

# Reading & Writing Workshop: *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

This is a **Reading & Writing Workshop** for *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, written in a five-session format. This version blends **literary analysis, genre study (detective fiction & Gothic mystery)**, and **group collaboration**, ideal for **grades 6–9** in ELA or British Literature and modifiable for later grades.

**Theme: Logic, Fear, and the Boundaries of Reason**

**Author: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1902)**

**Structure: 5 Sessions + Group Writing Project**

**Course Fit: Mystery & Detective Fiction, Gothic Literature, or British Literature Unit**

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## Session 1: Setting the Stage — Mystery and the Power of Reason

**Objective:** Introduce Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson, and the case of the Baskerville curse; examine reason vs. superstition.

**Group Focus:**

- **Group 1:** Character — Sherlock Holmes: reason, observation, and confidence.
- **Group 2:** Character — Dr. Watson: loyalty, narration, and perspective.
- **Group 3:** Theme — Logic vs. fear and superstition.
- **Group 4:** Setting — London vs. the eerie Dartmoor countryside.

**Reading Assignment:** Chapters 1–3

**Activities:**

- Create a “Case File” summary — key suspects, clues, and questions introduced so far.
- Read aloud Holmes’s deduction of Dr. Mortimer’s walking stick to model close observation.
- Discussion: *How does Conan Doyle build suspense through rational thinking and the unknown?*

**Writing Task:**

- Reflective paragraph: *What makes Holmes a believable detective — skill, logic, or intuition?*
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## Session 2: The Curse and the Legend — Gothic Atmosphere and Suspense

**Objective:** Explore the blend of Gothic and detective elements that make the story’s tone unique.

**Reading Assignment:** Chapters 4–7

**Group Roles:**

- **Group 1:** Symbolism — The moor, the fog, and the hound as gothic motifs.
- **Group 2:** Theme — Science vs. superstition: what does the “curse” represent?
- **Group 3:** Setting — How Conan Doyle transforms Dartmoor into a psychological landscape.
- **Group 4:** Character Study — Sir Henry Baskerville and the question of inheritance and fate.

**Activities:**

- “Atmosphere Chart”: collect descriptions of the moor and discuss how setting mirrors emotion.
- Group illustration or map of Baskerville Hall with key symbolic elements.
- Discussion: *Why do humans cling to superstition even when logic provides explanations?*

**Writing Task:**

- Analytical paragraph: *How does Conan Doyle use setting and mood to create suspense in the early chapters?*
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## Session 3: Investigation and Deception — Following the Clues

**Objective:** Track the investigation as Dr. Watson takes charge; analyze the structure of a detective narrative.

**Reading Assignment:** Chapters 8–11

**Group Roles:**

- **Group 1:** Detective Work — List all clues, suspects, and false leads.
- **Group 2:** Narrative Structure — Letters, reports, and shifting perspectives.
- **Group 3:** Theme — Truth, perception, and deception.
- **Group 4:** Character Focus — The mysterious neighbors (Stapletons, Barrymores, Laura Lyons).

**Activities:**

- Create a “Suspect Board” or digital evidence log connecting clues and motives.
- Read excerpts from Watson’s letters; discuss his reliability as narrator.
- Discussion: *Why does Doyle shift the focus from Holmes to Watson? What effect does that have on suspense?*

**Writing Task:**

- Journal entry as Dr. Watson: *Summarize your current theory about the case — and your doubts.*

## Session 4: Revelation and Resolution — Unmasking the Truth

**Objective:** Examine how reason overcomes fear and how Conan Doyle constructs the solution to the mystery.

**Reading Assignment:** Chapters 12–14

**Group Roles:**

- **Group 1:** Logic and Deduction — How Holmes pieces together the truth.
- **Group 2:** Character Study — The villain’s psychology and motive.
- **Group 3:** Symbolism — The hound as the embodiment of fear.
- **Group 4:** Literary Craft — Irony, foreshadowing, and the twist ending.

**Activities:**

- Group “Cause and Effect” chart tracing how each clue leads to the next revelation.
- Re-enact the final confrontation scene or present it as a mock detective briefing.
- Discussion: *Why is reason more powerful than fear — and what are its limits?*

**Writing Task:**

- Analytical response: *How does Conan Doyle balance logic and emotion to create both intellectual and emotional satisfaction in the resolution?*

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## Session 5: Reflection and Legacy — The Enduring Detective

**Objective:** Reflect on the novel’s themes and its influence on detective fiction and modern storytelling.

**Reading Assignment:** Chapters 15–End

**Group Roles:**

- **Group 1:** Theme — The victory of logic, but at what human cost?
- **Group 2:** Character — Holmes and Watson’s partnership: intellect vs. empathy.
- **Group 3:** Symbolism — The hound and the moor after the case ends.
- **Group 4:** Genre Legacy — How *The Hound of the Baskervilles* defines detective fiction.

**Activities:**

- Compare Holmes’s logical method to modern investigative science (forensics, profiling).
- Group “Then and Now” chart — early detective fiction vs. today’s mysteries.
- Discussion: *What makes Sherlock Holmes timeless — and what can readers still learn from him?*

**Writing Task:**

- Final essay: *What does The Hound of the Baskervilles teach about the human struggle between fear and reason?*

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## Group Writing Project — The Art of Detection

**Objective:** Synthesize understanding of mystery structure, reasoning, and moral complexity through collaborative work.

**Group Project Options:**

1. **Create a New Case:** Write an original short mystery featuring Holmes and Watson in a modern setting.
2. **Crime Board Presentation:** Build a visual “Evidence Wall” summarizing all clues, suspects, and deductions in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.
3. **Character Debate:** Stage a mock debate between Holmes and a believer in the supernatural about the role of logic vs. intuition.
4. **Comparative Essay:** Compare Holmes’s reasoning to another famous detective (Hercule Poirot, Nancy Drew, or modern crime series protagonists).

### Final Reflection (Individual):

“What does *The Hound of the Baskervilles* reveal about the balance between intellect, morality, and the fear of the unknown?”

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## Assessment Rubric (20 points total)

Category	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Reading Comprehension	Deep, text-based insight	Clear understanding	Some confusion	Limited comprehension
Collaboration	Active leadership & teamwork	Consistent participation	Uneven effort	Minimal engagement
Writing Quality	Well-organized with evidence	Mostly organized	Basic clarity	Weak or incomplete
Literary Analysis	Sophisticated thematic & symbolic insight	Clear understanding	Basic interpretation	Minimal analysis
Creativity / Engagement	Original and expressive	Thoughtful effort	Some creativity	Minimal originality

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## Extension / Enrichment

- Research Victorian science, criminology, or the real influence of Sherlock Holmes on police methods.
- Study Gothic elements (fog, isolation, superstition) and compare to *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*.
- Watch a film adaptation and analyze how suspense and logic are portrayed visually.
- Write a short “case report” from Watson summarizing lessons learned about human nature.