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## Sample MonkeyNotes

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# *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

by

**Sir Arthur Conan Doyle  
1901**



MonkeyNotes Study Guide by Kelly McCauley

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## KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

### SETTING

Several settings are mentioned in the novel (Sir Henry comes from Canada, Stapleton fled from Costa Rica) but the main setting where all the events occur is England. The story begins in London, where Holmes has.....

### CHARACTER LIST

#### Major Characters

**Mr. Sherlock Holmes** - The protagonist of the story. He is a detective and skeptic of the supernatural superstitions about the hound and determined to find the true evil behind the case. His powers of .....

**Dr. Watson** - He serves as a secondary protagonist to Holmes and narrator of the story. Though not nearly as skilled in the art of detecting as Holmes, Watson is nonetheless invaluable; his reports allow.....

**Mr. Jack Stapleton** - The antagonist of the story, Stapleton is the one who let the hound loose on Sir Charles, and attempted to likewise kill Sir Henry, in his pursuit of the Baskerville family inheritance (Stapleton is the son of Rodger Baskerville). While his interest in entomology is not fabricated, his name and .....

**The Baskerville family (Sir Henry, Sir Charles, and Sir Hugo)** - Hugo Baskerville's actions led to the legend of the hound of the Baskervilles, which prevents any member of the family from going out on the.....

#### Minor Characters

**Miss Stapleton** - She is a beautiful woman from South America, whom Sir Henry falls in .....

**Dr. Mortimer** - He is the country doctor who brings the case to the attention of Holmes and Watson. He is also significant to the story in that his forgetfulness and the loss.....

**The Barrymores (John and Eliza) and Selden** - Barrymore falls under suspicion early on, with his black beard (like the man in the cab) and suspicious behavior, suspiciously regarding the.....

**Cartwright** - He is the young boy who Holmes employs as an assistant. He is sent to .....

**Mr. Frankland and Laura Lyons** - Frankland is a neighboring man who spends his time with .....

**Lestrade** - He is the Scotland Yard detective that normally works with Holmes and Watson. He .....

**The Hound** - A fierce hound bought by Stapleton and kept locked up out on the moor, except when .....

### CONFLICT

**Protagonist** - The protagonist of a story is the main character who traditionally undergoes some sort of change. He or she must usually overcome some opposing force. The main protagonist, the central character in the novel, is Mr. Sherlock Holmes, given his ability to drive the plot forward. Dr. Watson could be .....

#### Antagonist

The main antagonist, the character that opposes and hinders the protagonist, is Stapleton. He is the man behind the mystery, which by Holmes's own admission, is most difficult and certainly worthy of his.....

#### Climax

The climax, the high point of action within the novel, comes when the hound appears out of the fog in pursuit of Sir Henry. All the events have been building towards this moment, when it is discovered that.....

## **Outcome**

The major outcome, the way events are left at the end of a novel, is that Stapleton is dead, though .....

## **SHORT PLOT / CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)**

When Sir Charles Baskerville is found dead in the alley by the moor, Dr. Mortimer goes to London to get Sherlock Holmes's help in deciding on the proper course of action for the new heir. He reads the manuscript about the family curse, supposedly begun over Hugo Baskerville's inappropriate actions, and a newspaper article about Sir Charles's death. After this, the doctor reveals that there is another piece of information- there were footprints of a hound a short distance from the fallen body. Holmes questions him over the details, wishing that he could have been called in earlier to examine the scene, but this was not possible, given the need for a tenant in the Hall and in the interest of preserving the doctor's scientific reputation.

It is also told that Sir Charles appeared to be waiting for someone, though he was an elderly man; that his footprints showed he had been running away from the house in his fright; and that his heart was weak, so that he was to leave for London the next day. Though Holmes does not believe in the curse himself, he is intrigued by the case and agrees to meet the next day to discuss it.

Sir Henry (the heir) arrives from Canada and is already a little shaken. A note warning him to stay away from the moor was delivered at his hotel, where no one had known he would be staying. Holmes recognizes the cut-out letters from the previous day's Times; being pressed for time, the sender had not been able to.....

## **THEMES**

Solving a murder and preventing another is the major theme, which can then be expanded into the themes of crime, protection, and detection. In the novel, crime is executed by evil (or, as it is believed, supernatural) forces, especially in the form of Stapleton. Driven by a desire for money and power, he is willing to dehumanize those around him to the same state as his specimens. Selden is another, smaller example of crime. He has committed murder as well but for various reasons he does not seem as bad, thus alluding that there are different layers of crime.

Holmes's main role in the story is protect good from evil; that is why he has been hired in the first place, to ensure Sir Henry's safety from the Baskerville curse. He is also concerned with Watson, inquiring.....

## **MOOD**

The phrase "gloom and doom" can be aptly applied to the mood of the novel. The Hall seems a depressing place from the start and the moor in general offers little to combat those feelings with the marshy.....

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY**

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle on May 22, 1859 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Though Conan was originally a middle name, he later began using it as part of his last name. He was educated at Stonyhurst, a Jesuit preparatory school, but he soon afterwards became an agnostic. He then attended Edinburgh University, studying medicine, and it was there that he met the man he would base the Sherlock Holmes character on- a professor named Joseph Bell.

His medicine work took him to the West African coast as a ship's doctor, before returning to set up a practice. He spent his time waiting for patients in writing stories. His first major work was *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), which included his character Sherlock Holmes. Then, while he was working as an oculist (an eye doctor), he killed off the character in "The Final Problem" (1893), in order to have more time to work on his.....

## LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The major historical force behind Conan Doyle's beliefs and the novel is the Spiritualism movement. Throughout the case, everyone, except for Holmes, comes to think, at least for some time, that the hound is supernatural. The closest Holmes himself comes is when he says at the start of the.....

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES / ANALYSIS

### CHAPTER ONE: Mr. Sherlock Holmes

#### Summary

In the morning hours of a day in 1889, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson awake to discover that a visitor had been to their apartment the previous night but departed before seeing either man. However, he left behind a walking stick. The walking stick bears the inscription: "To James Mortimer, M.R.C.S., from his friends of the C.C.H." This allows the two to begin making some deductions about his character and occupation using Holmes's methods (basically picking out details of an object and making likely inferences from it).

Watson describes a likeable old country doctor who received the stick from a local hunt, a theory that Holmes has several objections to. He argues instead for the case of a young practitioner presented with the stick when he left London's Charing Cross Hospital (C.C.H.) to move to the country. Watson checks on some of the details and, with the appearance of the curly-haired spaniel whose teeth marks are imprinted on the cane, followed shortly by his owner, James Mortimer, the rest of the deductions are able to be investigated. As it turns out, Holmes is only slightly off, as Mortimer had been given the cane when he was married (which the detective had not guessed), and that in turn had brought about the departure from the city.

Dr. Mortimer is tall, though his frame is hunched over. He wears glasses and appropriate dress, if somewhat shabby. Though a man with scientific leanings (an M.R.C.S. is a member of the Royal College of Surgeons), he is also vulnerable to superstitions. He admits himself to be "an unpractical man" and so has come to get advice on his problem.

Though Holmes feels slightly offended at Mortimer's ranking of him as secondary in "precisely scientific" matters to Monsieur Bertillon, he asks him to expand on the trouble that has brought him there.

#### Notes

Watson's Medical Directory citation of the article "Some Freaks of Atavism" is an early example of foreshadowing. Atavism is the presence of a characteristic found in remote ancestors but absent in more recent generations (basically, the resurfacing of a long gone trait in an individual) and, as the reader will shortly find out, the Baskerville family is said to be under a deadly curse as a result of the actions of an ancestor, Hugo. Dr. Mortimer's problem revolves around the question of what to do when the Baskerville heir arrives, not knowing whether he will also be under danger.

The other expert that Dr. Mortimer mentions in competition with Holmes is Alphonse Bertillon. The Frenchman changed police work with his invention of the later-discredited system of anthropometry, or bertillonage, which identified criminals based primarily on physical measurements. He is also credited with bringing uniformity to taking mug shots and pictures of evidence, as well as advancing forensics, with creations such as the dynamometer (used to measure the strength of a break-in).

### CHAPTER TWO: The Curse of the Baskervilles

#### Chapter Summary

Sir Charles Baskerville has died three months previous, leaving a manuscript with his friend and doctor, James Mortimer. Holmes dates it at 1730; its actual date is 1742, and it was written down by a Hugo Baskerville (not the same one that committed the soon-to-be-discussed crime) from an oral family legend. He intends the paper to be a warning to those in the Baskerville line to watch their temperament and beware of the moor in the dark.

Mortimer reads it to Holmes and Watson, which tells of the fate of the wicked Hugo. When a yeoman's daughter caught his eye and she did her best to avoid him, he and his friends carried her off to a.....

## OVERALL ANALYSES

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Sherlock Holmes** - Holmes represents several things from his role as the great detective. He is the ever practical man, not even caring about the rotation of the Earth, since it does not affect the case. Amidst widespread belief in curses and the supernatural, Holmes is really the only one who never doubts the pursuit of a rational cause. In this capacity, Holmes represents the world of explanations, of order, logic, and science.

Out of awe and appreciation for his skills as a detective, Holmes is also seen as a provider of security. Watson mentions several times that he wishes the detective were there, instead of back in London. Sir Henry also.....

**Dr. Watson** - Though Watson plays a part in the case, he is primarily significant as the narrator of the story. Since he is, like most readers, not a detective, he is able to relate information as the average person would.....

**Mr. Jack Stapleton** - First of all, Stapleton represents the corrupting influence of money and power. He killed Sir Charles, attempted to do the same to Sir Henry, and likely committed several other crimes, all in.....

**The Baskerville family** - This old line provides the contrast to Holmes when it comes to belief in the supernatural. They take the curse very seriously, to the point that previously Dr. Mortimer suggested .....

**Dr. Mortimer, The Barrymores** - Dr. Mortimer is important in that he brings the case to Holmes and.....

### PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The story is linear for the most part, following the case from Watson's perspective. This gives the reader the benefit of seeing the story from a perspective similar to their own. It is a brief time span, probably only a matter of a few weeks, with most of the climactic events taking part in the last two days. (Though there are dates mentioned periodically, there are holes in the chronology that are difficult to account for exactly.)

Conan Doyle employs a number of different ways to tell the plot, including Dr. Mortimer reading.....

### THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

**Evil/ Supernatural** - Though they seem to have little respect for the peasants' opinions, in this case everyone from Dr. Mortimer to Watson on occasion are led to think that perhaps the hound is just a.....

**Money / Power / Dehumanization** - This is closely related to the previous theme, but with some additional features. Stapleton's corrupt behavior comes about in the pursuit of money and power. Though in .....

**Protection** - What drives the pace of the novel is the balance between life and death that hangs about the characters until the criminal is discovered and dealt with. Holmes and Watson are important in.....

**Detection** - This category includes several aspects, starting with the fact that Holmes is a detective. Because of his expertise, he notices more about objects and people than most and picks up on leads from .....

**Family Lines** - Some of the relatives in the novel are quite different from each other, such as.....

### POINT OF VIEW

This book is told from the point of view of Dr. Watson as a recounting of events, which is fairly typical in.....

## GENRE

*The Hound of the Baskervilles* is a Mystery / Suspense novel.

## OTHER ELEMENTS

**References to real and fictitious facts** - Within the book, there are many references to real and fictitious facts. The best example of the latter is the names of cases, those that Frankland is responsible for.....

**Changes in the narration format** - A look at some of the chapter titles will indicate another element, the change in narration format. Though it is Watson's voice throughout, he relies on his reports .....

## IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS - QUOTES

from the Aladdin Classics June 2000 edition

1. **“Now is the dramatic moment of fate, Watson, when you hear a step upon the stair which is walking into your life, and you know not whether for good or ill. What does Dr. James Mortimer, the man of science, ask of Sherlock Holmes, the specialist in crime? Come in!”** (p. 7, Holmes, to Watson, before Dr. Mortimer enters).

This marks the moment of the beginning of the case, as well as hinting at a relationship between science and crime (one of the minor themes).

2. **“To that Providence, my sons, I hereby commend you, and I counsel you by way of caution to forbear from crossing the moor in those dark hours when the powers of evil are exalted.”** (p.17, read by Dr. Mortimer from a manuscript by Hugo Baskerville).

The legend sets up the book, giving Stapleton a basis for his crimes. Sir Charles listens to the warning and is only persuaded out to his death by Mrs. Lyons's note. It is repeated to Sir Henry several times, until Holmes is ready to solve the case.....

## SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS / IMAGERY / SYMBOLS

**The Hound** - The hound that haunts the Baskerville family because a disreputable ancestor primarily represents Stapleton. He tracks down and kills his relatives, as a result of his ancestor, .....

**Family Portraits** - The family portrait of Hugo that enables Holmes to figure out the .....

**The Moor** - The surrounding of the moor compliments the atmosphere of gloom and doom that.....

**Metals** - Though perhaps not quite developed and clear enough to be considered a full symbol in .....

## IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY

**Title:** *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

**Author:** Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

**Date Published:** in book form- 1902 (serialized in *The Strand* in 1901).....

## VOCABULARY

**Asperity** - severity of surroundings or personality; though it is used in Chapter One to describe Holmes's response at hearing he is the second best detective, it could also apply to the landscape around the Hall or Stapleton's temper, as seen in his outburst when Sir Henry tried to kiss his sister (actually his wife).....

## STUDY QUESTIONS - MULTIPLE CHOICE QUIZ

1. Holmes and Watson are incorrect in this deduction from their visitor's cane:

- a. his occupation
  - b. the reason he was given it
  - c. where he works now
  - d. where he used to work
2. This person discovered and reported the death of Sir Charles Baskerville:
- a. Barrymore
  - b. Dr. Mortimer
  - c. Mrs. Barrymore
  - d. Stapleton.....

## **STUDY QUESTIONS / ESSAY TOPICS / BOOK REPORT IDEAS**

Sherlock Holmes stories took on a life larger than even their author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, wanted. He even tried to kill off the great detective, but had to bring him back by popular demand. Discuss how the idea of creations becoming greater than their creators plays a part in literature in this and other works, such as Frankenstein.....

## **END OF SAMPLE MONKEYNOTES EXCERPTS**

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