
HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh on May 22, 1859, the third of ten children. Early on, he evinced a talent for storytelling, wowing teachers and friends in Jesuit school with his yarns. His first publication came in 1879 with "The Mystery of Sasassa Valley" in the *Chambers's Journal*.

At the same time, Doyle pursued a career in medicine at Edinburgh University, going on to become a surgeon of some renown at South sea, Portsmouth. While a medical student, he worked with Dr. Bell, who was exceptionally observant. Doyle thought he would write stories, said Doyle, "in which the hero would treat crime as Dr Bell treated disease and where science would take the place of chance."

In a series of stories—starting with *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of the Four*—Doyle produced the memorable character, Sherlock Holmes, a detective who relied on facts and evidence rather than chance. In 1891, six "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" showed up in *Strand* magazine, with six more appearing the next year. By 1893, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, as the collected stories were now called, was a huge hit. The public mourned Holmes' death in "The Final Problem." Doyle changed his decision to pursue more serious literary endeavors in 1901, when finances and public pressure yielded *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The same year that *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was published, Doyle produced a piece of propaganda on the Boer War, and the author was knighted for his efforts.

Doyle continued putting out Sherlock Holmes stories, including the collected *Return of Sherlock Holmes*. Later in life, when his son was killed in the first World War, Doyle devoted himself to his chosen faith, spiritualism. The notion of life after death and the idea of psychic abilities inform the character of Doyle's famous detective. Sherlock Holmes is a man who can see beyond appearances and link ostensibly unrelated facts into a coherent whole.

The Sherlock Holmes stories also owe a debt to Edgar Allan Poe, who is often credited with having created the modern detective tale. *The Gold Bug* (1843), *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt* (1842–1843), and *The Purloined Letter* (1844) are all, in a sense, precursors to Conan Doyle's detective stories.

Key Facts

FULL TITLE · *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

AUTHOR · Arthur Conan Doyle

TYPE OF WORK · Novel

GENRE · Mystery

LANGUAGE · English

TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN · Returning from the Boer War in South Africa, Doyle wrote and published *Hound of the Baskervilles* in England in 1901.

DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION · 1901, serialized in *The Strand*; 1902, published by Newnes

PUBLISHER · George Newnes, Ltd.

NARRATOR · Dr. Watson

CLIMAX · Holmes' secret plan comes to fruition when a guileless Sir Henry heads home across the moor, only to be attacked by the hound. Hindered by a thick fog and sheer fright, Holmes and Watson nonetheless shoot the beast and solve the mystery.

PROTAGONIST · Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes

ANTAGONIST · Jack Stapleton

SETTING (TIME) · 1889. Holmes notes that the date 1884, engraved on Dr. Mortimer's walking stick, is five years old.

SETTING (PLACE) · The novel starts and ends in London, in Holmes' office at 221b Baker Street. Most of the rest of the novel takes place in Devonshire, at the imposing Baskerville Hall, the lonely moorlands, and the rundown Merripit House where Stapleton lives.

POINT OF VIEW · The mystery is told entirely from Watson's point of view, although the author regularly switches from straight narrative to diary to letters home.

FALLING ACTION · Holmes explains the intricacies of the case; Sir Henry and Mortimer head off on vacation to heal Henry's nerves

TENSE · Modulates from past (as in Watson's narration of London events) to recent past (as in Watson's diary and letters)

FORESHADOWING · The deaths of some wild horses prefigure Stapleton's own death by drowning in the Grimpen mire. There is a sense in which all the clues serve as foreshadowing for later discoveries.

TO NE · At different times, the novel's tone is earnest, reverent (of Holmes), uncertain, and ominous.

THEMES · Good and evil; natural and supernatural; truth and fantasy; classism, hierarchy, and entitlement

MOTIFS · Superstition and folk tales; disguised identities; the red herring

SYMBOLS · The moor (the mire); the hound

Plot Overview

The Hound of the Baskervilles opens with a mini mystery—Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson speculate on the identity of the owner of a cane that has been left in their office by an unknown visitor. Wowing Watson with his fabulous powers of observation, Holmes predicts the appearance of James Mortimer, owner of the found object and a convenient entrée into the baffling curse of the Baskervilles.

Entering the office and unveiling an 18th century manuscript, Mortimer recounts the myth of the lecherous Hugo Baskerville. Hugo captured and imprisoned a young country lass at his estate in Devonshire, only to fall victim to a marauding hound of hell as he pursued her along the lonesome moors late one night. Ever since, Mortimer reports, the Baskerville line has been plagued by a mysterious and supernatural black hound. The recent death of Sir Charles Baskerville has rekindled suspicions and fears. The next of kin, the duo finds out, has arrived in London to take up his post at Baskerville Hall, but he has already been intimidated by an anonymous note of warning and, strangely enough, the theft of a shoe.

Agreeing to take the case, Holmes and Watson quickly discover that Sir Henry Baskerville is being trailed in London by a mysterious bearded stranger, and they speculate as to whether the ghost be friend or foe. Holmes, however, announces that he is too busy in London to accompany Mortimer and Sir Henry to Devonshire to get to the bottom of the case, and he sends Dr. Watson to be his eyes and ears, insisting that he report back regularly.

Once in Devonshire, Watson discovers a state of emergency, with armed guards on the watch for an escaped convict roaming the moors. He meets potential suspects in Mr. Barrymore and Mrs. Barrymore, the domestic help, and Mr. Jack Stapleton and his sister Beryl, Baskerville neighbors.

A series of mysteries arrive in rapid succession: Barrymore is caught skulking around the mansion at night; Watson spies a lonely figure keeping watch over the moors; and the doctor hears what sounds like a dog's howling. Beryl Stapleton provides an enigmatic warning and Watson learns of a secret encounter between Sir Charles and a local woman named Laura Lyons on the night of his death.

Doing his best to unravel these threads of the mystery, Watson discovers that Barrymore's nightly jaunts are just his attempt to aid the escaped con, who turns out to be Mrs. Barrymore's brother. The doctor interviews Laura Lyons to assess her involvement, and discovers that the lonely figure surveying the moors is none other than Sherlock Holmes himself. It takes Holmes—hidden so as not to tip off the villain as to his involvement—to piece together the mystery.

Mr. Stapleton, Holmes has discovered, is actually in line to inherit the Baskerville fortune, and as such is the prime suspect. Laura Lyons was only a pawn in Stapleton's game, a Baskerville beneficiary whom Stapleton convinced to request and then miss a late night appointment with Sir Charles. Having lured Charles onto the moors, Stapleton released his ferocious pet pooch, which frightened the superstitious nobleman and caused a heart attack.

In a dramatic final scene, Holmes and Watson use the younger Baskerville as bait to catch Stapleton red-handed. After a late supper at the Stapletons', Sir Henry heads home across the moors, only to be waylaid by the enormous Stapleton pet. Despite a dense fog, Holmes and Watson are able to subdue the beast, and Stapleton, in his panicked flight from the scene, drowns in a marshland on the moors. Beryl Stapleton, who turns out to be Jack's harried wife and not his sister, is discovered tied up in his house, having refused to participate in his dastardly scheme.

Back in London, Holmes ties up the loose ends, announcing that the stolen shoe was used to give the hound Henry's scent, and that mysterious warning note came from Beryl Stapleton, whose philandering husband had denied their marriage so as to seduce and use Laura Lyons. Watson files the case closed.

Character List

Sherlock Holmes

Sherlock Holmes is the ever-observant, world-renowned detective of 221b Baker Street. For all his assumed genius and intuition he is virtually omniscient in these stories, and Holmes becomes more accessible in the context of his constant posturing and pretension.

Holmes lets down his guard and admits of a fragile ego. When challenged at the beginning of the book—Mortimer calls him the second best crime solver in Europe and Holmes lets down his guard and asks who could possibly be the first. By and large, however, Holmes' ego is kept in check by a constant dose of adulation from Watson. Holmes regularly announces some absurd and unsubstantiated conclusion only to mock Watson by revealing the most obvious of clues. In the end, Holmes toys with his associates (and particularly Watson) at least as much as he flouts his enemies, equivocating, misleading, and making fools out of them only to up his own crime-solving cachet.

Dr. Watson

The good doctor plays the sidekick to Holmes' self-obsessed hero figure. Watson is a lowly apprentice and live-in friend, who spends most of the book trying to solve a difficult case in his master's stead. Always on hand to stroke Holmes' ego, Watson is nonetheless intent on proving his own mettle by applying Holmes' techniques.

Watson's never-ending adulation, which is presumably meant to mirror our own understanding of the legendary detective, comes through most forcefully at the end of the novel, when Holmes arrives at Devonshire. Holmes announces that he meant for Watson to think he was in London, and a pouty Watson reacts: "Then you use me, and yet you do not trust me!" Codependent throughout, Holmes and Watson fill each other's needs. Watson provides Holmes with an ego boost, and Holmes needs Watson's eyes and ears to inconspicuously gather clues. Watson is awestruck by Holmes' power of observation, and Watson feels more powerful by association.

Mr. Jack Stapleton

Intended to incarnate ill will and malice, Stapleton is conflated at various points with the lecherous libertine Hugo, whom he resembles. Stapleton is a black-hearted, violent villain hidden beneath a benign, bookish surface.

If Hugo operates as a kind of Doppelganger for his entomologist heir, then the convict offers an interesting parallel as well. Serving mainly as a red herring in the mysterious death of Sir Charles Baskerville, the convict also operates as a foil for the real culprit, Stapleton. Personifying "peculiar ferocity," "wonton brutality," and even dubious sanity, the convict is shown to be a pathetic, animalistic figure on whom the detectives ultimately take pity. Not so with Stapleton, a man with a "murderous heart," and a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Stapleton is a worthy adversary because of his birthright. If the convict is a simple murderer, he is also simply born, related by blood to the Baskerville's domestic help. Thus, the convict is part of a lower class than Holmes, and therefore is not a worthy adversary. Stapleton, however, is an intellectual, and when his evil side comes out, his hidden nobility comes out as well. Once Holmes is handling an educated and noble rival, he begins to take things much more seriously. In this sense, Stapleton's character adds to the strong classist themes imbedded in this book.

Sir Henry Baskerville - The late Sir Charles's nephew and closet living relative. Sir Henry is hale and hearty, described as "a small, alert, dark-eyed man about thirty years of age, very sturdily built." By the end of the story, Henry is as worn out and shell-shocked as his late uncle was before his death.

Sir Charles Baskerville - The head of the Baskerville estate. Sir Charles was a superstitious man, and terrified of the Baskerville curse and his waning health at the time of his death. Sir Charles was also a well-known philanthropist, and his plans to invest in the regions surrounding his estate make it essential that Sir Henry move to Baskerville Hall to continue his uncle's good works.

Sir Hugo Baskerville - A debauchorous and shadowy Baskerville ancestor, Sir Hugo is the picture of aristocratic excess, drinking and pursuing pleasures of the flesh until it killed him.

Mortimer - Family friend and doctor to the Baskervilles. Mortimer is a tall, thin man who dresses sloppily but is an all-around nice guy and the executor of Charles's estate. Mortimer is also a phrenology enthusiast, and he wishes and hopes to some day have the opportunity to study Holmes' head.

Miss Stapleton - Allegedly Stapleton's sister, this dusky Latin beauty turns out to be his wife. Eager to prevent another death but terrified of her husband, she provides enigmatic warnings to Sir Henry and Watson.

Mr. John Barrymore and Mrs. Eliza Barrymore - The longtime domestic help of the Baskerville clan. Earnest and eager to please, the portly Mrs. Barrymore and her gaunt husband figure as a kind of red herring for the detectives, in league with their convict brother but ultimately no more suspicious than Sir Henry.

Laura Lyons - A local young woman. Laura Lyons is the beautiful brunette daughter of "Frankland the crank," the local litigator who disowned her when she married against his will. Subsequently abandoned by her husband, the credulous Laura turns to Mr. Stapleton and Charles for help.

The convict - A murderous villain, whose crimes defy description. The convict is nonetheless humanized by his association with the Barrymores. He has a rodent-like, haggardly appearance. His only wish is to flee his persecutors in Devonshire and escape to South America.

Mr. Frankland - Laura's father. Frankland is a man who likes to sue, a sort of comic relief with a chip on his shoulder about every infringement on what he sees as his rights. Villainized due to his one-time harsh treatment of Laura, Frankland is for the most part a laughable jester in the context of this story.

Themes

Natural and supernatural; truth and fantasy

As soon as Dr. Mortimer arrives to unveil the mysterious curse of the Baskervilles, *Hound* wrestles with questions of natural and supernatural occurrences. The doctor himself decides that the

marauding hound in question is a supernatural beast, and all he wants to ask Sherlock Holmes is what to do with the next of kin.

From Holmes' point of view, every set of clues points toward a logical, real- world solution. Considering the supernatural explanation, Holmes decides to consider all other options before falling back on that one. Sherlock Holmes personifies the intellectual's faith in logic, and on examining facts to find the answers.

In this sense, the story takes on the Gothic tradition, a brand of storytelling that highlights the bizarre and unexplained. Doyles' mysterious hound, an ancient family curse, even the ominous Baskerville Hall all set up a Gothic- style mystery that, in the end, will fall victim to Holmes' powerful logic.

Doyle's own faith in spiritualism, a doctrine of life after death and psychic powers, might at first seem to contradict a Sherlockian belief in logical solutions and real world answers. Holmes is probably based more on Doyle's scientific training than his belief system. But the struggle for understanding, the search for a coherent conception of the world we live in, links the spiritualist Doyle with his fictional counterpart. Throughout the novel, Holmes is able to come up with far-flung if ultimately true accounts of the world around him, much as his author strove for understanding in fiction and in fact.

Classism and hierarchy

Hound's focus on the natural and supernatural spills over into other thematic territory—the rigid classism of Doyle's milieu. Well-to-do intellectual that he was, Doyle translated many of the assumptions of turn-of- the-century English society into his fiction. The natural and supernatural is one example.

Throughout the story, the superstitions of the shapeless mass of common folk- everyone attributes an unbending faith in the curse to the commoners-are denigrated and, often, dismissed. If Mortimer and Sir Henry have their doubts, it is the gullible common folk who take the curse seriously. In the end, when Watson's reportage and Holmes' insight have shed light on the situation, the curse and the commoners who believed it end up looking silly.

At the same time, Sir Henry's servants evince a kind of docility, and their brother the convict is reduced from dangerous murderer to pathetic rodent under Watson's gaze. *Hound's* classism is also

enmeshed in questions of entitlement: who has the right to Baskerville Hall, to Holmes' attention, to our attention.

Motifs

Superstition and folk tales

The story opens with the folk tale of the Baskerville curse, presented on eighteenth century parchment. The reproduction of the curse, both in the novel and in Mortimer's reading, serves to start the story off with a bang—a shadowy folk tale, nothing if not mysterious. At the same time, it offers a nice contrast to Watson's straight-forward reporting, a style insisted upon by the master and one which will ultimately dispel any foolish belief in curses and hounds of hell.

Red Herring

A classic of the mystery/detective genre, the red herring throws us off the right trail. Much like the folk tale, it offers a too-easy answer to the question at hand, tempting us to take the bait and making fools of us if we do. In *Hound*, the largest red herring is the convict. After all, who better to pin a murder on than a convicted murderer. Barrymore's late-night mischief turns out to be innocent, and the convicted murderer turns out to not be involved in the mysterious deaths.

Chapter I: Mr. Sherlock Holmes

Summary

Our first glimpse of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson is in their home office at 221b Baker Street in London. Watson examines a mysterious cane left in the office by an unknown visitor, and Holmes sits with his back facing his friend. Holmes asks Watson what he makes of it, and Watson declares that his friend must "have eyes in the back of [his] head," since he saw what he was doing. Holmes admits that he saw Watson's reflection in the coffee service, proving to Watson and us that he is an astute observer.

Watson offers up his theory as to the origin of the walking stick, declaring that the inscription, "To James Mortimer, M.R.C.S., from his friends of the C.C.H.," suggests an elderly doctor who was awarded the object after years of faithful service. Holmes encourages Watson's speculation, and the doctor continues, saying that the well-worn stick implies a country practitioner who walks about quite a bit. In addition, the C.C.H., he suggests, is probably the mark of "the something hunt," a local group to whom Mortimer provided some service.

Holmes congratulates Watson, and goes on to examine the cane himself as Watson basks in the glory of Holmes' compliment. However, Holmes quickly contradicts almost all of Watson's conclusions. Holmes suggests that while the owner is clearly a country practitioner, C.C.H. actually means Charing Cross Hospital. The cane was probably presented on the occasion of the man's retirement from the hospital, and only a young man would have retired from a successful city practice to move to a rural one. Holmes goes on to suggest that the man must possess a small spaniel, given the bite marks on the cane, and, he playfully announces, given the appearance of master and dog at their front door.

Mortimer arrives, introduces himself, and talks to the embarrassed Watson. An ardent phrenologist, Mortimer admires Holmes' skull and announces his desire to consult with "the second highest expert in Europe," a moniker which Holmes disputes.

Analysis

This first chapter is appropriately titled "Mr. Sherlock Holmes," as it introduces us to the great detective, while describing his abilities, and comparing him to Dr. Watson. Watson serves as Holmes' chronicler throughout the Sherlock Holmes series, but he does more than that. Watson is a foil for Holmes' brilliance—as Holmes himself says, "in noting your fallacies I was occasionally guided towards the truth." Dr. Watson gives Holmes the opportunity to show off, to disprove a plausible but erroneous set of conclusions by offering a superior talent for observation.

Conan Doyle also uses the character of Dr. Watson as a stand-in for us, Holmes' credulous readership, who connect with Watson both by virtue of his narration and to his common sense analysis of the situation. Holmes will always be able to trump Watson and us, providing more insight, analysis, and cleverness. Holmes always has an insider's edge. Conan Doyle often gives Holmes the advantage, because he provides him with more information than we get. When Holmes determines the size and breed of Mortimer's dog, for example, it is because he sees the animal

outside the window. Later, when wrapping up the case, Holmes benefits from some secret research he has done on the side. Holmes is supposed to beat us to the punch in every instance; we are all supposed to have the same puzzle pieces, but only Holmes can fit them together. Conan Doyle cheats sometimes, letting Holmes look brilliant when in fact he is just better informed. Giving Holmes' privileged information, however, goes toward establishing the depth of Holmes' character. Holmes rub it in to Watson and us when he comes up with the correct conclusions, only to reveal that he has knowledge of the most obvious of clues. For example, he had seen the dog or hound outside of the office, which is how he knew its breed. Also, he had seen Watson in the silver coffee service, which is why he knew Watson was inspecting the cane, even though he was not facing him. Holmes is able to play these common observations off as the most brilliant of insights or even as part of a supernatural ability, showing that he is also conceited and egotistical.

Chapter II: The Curse of the Baskervilles

Summary

Mortimer presents Holmes and Watson with a manuscript which the always observant Holmes had already noticed and dated at 1730. The document, dated 1742, Baskerville Hall, reveals the myth of the Baskerville curse. At the time of the "Great Revolution," Mortimer reads, Hugo Baskerville lorded over the Baskerville mansion in Devonshire. Sex crazed and lecherous, the infamous Hugo became obsessed with a local yeoman's daughter, whom he kidnapped one day. Trapped in an upstairs room, hearing the raucous drinking and carousing going on downstairs, the girl escaped with the help of an ivy-covered wall. She fled across the expansive moorlands outside. Enraged at finding that his captive escaped, Hugo made a deal with the devil and released his hounds in pursuit of the young girl. Hugo's companions had followed their drunken friend across the moorland, and came upon the bodies of both Hugo and his girl. Hugo had just had his throat ripped out by "a foul thing, a great, black beast." Ever since, Mortimer reports, the supernatural hound has haunted the family. The hound just recently killed Sir Charles Baskerville, the latest inhabitant of Baskerville Hall.

Mortimer unfolds the *Devon County Chronicle* of May 14, reading about Sir Charles' philanthropy and the circumstances surrounding his death. Having remade his family fortune in South African colonial ventures, Charles returned two years ago to the family estate and gave extensively to the

local population. The chronicle mentions the myth only to discount it, citing the testimony of Sir Charles' servants, Mr. Barrymore and Mrs. Barrymore, and that of Mortimer himself. Charles was found dead, the paper reports, at the site of his nightly walk down the so-called Yew Alley, which borders the haunted moorlands. Suspicious facts include Charles' apparent dawdling at the gate to the alley, and his footsteps down the alley itself, which indicated tiptoeing or running. But the paper points out Charles' poor health and the coroner's conclusion that the man died of a heart attack. The article goes on to insist that the next of kin, Sir Henry Baskerville, should come to take his uncle's post and continue his philanthropy.

Mortimer interrupts the account, however, to indicate that those are the publicly-known facts. Off the record, he admits that Sir Charles' poor health was a result of his fear of the family curse, and that he himself had suggested a sojourn in London to ease Sir Charles' nerves. Finally, Mortimer announces that the scene of the crime contained, in addition to Sir Charles' tiptoeing steps, "the footprints of a gigantic hound."

Analysis

The curse of the Baskervilles establishes many of the themes that will run throughout the rest of the book—the contrasting pairs of natural and supernatural, and myth and reality. Even as Doyle relates the deeds of a lecherous libertine—in the tradition of the Marquis de Sade—he invokes the Gothic tradition that is popular at the time. The ideas of an ancient curse, a hound of hell, and a kind of divine retribution all recall stories like those of Edgar Allan Poe, who imagined the most macabre situations and the most otherworldly explanations.

This chapter also presents several sources of information about the case—the manuscript, the paper, and Mortimer's reading of each one make it difficult to know which source to believe. An ancient curse, a modern piece of journalism, and a doctor's counsel all conspire to bewilder the detectives and the audience. Ultimately, however, the interplay of multiple perspectives only serves to emphasize the accuracy of our original source of all knowledge: Sherlock Holmes himself. Each source is set against the master's logical techniques for gathering and analyzing clues, both in form and in function.

The manuscript is notable both for its tone, which is radically different from the novel's no-nonsense, direct tone, and for its content, which points to the easy, but unrealistic, supernatural answers to a perplexing problem, rather than the more complicated scientific explanations. In the final analysis,

Holmes is able to gleam the valid facts from what would otherwise be a shadowy, ancient myth. Dating the document at 1730, and analyzing the print and the paper, Holmes brings the elusive myth into his realm by using the careful deductive reasoning.

The other piece of evidence, the newspaper article, also only gets the story half right, and it concocts easy answers just like the manuscript. If the manuscript took a credulous, superstitious stance, then the paper makes the opposite mistake, refusing to acknowledge a set of mysterious data. Both types of evidence render an incomplete picture. In the end, only Holmes will come up with the full story, as he takes an ostensibly unfathomable set of clues and producing an objective truth from them.

Chapters III–IV

Summary

Chapter III: The Problem

Holmes, excited by such a mysterious case, asks for more details. As it turns out, the paw prints indicated that the dog had not approached the body. High hedges and two locked gates bordered the Yew Alley. Mortimer suggests that the death was the result of some supernatural evil, and he describes his own interviews with locals, who had seen a spectral hound roaming the moors. The superstitious Mortimer only came to Holmes to ask what to do with Sir Henry, the sole heir, set to arrive at Waterloo Station in one hour. He mentions another heir, Sir Charles's brother Roger, but points out that he is presumed dead in South America. As for Sir Henry, Mortimer is afraid should he set up shop in Devonshire, but he knows that the county is counting on continued Baskerville philanthropy.

Holmes promises to consider the matter, telling Mortimer to pick up Henry at the station and bring him to the office the next morning. The detective dismisses Mortimer and Watson and settles down to contemplate the situation, ruminating in his typical fashion over a bag of Bradley's strongest shag tobacco.

Later that night, Watson returns to find the office atmosphere thick with smoke: as Holmes suggests, "a concentrated atmosphere helps a concentration of thought." Holmes surprises Watson by guessing he has been at his club and unveils a map of the Baskerville moorlands. Holmes indicates

his inclination to go through all the other possibilities before falling back on the supernatural one, and he speculates on the relevant questions. Given his infirmity and fear of the moor, Holmes wonders whom Charles was waiting for at the gate. The change in footprints, Holmes suggests, indicates running and not tiptoeing. Holmes also points out that Sir Charles was running in exactly the wrong direction—away from his house and any help he might find. The duo sets aside the case and Holmes takes up his violin.

Chapter IV: Sir Henry Baskerville

The next morning, Mortimer and the young Henry Baskerville arrive at 221b Baker Street. Though sturdy and weather-beaten, Sir Henry's expression showed that he was a gentleman. Just twenty-four hours in London, Sir Henry has already gotten involved in the mystery—he received an anonymous note of warning when he arrived at his hotel. Said the note: "As you value your life, or your reason, keep away from the moor." A few facts stand out: the address is on a plain envelope and printed in rough writing, and the note itself is composed with words cut out of a newspaper, except for the word moor. Holmes establishes that no one could have known where to reach Sir Henry, so the writer must be following him. Holmes quickly assesses the typeface and discerns that the words were cut out from yesterday's *Times*. He goes on to suggest that the culprit used a pair of short-bladed nail scissors, since the longer words are cut with two snips, and that the word moor was handwritten because the author could not find it in print.

Astounded, the others listen on intently. Holmes proceeds: the author must be an educated man, since only the well-educated read the *Times*. As such, the roughly written address suggests the writer was trying to disguise his or her handwriting, thus, the writer must have cursive that is recognizable. In addition, the author must have been in a hurry, since the words are glued carelessly onto the paper.

Dr. Mortimer, suddenly skeptical, questions Holmes' guess work, and the Holmes retorts that his methodology involves weighing probabilities and deciding on the likeliest solution. To prove it, he points out that the spluttered writing suggests a lack of ink, undoubtedly the result of a hotel pen, and not a private one. Holmes even asserts that an investigation of hotel garbage around Charing Cross, where the letter was postmarked, should yield the torn-up copy of the *Times*.

Announcing that he cannot glean anything else from the letter, the detective asks Henry whether anything else unusual has happened. Apparently, when Henry put a new pair out to be shined, his

boot was lost or stolen. Dismissing the incident, Holmes agrees to fill Henry in on the curse of the Baskervilles. The group debates whether the warning suggests a friend eager to protect the baronet or an enemy intent on scaring him off. Henry announces his intention to go to Baskerville Hall. After inviting the detectives to lunch later that day, he leaves.

As soon as Sir Henry and Mortimer are out the door, Holmes leaps into action, intent on trailing the baronet to spot the letter writer whom Holmes suspects is trailing Sir Henry. Sure enough, the stakeout reveals a suspicious stranger in a cab, but the moment Watson spies his bushy black beard, the villain hurries off. The spy, Holmes suggests, is a worthy rival given his choice of a cab, a supremely well-suited getaway car. Holmes own performance, by contrast, was sub- par: he let the spy know that he was seen. The detective does announce that he has caught the cab's number, 2704, and directs Watson into a nearby messenger office. Once inside, Holmes greets the manager, a former client, and asks for the man's son Cartwright's help. Holmes instructs Cartwright to inspect the garbage of all the hotels in the Charing Cross region, in search of the mutilated *Times*. Meanwhile, he tells Watson, they will investigate cab number 2704 before meeting Sir Henry for lunch.

Analysis

In this section, Holmes attacks the case, applying his logical methods to the few clues that they have. His decision to exhaust all real-world options before considering the supernatural is typical of Holmes' style. He decides to rule out all possibilities before he considers that there are supernatural reasons. Ironically, the way that he analyzes clues, and the intuition he uses to gather evidence, is almost supernatural. He is almost superhuman in his keen powers of observation. The book has a very mysterious and dark undertone. These two chapters introduce us to some of the more puzzling clues in the book—the cut-and-paste warning letter, the stolen boot, and the mysterious stranger. In particular, the appearance of the mysterious stranger highlights one of the more prevalent themes in the story: disguised identity. When the detectives spot their man, they cannot help but wonder whether the black beard is a fake. The man's hurried escape ensures that for now, they will not figure out his identity, or whether the beard is a disguise. At the same time, identities and intentions get confused as the detectives wonder whether the stranger and the letter writer are the same person, and whether that person is a friend or an enemy. In this case, a mistaken or uncertain identity adds to the building tension and the tone of mystery in the novel.

Mistaken and disguised identities play a large role in the novel. The villain will continually disguise his own and others' identities. Just like an episode of Scooby Doo, the buildup to the final unmasking, or the revelation of true identities, creates much of the suspense in the story. The conflict between an inexplicable, mysterious, or supernatural identity and a more realistic and logical one, drives the plot of the novel. These two sides: practical and supernatural also represent the different characters' perspectives about Baskerville mystery. Holmes takes a more dogmatic, methodological approach, whereas Mortimer believes in the supernatural explanations.

These chapters also introduce us to the character of Cartwright. Cartwright offers an interesting glimpse into the mindset of upper middle class England during Holmes' time. As an educated person, Holmes expects not only respect, but also service from his social inferiors, and he usually gets it. Cartwright agrees to go rummaging about in the trash for Holmes. Later on, when Holmes and Watson handle an irate cab driver, a few shillings buys him off and ensures his total cooperation. The detectives' interaction with people of lower classes suggests that they do not respect those people whom they consider of a lower social or economic status.

Chapters V–VI

Summary

Chapter V: Three Broken Threads

Arriving at Sir Henry's hotel, Holmes examines the register. Tricking the clerk into thinking he knows the two names added since Sir Henry, he gleans information that excludes the two from suspicion. So, the detective concludes, the watcher has not settled in Henry's hotel, and as such, wants very much to see but not to be seen.

Heading upstairs, the pair runs into a flustered Sir Henry, enraged at the theft of a second boot, this time an old one. Denouncing the hotel staff, Sir Henry is surprised at Holmes' suggestion that the thefts may have something to do with the case.

At lunch, Holmes, Watson, Henry, and Mortimer discuss Sir Henry's decision to go to Devonshire, and Holmes assents given the extreme improbability of unmasking the stalker in crowded London. Holmes asks if there is not anyone up at Devonshire with a full black beard, and learns that the

butler, Mr. Barrymore, fits that description. Intent on assessing whether Barrymore is at home or in London, Holmes sends a telegraph to Mr. Barrymore that will be delivered to his hand or else returned to sender. Barrymore, Mortimer relates, stood to inherit 500 pounds and a cushy, work-free setup upon Charles' death. Asking about other heirs and beneficiaries, Holmes learns that Mortimer himself received 1000 pounds, and Sir Henry got 740,000. The next in line, Mortimer states, is a couple named Desmond, distant cousins. Holmes declares that Sir Henry needs a more attentive bodyguard at Baskerville Hall than Mortimer. Citing previous commitments in town, Holmes declines to go himself and surprises everyone by suggesting that Watson accompany the baronet. Holmes insists that Watson keep him updated. While they are getting ready to leave for their office, they are surprised by a cry from Sir Henry. Diving under a cabinet, Henry discovers the first boot he lost (the new one) despite the fact that Mortimer searched the lunchroom earlier that afternoon. The waiter, when asked, denies any knowledge of who placed the boot under a cabinet.

Back at 221b Baker Street, the detectives try to piece together the threads of the case, but they soon hear by wire that Barrymore is indeed in Devonshire and that young Cartwright has not found the mutilated newspaper. However, the cab number proves useful—the cabman himself, irked at what he assumes is a complaint, arrives at the office. Holmes assures the man that he just contacted the cab company to get some information, and promises him half a sovereign if he cooperates. Holmes gets the man's name and asks about his mysterious morning fare. The cabman announces that the fare, calling himself Sherlock Holmes, was nondescript and ordered to him to do just what the detectives saw. Amused at his adversary's wit, Holmes is nonetheless annoyed that this third thread of the mystery has snapped.

Chapter VI: Baskerville Hall

On the morning of their departure, Holmes offers Watson some advice, suggesting that the doctor report facts only, and not conjectures. Holmes also announces that he has eliminated Desmond as a suspect, but that Watson should keep a close watch on all Henry's other intimates, including the Barrymores, Sir Henry's groom, the local farmers, Mrs. Stapleton and Mrs. Stapleton, and Mr. Frankland of Lafter Hall. Assuring that Watson has his gun and that Sir Henry will never go out alone, Holmes bids the group adieu.

On the trip, Watson chats with Mortimer and Henry, while the baronet admires the scenery of his birthplace. Soon, the group spots the fabled moorland, a gray, dream-like expanse. Observing Sir

Henry's exultation, Watson decides that this New World traveler is indeed "of that long line of high-blooded, fiery, and masterful men," a good enough man to brave the Baskerville curse.

At the station, the group is met by a pair of gun-toting police officers, on guard for an escaped con, and by a set of Baskerville servants. The ride to the hall offers a beautiful scenic view, but always with the foreboding moor in the background. Asking about the armed guards, the group learns from the coachman that a dastardly criminal, Selden, the Notting Hill murderer, just recently escaped from prison. Sobered and silent, the party finally reaches Baskerville Hall.

As Barrymore and his wife introduce themselves and start taking down the baggage, Mortimer announces his intention to head home for supper. Once inside, Watson and Sir Henry learn of the Barrymores' intention to leave Henry's service as soon as he gets settled. Citing their sadness and fear at Charles' death, the Barrymores admit that they will never feel relaxed at Baskerville Hall. They also announce their intention to establish a business with the money inherited from Sir Charles.

Later on at dinner, Sir Henry says he understands his uncle's ill health and anxiety given the somber and scary aspect of much of the hall. Once in bed, Watson has trouble sleeping, and he hears a woman's sobbing.

Analysis

When Holmes and Watson arrive at Henry's hotel, Holmes surprises us by lying to the bellhop to gain information about the guests who have checked in since Sir Henry. Sherlock also practices deceit, and his trickery clues us in to a maneuver he will pull when he suggests that he cannot go to Devonshire to handle the case. In enlisting Watson, Holmes plays his own game of disguised identity. Watson acts as Holmes' secret ears and eyes, thus Holmes will be there, through the conduit of Watson.

This section also depicts an interesting tête-à-tête between Holmes and Watson. When Holmes sends Watson up to Devonshire, he insists that Watson report just the facts. Though Watson revels in the trust and responsibility his friend affords him, it seems clear that Holmes does not give Watson enough credit. Then again, Watson is used to a much more abusive relationship with Holmes, so his expectations for their interactions are low. In "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax" and "The Solitary Cyclist," Holmes criticized his friend's abilities with an acid tongue.

The shift in perspective engendered by Watson's new found authority allows the novel to present a series of clues, without a series of hypotheses based on the clues. Learning the clues before Holmes gives us a chance to try our hand at solving the mystery. Doyle often achieves the same effect in other novels because Holmes has a tendency to keep tightlipped about his plans and theories. However, in this novel, Watson has the opportunity to stumble along with us, suggesting theories that may or may not be true.

Once Watson finally arrives in Devonshire, the so-called Notting Hill murderer pops up out of nowhere. In a novel that satires the easy answer by providing obvious clues—the manuscript, the county chronicle—here is the easiest answer of all, a murderer on the loose. At the same time, it seems jarring and improbable to count the convict among the suspects because of the structure of the book. First, there is the arduous setup of a curse and hound. Second, there are still over one hundred some-odd pages left in the book. The murderer on the loose is dangled in front of us as a red herring, an unlikely candidate who just might be the culprit after all.

Chapter VII: The Stapletons of Merripit House

Summary

The next morning, Watson and Sir Henry discuss the advantages of the Baskerville mansion, but Watson nonetheless mentions the crying he heard the previous evening. Sir Henry admits that he also heard the sobbing, but that he thought it was just a dream. Asking Barrymore about the incident, Watson notices that the butler gets flustered. He later learns that the man's suggestion that it could not have been his wife crying is a lie—Watson sees the woman's red and swollen eyes. Watson wonders at the butler's lie and at the woman's tears, speculating that perhaps Barrymore was the bearded stranger back in London. He decides to make sure Holmes' telegraph was actually delivered into the butler's own hands, so he takes a long walk out to the Grimpen postmaster. Questioning the postmaster's delivery boy, Watson learns that the telegram was actually delivered to Mrs. Barrymore, who claimed that her husband was busy upstairs. The boy did not see Barrymore

himself. Confused by the back and forth of the investigation, Watson wishes Holmes was free to come to Devonshire.

Just then, a small stranger carrying a butterfly net comes up, calling Watson by his name. Mr. Stapleton of Merripit House introduces himself and excuses his casual country manners. Mortimer had pointed Watson out, and Stapleton only meant to accompany the doctor on his walk home. Stapleton asks after Sir Henry, and expresses his concern that the baronet should continue his uncle's good works. He also remarks at the silliness of the local superstition, at the same time suggesting that there must have been something to scare the weak-hearted uncle to death. Watson is surprised that Stapleton knew of Charles' condition, but the naturalist explains that Mortimer clued him in. The doctor is equally off-put by Stapleton's subsequent mention of Sherlock Holmes, but he quickly realizes that his friend's celebrity status has preceded him, and tells the inquisitive Stapleton that Holmes is occupied in London. Watson refuses to tell Stapleton anything specific about the case, and the naturalist lauds his discretion.

Walking alongside the moor, Stapleton points out the mystery and danger of the place, highlighting the great Grimpen mire, a stretch where a sort of quicksand can suck up either man or beast. Just then, the two spot a pony being swallowed up by the sand, even though, as Stapleton brags, the pony knows his way around well enough not to get into trouble. As Stapleton dissuades Watson from trying his luck, the two hear a low, sad moan that the locals suspect is the howling of the hound of the Baskervilles. Stapleton also points out some low, stone buildings along the moor: the residences of Neolithic man.

Suddenly, Stapleton goes bounding off after a butterfly, and Watson finds himself face to face with Miss Stapleton, who has walked up unnoticed. A stunning, dark beauty—the exact opposite of her brother—she cuts off Watson's introduction by telling him to go back to London and insisting that Watson say nothing to her brother.

Reappearing at Watson's side, Mr. Stapleton discovers that his sister had thought Watson was Sir Henry, and proper introductions are made. The three make their way to Merripit House, and Watson remarks that the spot seems a strange and melancholy place for the pair to choose.

Stapleton suggests that they get along fine, though his sister seems unconvinced. The naturalist tells Watson of a previous career as a schoolmaster up north, but insists that he prefers the opportunity the moors provide for collecting and inspecting insects. Watson leaves and Stapleton asks that he

tell Sir Henry of his intention to pay a visit. On the way home, Watson encounters Miss Stapleton, who has run to catch up with him. She tells him to forget her warning, though Watson presses her for more details. Miss Stapleton tries to play off her outburst, claiming to be concerned about the curse and eager not to contradict her brother, who wants a charitable Baskerville in residence. Watson is more confused than ever.

Analysis

Our encounter with the Stapletons provides more questions than it answers. When Stapleton first meets Watson, he asks all kinds of questions: about Holmes, about the case, and about Sir Henry. On one hand, we are supposed to believe that the convict's behavior makes him look suspicious. He is a convicted killer who recently escaped. On the other hand, we are supposed to believe that Mr. Stapleton is trustworthy, and his actions make him appear to be a genuinely concerned person and an unsuspicious character.

In this chapter, we receive an introduction to Stapleton's past life as a schoolmaster, a piece of information that is not helpful until Holmes later checks up on it. This factoid about Stapleton justifies Holmes' later investigation, because it gives a shred of credence to what would otherwise seem a shot in the dark, or out of the blue explanation for the entire case. We wonder whether there is another reason for Doyle to mention Stapleton's past, other than to tie the plot together in the end.

Miss Stapleton, for her part, plays a shadowy role that only becomes clear upon a close reading. Once we realize that Beryl is not an Englishwoman but rather a Costa Rican, her actions and attitudes take on a whole new and uncomfortable layer of meaning. If Doyle's depiction of characters like Cartwright and the Barrymores evinces a certain classism, then Beryl Stapleton ends up in the role of an exoticized shaman, less like a familiar Cassandra than a sultry Latin Sheherezade. Doyle spends lots of time describing her dark beauty and her different way of speaking. Presumably, these facts are supposed to fit neatly into the rubric of clues that end up revealing who the Stapletons really are, and what this whole mystery means. At the same time, the Costa Rican Stapletons are intended to add that layer of mystery that only an exotic culture can offer. In both senses, Beryl's identity, and the way the novel treats her, reveals the different assumptions and stereotypes about ethnicity that colored Holmes' and Doyle's England.

Chapter VIII–IX

Summary

Chapter VIII: First Report of Dr. Watson

From this point on, Watson tells us, the story will be told as it was reported to Holmes himself: in letter form. Watson describes the loneliness and ancient feel of the moor. He goes on to relate the status of the escaped con, who has not been seen in two weeks. The relieved locals assume he has fled the area, since there is no food to sustain him on the moor.

Watson also alludes to a budding romantic relationship between Sir Henry and Miss Stapleton, whom he characterizes as exotic. Though Watson thinks her brother is a bit of a wet blanket by contrast, he nonetheless admits that he has hidden passions. He points out that Mr. Stapleton expresses disapproval of Sir Henry's interest in his sister.

Watson goes on to relate his meeting with another neighbor, Mr. Frankland of Lafter Hall. Mr. Frankland is a good-natured if quarrelsome man, who likes to sue people for the sake of suing. Watson notes his interest in astronomy and the telescope atop his house, often used for searching the moorlands for the escaped convict.

When Watson mentions that telegraph did not make it into Barrymore's hands, and he describes Sir Henry's questioning of his butler. Barrymore admits that he did not receive the wire from the postman himself, but insists that he was indeed at home that day. When Barrymore wonders what all the questions are about, Sir Henry appeases him by giving him a box of old clothes.

Watson reiterates his suspicions that Barrymore, whose wife he has once again been seen crying, is up to no good. Late one night, Watson is woken by the sound of footsteps outside his door. Peeking out, he sees Barrymore, silhouetted by a candle he is holding, skulking down the hall. As Watson follows him, he sees the butler go up to a window, and hold his candle aloft as if signaling to someone. Suddenly, he lets out an impatient groan and puts out the light. Watson makes it back to his room just in time, and later that night hears a key turning in a lock. Watson offers no speculation, leaving the theorizing to Holmes.

Chapter IX: (Second Report of Dr. Watson) The Light Upon the Moor

Having investigated the window that Barrymore used, Watson determines that this particular window has the best view of the moor. Watson suggests his suspicion of a love affair between Barrymore and a country lass, which would explain his wife's crying. Informing Sir Henry, who claims to have heard Barrymore's late night activity, Watson plots a late-night stakeout to catch Barrymore in the act.

Meanwhile, Henry's romance with Miss Stapleton hits a rough patch. Henry, going out to meet her, excuses Watson of his duties as bodyguard, lest the doctor turn into a chaperone as well. All the same, Watson trails the baronet and sees him walking with Miss Stapleton. As Henry bends in for a kiss, Stapleton arrives on the scene, yelling and carrying on inexplicably. As the Stapletons depart, Watson reveals himself to Henry, who wonders whether Stapleton might be crazy. He things himself a worthy match for Miss Stapleton, though he admits that on this occasion she refused to talk of love and only offered mysterious warnings. Later that day, Stapleton meets Sir Henry at home to apologize for his over-protective nature, and invites him to dinner next Friday.

Meanwhile, Watson and Henry's stakeout takes two nights of vigilance. On the second night, the two hear Barrymore and follow him to his window. Watson watches as Sir Henry confronts him. Shocked and bewildered, the butler tries to furnish an excuse, but Sir Henry insists on the truth. As Barrymore waffles, protesting, Watson goes to the window, figuring that another person out on the moor must be matching Barrymore's signal. Sure enough, a light shows up across the moor, but the butler refuses to talk, even at the expense of his job. Suddenly, Mrs. Barrymore arrives and explains everything. The light on the moor is a signal from the escaped convict, who turns out to be her brother. The Barrymores have been feeding and clothing the man so he does not starve out on the moor. Excusing the Barrymores, Henry and Watson determine to go out and capture the convict, so as to protect the community. On their way toward the light, though, the pair hears the loud moaning of a wolf and wonders whether they should continue their adventure. Watson even admits that the locals suspect the braying to be the call of the Hound of the Baskervilles.

Frightened but determined, Sir Henry insists they proceed. When the pair finally reaches the flickering candlelight, they spy a small crevice in some rocks where candle and convict are carefully hidden. The convict turns out to be all the two might have expected: haggard, unkempt, and animal-like. When Watson moves in for the kill, though, the man manages to escape. Just then, as they

make their way home, Watson catches sight of a lone figure, silhouetted against the moor. But as suddenly as the tall, mysterious figure appeared, the figure is gone.

Analysis

There are several clues presented in Chapter VIII but little analysis: we learn of Stapleton's deep passions and Watson reiterates Miss Stapleton's exotic beauty. At the same time, the novel moves forward when the subplot of the escaped convict is addressed, and we are left to wonder how the convict figures into the broader mystery.

At the end of the chapter, when Watson leaves it to Holmes to figure things out, he is also leaving it to us to come up with our own theories. Instead of involving Holmes, who is could surely figure this all out quickly, Doyle lets Watson tell the story, thus leaving the clues disconnected and the legend intact. Though Watson seems pleased that his master entrusted him with so much responsibility, it will turn out that Holmes did not trust him at all, and the doctor will end up looking more like a fool.

In this section, we also meet Mr. Frankland, who serves as a much-needed dose of comic relief in an otherwise grim tale. He talks of the locals burning him in effigy or carrying him through the streets, depending on whether he has done them a service or a disservice on that particular day. At the same time, the character of Frankland satirizes the idea of entitlement and hierarchy, although it is not clear which side he is on. Frankland's gratuitous lawsuits, aimed at protecting what he sees as his rights, suggest that Doyle has a humorous take on this character's actions and opinions. But we are unsure whether Doyle is satirizing all entitlement, or a middle- and lower-class assumption of the rights of the nobility.

In the same vein, when we get a glimpse of Sir Henry's romantic life in Chapter IX, the themes of entitlement and hierarchy reappear. Talking with Watson about his failure to woo Miss Stapleton, Henry is utterly baffled that the non-noble Beryl and her brother would reject so good a marriage. In assuming his own suitability, Henry acts as if he is entitled to a marriage with a woman of a lower class. By doing so, he mimics the assumptions of his ancestor, Hugo, who started the curse when he ignored the entitlement—to dignity and to self- determination—of even the lowliest of lower classes.

Chapters X–XI

Summary

Chapter X: Extract from the Diary of Dr. Watson

Musing on the mysteries of the case, Watson dismisses the supernatural explanation but admits that his common sense offers no obvious solution. Where might a living and breathing hound hide by day, and who is the mysterious shadow out on the moor? Watson determines to find out what this man might know and whether he is the same person who provided the warning back in London.

Meanwhile, Sir Henry argues with Barrymore over the chase of his brother-in-law, Selden. Watson and Henry worry that the man is a public danger. Nonetheless, Barrymore assures them that Selden is just biding his time until a ship arrives for South America, and that he will not commit any more crimes. Barrymore's betters agree not to tell the police, and Barrymore thanks them by offering another clue. Apparently, Sir Charles went to the gate on the night he died to meet a woman, and Barrymore tells of his wife's discovery of a charred letter, signed L.L., requesting the late-night meeting.

The next day, Watson learns from Mortimer that Laura Lyons, daughter of "Frankland the crank," lives nearby in Coombe Tracey. Mortimer goes on to explain that Laura married an artist against her father's will and that both husband and father have since abandoned her. In the meantime, both Stapleton and Sir Charles have come to her aid by offering her alms.

As for the silhouette on the moor, Watson learns from Barrymore that Selden has seen him, too. He appears to be a gentleman, and he lives in one of the Neolithic huts along the moor, getting his food from a young boy.

Chapter XI: The Man on the Tor

Deciding that an informal visit might be the most productive, Watson leaves Sir Henry at home and heads for Coombe Tracey. At Laura Lyon's apartment, Watson meets the beautiful brunette and announces his interest in the matter of Sir Charles' death. Suspicious but finally cooperative, Laura admits that Sir Charles supported her financially, and that she wrote to him once or twice. But when

Watson presses the issue, she claims to have had very little to do with him personally, and that it was Stapleton who told him of her situation.

Watson goes on to mention the burned letter, and Laura finally admits to having written it. The lateness of the hour and the strangeness of the location, she claims, resulted from her just having heard of Charles' imminent departure and her fear that a late-night meeting might look bad. When Watson asks what happened that night, Laura claims to have missed the appointment, but she refuses to say why. All she will disclose is the letter's content: an appeal for alms from Sir Charles to get her out of a bad marriage. Laura also adds that in the interim, she has gotten help from someone else.

Frustrated, Watson takes his leave, wondering what Laura might be holding back. Meanwhile, the doctor determines to search for the mysterious stranger on the moor. Watson is particularly determined because he wants to show up his master, Holmes. On his way home, Watson bumps into Mr. Frankland and agrees to have a glass of wine with him. As Frankland prattles on about his various legal matters, Watson realizes that the man has unwittingly spotted the stranger on the moor, thinking him to be the escaped convict. The man Frankland saw had a young boy bringing him food, just as Barrymore described the stranger's setup. Watson prods Frankland for more information, and just then, the man spots someone out on the moor and goes for his telescope. Sure enough, they see a young boy who is glancing behind him as if to make sure no one is watching.

Watson declines Frankland's offer for another drink and makes his way to where he saw the boy. Finding the stranger's hut, Watson decides to wait for his return. Examining the contents of the hut, the doctor discovers a note that says he has gone to Coombe Tracey and he realizes that he is also being followed. Finally, Watson hears footsteps outside and a sudden greeting.

Analysis

These chapters further explore Watson's character, and his desire to triumph over Holmes. For example, he says, "It would indeed be a triumph for me if I could run him to earth, where my master had failed," showing that he is perseverant, despite his ability to ever solve mysteries as well as Holmes. He represents the frustration we feel at not being able to solve the mystery without Holmes (or the author's) help. Watson tries to take on the mysterious stranger on the moor before Holmes finds him. The irony of the situation, of course, is that the stranger will turn out to be none other than Watson's master. Through no fault of his own, Holmes will humiliate the well-meaning Watson.

Watson stumbles on to Holmes with the help of Frankland, the story's cranky comic relief. In hindsight, the two men are an interesting and ill-informed pair. Frankland convinced he has spotted the convict and Watson is convinced he really knows what is going on. In the end, we realize that neither of them are correct, and Holmes has out-witted them again.

At the end of this section, Doyle uses a classic suspense technique: the cliffhanger. Regularly employed in virtually all genres, the cliffhanger comes from a tradition of serialization and is not exclusively a mystery story tactic. Back when fiction was often printed in segments—little bits of the story published each week or month in a periodical—the cliffhanger kept people coming back for more. The cliffhanger ensured that they would buy the next issue of the magazine, that they would read the next installment, and sometimes, that the whole of the story would later be bound and sold as a book. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was serialized in the *Strand* magazine before it was ever published as a whole. The notion of a serialized story reminds us that many of the most famous authors simply wrote because they needed to make money. Writers like Charles Dickens would write hundreds and hundreds of pages, and keep the story going by adding a cliffhanger at the end of every chapter. Similarly, Doyle only wrote *Hound* because of the public appeal for more Sherlock Holmes adventures, and because Doyle was experiencing financial problems. As a result, *Hound* is one of the longest Sherlock Holmes adventures he ever wrote.

Chapters XII–XIII

Summary

Chapter XII: Death on the Moor

Watson quickly realizes that Holmes is the man greeting him. Watson wonders how the detective found the hut, and why was he hiding on the moor. Holmes explains that he saw Watson's brand of cigarette stubbed out near the hut. As for Holmes' presence in the hut, on the moor, in Devonshire, the detective explains that he hid so the enemies would not know of his direct involvement. Holmes lied to Watson, he says, so that no one would discover him, should Watson decide to compare notes or bring his master some food. Suddenly upset that his reports went to waste, Watson learns that Holmes actually had them forwarded and has kept them close at hand.

While recounting the day's visit to Coombe Tracey, Watson learns from Holmes that Laura and Mr. Stapleton share a close relationship and that Beryl, the woman masquerading as Stapleton's sister is actually his wife. Shocked at these revelations, the doubting Watson demands proof, and Holmes tells of his own investigation into Stapleton's past, and his career as a schoolmaster up north. Stapleton, it becomes clear, is the enemy they have been after, and he has been using his wife-cum-sister to get at Sir Henry and Laura Lyons. He seduced Lyons and used her to lure Charles onto the moor.

Watson and Holmes decide to visit Laura Lyons again, to tell her of Stapleton's ruse and hopefully, to shift her loyalties. Meanwhile, a sudden scream is heard on the moor, and, upon investigation, they discover the body of Sir Henry or what appears to be a body in his clothes. As it turns out, Barrymore delivered a bunch of old clothes to the convict. The hound had sniffed Henry's stolen boot back in London and had attacked the right clothes on the wrong man. Just then, Stapleton shows up, assuming that the dead man is Henry. When he discovers the truth, he stammers: "Who-who's this?" When Watson wonders why the naturalist assumed it was Sir Henry, Stapleton admits it was because he had asked him to come over. Holmes defuses the situation by suggesting that the convict, Selden, must have just fallen and broken his neck, and goes on to tell Stapleton he intends to go home tomorrow, since he is not interested in the myths that plague the particular case. Suspicious but reassured, Stapleton goes home and the detectives head for the Hall.

Chapter XIII: Fixing the Nets

Walking and talking on their way home, Watson and Holmes marvel at the self-control of their enemy, who held his tongue even after it became clear his hound had killed the wrong man. They wonder, now that the villain has seen Holmes, whether he will become more cautious or more desperate. Watson suggests that they arrest him at once, but Holmes reminds him that they have yet to establish the proof they need for a conviction.

Holmes has hope for tomorrow's interview with Lyons, but he also claims to have another plan in the works. He tells Watson not to tell Henry of Selden's death, and insists that he excuse himself from the dinner he and Henry were to attend at Stapleton's the next day.

After some light conversation with Sir Henry and the sad announcement of Selden's death to his sister, Holmes spies a portrait on the wall and learns that the thin cavalier in question is none other than Hugo Baskerville himself. Later that night, Holmes explains his interest to Watson,

demonstrating the remarkable similarity between Hugo and Stapleton, thus establishing Stapleton's motive: as a Baskerville relative, Stapleton has designs on the inheritance.

The next morning, Holmes handles the removal of Selden's body and tells Sir Henry to keep his dinner appointment with Stapleton, excusing himself and Watson. Holmes tells the baronet that he and his friend are going to London, and though Sir Henry is understandably alarmed, Holmes tells him to trust him. He also insists that the baronet deliver the same message to Stapleton and that he walk home alone across the moor after dinner.

Later that day, at the train station, Holmes sends Cartwright back to London with instructions to send a wire from London, in Holmes' name, to Sir Henry. Holmes hears from another man, Lestrade, whom he intends to enlist later that night.

Meanwhile, Holmes and Watson head over to Laura Lyons' place, and Holmes tells her of Stapleton's secret marriage. Shocked and visibly upset, Laura demands proof, and Holmes produces a photo of husband and wife. Laura spills the beans: Stapleton had offered to marry her if she got a divorce, an endeavor that would require Sir Charles' assistance. The naturalist wrote Laura's letter to Charles and then insisted she miss the appointment, suggesting that he himself would pay the expenses. Stapleton even convinced Laura to keep quiet, telling her that she might get in trouble.

Analysis

After a long period of narration by Watson, the return of Holmes, like the unexpected appearance of the convict, can seem a bit jarring. Whereas Watson left things a bit looser, and more uncertain, after Holmes arrives, there is no more mystery left to solve. When he suddenly announces who the criminals are, we are left wondering how he solved the puzzle.

In this section, we learn that Stapleton is the culprit and that, in effect, all our speculations were useless since we did not have the key piece of information, Stapleton's identity and marital status. This allows the mystery to move much more quickly. Since Holmes knows what he is doing, how to get information out of people, and how to piece together the clues, the events follow one after the other and the denouement comes at an appropriate pace. If Watson's clue gathering allowed us a chance to participate, Holmes' tightlipped detection builds up the suspense even after the mystery's solved about what Holmes will do to catch the criminal. This section also recalls the themes of

mistaken identity and entitlement. First, the convict is mistaken for Sir Henry because he is in his clothes, and as a result, the hound attacks him. Also, Holmes observes Stapleton's close resemblance to Hugo Baskerville. The villain's noble birth seems to make sense, because he feels like he is entitled to a large sum of money. Similarly, Beryl's rejection of Henry makes more sense, since she is not a lower-class woman rejecting a higher-class man, but rather, she is someone is already taken.

At the same time, this section reveals Holmes' own game of disguised identity. Holmes shows that he, a gentleman, lived like a convict. He looked for food and lived in a bare-bones dwelling. Even though Holmes also had clean collars and a willing helper-boy, the book still asks how Holmes could have managed in such dire conditions.

Chapters XIV–XV

Summary

Chapter XIV: The Hound of the Baskervilles

The three detectives approach Merripit House, and Holmes insists that they all tiptoe so they are not heard. Hidden behind some rocks, the group observes Sir Henry and Mr. Stapleton chatting over coffee. Sir Henry seems nervous, perhaps pondering the long walk home across the moor.

Just then, Stapleton gets up and heads outside, letting himself into a small outhouse where the hidden group hears some strange scuffling. Meanwhile, a thick fog starts to settle and spread across the moor, and the group gets nervous as the visibility gets worse and worse. Once the fog engulfs the path from Merripit to Baskerville Hall, the detectives will not be able to watch Henry's walk home, nor protect him when the hound attacks.

Once Henry finally gets going, the fog covers the path, and the detectives hear the hound before they see it. When it emerges from the mist, the hound turns out to be an immense, iridescent, fire-breathing beast, the very picture of the Baskerville myth. Stunned, the detectives only shoot one round of bullets as the hound nips at Henry's heels. But the shots do not kill the beast, and it leaps at

Henry's throat. Fortunately, Holmes manages to unload five more rounds at just the right moment, and the hound collapses.

Examining the baronet, they discover no injuries. Getting a chance to finally examine the animal, the detectives determine it to be a bloodhound-mastiff mix, as big as a lion and covered with phosphorous to make it glow. Rushing back to the house, the detectives discover Mrs. Stapleton bound and gagged.

Waking up, Mrs. Stapleton makes sure Sir Henry is safe and the hound is dead, and then informs the detectives of her husband's hiding place in the Grimpen mire, the deadly marshland where he kept his hound. Deciding that the fog is too thick to pursue the villain through the treacherous mire, Holmes and Watson head back to Baskerville Hall with Sir Henry.

The next day, Mrs. Stapleton leads them through the mire, eager to capture her abusive husband. The Stapletons had placed sticks in the mire to mark the spots where it was safe to walk, and the detectives follow the path until they come upon an object, partially submerged. It turns out to be Sir Henry's black boot, which Stapleton used to set his hound on Henry's trail and then threw to the ground as he made his escape. As for Stapleton himself, his footprints are nowhere to be found beyond a certain point, and the detectives decide that the great Grimpen mire has engulfed him. When they reach his lair, they discover the place where the hound was kept, hidden away but still audible for miles around. The villain brought his hound to Merripit only that last day, so dangerous was the risk of discovery. The detectives also find the phosphorous used to make the beast glow—scary enough to frighten Sir Charles to death.

Chapter XV: A Retrospection

Back in London, Henry and Mortimer call on the detectives to get the full rundown of the confusing case. Holmes explains that Stapleton was actually the son of Roger Baskerville, Charles' younger brother who moved to South America and was presumed dead. Stapleton, or Sir Roger Baskerville, Jr., lived in South America and married Beryl Garçia of Costa Rica, the dark and lisping beauty masquerading as his sister. Having embezzled public money, Roger fled to England, changed his name, and established a school up north. When the school folded, Roger had to take off again, this time heading to Devonshire where he had heard of his stake in a large inheritance. Having made friends with Sir Charles, Roger heard of the myth of the hound and of Charles' bad heart.

To get the superstitious Charles out alone on the moor, Stapleton tried to enlist his wife, but she refused. He happened, however, to meet Laura Lyons, and he told her he would marry her if she got a divorce. Convincing her to get the necessary money from Charles, he made her miss the late-night appointment and unleashed his hound. Though Laura suspected Stapleton, she protected him out of love.

Once Henry arrived on the scene, Stapleton took his untrustworthy wife with him to London, where he trailed the baronet and she tried to warn him. Stapleton also made a point of stealing one of Henry's shoes to give his hound the baronet's scent. But the first boot he stole was brand new, not yet worn by Sir Henry and unsuitable for its intended purpose.

Holmes mentions that Mrs. Stapleton's letter smelled of perfume, and that the suggestion of a gentlewoman made him think right from the start of the Stapletons. Going on to investigate and ultimately establish Stapleton as the enemy, Holmes nonetheless needed proof, so he used Henry as bait to catch Stapleton red-handed. Holmes apologizes for using the baronet, but insists that it was necessary.

Mrs. Stapleton, for her part, both loved and feared her husband, and she was willing to warn Henry but not to reveal her husband's involvement. Stapleton himself encouraged the romance but could not help a jealous outburst the day he saw the two talking intimately.

On the night Henry came to dinner, Mrs. Stapleton realized her husband had his hound in the outhouse, and she confronted him. He revealed his relationship with Laura, and, when she reacted, he tied her up and gagged her. The only other loose end, as Holmes sees it, is just how Stapleton intended to claim the fortune. Though Holmes speculates that perhaps he would claim it from South America, he admits that he cannot predict behavior in the future. Henry heads off for a vacation with Mortimer to calm his nerves.

Analysis

When the detectives finally encounter the hound it is not enough that he is glowing and breathing fire, he has to emerge out of a thick fog. Doyle's whole Gothic apparatus, the themes of fantasy and the supernatural, the curse, the manuscript, the manor, all of it has led up to this one moment, when the hound leaps out of the hazy world of imagination and into the detectives' realm of reality. It is a key moment of climax. After the action has subsided, it is really only after they have killed the hound

that the detectives get a good look at him. Once again, the detectives encounter a kind of disguised identity, discovering the artifice that made the hound look supernatural. The juxtaposition of the plot-driven climax of the hound's appearance and the thematic climax of its unmasking clearly reveals the ways in which Doyle uses a kind of Gothic, folk tale tradition in service of his story. In the end, mystery is exciting but closure is comforting.

In "A Retrospection," Holmes gives us all the comfort we need and a synopsis of the entire story. He ties up all the loose ends and even claims to have known right from the start that the Stapletons were the ones to blame. Interestingly, though, the wrap up is not that neat, with Henry headed off to calm his nerves on a vacation. Henry and Beryl do not get married and live happily ever after, and it is not even clear that Stapleton is actually dead. It has been suggested that Doyle considered bringing Stapleton back in a later story, but "what a man may do in the future is a hard question to answer."

Important Quotations Explained

"Really, Watson, you excel yourself," said Holmes, pushing back his chair and lighting a cigarette. "I am bound to say that in all the accounts which you have been so good as to give of my own small achievements you have habitually underrated your own abilities. 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."

Holmes' backhanded compliment underlies the bizarre relationship between the detective and his crony, Watson. Holmes enjoys leading Watson on, letting him think he has the right answer, when in fact the detective himself is holding all the cards. In as much as Watson serves as a stand-in for the readers, Holmes' coy little encouragement tempts us to try our hand at detection as well, even if we will never be as good at solving mysteries as Sherlock Holmes.

The moon was shining bright upon the clearing, and there in the centre lay the unhappy maid where she had fallen, dead of fear and of fatigue. But it was not the sight of her body, nor yet was it that of the body of Hugo Baskerville lying near her, which raised the hair upon the heads of these three daredevil roysterers, but it was that, 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.

The appearance of the old-time manuscript signals a shift in the narrative's format from Watson's straight-up reporting to the land of make-believe, manuscripts and a redoubled dubiousness. Mortimer reads the manuscript in a folk tale style, suggesting the importance of supernatural and fantasy in adding suspense to the plot.

Throughout the novel, Doyle is careful to distance his legendary detective from any implication of inaccuracy, even going so far as to couch the gathering of clues in a Watson-only space up in Devonshire. Here, the mystery that serves so important a function in the novel appears third-hand, and in a manuscript read by Mortimer. The reading of the manuscript serves both to allow the detective some critical distance and to make the mystery that much more ominous.

Over the rocks, in the crevice of which the candle burned, there was thrust out an evil yellow face, a terrible animal face, all seamed and scored with vile passions. Foul with mire, with a bristling beard, and hung with matted hair, it might well have belonged to one of those old savages who dwelt in the burrows on the hillsides. The light beneath him was reflected in his small, cunning eyes which peered fiercely to right and left through the darkness, like a crafty and savage animal who has heard the steps of the hunters.

Physiognomy has a long and illustrious history, from Chaucer's gummy-toothed travelers up through the early twentieth century. The assumption that physical features match personality and temperament comes through strongly in this quote, where the sinful convict ends up looking like a beady-eyed rat.

Interestingly, Doyle's picture of a debaucherous man who looks the part resonates with another novel of the same period, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Oscar Wilde and Arthur Conan Doyle received commissions from the same publisher on the same night in 1889, Wilde for *Dorian* and Doyle for *The Sign of Four*. Doyle's physiognomy is also expressive of a classist sentiment, whereby the uneducated, ignoble criminal looks "like a crafty and savage animal" while the evil nobleman looks just like everybody else.

All my unspoken instincts, my vague suspicions, suddenly took shape and centred upon the naturalist. In that impassive, colourless 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.

The criminal breaks the physiognomy mold, because his physical features do not match his personality or his behavior. As a result, the criminal is an adversary worthy of Holmes' skills, because he hides his evil under a benign surface. His class and entitlement are reflected in his dress and mannerisms, as well as his intelligence and education.

We do not get a chance to evaluate the difference between the criminal's behavior and his appearance. Although Doyle openly expressed his distaste for mystery stories that "fake it," or do not give their readers all they need to know, Doyle springs the identity of the killer on us with very little fanfare. Like Watson, we are dumbfounded by Holmes' announcement that Stapleton and his sister are married, that Stapleton is in fact a Baskerville. Though Watson is ready to take Holmes' word for it, we are not as convinced. Doyle does not give us a terribly compelling picture of a wolf in sheep's clothing, so we just need to accept Watson's trust in Holmes' intuition.

Study Questions and Suggested Essay Topics

Study Questions

Why did Doyle choose Watson to narrate *Hound* instead of having Holmes tell the story himself? What are the benefits and drawbacks of doing it this way?

Doyle uses Watson as a narrator for two key reasons. In the first place, Watson is not as intuitive as Sherlock Holmes. In this sense, he allows the reader to join him as he attempts to live up to the master's standards. By contrast, if Sherlock Holmes were telling the story, we would have little opportunity to solve the mystery ourselves: witness, for example, Holmes' various and sundry revelations of the truth, which preclude our participation by effectively beating us to the punch.

The second reason Doyle uses Watson as a narrator is that it allows for the pace he is looking for. Even if Holmes' character can give us a chance now and then by keeping his conclusions to himself, he is still too quick a thinker to take on the onerous task of relating all the facts in detail. Only a slow-

witted lackey like Watson is fit for the job. When Holmes' character does appear, he serves more as a catalyst for the action in the story, bringing things to a quick and exciting climax.

At the same time that *Hound* was written, Gothic fiction, which used supernatural themes, was extremely popular. Doyle himself was a spiritualist. How does the novel handle the possibility of supernatural occurrences?

The supernatural plays a major role in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Doyle uses it on multiple occasions in service of his plotline and in dialogue with other themes.

As far as plot goes, Doyle takes full advantage of the excitement, and power of a Gothic-style mystery—an ancient curse, and a common plotline, with two dead bodies at the hands of possibly a supernatural beast. At the same time, however, he evinces a strong faith, at least in Holmes, of a logical, rational explanation for even the most mysterious occurrences.

Thematically, the supernatural ties together questions of class, which run throughout the novel. Superstition is linked to weakness (as with the infirm Sir Charles), but most prominently with lower class status. In this sense, it is interesting that Doyle regularly refers to the superstitious commoners but only rarely lets us meet them first hand.

How do Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle handle class differences?

Both Holmes and Doyle come from a very specific and presumably similar cultural milieu in which gave privileges to the educated white male and denigrated virtually every other kind of human experience. Though they relied on and even fostered what might be called a space for only men, they almost certainly had no time for homosexuals. Though they relied on the lower classes to fetch them things and rummage through their garbage, they took little account of them or their dignity either. Two arguments can be made: one, that the prejudices of the past cannot be judged by the standards of our current cultural moment and two, that Holmes and Doyle were racist and sexist.

It probably makes the most sense to take the middle road, to situate classisms and racisms in their appropriate cultural context, while at the same time insisting on their inappropriateness in our modern world.