

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

1 Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who was usually very late in the mornings, save upon
2 those not infrequent occasions when he was up all night, was seated at the
3 breakfast table. I stood upon the hearth-rug and picked up the stick which our
4 visitor had left behind him the night before. It was a fine, thick piece of wood,
5 bulbous-headed, of the sort which is known as a “Penang lawyer.” Just under
6 the head was a broad silver band nearly an inch across. “To James Mortimer,
7 M.R.C.S., from his friends of the C.C.H.,” was engraved upon it, with the date
8 “1884.” It was just such a stick as the old-fashioned family practitioner used
9 to carry — dignified, solid, and reassuring.

10 “Well, Watson, what do you make of it?”

11 Holmes was sitting with his back to me, and I had given him no sign of my
12 occupation.

13 “How did you know what I was doing? I believe you have eyes in the back of
14 your head.”

15 “I have, at least, a well-polished, silver-plated coffee-pot in front of me,” said
16 he. “But, tell me, Watson, what do you make of our visitor’s stick? Since we
17 have been so unfortunate as to miss him and have no notion of his errand, this
18 accidental souvenir becomes of importance. Let me hear you reconstruct the
19 man by an examination of it.”

20 “I think,” said I, following as far as I could the methods of my companion,
21 “that Dr. Mortimer is a successful, elderly medical man, well-esteemed since
22 those who know him give him this mark of their appreciation.”

23 “Good!” said Holmes. “Excellent!”

24 “I think also that the probability is in favour of his being a country practitioner
25 who does a great deal of his visiting on foot.”

26 “Why so?”

27 “Because this stick, though originally a very handsome one has been so
28 knocked about that I can hardly imagine a town practitioner carrying it. The
29 thick-iron ferrule¹ is worn down, so it is evident that he has done a great

1 A type of object used to fasten, join or reinforce.

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30 amount of walking with it.”

31 “Perfectly sound!” said Holmes.

32 “And then again, there is the ‘friends of the C.C.H.’ I should guess that to be
33 the Something Hunt, the local hunt to whose members he has possibly
34 given some surgical assistance, and which has made him a small presentation
35 in return.”

36 “Really, Watson, you excel yourself,” said Holmes, pushing back his chair and
37 lighting a cigarette. “I am bound to say that in all the accounts which you have
38 been so good as to give of my own small achievements you have habitually
39 underrated your own abilities. It may be that you are not yourself luminous,
40 but you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius
41 have a remarkable power of stimulating it. I confess, my dear fellow, that I am
42 very much in your debt.”

43 He had never said as much before, and I must admit that his words gave me
44 keen pleasure, for I had often been piqued by his indifference to my
45 admiration and to the attempts which I had made to give publicity to his
46 methods. I was proud, too, to think that I had so far mastered his system as
47 to apply it in a way which earned his approval. He now took the stick from my
48 hands and examined it for a few minutes with his naked eyes. Then with an
49 expression of interest he laid down his cigarette, and carrying the cane to the
50 window, he looked over it again with a convex lens.

51 “Interesting, though elementary,” said he as he returned to his favourite
52 corner of the settee. “There are certainly one or two indications upon the
53 stick. It gives us the basis for several deductions.”

54 “Has anything escaped me?” I asked with some self-importance. “I trust that
55 there is nothing of consequence which I have overlooked?”

56 “I am afraid, my dear Watson, that most of your conclusions were erroneous.
57 When I said that you stimulated me I meant, to be frank, that in noting your
58 fallacies I was occasionally guided towards the truth. Not that you are
59 entirely wrong in this instance. The man is certainly a country practitioner. And
60 he walks a good deal.”

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61 “Then I was right.”

62 “To that extent.”

63 “But that was all.”

64 “No, no, my dear Watson, not all—by no means all. I would suggest, for
65 example, that a presentation to a doctor is more likely to come from a hospital
66 than from a hunt, and that when the initials ‘C.C.’ are placed before that
67 hospital the words ‘Charing Cross’ very naturally suggest themselves.”

68 “You may be right.”

69 “The probability lies in that direction. And if we take this as a working
70 hypothesis we have a fresh basis from which to start our construction of this
71 unknown visitor.”

72 “Well, then, supposing that ‘C.C.H.’ does stand for ‘Charing Cross Hospital,’
73 what further inferences may we draw?”

74 “Do none suggest themselves? You know my methods. Apply them!”

75 “I can only think of the obvious conclusion that the man has practised in town
76 before going to the country.”

77 “I think that we might venture a little farther than this. Look at it in this light.
78 On what occasion would it be most probable that such a presentation would
79 be made? When would his friends unite to give him a pledge of their good
80 will? Obviously at the moment when Dr. Mortimer withdrew from the service
81 of the hospital in order to start a practice for himself. We know there has been
82 a presentation. We believe there has been a change from a town hospital to a
83 country practice. Is it, then, stretching our inference too far to say that the
84 presentation was on the occasion of the change?”

85 “It certainly seems probable.”

86 “Now, you will observe that he could not have been on the staff of the
87 hospital, since only a man well-established in a London practice could hold
88 such a position, and such a one would not drift into the country. What

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89 was he, then? If he was in the hospital and yet not on the staff
90 he could only have been a house-surgeon or a house-physician—little more
91 than a senior student. And he left five years ago—the date is on the stick.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 1** “Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who was usually very late in the mornings, save upon those not infrequent occasions when he was up all night, was seated at the breakfast table.”

What does this suggest?

- A** Sherlock stayed up late a lot of the time
 - B** Sherlock infrequently stayed up late
 - C** Sherlock usually sits at the breakfast table in the morning
 - D** Sherlock does not usually miss breakfast
-

- 2** Where did James Mortimer leave the stick?

- A** In the kitchen
 - B** In the living room
 - C** On the rug
 - D** On the table
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- 3** What was it that Watson thought Sherlock could not see him doing?

- A** Writing in his journal
 - B** Making breakfast
 - C** Investigating the stick
 - D** Serving breakfast
-

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

4 Which one of these statements are true?

- A** Sherlock uses information from all around the house
 - B** Sherlock has a lot of shiny furniture
 - C** Watson was at the breakfast table before Sherlock
 - D** Sherlock was sitting facing Watson the whole time
-

5 “Since we have been so unfortunate as to miss him and have no notion of his errand, this accidental souvenir becomes of importance.”

What does Sherlock mean when he says this?

- A** He means that he will use the name and initials to track down the man
 - B** They will use the stick to make assumptions about the man
 - C** They will put a ‘lost’ poster in the newspaper
 - D** They are glad they can keep this nice stick
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6 “following as far as I could the methods of my companion,” (line 20)

What does this suggest?

- A** Watson will be using the methods of Sherlock Holmes
 - B** Watson will follow Sherlock Holmes
 - C** Watson will use the stick to follow the man
 - D** None of the above
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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 7** Having read the text fully, which of these statements is true about why Sherlock says “Good!” and “Excellent!” when he is listening to Watson’s guesses?
- A** He agrees completely
 - B** He is amazed at Watson’s skills
 - C** He is complimenting Watson sincerely
 - D** He is complimenting Watson for giving him ideas
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- 8** What makes Watson believe the stick to belongs to someone who works in the country?
- A** The iron ferrule has been worn down from all of the concrete
 - B** He has done a lot of walking, which has caused the iron to wear down
 - C** The practitioners in the city do not use sticks
 - D** Medical men who are well esteemed come from the country
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- 9** “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. I confess, my dear fellow, that I am very much in your debt.”

What does this suggest about Sherlock?

- A** That Sherlock is hurtful with his words
 - B** Sherlock puts Watson down
 - C** Sherlock is thankful to Watson for inspiring new ideas
 - D** Sherlock thinks Watson dims his bright light
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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 10** What was Sherlock indifferent towards?
- A** To Watson trying make Sherlock well known in public
 - B** To Watson's admiration of publicity
 - C** Sherlock was indifferent towards Watson's attempt
 - D** Sherlock was indifferent towards the mysterious stick
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- 11** Which word best describes how the stick makes Sherlock feel?
- A** Interested
 - B** Fearful
 - C** Anxious
 - D** Flabbergasted
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- 12** Why does Watson have a feeling of self-importance?
- A** He feels good because he has outdone Sherlock
 - B** He thinks he is better than or as good as Sherlock
 - C** He feels good that Sherlock acknowledged his ability
 - D** He is impressed with his own ability
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- 13** Which one of these statements are True?
- A** The H stands for hospital
 - B** The H stands for Hunt
 - C** Sherlock believes the H stands for hospital
 - D** Watson's guesses were all wrong
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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 14** What reason does Sherlock suggest that Dr. Mortimer was presented with the stick?
- A** His friends are grateful for his work
 - B** His friends were honouring years of services
 - C** They were pledging their good will
 - D** The doctor was going to leave the hospital
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- 15** Why could the Dr. not have been on the staff at the hospital?
- A** Because he was not a well-established doctor from London
 - B** Because he had left
 - C** Because he had a walking condition that needed a stick
 - D** It is not clear
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- 16** Which word best replaces the word errand (line 17)?
- A** Huge task
 - B** Chore
 - C** Essay
 - D** Trip
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- 17** What does deduction (line 53) mean?
- A** A simple guess
 - B** A guess based on information
 - C** A solid fact
 - D** A long list of questions
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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

18 What does erroneous mean?

- A** It means correct
 - B** It means insulting
 - C** It means too vague
 - D** It means incorrect
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