

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for The Hound of the Baskervilles (Unabridged)

by
Arthur Conan Doyle

Book Information

Arthur Conan Doyle, The Hound of the Baskervilles (Unabridged)

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246 Pages

Book Level: 8.3

Interest Level: UG

Sherlock Holmes and Watson set out to solve the mystery that had haunted the Baskerville family for years and had recently occurred again.

Topics: Animals, Dogs; Horror/Thriller, Misc./Other; Mysteries, Murder; Power Lessons AR, Grade 8; What Kids Are Reading, 2014, 75 Most Read Fiction, ATOS Book Levels 7.0-10.0

Main Characters

Beryl the wife of Stapleton, who is posing as his sister

Dr. James Mortimer the country doctor who engages Holmes and Watson to keep Sir Henry's life safe

Dr. Watson Holmes's able assistant, who is charged with protecting Sir Henry Baskerville

Eliza Barrymore the butler's wife, whose brother, an escaped convict, is hiding on the moor

John Barrymore the butler at Baskerville Hall who helps Watson with his task

Laura Lyons a young woman who unwittingly helps Stapleton with setting up Sir Charles's death

Mr. Frankland the odd father of Laura Lyons

Selden an escaped convict hiding on the moor

Sherlock Holmes the famous detective who conducts much of his investigation on this case while in hiding

Sir Henry Baskerville the heir of Sir Charles's considerable fortune, whose life is in danger

Stapleton a Baskerville heir, disguised as a naturalist, who uses a terrifying hound to try to gain his family's fortune

Vocabulary

guinea an English coin valued at twenty-one shillings

league a distance equivalent to about three miles

mire an area of deep mud or soggy earth

moor an open area of marshy land usually covered with coarse grass or heather

morass a swampy or marshy area

tor a high hill that is rocky or craggy

Synopsis

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is a tale of mystery and cleverness by characters on both sides of the law. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are the main characters who, once again, are engaged to help a fellow countryman in need.

Dr. Watson appears to be the lead detective in this story, while Holmes is detained on another case in London. Unbeknownst to Watson, however, Holmes is cleverly conducting his investigation while hiding out in a stone hut on the moor.

While engaged by a country doctor to help the only heir of the Baskervilles avoid suffering the same fate as his ancestors, Holmes and Watson become intrigued by the legend of a supernatural hound. Most local people believe the hound is a curse upon each successive baronet who inhabits Baskerville Hall.

Watson is charged with keeping Sir Henry, the newest baronet, safe. He does a commendable job while using the investigative skills taught to him by the master sleuth, Sherlock Holmes. This ghost-like, larger-than-life dog is believed to be the killer of Sir Charles, the uncle of Sir Henry. Through keen observation and skilled questioning, Watson is able to piece together many of the facts concerning the mystery. After discovering that Holmes is actually on the site too, they combine their knowledge to deduce the most likely suspect--Stapleton, a naturalist who lives with his sister on the moor

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researching butterflies. Holmes researches Stapleton's past and learns that his so-called sister is really his wife. While visiting Baskerville Hall, Holmes notices how much Stapleton resembles a portrait of Hugo Baskerville, Sir Henry's ancestor who was known for his cruel ways. With this piece of evidence, the detective is more certain of the who and why of Sir Charles's death, and all that is left is to determine the how.

To solve this last mystery, Holmes and Watson reluctantly use Sir Henry as "bait." He bravely keeps an engagement with the Stapletons to draw out the villain. As Holmes suspects, Stapleton sends his hound after Sir Henry as he walks home across the dangerous moor. A dense fog rolls in, which makes Sir Henry's rescue more dramatic. The two sleuths do manage to kill the hound, but Stapleton gets away.

In the end, Sir Henry survives, the mystery of the hound is solved, and Stapleton's true identity is revealed.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

As in all good mysteries, the characters, as well as the reader, experience a series of very suspenseful events. What emotions or feelings are expressed by the different characters in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and what event is connected with each?

Students' answers will vary, but may include the following examples: fear when the hound chases Sir Henry in the fog; jealousy when Beryl Stapleton is wooed by Sir Henry; sadness over the frightful death of Sir Charles; or outrage for the manner in which Stapleton mistreats his wife.

Literary Analysis

The Hound of the Baskervilles takes place on England's moors. How important is this setting to the main idea of the story? Explain your answer.

The setting is integral to the story. Important elements such as the spectral hound and the mystery of its legend fit well with the peculiarities and uniqueness of the English countryside, especially its moors which are unpredictable, dangerous, and mysterious.

Inferential Comprehension

The author reveals a lot about the personalities of Holmes and Watson, as well as the dynamics of their relationship. How is this detective duo similar to other legendary pairs, such as Batman and Robin, Robin Hood and Little John, or a duo of your choice?

In all of these relationships, one member of each pair seems to possess more authority or prowess, while the other's role is more of an assistant. This causes others to take the "junior" character somewhat less seriously. This might sometimes cause these secondary characters to try to prove themselves to their cohort, as was the case with Watson.

Constructing Meaning

Sherlock Holmes and Watson have to be absolutely sure of the truth before they notify the authorities about Stapleton. Real-life detectives, as well as reporters and journalists, must also be careful that they obtain the facts and write or report the truth. Why is this important in society, and what should be done to those professionals who do not gather and report the truth?

Answers will vary, but might include that the entire justice system is based on the truth. Without it, society could not operate in good faith. Punishment could include loss of one's job and/or a jail sentence.

Teachable Skills

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Understanding Characterization Sherlock

Holmes is able to surmise the presence of his friend and colleague, Dr. Watson, from the brand name on a discarded cigarette. This suggests that Holmes closely observes and remembers Watson's habits and idiosyncrasies. Have your students test their knowledge of a friend's or classmate's uniqueness by writing down from memory as many details as possible about the other person. Then ask them to switch roles and repeat the process.

Understanding Hist/Cultural Factors The

Baskervilles are a prominent and wealthy English family well steeped in traditions. Many such families in real life have a family crest or coat of arms by which they are identified. Ask your students to create a coat of arms for the Baskervilles based on what they learn from the story. Have them make a model or drawing of it to show their classmates along with an explanation of its features.

Making Predictions *The Hound of the*

Baskervilles ends with the villain, Stapleton, supposedly meeting his end in the treacherous Grimpen Mire. Have students assume Stapleton did not lose his life on the moor, as Holmes deduced, but that he cleverly escaped. Ask students to write an escape scenario with a short summary giving the details of the act which could possibly give this villain the "last laugh."

Differentiating Fact and Opinion Most

detectives like Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson ask a lot of questions as part of their work. Have students practice their own question-writing and interviewing skills by composing a list of questions to be asked of a classmate to learn more about him or her. Then ask them to conduct an interview and to write a summary of what they learned.