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The Hound of the Baskervilles

Arthur Conan Doyle · *1902 · original English text*

A Devonshire legend of a spectral hound, a dead baronet on the moor, and a living heir who must go home all the same. Holmes sends Watson to Baskerville Hall, and what looks like a curse is shown, step by step, to be a man's work. Doyle writes a detective story that still leaves room for the moan of the moor, and for a justice that must walk carefully in the fog.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

When a family is haunted by a legend of a gigantic hound, how does a just mind tell a curse from a crime—and still take the danger seriously?

"Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!"
Dr. Mortimer · Chapter 2

Holmes will not grant a supernatural hound, and he will not deny the footprints. "The devil's agents may be of flesh and blood, may they not?" The crime is Stapleton's, using a legend, a dog, and a hidden marriage. Watson's loyalty on the moor, and Holmes's unseen watch, save Sir Henry—at a cost, and not without error. Reason wins, and the moor remains itself.

KEY CHARACTERS

Sherlock Holmes
The reasoner, who will grant footprints and not a curse, and who watches from the tor

Dr. Watson
The loyal reporter at the Hall, whose errors are honest and whose courage is real

Sir Henry Baskerville
The heir, brave, impatient, and nearly killed for an estate

Jack Stapleton
The naturalist-neighbor, a Baskerville in hiding, the mind behind the hound

Beryl Stapleton
Presented as his sister; in fact his wife, used and at last rebellious

Dr. Mortimer
The country doctor who brings the case, and who saw the prints

The Barrymores and Selden
Servants of the Hall, and the escaped convict whose death is a grim mistake

A LEGEND, AND AGENTS OF FLESH AND BLOOD

> *"Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!"*
> **Dr. Mortimer** · Chapter 2

> *"The devil's agents may be of flesh and blood, may they not?"*
> **Sherlock Holmes** · Chapter 3

Grades 6–8
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01 The Manuscript and the Footprints

CHAPTERS 1–3

A legend, a coroner's story, and a walking stick on the table.

- Dr. Mortimer brings Holmes the Baskerville legend of a hound that hunts the family
- Sir Charles has been found dead near the moor; the doctor saw, and will not forget, the footprints of a gigantic hound
- Sir Henry, the heir from Canada, is already being watched in London
- Holmes, apparently kept in Baker Street, means to hunt the hunter

> *"Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!"*
> **Dr. Mortimer** · Chapter 2

02 Sir Henry Goes West

CHAPTERS 4–8

A missing boot, a bearded spy, and Watson's first nights at the Hall.

- An attempt is made on Sir Henry in London; a boot is stolen, then another
- Watson is sent with him to Devonshire, to report all that he sees
- Baskerville Hall is heavy, the moor is near, and a convict, Selden, has escaped onto it
- The neighbors—the Stapletons of Merripit House—offer friendship and a warning

03 The Moor

CHAPTERS 9–11

A lady's letter, a light on the moor, and a man on a tor.

- Beryl Stapleton tries, in a disguised letter and then in person, to keep Sir Henry off the moor
- A light at night, and a meeting, connect the Hall with the convict—Barrymore's secret of a condemned brother-in-law
- Watson hears a howl across the Grimpen Mire
- He finds that a hidden man has been watching the Hall, and takes him for the enemy

> *"The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes."*
> **Sherlock Holmes** · Chapter 3

04 Holmes on the Tor

CHAPTERS 12–13

The watcher is Holmes; the net is already closing.

- The man on the moor is Holmes himself, who has been living rough in order to watch unseen
- A mistaken identity in the fog: a man in Sir Henry's clothes is killed by the hound—it is Selden
- The Stapleton household begins to come apart; Beryl is more prisoner than free sister or wife
- Holmes now has enough to act, but he needs one more night

05 Flesh and Blood

CHAPTERS 14–15

A fog, a phosphorus-painted dog, and a man who dies in the mire.

- Sir Henry is used, reluctantly, as bait on the path from Merripit House
- The hound, a huge creature daubed to shine, is shot down before it can kill him
- Stapleton, who is a Baskerville and was secretly married to Beryl, flees into the Grimpen Mire and is lost
- Holmes explains the crime: no curse, but a man who used a legend, a dog, and an inheritance

> *"The devil's agents may be of flesh and blood, may they not?"*
> **Sherlock Holmes** · Chapter 3

Reason and Fear | Justice | Deception | Loyalty | Inherited Shame | The Moor

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 6–8

1. Holmes's question—"The devil's agents may be of flesh and blood, may they not?"—is the book's method. Take the terror seriously; look for a human agent.
2. "The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes" is spoken in Baker Street, before Devonshire. It is a warning to the reader as well as to Watson.
3. Selden's death is a real cost of the fog and of a borrowed coat. The detectives are not infallible; they are faithful.
4. Beryl is a victim of the plot, not its author. Watch how the "sister" story unravels.
5. The hosted text is Doyle's original English (Project Gutenberg #2852). Chapter 3 is titled "The Problem" in this edition.