutes because he saw that ash had dropped twice from his cigar, Holmes congratulates him on his acute observation. Holmes asks if anyone has seen the hound since Sir Charles's death. Dr. Mortimer replies that three people saw it before his death but no one has seen it since.

Dr. Mortimer asks what he should do about Sir Henry Baskerville, who is due to arrive in about an hour. Sir Henry is the only heir and the last of the Baskervilles. Holmes tells him to go ahead and meet Sir Henry, but to bring him along the next day for a second consultation.

Holmes goes into seclusion to think about the case. He asks Watson to deliver a pound of shag tobacco to their rooms. Watson retires to his club to give Holmes his privacy. Watson returns to find the room filled with smoke from Holmes's pipe. Holmes spent the day thinking about the case and pouring over a map of Devonshire. He notes that there are very few buildings near Baskerville Hall. One is Lafter Hall. There are two farmhouses and a prison fourteen miles away. It is very secluded and therefore a good spot for a crime. Holmes says he is trying to figure out whether a crime was committed and if so, how?

Because Sir Charles's footprints are tiptoes, Holmes assumes he was running for his life and "his heart burst." He believes that Sir Charles was waiting for someone and that it is significant that he was leaving for London the next day. Although Watson is in the dark about the case, Holmes says that it is becoming coherent to him.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Holmes's primary activity is thinking, something most people do not consider to be an activity at all. In many of the stories he talks about a "three pipe" problem as opposed to a "two pipe" one. He usually retires to his rooms to think and smoke, sometimes for days. To relax after a day of thinking, Holmes uses cocaine or plays his violin. Except for Watson and his brother, Holmes has no friends or family who appear in the series. He is also the perfectly contained logical man with no emotional connections other than Dr. Watson. However, he has a strong code of personal ethics.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Dr. Mortimer returns to 221B Baker Street with Sir Henry Baskerville. Sir Henry shows Holmes a strange letter he received that morning addressed to him at his hotel in sloppy handwriting. The letter reads: "As you value your life or your reason keep away from the moor." All the words had been cut from a newspaper except the word "moor," which was written in ink.

Holmes is able to locate the exact article in the *London Times* from which the letter-writer cut the words for his epistle. He also deduces that the writer used hotel ink and nail scissors to cut the article. Because the *Times* is read by educated people, Holmes believes the writer to be an educated person trying to conceal his intelligence with sloppy handwriting. Holmes asks Sir Henry if he thinks he is being followed or if anything out of the ordinary has occurred besides the strange letter. Sir Henry says that he put his boots outside his door to be cleaned by hotel servants but only one boot was returned.

Dr. Mortimer repeats his story about the Hound of the Baskervilles and Sir Charles's strange death for Sir Henry. Sir Henry says that he has of course heard about the hound since he was a child. Holmes says he advises Sir Henry *not* to go to Baskerville Hall. Sir Henry, however, says nothing can prevent him from going to the home of his people and claiming it as his own. The four men agree to meet for lunch later in the day.

Watson and Holmes take off immediately in a taxicab after Dr. Mortimer and Sir Henry leave 221B Baker Street. They are able to discern that a bearded man in a cab is following Sir Henry. Holmes gets the number of the cab but feels badly when the mysterious cab was able to shake them. He wishes he had hired a second cab to follow the one following Sir Henry. He surmises that the beard on the passenger was probably fake.

Holmes hires a fourteen-year-old boy named Cartwright to visit twenty-three hotels in the Charing Cross area. Cartwright is to go through the wastebaskets and find copies of yesterday's *London Times*. He will be looking for one with the article cut out.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Holmes seldom makes a mistake, and when he does, he beats himself up over it. He also has a way of showing off by mentioning obscure monographs he has written on obscure subjects like tobacco ashes, and by alluding to famous clients like the Pope. These details make him a fascinating character.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Holmes and Watson spend time looking at an art exhibit and then they go to Sir Charles's hotel. Holmes cleverly gets the hotel registrar to talk about two guests so that he can eliminate them as persons who may have been following Sir Henry.

The three men meet in Sir Henry's hotel rooms. Sir Henry is upset because yet another boot is missing. Someone has taken one brown and now one black boot. After lunch Sir Henry repeats his intention of going to Baskerville Hall. Holmes reports that he is being followed. Since the servant Barrymore has a full beard, Holmes decides to telegraph him and demand an instant reply so that he can determine if Barrymore is at Baskerville Hall or following Sir Henry in London.

Holmes next finds out that Sir Henry is due to inherit close to a million pounds. If Sir Henry dies, the estate passes to a distant cousin, James Desmond. James Desmond is an elderly clergyman living in a far-off province. Therefore he is probably not the murderer. Sir Henry himself has not made out a will, leaving out the possibility that one of Sir Henry's heirs wants him dead.

Holmes again insists that Sir Henry should stay away from Baskerville Hall. Since Sir Henry assures Holmes he will not be scared off, Holmes suggests that Watson go with him and stay at his side until the case is completed. Holmes himself cannot go because of other pressing cases. As they rise to leave, Sir Henry finds his brown boot but notes that the waiter must have placed it there during lunch because he had thoroughly searched the rooms for it.

That evening Holmes is again lost in thought with his pipe when two telegrams arrive. One says that Barrymore was at Baskerville Hall at the time the bearded passenger was following Sir Henry. The other is from Cartwright, who says he searched twenty-three hotels without finding a cutout *London Times*.

Holmes had asked the cab company about the cab driver who followed Sir Henry. Now the cabbie shows up at 221B Baker Street to confront Holmes, because he is an honest man with a good record as a driver. Holmes asks about his bearded passenger, and the cabbie says the man's name was Mr. Sherlock Holmes. The passenger said Holmes was a detective who told him to follow the other cabbie. He then gives Holmes a description of the passenger.

Chapter 5 Analysis

This chapter is entitled "Three Broken Threads." Holmes has been following three leads, none of which turned out well for him. The first was Barrymore, the second was the *London Times*, and the third was the cab driver. Finding out that the passenger



impersonated Holmes himself makes him believe that he is up against a clever opponent.

Holmes's knowledge and interest in art later comes in handy when he looks over the Baskerville portraits. Sir Henry has a quick temper and emotional way of doing things. For example, later he falls in love easily.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Holmes gives Watson the instruction to write to him and give him every possible fact, not any new theories. In particular he wants to understand the neighbors, all of whom are suspects. The Barrymores, Dr. Mortimer's wife, Stapleton and his sister, and Mr. Frankland of Lafter Hall are all suspects.

Holmes and Watson meet Sir Henry and Dr. Mortimer. Holmes pleads with Sir Henry not to go out at night alone and to at all times remain in the company of Dr. Watson. Holmes would prefer that Sir Henry *not* go to Baskerville Hall; Sir Henry says he will not be bullied out of his family estate.

During the ride to Baskerville Hall, Dr. Watson finds Sir Henry an interesting and admirable man. They enjoy the ride through the countryside, but as they approach, a warden with a gun is guarding the environment. It seems that a dangerous convict, Selden, also known as the Nottingham murderer, has escaped from prison and is probably in hiding in the moor. Selden's crimes were so depraved that he was not executed because of mental illness. When they pass the yew bridge where Sir Charles met his fate, Sir Henry says he will install electric lights in the near future so the bridge is not so gloomy. He intends to renovate Baskerville Hall and the environs.

The Barrymores, a married servant couple, greet them at Baskerville Hall. Dr. Mortimer leaves to go home. Sir Henry is delighted with the old mansion and his renewed sense of family. The Barrymores announce their intention of quitting because Sir Charles's death has been so disquieting to them. This is especially sad to Sir Henry because the Barrymores have served the Baskervilles for several generations. Sir Henry wants to restore the family traditions and now another is still about to be broken.

Dr. Watson's room is next to Sir Henry's. Dr. Watson reports that the rooms are somewhat modern but the dining room and other older parts of the five-hundred-year-old manor are very gloomy and dark. Even Sir Henry admits that Baskerville Hall is not a very cheerful place and no wonder his uncle developed a bad heart by living here alone. Watson cannot sleep. He is restless in his mind and also he hears the sobs of a woman. He resolves to get to the bottom of that matter the next day.

Chapter 6 Analysis

In a Sherlock Holmes mystery, things always get creepier when Holmes leaves the scene. Holmes, as the perfect reasoning man, counteracts feelings of dread and gloom and childlike reactions to strange noises, dark places, and so forth. Here the dread and gloom of the book feel even more vivid in the hands of Dr. Watson. Dr. Watson is an everyman, someone every reader can identify with. His very ordinary reactions to things contrast with the extraordinary genius of his friend.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The next morning Watson remarks to Sir Henry that he heard a woman sob in the night. Sir Henry heard it too. Mrs. Barrymore has swollen eyes but denies that she has been crying. Watson suspects the Barrymores are the murderers because of this latest lie, and also because Barrymore has a beard like the passenger in the cabbie. Watson makes a check as to whether Barrymore got the telegram personally in his hands. The postmaster explains that he gave it to Mrs. Barrymore, who in turn gave it to Mr. Barrymore. This arouses Watson's suspicions all the more.

As he walks along a road near the manor, Watson hears footsteps behind him. It is Stapleton of Merripit House, a residence near Baskerville Hall. Stapleton inquires about Sir Henry. He is surprised that Sir Henry wants to live in Baskerville Hall after the terrible death of Sir Charles. Watson asks him if he believes in the legend of the hound. Stapleton replies only that he believed Sir Charles was much troubled by it. Because of his bad heart and irrational fears, Stapleton believes that Sir Charles died of fright.

To Watson's immense surprise, Stapleton asks about "your friend Sherlock Holmes." Watson explains that Holmes has had to stay behind in London but he discreetly avoids the question of whether Holmes is involved in the case.

Stapleton is a naturalist who collects butterflies and other insects. He has only been in the area for two years, but he loves the moor. He points out the Grimpen Mire and observes that another pony has drowned there recently. The mire is very dark and like quicksand, so it is easy to lose one's footing, especially at night.

Stapleton invites Watson to Merripit House. As they walk toward it, a butterfly distracts Stapleton and he runs to pursue it. Watson is suddenly approached by a beautiful woman with a lovely figure, elegant dress, and finely cut face. It is Stapleton's sister, Beryl. She emotionally implores Dr. Watson to stay away from the moor. Later when she realizes that she was talking to Dr. Watson and not Sir Henry, she takes back her warning and remarks, "We have been talking at cross purposes."

Watson demands that she tell him what she knows about the murder and the danger to Sir Henry because Sir Henry is his friend. If she knows about danger, he will warn Sir Henry. She tries to brush him off. She tells him that her brother is very anxious for Baskerville Hall to be inhabited and would be angry with her for telling Sir Henry to leave. She is sorry about what she did, saying that it was just a woman's whim.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Stapleton emerges as a man surrounded by images of death and dread. For example, he says he enjoys the moor, a mysterious place where ponies, dogs, and people can



lose their footing and drown. He collects butterflies and plants with nets, and then kills and mounts them. His sister, on the other hand seems to be of a completely different mind. She is afraid of the legend of the hound and warns the man she thinks is Sir Henry to leave for his own safety.

Sir Doyle foreshadows the death of an important character in Grimpen Mire. Note that Watson is discreet enough not to give away that Sherlock Holmes is working on this case to Stapleton. Watson can appear open, but he is a professional who preserves client confidentiality.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The next three chapters take on a different style of writing. Instead of a straight narrative with action and quotations, this chapter and the next are in the form of letters from Dr. Watson.

Dr. Watson first writes about the grim atmosphere of the place and then apologizes to Holmes for being impractical. He then tells Holmes that an escaped convict named Selden is hiding on the moor. Selden is a depraved murderer. Watson is fairly sure that since there are four able-bodied men at Baskerville Hall, they are not in danger. Yet he worries about the Stapletons. Mr. Stapleton is a small man, and his sister is very beautiful. So beautiful and charming that she has captured the heart of Sir Henry. Stapleton seems to stand in the way of their love affair; he is jealous and possessive of his sister.

Dr. Watson goes to dinner, and then he, Sir Henry, Stapleton and Mortimer go out to yew alley, the scene of Sir Charles's death. It is indeed a grim place but Watson tries to picture the occurrence as he stood there. Watson also meets another neighbor, Mr. Frankland of Lafter Hall. Mr. Frankland's hobby is filing frivolous lawsuits, and he even has one against Dr. Mortimer for digging up a grave to find a particular skull. Frankland seems to be a harmless old man who provides Watson with comic relief.

Watson again takes up the matter of the telegram to Barrymore. Sir Henry, in his straightforward manner, asks Barrymore directly if he received the telegram. He said he was upstairs and his wife brought it up to him. He told her to answer it. Watson expresses concern about Mrs. Barrymore, who seems constantly unhappy. He is sure something is causing her deep sorrow. To add to Watson's misgivings about the Barrymores, he heard Barrymore walking around the corridors in the middle of the night. He knows something is going on. Watson talks to Sir Henry about it and they are determined to confront Barrymore.

Chapter 8 Analysis

By writing in the form of a letter from Watson to Holmes, the reader gets to experience the dynamics of their friendship. Watson is open and frank and unafraid to be himself. He gets a humorous gossipy tone when he writes about Sir Henry's love affair. Sir Henry is straightforward and emotional. He is direct in everything he does.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Watson continues writing in the conversational style of a letter to a good friend. He tells Holmes that he made it his business to look from the window Barrymore sought out the night before. The window has a view to the moor. Watson wonders if the handsome Barrymore is not cheating on his wife. He reports that Sir Henry is planning many of renovations to Baskerville Hall, and some builders and decorators have already been contacted.

Sir Henry and Watson decide to sit up that night until Barrymore goes to the window. In early evening Sir Henry puts on his coat for a walk. Watson, whose orders from Holmes are to trail Sir Henry, begins to go with him. Sir Henry objects and says he will go alone. Watson follows him. He watches as Sir Henry meets Miss Stapleton and they engage in an intimate conversation. Suddenly Stapleton comes upon them with his butterfly net. The tone of the meeting changes. Stapleton seems to grab his sister and take her off with him, leaving Sir Henry the very picture of dejection.

Sir Henry sees Watson, which causes him some embarrassment. He remarks that he thought he was in a private place to meet and court his lady fair, and instead his friend witnessed his intimate moment. Sir Henry says he thinks Stapleton is crazy to object to him as a potential husband for his sister, because he is amicable and wealthy and honest. Sir Henry also tells Watson that he promised to build a friendship without lovemaking with his sister. If, after three months, he still feels the same way about her, then Stapleton will allow him to propose to her again.

Both men find the matter very perplexing. Sir Henry is by any standard a "good catch" for a single woman. He is handsome, gentlemanly, aristocratic, and very wealthy. That evening the two men decide to employ Holmes's methods and to stay up all night to entrap Barrymore. Nothing occurs. The next night Barrymore comes by the window. In Sir Henry's direct way, he asks Barrymore bluntly about what he is doing. Barrymore says he always goes around fastening windows at night. Sir Henry demands the truth. Barrymore says he is holding a candle to the window. Watson believes the candle must be a signal. Sure enough, he and Sir Henry see the light of another candle in the moor. Sir Henry again demands the truth, wanting to know if Barrymore is plotting against him. Barrymore refuses to answer, so Sir Henry fires him on the spot.

Mrs. Barrymore emerges to plead with Sir Henry. She confesses that her brother is the convict Selden. She and her husband are giving him food and clothing and hiding him in the moor. They signal to him every other night to see if he still needs food. Mrs. Barrymore says her brother really is a good man.

Sir Henry declares that he is going to capture Selden. He and Watson go out on the moor, and they hear the cry of the hound. Sir Henry says he is not a coward but that the



sound freezes his blood. Then they see Selden with his "evil yellow face, a terrible animal face." Selden makes a run for it. Watson thinks about shooting him but cannot kill an unarmed man. After Selden gets away, Watson sees a tall thin man with arms folded, looking out on the moor. Watson wants to pursue the stranger, but Sir Henry is still upset by the cry of the hound and wants to go back to Baskerville Hall. They decide to go to the police and point them in the direction of Selden.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Sir Doyle gives readers a series of clues, some of which matter to the case and some of which do not. In the background somewhere Sherlock Holmes is working with the same set of clues. He will put together the solution of the case, which will later become the obvious solution to the reader. The reader, like Watson, chastises himself for not seeing the obvious. This is part of the fun of reading the Sherlock Holmes books. Sir Henry emerges as a brave and impulsive person with a direct way of speaking and acting.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The literary style of the book changes to an excerpt from Dr. Watson's journal with dated entries. On October 16, it is a dark and stormy night, and even Watson feels a sense of doom. The baronet (Sir Henry) is in a black mood because of Miss Stapleton.

Watson writes that he himself has heard the sound of the large dog baying and howling, but common sense tells him it is a real dog, not a ghost. Local peasants have reported seeing a large luminous animal with terrible teeth on the moor. They believe it to be a supernatural monster. Watson again records his sighting of a tall, thin stranger on the moor. It cannot be Frankland or Stapleton because of his height. He is convinced that he is being followed by the same person who followed them in London.

Barrymore gets angry with Sir Henry for hunting down his brother-in-law. He begs him not to call the police, since Selden is about to leave the country on a ship. Selden will do no more damage and his wife would be eternally grateful to Sir Henry. Barrymore is hysterical at what has been going on: Sir Charles's death, the noises, the newest stranger on the moor, and so forth. He says the stranger is being fed by a child, and Watson swears to find them both.

Sir Henry realizes he is abetting a felony but agrees to stop pursuing Selden after the Barrymores beg him. A grateful Barrymore tells Sir Henry that he has information on the death of Sir Charles. Sir Charles was actually at the gate the night of his death to meet a woman at ten o'clock. The woman's initials are L.L. The reason Barrymore knows this is because he discovered a scrap of a burned letter to Sir Charles written by the woman. He is telling Sir Henry because Sir Henry has been kind to him about Selden.

The next day Watson meets Dr. Mortimer and asks if anyone in the vicinity has the initials L.L. Dr. Mortimer says that Frankland's daughter is Laura Lyons. Laura made a bad marriage to an artist and since then both her father and her husband have abandoned her. Several people like Sir Henry and Stapleton set up Miss Lyons in a typewriting business in Coombe Tracey. Watson returns and talks with Barrymore. Barrymore has also seen the tall thin man and believes he may be consorting with Selden on the moor.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle brilliantly creates more suspense by adding still another threat to Sir Henry's life on the moor. He has already given the reader a terrible hound, an escaped murderer, and now he presents a mysterious stranger living in a cave.

Sir Doyle is not a humorist but he does put in an occasional joke, such as in this chapter. Watson says he asked Dr. Mortimer in a casual way about Frankland's skull



and kept him talking for the rest of the drive, concluding "I have not lived with Sherlock Holmes for nothing."

In many Sherlock Holmes stories, Watson and Holmes do not care about the letter of the law. They conform to a higher sense of what's right and what's wrong. In this chapter Watson and Sir Henry agree to let a murderer leave the country without police interference. Holmes himself allows bad people to die when he could save them and allows good people to escape if he thinks it is the right thing to do.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Watson has established two things: (1) that Laura Lyons was to have met Sir Charles at ten o'clock by yew alley; and (2) the new stranger on the moor lives near the stone huts. He decides to visit Laura Lyons in Coombe Tracey and that the meeting will go better without Sir Henry being there. Laura Lyons is surprised to see a stranger when Watson arrives. She is working at a Remington typewriter. Watson's first impression is one of beauty; but at second glance, Laura has a coarseness and hardness that mars her features.

Watson begins by saying that he is acquainted with her father, Frankland. Laura replies her father has disowned her and without Sir Charles's help, she would be totally destitute by now. Then Watson questions Laura about the night of Sir Charles's death. At first she is shocked and refuses to answer. She then replies she does not talk about her involvement because the police would investigate her as an accomplice. She wishes to avoid a scandal.

Laura confesses that Stapleton introduced her to Sir Charles and encouraged their friendship because Sir Charles had the financial means to help her. She is indignant that Watson knows about the letter that she wrote to Sir Charles, but calms down when Watson says he only has a scrap of the letter and has not read it completely. Laura reiterates that the letter and meeting were both very private. She also reports that she never met Sir Charles that night; indeed, she never left her home. She is afraid that her husband will force her legally to live with him again if she receives help and money from others.

Watson returns to Baskerville Hall with the intention of finding the stranger on the moor. When he runs into Frankland, the old eccentric is in a good mood because he has just won a lawsuit, which cost him two hundred pounds. He says that he files one lawsuit after another out of a sense of public duty. The truth is the lawsuits are entertaining and he enjoys the thrills of legal combat. Frankland tells Watson that he has seen the stranger on the moor through his telescope and that he is being fed by a "small urchin." He shows Watson the spot on the moor where he has seen the stranger.

Watson goes there when the sun is setting. He finds an occupied hut, which contains a few tin cans of food and a small table. There is a note on the table that says, "Dr. Watson has gone to Coombe Tracey." Watson surmises that he himself must be the object of the man's pursuit on the moor. Then he observes a large hole in the roof, and asks himself why would this man put up with hardships like rain coming in his hut? What is his purpose? Then he hears some footsteps. Watson cocks his pistol. The man in the moor turns out to be Sherlock Holmes.



Chapter 12 Analysis

The author breaks up the dread and horror of his story with the surprise of Sherlock Holmes appearing to Watson on the moor. Once Holmes is again in the picture, the reader feels a sense of renewed safety.

In many of the Holmes stories, Holmes wears such complete disguises that they fool Watson completely. He disguises himself as a beggar, a bookseller, and a priest, among many other transformations. Again there is an example of Watson's physical courage in that he goes alone to confront whomever he may find living on the moor.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Watson reacts to Holmes's sudden appearance by feeling a sense of responsibility lifted from off his shoulders. Holmes says he knew it was Watson in his hut because he recognized his cigarette ashes when he was walking outside.

Watson feels slighted. Surely Holmes trusted him to handle the situation in Baskerville Hall. Perhaps all his hard work and reports to Holmes were nothing but a waste. Holmes replies that he has read over Watson's reports many times and that Watson has been invaluable to him. He has had to go into hiding to close in on the murderer.

The two friends next talk about Watson's meeting with Laura Lyons. Holmes says that Lyons and Stapleton have been very close and intimate; in fact, Lyons believes that Stapleton will marry her. This is impossible because Stapleton is actually married to the woman posing as his sister. Of course this also means that Beryl Stapleton cannot marry Sir Henry Baskerville.

Holmes has gone ahead and investigated Stapleton's background. He was a teacher in the north of England, but left that school under atrocious circumstances. Watson asks Holmes what in the world is Stapleton after? Holmes replies that it is nothing short of murder. He is closing in on Stapleton, but needs more proof. The dangerous thing is that Stapleton may strike again before Holmes can gather his proof. Suddenly they hear a terrible scream. Then moans and the barking of a hound echo across the moor. Holmes worries that they are too late.

The two men race out to the moor in the direction of the scream. They find a body grotesquely laid out, face down. It is Sir Henry Baskerville, dead from a fall. His skull is crushed on rocks. Holmes remarks that the greatest blunder of his career has been to allow a client to die in the pursuit of a criminal.

The two men grow angry as they stand there by the body. Holmes says the murderer will not escape them, and that they will capture him. He goes down over the body again, and then suddenly starts to laugh and dance and act like a madman. It is not Sir Henry's body at all. It is the body of Selden dressed in Sir Henry's cast-off clothes, which were given to him by the Barrymores.

As they wonder where to keep the body for the night so the wolves do not get it, Stapleton himself appears. Stapleton asks who has died, but keeps cool when Holmes explains that it is Selden. Stapleton remarks that Sir Henry was to have come to his home that very evening, so he thought perhaps it was Sir Henry who had perished. The three men decide to leave the body there for the night. Holmes tells Stapleton that he is returning to London on pressing business.



Chapter 13 Analysis

This is an exciting chapter where the novel is building to a climax. Watson reacts at an ego level when he finds Sherlock Holmes in the vicinity. He assumes Holmes did not trust him or did not like the way he was doing business. This very human reaction is part of what makes the reader identify with Dr. Watson and like him.

Likewise, the reader has come to like Sir Henry and may feel badly when it appears that he was murdered. The author pulls the reader into a sympathetic response and then relief that Sir Henry is actually safe. Stapleton emerges as a very clever, cold man who can keep his head after learning he killed the wrong person.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson return to Baskerville Hall. Holmes remarks what a cunning, cruel man Stapleton is in the way that he was able to keep his composure after learning his murderous plan failed. Watson wants to have Stapleton arrested, but Holmes says there is not enough evidence. They only heard the sound of a hound; they did not actually see a hound kill Selden. There is no direct connection between a hound and the deaths of Selden and Sir Charles. Selden died in a fall. Sir Charles died of fright. There is an absence of motive.

Back at Baskerville Hall, Mrs. Barrymore is in deep mourning for her brother, Selden. Sherlock Holmes tells Sir Henry that Selden was wearing his clothes when he died. The implication is clear.

After dinner, Sherlock Holmes peers over a collection of family oil paintings of Sir Henry's ancestors. A portrait of Sir Hugo Baskerville catches his attention. As Watson and Holmes stare at it closely, Watson realizes it is the same face as Stapleton's, further connecting the insect expert to the crime.

Later Sherlock Holmes tells Sir Henry he must visit the Stapletons alone. When he walks home, he should take the route from Merripit House to Grimpen Road. Sir Henry should also be perfectly clear to the Stapletons that he is alone. Watson is astounded by this idea. Holmes has, after all, been insistent that Sir Henry should never walk alone in the moor. Sir Henry is let down by the plan but agrees to do as asked. Holmes tells Sir Henry that he and Watson will leave for London after breakfast the next day.

The next morning Watson and Holmes actually take the train to Coombe Tracey to visit Laura Lyons. At the station Cartwright is waiting. Holmes tells the boy to send a telegram to Sir Henry saying that Holmes has misplaced his pocketbook. This will make Sir Henry believe that they really went to London. Cartwright gives Holmes a telegram from Lestrade at Scotland Yard to the effect that Lestrade is arriving with a blank arrest warrant tomorrow.

Holmes and Watson arrive at Laura Lyons's place where Holmes starts the questioning in a straightforward way. She must tell him about the night of Sir Charles's murder or else. He remarks that Mr. and Mrs. Stapleton are involved. Lyons reacts very emotionally to the idea that Stapleton is married. She thinks it cannot be true. Holmes shows her a picture of the couple posing as a Mr. and Mrs. Vandeleur and gives her other evidence that the two are indeed married.

Lyons says that Stapleton is in love with her. He wants to marry her when she is officially divorced from her current husband. Stapleton made her keep this plan secret. It was he who dictated the letter to Sir Charles and implored him to give her the money for



legal expenses to pay for her divorce. It was Stapleton who arranged her meeting that night with Sir Charles. At the last minute Stapleton decided it was a dishonorable thing to ask, and told her he himself would save up for these expenses. Then it was Stapleton who told her not to meet with the police about the matter. She liked Sir Charles and never intended him any harm.

Holmes comforts her with the idea that she is lucky to have escaped with her life. Watson and Holmes go to the train to meet Lestrade. Holmes remarks that the case has had some unique features which he has found challenging.

Chapter 14 Analysis

In Victorian times a married woman like Laura Lyons could not visit Sir Charles openly at his home without causing a scandal. Another Victorian belief is that people can be throwbacks physically and spiritually to their ancestors. In this case, Stapleton is a throwback to Sir Hugo Baskerville.

Holmes is in the process of setting up both Sir Henry and Stapleton. He wants Sir Henry to believe he is truly in London, which is why he sends the fake telegram about the missing pocketbook. He wants Stapleton to believe he and Watson are in London.

Stapleton emerges as a killer who uses women, both his wife and Laura Lyons, to get what he wants. Holmes is as cool as Stapleton when he calmly reflects that the case has interesting aspects and compares it to other such cases, even as Sir Henry's life is about to be mortally endangered.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson, and Lestrade take a wagon to a location near Merripit House. They creep close enough to see that Sir Henry and Stapleton are talking and sharing cigars while they drink together. Stapleton leaves and walks to a small out-building, which he unlocks and then closes up again. He then returns to Sir Henry, who seems distraught. Beryl Stapleton is nowhere to be seen.

Holmes worries that when a dense fog descends on the moor, no one will be able to see his hand in front of him. If Sir Henry does not come out within the next quarter hour, the plan will be foiled and he is in danger of being murdered. Holmes, Lestrade and Watson move to higher ground. Soon they can hear Sir Henry walking alone on the moor through the thick smoky fog. Sir Henry is frightened and continually looks over his shoulder.

Holmes yells, "It is coming!" Watson sees Holmes's face, which has a look of amazement on it. Meanwhile Lestrade falls to the ground in fright. Watson then sees an "enormous coal black hound ... such as no mortal has ever seen ... savage, appalling and hellish ... outlined in flickering flames." Holmes springs into action. He shoots five rounds from his revolver into the beast. The hound falls to the ground. Sir Henry also has fallen. Dr. Watson attends to him, and gives him a shot of brandy. He appears to recover.

The hound had been painted in phosphorus in order to illuminate his fur in the darkness. It is a huge dog, half mastiff and half bloodhound, with long ears and a terrible jaw. The three men are convinced that Stapleton heard the shots and would have fled Merripit House. Nevertheless, they decide to go back there.

Upstairs in a locked bedroom they discover Beryl Stapleton. She is tied with cloths to a chair in a roomful of cases of dead butterflies. She faints after they loosen her binding. Beryl tells them that her husband has tortured her both physically and emotionally for years. She feels guilty about what help she has given him in his terrible murders. She tells the men that he keeps the hound in an old tin mine in an island at the heart of the mire, and that is probably where Stapleton has gone now.

Holmes says the fog is so dense he could not possibly find his way. Mrs. Stapleton says they planted guiding wands in order to see in the dark. It is much too dark to go looking for Stapleton that night. Lestrade stays behind while Holmes and Watson return to Baskerville Hall.

Because of his close escape from death, Sir Henry's nerves are gone. After Holmes tells Sir Henry the truth about Beryl Stapleton, he collapses into a fever. Dr. Mortimer cares for him.



The next morning Beryl Stapleton leads Watson and Holmes on a search for her missing husband through mud and marshland. They find Sir Henry's missing boot, which Stapleton used to give the dog Sir Henry's scent. After finding their way through the mire, Holmes and Watson conclude that Stapleton drowned there. It is the only possible conclusion and a fitting ending to such a murderous villain.

Chapter 15 Analysis

The hound is not a disappointment. He is a shocking monster who jumps off the page like the shark in *Jaws*. Sir Doyle built up the suspense to a climax that really pays off. It is not the sort of thing to read in the middle of the night.

The killing off of Stapleton leaves his wife free to marry Sir Henry. Sherlock Holmes probably knew when the boot turned up missing that it was being used to give a dog Sir Henry's scent. No doubt he came to this conclusion during one of his "thinking days." The author gives the reader the clues but only Holmes can put them all together.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Sherlock Holmes gave the following summary of the case to Dr. Watson a few months later. Stapleton was the son of Sir Rodger Baskerville, who was Sir Charles's brother. Sir Rodger spent most of his life in Central America, where he married and had one son (Stapleton). Stapleton married Beryl Garcia. After stealing a fortune, he changed his name to Vandeleur and went to England, where he established a school in the east of Yorkshire.

Stapleton developed an international reputation as an entomologist. He moved to Devonshire with the intention of getting his family's fortune. He became a friend and neighbor to Sir Charles and Dr. Mortimer, who told him about Sir Charles's bad heart. He came up with the plan to use the family legend of the hound to kill Sir Charles. At first Stapleton wanted his wife to lure Sir Charles into a love trap, but she refused to cooperate even though he beat her. Stapleton instead used Laura Lyons to write and invite Sir Charles to meet her at the tunnel before he departed for London. The sight of the luminous hound alone running down the tunnel was enough to kill Sir Charles.

Stapleton probably did not know that there was another heir to the Baskerville fortune in Canada, who turned out to be his cousin, Sir Henry Baskerville. Dr. Mortimer told him about Sir Henry, which presented Stapleton with yet another person to eliminate before he got his full inheritance.

Stapleton's wife was the person who cut the letters out of the *London Times* in order to warn Sir Henry. The scent of her perfume on the letter made Holmes believe a woman was involved, which pointed to the Stapletons. But it was Stapleton himself who came to London and secured Sir Henry's boot by bribing the hotel servants. He was the bearded man who followed Holmes and Watson.

Holmes was actually staying at Coombe Tracey, only living in the stone hut when necessary. He was following Stapleton closely. Watson's reports were invaluable, as well as the fact that Watson and Sir Henry cleared up the matter of the escaped convict themselves.

Stapleton was encouraging Sir Henry to frequent Merripit House by having him fall in love with Beryl Stapleton. At the last minute she turned on Stapleton, forcing him to tie her up the night of the planned murder of Sir Henry. One problem Stapleton faced was the matter of claiming his inheritance after the death of Sir Henry. He planned to either claim it from South America without appearing at Baskerville Hall or by using an elaborate disguise. Holmes and Watson retire for a pleasant evening at a restaurant and theater.



Chapter 16 Analysis

Readers of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries tend to be intelligent and analytical, which is why Sir Doyle has to clear up any loose ends that may trouble them. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles* he had the elaborate device of using Laura Lyons to entrap Sir Charles, and explaining away how Stapleton could claim his fortune if he were well-known around Devonshire. Even with the explanations in this chapter, these devices seem far-fetched. Note that Sir Henry does not marry Beryl Stapleton or continue to pursue her.

A Holmes mystery always ends with Watson and Holmes going back to normal life in London. Sometimes Holmes seems depressed after the exertion of a case and retires to the seven-percent solution and his violin.



Characters

Sherlock Holmes

Sherlock Holmes is one of the most famous and beloved characters in all of literature. Every year hundreds of tourists look for his famous rooms at 221B Baker Street in London. When his creator grew tired of writing about the detective, he wrote a story that ended Sherlock Holmes's life. Outraged fans demanded that Sir Doyle resurrect Holmes from the dead and write more stories.

Holmes is fascinating because he is a person who has overcome all his emotions, fears, and irrationalities to become the perfect, logical reasoning machine. His main activity is thinking. He often spends a full day or two in thought, as he does in this novel. Like his imitation, Spock in the *Star Trek* series, Holmes is never muddled by emotions or sexual attractions or the other irrationalities that get in the way of ordinary people's logic and reason. He seems to have no sensual life, although he appreciates art and great music. He can focus on obscure scientific subjects such as the varieties of tobacco ash or dating manuscripts but has little interest in any subject that is not connected to his work. In the story in which his brother Mycroft appears, readers were surprised to learn that he had any family whatsoever; Holmes never talks about his childhood or parents.

Yet Holmes is a completely drawn character with human failings. He pays the price for his emotional repression. He uses cocaine, the famous seven-percent solution, to relax his nerves. He also relaxes by playing the violin and smoking his pipe, sometimes one pound of tobacco after another.

Dr. John Watson

Watson is Holmes's roommate, best friend, and the recorder of his adventures. In one story Holmes says, "I am lost without my Boswell." Although it appears as if Watson is the follower and Holmes is the leader, Holmes appreciates and needs Watson as a sounding board and loyal friend. Watson has a lot of physical courage, which is a necessity in criminal work. Holmes gets his friend involved in shoot-outs, mobsters, and in this novel, with an attack dog bigger than a mastiff. Yet Watson never flinches or thinks of himself. He is the one Holmes trusts. In this book Holmes entrusts Sir Henry Baskerville, a person about to be brutally murdered, in the care of his friend. Watson accepts not only the danger but also the responsibility.

Watson's profession often comes in handy as they pursue criminals. Watson pronounces people dead or gives them emergency treatment. His knowledge of medicine also is helpful in many of their cases. He also is willing to drop his practice to travel with Holmes when necessary. Watson is often called an "everyman" or "average Joe." He frankly admires Holmes's ability in deduction and crime investigation, and tries hopelessly to emulate it. He is never critical of Holmes but always supportive and ready



to help. Yet in many ways Watson is an extraordinary person in his own right. Decent, loyal, trustworthy, intelligent, and gentlemanly, Watson is the perfect foil for Sherlock Holmes.

Sir Henry Baskerville

Sir Henry is an interesting character in that he was born into an aristocratic family but spent much of his life in the Americas. Sir Doyle often gives major characters and American accent and background. These characters often have rough edges, with a cowboy flavor to their personalities. Sir Henry has that quality.

Yet he is also very headstrong. He refuses to take Holmes's advice to stay away from Baskerville Hall until the murderer is behind bars. He falls in love very suddenly with a woman he hardly knows. His reactions to situations are unstudied and natural. To Sir Doyle, that is an American quality. He is open and honest and natural, such as when he confronts Barrymore with the knowledge that the servant is untrustworthy. Sir Henry has physical courage and self-confidence. He is willing to walk the moor at night even as his relatives have been murdered doing just that. He is a very likable person, which makes his murder all the more horrible to contemplate.

Dr. James Mortimer

Dr. Mortimer is a very decent, intelligent man with a scientific bent. He studies skull formations, which sounds odd to us but was a common hobby in that period of history. Dr. Mortimer is a caring person. He becomes not only Sir Charles's physician but also his friend. He is deeply concerned about the welfare of someone he has yet to meet. He is a good foil to Holmes, who has no use whatsoever for the supernatural. Dr. Mortimer tries to be totally scientific, but science cannot totally explain the horrors of things he has seen and heard with his own eyes.

Stapleton

Holmes needs a formidable villain or else the mystery is too easy. Stapleton is intelligent, cruel, ruthless, and cunning. As a disinherited Baskerville relative, Stapleton has both anger and a sense of entitlement and injustice. He has been physically abusive toward his wife, whom he uses as a tool in his crime schemes. He artfully plans his murders in such a skillful way that the murder of Sir Charles appears as an accident. He is cold-blooded enough to use a savage dog as a murder weapon. Like every character in the Holmes series, Stapleton is complex. He is also a cultivated human being who collects butterflies and insects. This pursuit has a murder image, too.



Selden

Selden is an escaped convict whose crime was so depraved he is deemed mentally ill. He is the brother of Mrs. Barrymore who is secretly feeding and hiding him on the moor. He is murdered while wearing cast-off clothing from Sir Henry Baskerville. The hound, given Sir Henry's scent, mistook Selden for the intended victim.

Miss Stapleton

Miss Stapleton is presented as Stapleton's sister, but she is really his wife. She is also his victim. He uses torture to employ her as an accomplice to his murders. She counteracts her husband's schemes by warning his victims in advance. She is a beauty with a fine figure and face who wins over the affections of Sir Henry.

Laura Lyons

Laura Lyons is estranged from her father, Frankland, because she wed an artist. Separated from her husband, Miss Lyons is in a desperate financial position. She is trying to get money from Sir Charles Baskerville and Stapleton, whom she also wants to marry.

Lestrade

Lestrade is a recurring character in the Holmes series. He works for Scotland Yard. He is brave and honest, but Holmes always outsmarts him and solves the case before Lestrade even gets close to it. Lestrade usually takes public credit for the capture of the criminals.

The Barrymores

This is a married couple who are servants to the Baskervilles. The Barrymore family has been serving the Baskervilles for generations. They appear to be simple people, but they are not. They are harboring a dangerous criminal, Mrs. Barrymore's brother, by feeding him on the moor.

Frankland

Another neighbor of the Baskervilles, Frankland is a bit of the eccentric. He spends his time filing frivolous lawsuits for the joy of combat and victory. A wealthy aristocrat and owner of Laffer Hall, he is involved with Laura Lyons and has offered her money in the past. He is a suspect in the murders because of his proximity to the Baskervilles.

Cartwright

Holmes employs this fourteen-year-old boy to investigate hotels, post telegrams, and give him food on the moor.



Objects/Places

The Hound of the Baskervilles

An ancient story curses the Baskerville family. One of their ancestors was mauled to death by a phantom dog because he was a wicked man. Legend has it that no Baskerville man should roam the moors at night because of this evil hound.

Dr. Mortimer's stick

In Chapter 1 Dr. Mortimer leaves his walking stick at 221B Baker Street. Holmes and Watson take turns deducing facts about the doctor's life just by looking at the stick.

Sir Henry Baskerville's boots

Sir Henry puts out two pair of boots to be cleaned by hotel personnel; one boot of each pair is stolen. One of the boots gets returned but Stapleton keeps the other to use to give his hound Sir Henry's scent.

221 B Baker Street

Holmes and Watson met through a newspaper advertisement several years ago when Watson advertised for a roommate to share rooms at 221B Baker Street. They have been best friends and shared the rooms for years.

Devonshire

Baskerville Hall is located in this area of England. .

Baskerville Hall

The Baskerville family has owned a large estate that includes acres of property, a castle-like mansion called Baskerville Hall, stables, and other outbuildings in Devonshire County.

The moor

The moor is a vast prairie with bogs and mires that surrounds Baskerville Hall. Strange noises emanate from the moor including what sounds like a giant hound baying. Some attribute the sound to the wind or the bogs themselves; others say it is the Hound of the Baskervilles crying at night.



Grimpen Mire

A large lake of quicksand is located on the moor where many animals and a few people have been drowned.

Black Tor

The Tor is a portion on the moor where Sherlock Holmes lives in secret.

The yew bridge or yew alley

Sir Charles Baskerville met a mysterious stranger at this old covered bridge the night he was murdered. The bridge is a long tunnel with solid wooden walls and a roof. He ran away from the house and into the bridge the night of the murder. This action convinces Holmes that he was disoriented mentally.

The telegram to Barrymore

Was Barrymore the mysterious bearded passenger in the cab that followed Sir Henry Baskerville in London? Sherlock Holmes immediately sends him a telegram, demanding an immediate answer, to find out if he is at Baskerville Hall. He receives a telegraph back to the effect that Barrymore is home, but later Watson finds out that Barrymore himself did not pick up the telegram; his wife did.

Shag tobacco, Cocaine, Violin

Sherlock Holmes uses all three to relax or when he needs to go into deep thought about a case.

A Candle in the Window

The Barrymores signal to Selden by lighting a candle and holding up at a particular window. Selden signals back with a candle too.

Lafter Hall

Mr. Frankland is one of the Baskerville's few neighbors; he lives in Lafter Hall, a manor near Baskerville Hall.



Merripit House

Mr. Stapleton and his "sister" live in this house near Baskerville Hall. They are suspects in the case because of proximity.

The butterfly net

Stapleton is a naturalist who walks around the moor catching butterflies in his net.

Coombe Tracey

The nearby area where Miss Laura Lyons has her typing business is Coombe Tracey. Holmes and Watson visit her there to gather information about Stapleton.

Frankland v. Moorhead, Frankland v. Regina, etc

Frankland files frivolous lawsuits out of a sense of public duty but also to amuse himself because he enjoys the thrill of the battle.

Mr. and Mrs. Vandeleur

The Stapletons used this name after Stapleton was fired as a teacher in the north of England.

Guiding Wands

The villain Stapleton and his wife plant guiding wands on the moor so they can see their way in darkness.



Setting

The late Victorian setting of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is an orderly one. In it, each person has a role to fill, and when every role is suitably filled, society prospers. But the social order is endangered by those bent on its destruction, and the villains come in many disguises.

The opening scenes place Sherlock Holmes in the comfortable surroundings of his home at 221B Baker Street in London. But quickly the action shifts to the dreary "Grimpen Mire," a vast moor or bog-marsh area of England. This bleak and deserted wasteland provides a startling contrast to Holmes's refined London world. Reason seems to break down, and the atmosphere becomes eerie when it appears that a supernatural creature is responsible for the terrifying happenings on the moors.

Conan Doyle carefully recreates both the Baskerville family history and the outlying areas around Baskerville Hall.

The myth of the hound itself is reproduced through Dr. Mortimer's efforts and acts as necessary background.

As the story progresses, the Grimpen Mire comes to symbolize an ominous mire of evil, where, to his horror, Dr.

Watson hears the panic-stricken cries of moor ponies, captured by the muck that lurks beneath the deceptive vegetation.

One false step means death, both in the moor where what looks like solid ground may suddenly give way and in a society where a seeming friend could be a clever murderer, or even a demon with a frighteningly huge hound at his command. For Holmes, the setting becomes as much of a clue to the nature of the crime as other physical clues. The middle passages of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* are among the most suspenseful in literature in large part because of the unrelieved atmosphere of doom that surrounds the well-drawn, appealing characters of Watson, Sir Henry, and Holmes.



Social Sensitivity

Social Concerns

The late Victorian society of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is an orderly one. In it, each person has a role to fulfill, and when he does, society prospers. For many years, the region around the Baskerville estate had been poor and backward, but when Sir Charles Baskerville returned to claim his estate, the region began to prosper.

By returning and devoting his vast fortune — earned in business — to the betterment of the community, Sir Charles fills the long-empty role of leadership that is the duty of the Baskervilles. Into the happy and orderly society comes disorder in the forms of two utterly evil men. One, a convicted murderer escaped from prison, frightens local citizens and warps the normal social order. Mr. and Mrs. Barrymore, descendants of a long line of servants faithful to the Baskervilles, have their priorities twisted by the criminal Selden. He is Mrs. Barrymore's brother, and in aiding him, the Barrymores' normal first loyalty to the Baskervilles shifts to the service of evil.

Even more unsettling is the terrible Hound of the Baskervilles, which is let loose on the moors by someone who intends to upset the natural order of Baskerville Hall by supplanting the heirs. The murder of Sir Charles disrupts society, making people suspicious and uncertain. Society becomes a "bog in which we are floundering."

The Grimpen Mire symbolizes the ominous disorder around it; to his horror, Dr. Watson hears the cries of a moor pony, the second in two days to be captured by the muck that lurks under vegetation throughout the Mire.

One false step means death, both in the Mire where what looks like solid ground may bring slow but certain death, and in a society where any seeming friend could be a clever murderer with a frighteningly huge hound at his command.

Social Sensitivity

The Hound of the Baskervilles depicts the kinds of individual disorientation that are created by social disorder. For instance, love is perverted by evil in the novel. Selden, the notorious Notting Hill murderer, uses his sister's love to evade the law. Stapleton uses his own wife to lure Sir Henry Baskerville to his doom.

He pretends love and offers marriage to Laura Lyons in order to persuade her to entice Sir Charles into a dark walkway where he meets the Hound itself. All who encounter these evil lovers are endangered because their relationships are as confused and misleading as the narrow paths of Grimpen Mire. Sir Henry in particular is tempted by the allure of another man's wife and is left with a disordered mind at the novel's end. But the steady, clear light of reason, as embodied by Sherlock Holmes, works throughout to pierce the chaotic darkness and unmask the sources of evil.



Techniques

Most of the techniques in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* are common to most of the Holmes mysteries. First, a client visits Holmes, and Holmes makes some clever deductions about him. Then the client introduces the problem that Holmes must solve. In this case, a country doctor, James Mortimer, tells Holmes of the strange death of Sir Charles Baskerville. An unusually observant man, Mortimer noted a giant paw print near the body and the cigar ash near the gate — both important clues and enough to arouse Mortimer's suspicions. In a typical case, Holmes would go to the scene of the crime, sift through clues, and decide on a course of action. These steps make for a suspenseful and fast-paced narrative.

However, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Holmes sends Dr. Watson to work on the case at Baskerville Hall, while he himself stays in London to work on another case.

This would seem to cut the heart out of the novel because its main character is absent for several chapters. Nonetheless, the device works. Dr. Watson, a levelheaded man, confronts a sinister scheme that seems to have turned the world upside-down. The atmosphere is Gothic, with the supernatural seeming to be the explanation for the terrifying happenings on the moors. The middle passages of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* are among the most suspenseful in literature in large part because of the relentless atmosphere of doom that surrounds well-drawn and appealing characters such as Watson and Sir Henry.

When Holmes reappears and solves the mystery, there is no sense of being cheated by Conan Doyle for two reasons: First, Holmes reveals that he did not actually deviate from his customary approach to solving a case. He in fact followed Watson and Sir Henry to Devonshire, and he sifted through clues as is his habit. He hid out on the moors because of his respect for the villain, who would undoubtedly be wary and especially cautious if he knew Holmes were nearby. Second, the villain is so clever that identifying him is not enough to stop him. Even after Holmes explains everything to Watson and identifies Stapleton as the murderer, he must out-think Stapleton and catch the villain in the act. The climax is an excellent payoff for the intricate mystery. The tension is extraordinary when the hound attacks: "Fire burst from its open mouth, its eyes glowed with a smouldering glare, its muzzle and hackles and dewlap were outlined in flickering flame." A fiend from hell seems loosed upon Sir Henry.

Literary Qualities

The techniques in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* are common to most Holmes mysteries. First, a client visits Holmes, and Holmes makes some clever deductions about him. Then the client introduces the problem that Holmes must solve. In this case, a country doctor, James Mortimer, tells Holmes of the strange death of Sir Charles Baskerville.

An unusually observant man, Mortimer noted a giant paw print near the body and the cigar ash near the gate—both important clues and enough to arouse Mortimer's suspicions. In a typical case, Holmes would go to the scene of the crime, sift through clues, and decide on a course of action. These steps make for a suspenseful and fast-paced narrative.

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, however, Holmes sends Dr. Watson to work on the case at Baskerville Hall, while he announces that he must stay in London to work on another case. This would seem to derail the novel because its main character is absent for several chapters.

Nonetheless, the device works. Dr. Watson, a level-headed man, pursues his assignment and begins to uncover a sinister scheme. When Holmes reappears to solve the mystery, there is no sense of the reader being cheated for he has been working behind the scenes all along. Even after Holmes explains everything to Watson and identifies the murderer, he must still out-think the villain and catch him in the act.

Conan Doyle drew on many sources for his own well-wrought detective stories.

The most important precedents for the Holmes adventures were Edgar Allan Poe's tales of "ratiocination" and the novels of Wilkie Collins. Poe's tales feature the great French detective Auguste Dupin, who uses his intellect to solve bewildering crimes. As in the Holmes stories, someone brings Dupin a mystery; then Dupin sifts through the clues and devises a plan to unmask the villain.

Conan Doyle's stories follow this pattern, even to the point of making Holmes analytical and arrogant like Dupin.

Collins's influence may especially be seen in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. In his two most famous novels, *The Woman in White* (1859) and *The Moonstone* (1868), Collins tells the stories through the letters and diaries of the characters.

This technique creates a tone of immediacy, as if the reader were seeing the narrative unfold moment by moment. In addition, the mystery is enhanced because the reader can know no more than his characters. Yet, all the clues needed to solve the mystery are presented; the reader may sift through them and try to be a step ahead of the characters.



Three chapters of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* are told through Watson's diaries and letters to Holmes, creating an effect similar to that in Collins's novels. In addition, Collins added the gothic atmosphere of the supernatural to his fiction, making even everyday scenes and events seem full of looming violence or evil. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* also uses this technique, making after-dinner walks in the yard seem ominous and dangerous. Some critics have gone so far as to assert that Sergeant Cuff from Collins's *The Moonstone* is the model for Sherlock Holmes because both men look alike, are analytical, and retire to the country to raise roses. Whatever the sources of the Holmes adventures, their ingenious blend of crime and day-to-day life, and their clear narratives make them original and engrossing reading.



Themes

Good v Evil

Part of the appeal of the Holmes mystery series is that the forces of good and evil are clear-cut and in opposition. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is a perfect example.

The hound itself is "from hell." Sir Hugo was "one possessed by a devil." The moor is a place of evil and darkness; Baskerville Hall is a place of gloom and despair, haunted by ghosts of generations past.

The villain, Stapleton, will stop at nothing to achieve his goals. He is willing to murder by the cruelest means: using a gigantic attack dog on a victim walking alone in the middle of the night. He is not beneath making a woman fall in love with him and then using her charms to entrap another man. He is cold-blooded and cruel; even his profession centers around death.

Watson and Sir Henry Baskerville represent the forces of goodness and the light of reason shining upon the forces of evil.

Although Sherlock Holmes never believes in things like the forces of good and evil, his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, probably did. He was deeply involved in the practice of spiritualism for many years of his life.

Irrationality and Emotionality v Rational Thinking

In every Sherlock Holmes mystery, every character is troubled by murder or other crime. There are often hints of the supernatural and a sense of impending doom, leading every character to experience fear, irrational thinking and magical explanations of phenomena. This characteristic is countered by the character of Sherlock Holmes, who is the perfect thinking machine. Holmes is incapable of human emotions like fear and sexual love. He is the perfectly rational man.

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, this theme is perfectly carried out. Sir Henry Baskerville, Watson, and others are living in fear of their lives because a supernatural beast that first appeared several centuries before and is again haunting the moorlands. There is an element of revenge and family history so strong that it is impacting one generation after another.

Holmes never gives into nor does he even experience such magical thinking. He only looks to empirical facts. He assumes that the supernatural does not exist and therefore cannot impact the case.



The Sins of A Person Impact His Family

Everyone in the novel (but Sherlock Holmes) believes that there is a curse on the Baskerville family that will keep recurring until the mystical hound is killed. The curse began when Sir Hugo Baskerville led a life of crime and passion, only to be hunted down and killed one night by the terrible monster. His sins were so horrible that even centuries later, no other Baskerville male dare to cross the moors at night or else the beast will kill him too, in revenge for the ancestor's sins.

This theme is further carried out in the character of Stapleton, who not only looks like his ancestor, Sir Hugo Baskerville, but he also resembles him in character and actions. The family line continues its evil in a hereditary fashion. Similarly the evil of Selden, an escaped murderer, impacts the lives of his relatives, the Barrymores. Mrs. Barrymore becomes a criminal herself by helping her brother. Finally Beryl Stapleton becomes involved in a life of deception and crime because of her husband.

The themes of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* serve to enhance the disorientation created by social disorder. For instance, the theme of love is twisted by the evil in the novel. Selden, the notorious Notting Hill murderer, uses his sister's love to aid him in evading the law. Stapleton uses his own wife to lure Sir Henry Baskerville to his doom.

He pretends love and offers marriage to Laura Lyons in order to persuade her to entice Sir Charles into a dark walkway where he meets the Hound itself. All who encounter these evil lovers are endangered because their relationships are as confused and misleading as the Grimpen Mire. Sir Henry in particular is sucked in by the allure of another man's wife and is left with a disordered mind at the novel's end.



Style

Points of View

All the Sherlock Holmes novels and stories are written in the first person from Dr. Watson's point of view, with one exception. In that one story Holmes attempts to write it himself, and most lovers of the Holmes series think that the story is a failure. Watson is the point of view of an ordinary but decent person, who is completely loyal to his extraordinary friend. He tells the story as he himself sees it, explaining clues that he did not catch but that Holmes uses to solve the mystery.

In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, there are three chapters written from the point of view of a report by Watson to Holmes about the goings-on at Baskerville Hall. Watson uses phrases like, "this is probably uninteresting to a practical mind like yours." The other chapter is written as an excerpt from Watson's personal journal. By employing the literary devices of journals and reports, the point of view and perspective of the novel becomes fresher in the middle of the book.

Setting

The Hound of the Baskervilles is set at Baskerville Hall and its surrounding countryside, and in London. Sir Doyle uses each setting to create moods that enhance the story. For example, the city of London is a place of rationality where trains run on time and police answer distress calls. Holmes lives in a completely male world of rationality and logic in this completely male city of men's clubs, pubs, and 221B Baker Street.

Baskerville Hall was built hundreds of years ago. It is gloomy and needs renovation. The only light is often candlelight. The dining room is "a place of dark and gloom" with "smoke darkened ceilings" and "black beams."

Most importantly, Baskerville Hall is completely isolated. The reader moves from the bustling sunlit world of London city life to a place where neighbors are few. The moor surrounds the old manor house. It is a place of strange noises and danger; if you lose your footing in Grimpen Mire, you will die the way ponies and dogs do. Sir Doyle masterfully uses these settings to create an atmosphere of gloom and despair and danger from a mythical monster that tears real men apart in the dark of night.

Language and Meaning

Sir Doyle is a master at choosing words and images to create dread in the reader. When he writes about the hound, his words suggest the supernatural: the hound from hell, a devil possessed Hugo, a phantom spectral beast. He uses images of the moor to create a sense of impending doom: animals die in mysterious quagmires and there are unexplained noises and cries all night long that peasants interpret as ghosts. Doyle



repeats the warning to the Baskerville heirs over and over again at different points in the story: "A Baskerville heir must not walk in the moor at night ... if he values his life and reason." Even Holmes, the rational man, implores Sir Henry not to be alone at night on the moor. There is a constant tension between the suggestion of the supernatural and evil forces working in real people.

Sir Doyle is particularly good at naming people and places. Grimpen Mire, Merripit House, and Baskerville are good examples. There are no "merry pits." Baskerville sounds like "bastard" instead of a beloved son. The sound of the words "Grimpen Mire" suggests a dark death in a dark lake on a foggy night.

One reason that the Holmes series is not considered great literature, however, is that Sir Doyle's writing can be stilted and very Victorian. Holmes calls out, "The brute! The brute!" When Holmes suspects Sir Henry is murdered, he says "Fool that I was to hold my hand. And you, Watson, see what comes of abandoning your charge!" This language does not stand the test of time and sounds only quaint today.

Structure

The Hound of the Baskervilles is structured like most Sherlock Holmes stories. A new client comes to 221B Baker Street and presents his problem to Sherlock Holmes. Holmes asks Watson to participate in the solving of the mystery. The story is told in chronological order, and in the first person by Dr. Watson.

Doyle uses long excerpts from other media to vary his narrative. For example there is a passage from the *London Times* about the death of Sir Charles Baskerville. One chapter is almost completely taken up by a reprinting of a manuscript from 1742.

To vary the narrative, Sir Doyle also allows characters to speak for pages and pages. In addition, he employs the literary device of using excerpts from diaries and letters. These devices keep the book interesting and change the pace of the novel.



Quotes

"Really, Watson," said Holmes, "you excel yourself. ... It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it." Chapter 1, pg 11

Standing over Hugo and plucking at his throat, there stood a foul thing, a great black beast, shaped like a hound, yet larger than any hound that ever mortal eye has rested upon. And even as they looked the thing tore the throat out of Hugo Baskerville ... and turned its blazing eyes and dripping jaws upon them ... Chapter 2, pg 24

"I have heretofore confined my investigations to this world," said Holmes. "In a modest way I have combated evil, but to take on the Father of Evil himself would be too ambitious a task. Yet you must admit the footprint was material." Chapter 3, pg 37

As you value your life or your reason, keep away from the moor. Chapter 4, pg 48

The promise of adventure had always a fascination for me, and I was complimented by the words of Holmes and by the eagerness with which the Baronet hailed me as a companion. Chapter 5, pg 71

We had a line of inexplicable incidents all within the past three days, which included the receipt of a printed letter, the black bearded spy in the hansom, the loss of the new brown boot, and now the return of the new brown boot. Chapter 5, pg 72

It was Selden, the Nottingham murderer ... The commutation of his death sentence had been due to some doubts about his sanity, so atrocious was his conduct. Chapter 6, pg 84

"Bogs make queer noises at times. It is the mud settling or the bog rising or some such thing."

"No, no. That was a living voice." Chapter 6, pg 102

"Man, man," she cried. "Can't you tell when a warning is for your own good? Go back to London! Start tonight! Get away from this place at all costs!" Chapter 7, pg 104

The longer one stays here, the more that the spirit of the moor sinks into one's soul, its vastness and also its grim charm. Chapter 8, pg 111

A spectral hound which leaves material footprints and fills the air with its howling is surely not to be thought of ... If I have one quality on earth, it is common sense and nothing will persuade me to believe in such a thing. Chapter 9, pg 146

It is one thing to laugh about it in London and it is another to stand out here in the moor and hear a cry such as that ... I don't think I am a coward, but that sound seemed to freeze my own blood. Chapter 9, pg 140



Please, please, if you are a gentleman, burn this letter and be at the gate at ten o'clock.
Chapter 10, page 151

"It is a lovely evening, my dear Watson," said a familiar voice. "I really think you'll be more comfortable outside than in." Chapter 11, page 176

In that impassive colorless man with his straw hat and his butterfly net, I seemed to see something terrible—a creature of infinite patience and craft, with a smiling face and a murderous heart. Chapter 12, page 182

"Fool that I was to hold my hand. And you, Watson! See what comes of abandoning your charge! By Heaven, if the worst has happened, we'll avenge him!" Chapter 12, pg 185

The face of Stapleton sprung from the canvas. Chapter 13, pg 201

"Let them know you intend to walk across the moor. "That is the very thing which you have so often cautioned me not to do." Chapter 13, pg 203

I sprang to my feet, my inert hand grasping my pistol, my mind paralyzed by the dreadful shape which sprung out upon us from the shadows of the fog. A hound it was, an enormous coal black hound, but not such a hound as mortal eyes have ever seen.
Chapter 14, pg 216



Adaptations

The best-loved of the motion-picture adaptations of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is that of 1939, starring Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Dr. John Watson. Darryl F. Zanuck, then head of Twentieth Century-Fox, is often credited with recognizing Rathbone's resemblance to the Strand magazine illustrations of Holmes and with suggesting to Rathbone that he play Holmes in a motion picture. Directed by Sidney Lanfield and shot in black and white, the film includes Richard Greene as Sir Henry Baskerville. Rathbone plays Holmes as an impatient and stylish character, whereas Bruce plays Watson as a silly but courageous companion. Shot in period costume, the picture was the first to place a Holmes story in the period in which its events were supposed to take place, in this case 1889. Earlier efforts modernized Holmes.

Many readers have been disappointed by the film's dropping many of the novel's most potent themes, such as that of disordered love; Wendy Barrie as Stapleton's sister is all innocence and sweetness. Even so, Rathbone's elan, the Gothic atmosphere, and the brisk pace of the plot have won the motion picture a devoted following, and it remains one of the best mysteries on film.

The only significant silent version of the novel is the 1929 *Der Hund von Baskervilles*, a German production directed by Richard Oswald and starring Carlyle Blackwell, an American. In 1932, Gainsborough productions brought out a sound version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, starring Robert Rendel as Holmes and Frederick Lloyd as Watson. Both critics and the public have been largely indifferent to this motion picture. In 1959, Hammer Films brought out its own version of the novel, this time starring Peter Cushing as Holmes, Andre Morell as Watson, and Christopher Lee as Sir Henry Baskerville. It was directed by Terence Fisher. Critics disliked this color motion picture because of its many liberties with the plot. The efforts of the filmmakers to evoke the 1880s costumes and settings make this movie an enjoyable, although silly, Saturday afternoon entertainment.

A good version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is Universal's 1972 movie made-for-television starring Stewart Granger as Sherlock Holmes. Bernard Fox plays Watson and William Shatner plays Stapleton. Directed by Barry Crane, the movie is brisk and entertaining, although not mysterious.

Conan Doyle himself adapted "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" into a stage play that was presented in 1910 at the Adelphi theater in London. It starred H. A. Saintsbury as Sherlock Holmes, Lyn Harding as Dr. Roylott, and Christine Silver as Miss Stoner.

The play ran for one hundred eighty-nine performances and made a handsome profit. In 1931, British and Dominion Studios produced *The Speckled Band*, a motion picture starring Raymond Massey as Holmes, Athole Stewart as Watson, and Lyn Harding as Roylott.



The most celebrated of the stage portrayals of Sherlock Holmes is that of the American actor William Gillette, who was chosen by Conan Doyle and New York producer Charles Frohman for the lead in *Sherlock Holmes*. Gillette took Conan Doyle's original script and rewrote it into a version based on "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891). Conan Doyle liked the revisions, which Gillette used on an American tour in 1899.

The scripts for the play were lost during the tour, and Gillette rewrote the play. He continuously tinkered with the script through thousands of performances well into the 1920s. His tall, lean figure and aquiline nose resembled Sidney Paget's illustrations of Holmes for the Strand. Later illustrators used Gillette himself for their model. The actor's acid humor and cold manner well suited Conan Doyle's vision of Holmes. The script was published in 1922. The Royal Shakespeare Company revived Gillette's play in 1974 to popular and critical acclaim.

John Wood starred as Holmes, and the play had a successful tour of the United States.

In 1953, Basil Rathbone appeared in *Sherlock Holmes*, a play written by his wife Ouida Rathbone. It was a failure, closing after three performances. In 1965, Fritz Weaver starred as Holmes in *Baker Street*, a play by Jerome Coopersmith. The play included Martin Gabel as master criminal Professor Moriarty. It lasted on the stage for almost a year.

Sherlock Holmes first appeared on film in *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* in 1903.

Produced by American Mutoscope, this short silent movie is silly, showing a character vanishing with a bit of motion picture gimmickry. Later, James Braginton starred as Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet* in 1914; H. A. Sainsbury starred as the detective in *The Valley of Fear* in 1916; and William Gillette brought his play *Sherlock Holmes* to the screen in 1916. This last was directed by Arthur Berthelet for Essanay productions. It was Gillette's only motion-picture portrayal of Holmes. In 1922, Gillette's script was revised and expanded for a Goldwyn production of *Sherlock Holmes*, starring John Barrymore as the detective. Roland Young played Watson, and the movie was directed by Albert Parker. Barrymore overacts. From 1921 to 1922, Maurice Elvey produced about fifty short adaptations of the Holmes stories. These versions follow closely the plots of the original mysteries. They star Eille Norwood as Holmes and Hubert Willis as Watson.

Paramount's *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* of 1929 ushered in the era of sound for Holmes adaptations. Directed by Basil Dean, it stars Clive Brook as the master detective, H. Reeves-Smith as Watson, and Harry T. Morey as Moriarty. The action takes place on an ocean liner while Holmes tries to save Watson's daughter's fiancé from Moriarty. Brook again portrays Holmes in Fox's *Sherlock Holmes* of 1932. This time Reginald Owen is Watson and Ernest Torrence is Moriarty. It was directed by William K. Howard. In both films, Brook plays Holmes as a stylish gentleman. In 1933, Reginald Owen switched from playing Watson to playing Holmes in *World Wide's A Study in Scarlet*. Watson is played by Warburton Gamble, Scotland Yard's Inspector



Lestrade is played by Alan Mowbray, and Anna May Wong is the best part of the movie as its villainess.

The first actor to fully capture the imagination of movie audiences with his portrayal of Holmes was Arthur Wontner, an Englishman who appeared as the detective in five motion pictures.

A commanding performer who gives Holmes an ironic wit, he was the epitome of Holmes for 1930s audiences. He first appears as Holmes in *The Sleeping Cardinal* (also presented as *Sherlock Holmes' Fatal Hour*), a Twickenham production in 1930. Ian Fleming plays Watson. Directed by Leslie S. Hiscott, the picture follows Holmes's investigation of the murders of night watchmen in a mystery based on "The Final Problem" (1893) and "The Adventure of the Empty House" (1903). This picture was followed in 1932 by another Twickenham production, *The Missing Rembrandt*, which was directed by Hiscott. Wontner and Fleming are again Holmes and Watson. The film is based on "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton" (1904). The third film in the series is *The Sign of Four*, this time a World Wide production, in 1932. Directed by Graham Cutts, this film has Wontner as Holmes, but Ian Hunter plays Watson. It is faithful to the novel. The fourth film is *The Triumph of Sherlock Holmes* of 1935. A Real Art production, it was directed by Hiscott and stars Wontner and Ian Fleming, who returns to the role of Dr. Watson.

Lyn Harding plays Moriarty. Based on *The Valley of Fear*, it is a conscientious adaptation of the novel. The last film in the series is *Silver Blaze* (also presented as *Murder at the Baskervilles*, an inappropriate title). A Twickenham production for 1937, it was directed by Thomas Bentley and returns Wontner, Fleming, and Harding as Holmes, Watson, and Moriarty. It is based on "Silver Blaze" (1892). Another interesting 1930s motion picture is the German *Der Mann der Sherlock Holmes War*, a 1937 UFA production starring Hans Albers as a private detective impersonating Holmes.

In 1939 began the best known and most celebrated portrayal of Sherlock Holmes, that of Basil Rathbone. Beginning in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Rathbone portrayed the detective in fourteen films until 1946, when he refused to continue the series because he thought himself typecast as Holmes.

The second film with Rathbone as Holmes is *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, in which Moriarty plots to steal the Crown Jewels of England. An entertaining movie, it was produced by Twentieth Century-Fox and directed by Alfred Werker. Nigel Bruce is Watson and George Zucco is a particularly effective Moriarty.

Three years later, in 1942, Universal brought Rathbone and Bruce together for a series of motion pictures in modern settings. *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* of 1942 was the first of the Universal films. It introduces Mary Gordon as Mrs. Hudson — a role she kept for the rest of the series. Directed by John Rawlins, the movie is loosely based on "His Last Bow" (1917), which follows Holmes's counterespionage work during World War I, but which has been updated and reworked for World War II. The next motion



picture was *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon*, also released in 1942 and directed by Roy William Neill, who would direct all the rest of the Universal films.

This motion picture introduces Dennis Hoey as Scotland Yard's Lestrade — a role he kept for the rest of the series.

Lionel Atwill plays a particularly cruel Moriarty. The third Universal film was *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* of 1943.

This motion picture brings Holmes and Watson to America in pursuit of stolen microfilm. It tries to lift the patriotic spirits of its wartime audiences. In it, Watson discovers to his dismay that Americans brew their tea with tea bags. The next motion picture, *Sherlock Holmes Faces Death* of 1943, was based on "The Musgrave Ritual" (1893). *Spider Woman* of 1944 has Holmes and Watson facing actress Gale Sondergaard in a bizarre mystery. The *Scarlet Claw* of 1944 brings Holmes and Watson to the village of La Morte Rouge of Canada. Many Sherlock Holmes fans regard this film as the best of the Rathbone-Bruce series because of its Gothic atmospherics and devious plot. The *Pearl of Death* of 1944 is based on "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons" (1904). In it, Rondo Hatton plays the monstrous "Creeper," a murderer who smashes china for no apparent reason.

Loosely based on "The Five Orange Pips" (1891), *The House of Fear* of 1945 has Holmes and Watson investigating murders of members of the "Good Comrades" club at Drearcliff, a manor house. *The Woman in Green* features Henry Daniell as Moriarty, who with Lydia Marlowe (played by Hillary Brooke), is responsible for a series of gruesome murders. In *Pursuit to Algiers* of 1945, Holmes and Watson escort Rovenia's royal heir on a voyage to his country. In *Terror by Night* of 1946, Alan Mowbray plays the villainous Colonel Sebastian Moran, while Holmes investigates murders on a train. *Dressed to Kill* of 1946 concluded the Universal series. In it, Holmes tracks down a missing £5 printing plate. Rathbone may have been dismayed by becoming typecast, but he remained a beloved figure to the movie-going public throughout his life. He is to this day still the image of Holmes for most audiences.

In 1962, Christopher Lee, who appeared as Sir Henry Baskerville in Hammer Films' 1959 production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, played Sherlock Holmes in the German motion picture *Sherlock Holmes und das Halsband des Todes* (also presented in a dubbed-in-English version as *Sherlock Holmes and the Deadly Necklace*). This CCC-Criterion production features Thorley Walters as Dr. Watson and Hans Sohnker as Professor Moriarty. It was directed by Terence Fisher, who had directed Lee's earlier film.

A Study in Terror of 1965 added the case of Jack the Ripper to Holmes's adventures. Produced by Columbia and directed by James Hill, it features John Neville as Holmes, Donald Houston as Watson, Robert Morley as Sherlock's brother Mycroft, and Frank Finley as Lestrade. The performances are excellent, and the atmosphere is an eerie mixture of realistic settings and Gothic horror.



In 1970, United Artists produced *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, which was directed by Billy Wilder. Robert Stephens plays Holmes, Colin Blakely plays Watson, Christopher Lee plays Mycroft Holmes, and Irene Handl plays Mrs. Hudson. Although advertisements for this motion picture portrayed it as a sleazy sexual tease, it is actually an engrossing, sometimes silly, adventure. In it, Holmes both makes mistakes and falls in love.

A fun although not quite fulfilling motion picture is *They Might Be Giants* of 1971. In it, George C. Scott plays a psychotic judge who believes he is Sherlock Holmes. His psychiatrist is Dr. Watson, a woman, played by Joanne Woodward. Produced by Universal and directed by Anthony Harvey, this film is funny, almost poignant, and tries to capture some of the idealistic knight-errantry of the original stories.

In 1979, Twentieth Century-Fox released *Sherlock Holmes's Smarter Brother*. Written and directed by Gene Wilder, this spoof of the Sherlock Holmes stories features Wilder as Sigerson Holmes, Marty Feldman as his sidekick, Madeleine Kahn as the femme fatale, and Leo McKern as Professor Moriarty, who must do something incredibly nasty every twenty-four minutes. Douglas Wilmer plays Sherlock Holmes and Thorley Walters plays Dr. Watson. This is a funny motion picture, featuring Sigerson Holmes's wild adventures as he solves a crime with the not-to-subtle prodding of his brother Sherlock.

In 1955, Ronald Howard starred as Holmes in the television series *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. H. Marion Crawford costarred as Watson in this English production. Consisting of thirty-nine half-hour episodes, the series has recently been reborn on inexpensive video tapes for sale in supermarkets and bookstores. Crawford is a good Watson, but Howard is not as commanding as he should be as Holmes.

In 1985, Sherlock Holmes made a triumphant return to American television as part of the *Mystery* series on PBS. A production of England's Granada Television, the series stars Jeremy Brett as Holmes and David Burke as Watson for two seasons and Edward Hardwicke as Watson thereafter. Lean, well-scrubbed, and arrogant, Brett's interpretation of Holmes is the best yet. He speaks Holmes's lines very much as Conan Doyle must have heard them when he composed them. Both Burke and Hardwicke play Watson as an intelligent observer, as well as a robust companion. The series' episodes closely follow, with some minor variations, Conan Doyle's original stories and are carefully set in the Victorian period. They are treats for Sherlock Holmes fans.



Key Questions

Is *The Hound of the Baskervilles* the best mystery novel ever written? A group interested in the mystery genre in particular could debate that question long into the night, with each member advancing reasons why his or her favorite novel deserves the honor. But the question is not a shallow one. For nearly one hundred years readers young and old have been held in the powerfully suspenseful grip of the tale of a demonic hound and the efforts of mortal human beings to uncover its murderous secret. The novel is one of Conan Doyle's most inspired works, balancing traditional romance against harsh reality. Part of the novel's greatness lies in its testing of the human spirit; its characters are put under terrible stress, with some of them snapping under the strain, and others such as Holmes feeling the blows of an evil that almost defies rationality. That Holmes ultimately makes the evil yield to his scientific analysis is a triumph for him.

Even so, note how balanced the novel is. Holmes is not perfectly successful. His client lives through the experience, but at the cost of nearly losing his mind. Indeed, even though he is the center of his community's hopes for prosperity and peace, Sir Henry must travel away in an effort to regain his wits. The single-minded malevolence of Stapleton is particularly potent in a world in which images are uncertain, mysteries have multiple solutions, and mere human beings are uncertain of the truth and themselves.

All this make *The Hound of the Baskervilles* an exciting read and an excellent subject for discussion.

1. One of the most interesting aspects of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is the absence of Sherlock Holmes for much of the narrative. Is he really the main character? Could one make a case for Watson actually being the main character? Does he not have more to do with the action than Holmes?
2. A common reaction of readers to *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is amazement at its tension and its ability to hold a reader in taut suspense. What about this novel leaves many readers breathless at the end, as if they had themselves been running from the dreaded hound? What makes this short novel so gripping? Is it Watson's unadorned writing style? Is it a wellbalanced mixture of supernatural and man-made danger? Is it the choice of setting, dark and mysterious, threatening death to unwary walkers?
3. Note how Conan Doyle builds his images in the novel. Each image adds to a frightful atmosphere in which horrors may lurk anywhere. In the city a mysterious cane leads to a doctor with a disturbing tale to tell to a threatening letter. In the country of the mire, a pony dies an anguished death, and at that point any kind of evil seems possible. What other images does Conan Doyle use to pull his audience into his world of romance and mystery? How does Holmes himself deal with these images?
4. It can be fun to compare the novel to its motion picture versions. Someone who is a devoted fan of Holmes has probably seen most of them and would be happy to see them again. Most are available on videotape. How have the filmmakers tried to



incorporate the novel's themes into their dramatizations? Note especially what they have chosen to emphasize; this indicates what they think is the primary appeal of the novel to audiences. Are their choices correct? What have they missed? Which translations of the novel to film succeed? Which fail? What does this suggest about the strengths and weaknesses of the novel itself? What does this suggest about the variety of ways audiences interpret the events of the novel?

5. Note how the butterfly is used symbolically in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. It is more than an object for a collection. It shows us that the chief villain has a scientific mind, just as Holmes has, making him a worthy opponent. It is also the key to Holmes's unlocking the mystery; through it, he unlocks Stapleton's secrets. Does Conan Doyle use other images this way? What about the novel's central image, that of the huge, ravening hound? What do you make of its supernatural reputation, its frightening looks, and its mundane reality?

6. Imagine the situation Conan Doyle was in when he wrote *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. He had tried to kill off Sherlock Holmes once and for all. He was making a reputation for himself as an author of historical novels, and he was involved in important public affairs, such as the war in South Africa. An American publisher finally offers him more money than he in good conscience — as a provider for his family — can refuse. What choices does he face in providing a tale that will satisfy his expectations, those of his publisher, and those of his audience? Notice how he satisfies one of his own desires by setting the novel in a period before Holmes's supposed death, thus technically maintaining the idea that Holmes is dead and will adventure no more. What would his publisher and audience want? How does Conan Doyle try to satisfy them?

7. In the world of the Sherlock Holmes stories, good and evil have many forms and are often ambiguous. Holmes's task is often one of sorting not only good from evil but of sorting various degrees of evil from one another. What are the various forms of evil in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*? Can you give them identifying labels? Why would Conan Doyle incorporate several kinds and degrees of evil into the novel?

8. Holmes has his weaknesses, and some are put on display in the novel. He even makes an outrageous error that allows Watson to track him down. What do these weaknesses tell about his character? Is he ever a happy man?

9. Watson is a frequently misunderstood character. What do we learn about him in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*? Is he stupid?

10. Is *The Hound of the Baskervilles* a moralistic story? What social or ethical values does it represent?



Topics for Discussion

Why do you think that Sherlock Holmes is one of the most famous and most admired characters in literature?

In what ways is Dr. Watson the ideal friend and foil for Sherlock Holmes?

Why didn't Sir Henry Baskerville marry Beryl Stapleton?

How does Sir Doyle create complex memorable characters? Give at least four examples of such complexity from *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Sherlock Holmes would examine a crime scene for clues and work backwards. How is this relevant today? In what ways did Doyle anticipate modern scientific "Crime Scene Investigation?"

Do you think it is possible to become as observant as Sherlock Holmes was? Discuss whether his methods of deductive reasoning can be applied in everyday life.

Give at least five clues that were obvious to the solution of the mystery that Dr. Watson did not interpret correctly but Sherlock Holmes saw early on and used to solve the puzzle.

1. What is your initial reaction after reading the manuscript that explains the myth of the "Hound of the Baskervilles"?
2. Stapleton says, "This is the great Grimpen Mire . . . a false step yonder means death to man or beast." What is the significance of the moor? Is it an important element in the story?
3. Why does the novel include letters that Watson writes to Holmes?
4. Why does Watson go to Baskerville Hall without Sherlock Holmes?
5. In the opening chapter of the novel, how do Watson and Holmes characterize Dr. Mortimer from just his walking stick, before even setting eyes on him?
6. The narrative explains, "One of Sherlock Holmes's defects . . . was that he was exceedingly loth to communicate his full plans to any other person until the instant of their fulfillment." Why is this important? Discuss some examples of this in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.
7. How does Holmes deduce where Sir Henry Baskerville's threatening letter came from? Does he make any similar deductions? If so, what are they?
8. What clues reveal Sir Charles Baskerville's actions the night that he is murdered?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Compare *The Hound of the Baskervilles* to several of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes short stories. Discuss the similarities.
2. Does the nature of the criminal and the crime itself become clear to you before the end of the novel? If so, where and when did you have suspicions?
3. Read one of Edgar Allan Poe's Inspector Dupin mysteries and compare his character to Sherlock Holmes.
4. There are quite a few film versions of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and other Sherlock Holmes stories. Watch one or two of them and compare the two mediums.
5. Research Dartmoor, the English moor around which this novel centers. What are the legends that relate to the moor and its surrounding areas?

Literary Precedents

Conan Doyle was well read in the field of mysteries and drew on many sources for his own well-wrought stories. The most important precedents for the Holmes adventures were the tales of "ratiocination" of Edgar Allan Poe and the novels of Wilkie Collins. Poe's tales feature the great detective Auguste Dupin, a Frenchman who uses his intellect to solve bewildering crimes. As in the Holmes stories, someone brings Dupin a mystery; then Dupin sifts through the clues and devises a plan to unmask the villain.

Conan Doyle's stories follow this pattern, even making Holmes analytical and arrogant like Dupin.

Collins's influence may especially be seen in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. In his two best novels, *The Woman in White* (1859) and *The Moonstone* (1868), he tells the stories through the letters and diaries of the characters. This technique creates a tone of immediacy, as if the reader were seeing the narrative unfold moment by moment. In addition, the mystery is enhanced because the reader can know no more than the characters. Yet, all the clues are presented: The reader may sift through them and try to be a step ahead of the characters. From chapters 8 to 10 of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, more than twenty percent of the novel, the story is told by Watson's diaries and letters to Holmes, creating an effect similar to that created in Collins's novels. In addition, Collins mixed the Gothic atmosphere of the supernatural into his fiction, thus making everyday scenes and events seem full of suspense and threatening doom.

The Hound of the Baskervilles also uses this technique, making even afterdinner walks in the yard seem ominous and dangerous. Some critics have gone so far as to assert that Sergeant Cuff from Collins's *The Moonstone* is the model for Sherlock Holmes because both men look alike, are analytical, and retire to the country, Cuff to raise roses and Holmes to keep bees. Whatever the sources for the Holmes adventures, their ingenuity, blend of crime and day-to-day life, and their clear narratives make them original and engrossing reading.



Further Study

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Related Titles

Although *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is the most popular of the Holmes adventures, the series consists primarily of short stories, with only four novels. The short stories are consistently entertaining and each Holmes enthusiast has his own favorite. The one that is most often included in anthologies and textbooks is "The Adventure of the Speckled Band," because teachers think it is a good example of Conan Doyle's style and skill in plotting. It was Conan Doyle's favorite Holmes story.

Other works devoted to Sherlock Holmes include: *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), novel; *The Sign of Four* (1890), novel; *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892), short stories; *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1893), short stories; *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905), short stories; *The Valley of Fear* (1914), novel; *His Last Bow: Some Reminiscences of Sherlock Holmes* (1917), short stories; *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927), short stories; *The Final Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1981), short stories, plays, and poems, edited by Peter Haining.



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