

“The Hound of the Baskervilles” is a detective novel, originally published in 1902 and serialized in Strand Magazine. It is the third entry in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s famous Sherlock Holmes series of mystery stories. The novel marks the revival of Sherlock Holmes after his supposed death in the previous novel in the series.

One beautiful September morning, detective Sherlock Holmes is visited by a man who refers to himself as Dr. Mortimer. Mortimer brings Holmes a mysterious letter from the recently deceased Sir Charles Baskerville. The letter references an event that occurred a hundred years prior, in which the Baskervilles’ ancestor, Sir Hugo Baskerville committed several unforgivable crimes was killed by a gigantic angry dog. Since that time, the Baskerville family has been living in the shadow of the curse of the hound.

Eventually, it is revealed that the murderer is a man named Jack Stapleton who aims to obtain the fortune of the Baskerville family, and thus he created the legend of the hound to kill all the people who were set to inherit the Baskervilles’ legacy. Before he is able to kill Sir Henry Baskerville, Sherlock Holmes reveals his plan and saves the whole family.

The Hound of the Baskervilles incorporates elements of both typical detective stories and

gothic literature. I found the contrast provided by the two radically different settings of the novel to be compelling. Although the story begins in a noisy, lively and bustling life in London, it quickly moves to a melancholic country setting, with a more archaic aesthetic than the modern city atmosphere of London. This change of settings is exemplified in Chapter 6, page 87, where the author writes:

“In a very few hours the brown earth had become ruddy, the brick had changed to granite, and red cows grazed in well-hedged fields where the lush grasses and more luxuriant vegetation spoke of a richer, if a damper, climate.”

Gothic fiction, is largely known through Gothic horror, which is a genre of literature that combines fiction, horror, death and romance. In this novel, the story starts with a frightening legend revolving around the Baskerville family. The Gothic atmosphere can be observed in chapter 6, when the writer describes Watson's first visit to Baskerville Hall:

“Through the gateway we passed into the avenue, where the wheels were again hushed amid the leaves, and the old trees shot their branches in a sombre tunnel over our heads. Baskerville shuddered as he looked up the long, dark drive to where the house glimmered like a ghost at the farther end.”

The detective elements in the story are clearly evident. For example, the story begins Dr. Mortimer leaves his cane behind in Sherlock Holmes's house. Before meeting Dr. Mortimer, Holmes

tries to deduce the background of the man through his cane. When Holmes meets Sir Henry, Henry shows him a note that he had received warning him not to return to the Baskerville home. Holmes figures out that the note was written in a hotel and is comprised of pieces cut from a certain newspaper. Moreover, Sir Henry tells Holmes about the missing boots, which arouses Holmes's curiosity about this case even more. In the end, Holmes uses his inferential ability to solve the mystery and save Sir Henry's life.

In addition, the writer draws a connection between both natural and supernatural elements, and between truth and fantasy. The house and the surrounding scenery are all portrayed as being normal, with no supernatural ties. However, the gigantic hound that kills people and the curse of the Baskervilles family are supernatural elements. As such, the novel suggests that a supernatural accident has occurred in a natural place. A large part of the novel involves Holmes separating truth from fantasy. Dr. Mortimer was looking for Sherlock to help protect Sir Henry from being killed by the curse of the family. However, Henry insists that Holmes should first clear up the mystery surrounding his uncle's death. Eventually, after several twists and turns, Holmes solves the mystery behind the curse and finds out the truth.

The Hound of the Baskervilles was somewhat different from the other novels in the Sherlock Holmes series that I had read before. Usually Sherlock Holmes and Watson would visit crime scenes, make deductions and stay together until the case had been solved. However, this time,

Watson had to work by himself and even replaced Sherlock, to help Sir Henry solve the mystery of the Baskervilles. However eventually, as always, Holmes surprises Watson again and solves the case.

To be honest, I did not find the curse itself to be frightening, because I do not believe the supernatural. I am tolerant of stories with supernatural elements, but because I believe in logical reasoning I was able to deduce the identity of the killer while reading the story. At the same time, I was confused while reading chapters 4 and 5, because I could not tell what the relation between the missing boots and the family curse was. However, I was suspicious of the black-bearded spy. Ultimately, it turns out that this man named Jack was really Henry's uncle, although he kept quiet about it in order to get his hands on the Baskerville fortune and mansion. In the other detective novels that I had read previously, if there's a murder in the story, it is usually related to family legacy or revenge. As such, I found this to be quite a typical detective story.

Of all the novels I read in this semester, I found *The Hound of the Baskervilles* to be the most enjoyable. The other books usually focused on lone-wolf style detectives solving entire cases on his own, but Sherlock Holmes always works with his partner Dr. Watson, which provides Doyle's stories with an element of comradery not found in other detective stories. As opposed to the dark, noir atmosphere present in most of the other novels we read, Watson's third-person narration of *The Hound of the Baskerville* provides the novel with a more light-hearted and humorous tone. The novel sometimes includes Watson's thoughts on Holmes, and his opinions and deductions regarding

the case at hand, which provides the reader with a second view-point from which to observe the case. I believe that Holmes's relationship with Watson makes him more relatable than other detective characters, despite some of his more outlandish and eccentric qualities.

Sherlock Holmes himself is shown to favor seeking the truth over all else, which is a trait that I find admirable in detective characters. Many of the other novels such as *The Black Lizard* and *The Maltese Falcon*, included morally grey protagonists who strived for personal gain above all else. Although Sherlock Holmes is shown to engage in some questionable activities such as recreational drug use, it is always clear that he is the hero of the story. Another element of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* that I found interesting was its setting in rural England at the start of the 20th century. This provided the novel with a unique backdrop compared to the majority of the other novels we read this semester, which largely took place in bustling cities.

Overall, I found *The Hounds of the Baskervilles* to be a very appealing novel due to its third-person narration writing style, its classic detective structure, and its eccentric yet reliable lead character, Sherlock Holmes. Compared to other detective novels, Sherlock Holmes stories consistently portray likable characters and interesting mysteries.