

**Reflections:**

*A Student Response Journal for...*

# *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

*by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*

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*The Hound of the Baskervilles*

## Getting Ready

1. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was a very popular book when it was first published. It was printed in serial form, meaning that a chapter at a time was printed, and fans of the book eagerly awaited each installment. Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories created a reading frenzy. Today, Sherlock Holmes is still a very popular character. In fact, many readers consider *The Hound of the Baskervilles* to be one of the best mystery novels of all time.

Think of some of our current popular entertainers: actors, sports figures, writers, or singers. Of all of our celebrities, whose work do you think will still be studied a hundred years from now? In an essay of no fewer than two paragraphs, choose one popular celebrity and explain why you think that person's work will be studied in years to come.

2. As you read *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, write down any words that you do not recognize. Then, at the end of each chapter, write the definitions for these words.

## **1 – Mr. Sherlock Holmes**

3. The very first thing we learn about Sherlock Holmes is that he “[is] usually very late in the mornings save...when he [is] up all night.” How does this compare with your own life? Are you, like Holmes, a “night owl” who stays up late and sleeps late, or are you a morning person who is up early to start the day? Write a well-constructed paragraph in which you explain if you are a morning person or a night person.
4. When Watson deduces exact details about Dr. Mortimer based only on the doctor’s walking stick, Holmes tells Watson that “it may not be that he is luminous, but...a conductor of light.” Write an E-mail to a classmate explaining just what Holmes means in this figurative statement.
5. Watson feels a bit of pride at being praised by Holmes, especially since Holmes is mostly indifferent to Watson’s opinions. Some people, like Watson, need to be praised or at least treated like an equal in order to be motivated to do a good job. Others, though, are most motivated by having someone tell them that they can’t accomplish something. These people feel challenged just by the fact that someone has told them, “No.”

What do you think is the best way to motivate people to accomplish something? How, for example, does a person motivate a worker or a student? Write a posting for a website for high school educators explaining the best way to motivate students to achieve academic goals.

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6. When Holmes tells Watson that his conclusions about the walking stick were wrong, he says that “in noting” the errors that Watson made, he was “guided to the truth.” Everyone makes mistakes, and often, in making these mistakes, we learn the right way to do things. Write a two-paragraph article for a children’s magazine explaining the good things that can come from making mistakes. Use real-life examples to back up your thesis.
7. From the very beginning, Sherlock Holmes is presented as a kind of teacher for Watson. Holmes challenges Watson and coaxes him into thinking for himself. They obviously have a great student-teacher relationship.

When you think back on all of your school days, who was your favorite teacher? What makes that person your favorite? Write an E-mail to your favorite teacher thanking her and explaining to her what a difference she has made in your life.

8. Holmes sees Dr. Mortimer walking up to his door. He says that “now is the dramatic moment of fate...when you hear a step upon the stair which is walking into your life, and you know not whether for good or ill.” Think about a time when a new person “walked into your life” and “you [knew] not” whether that person was a good person or someone who meant to do you harm. Then, write a short paragraph in which you explain your experience. Make sure to explain how you felt upon meeting that person and how that relationship turned out.

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*Response Journal*

9. When Dr. Mortimer first meets Sherlock, he examines, from a distance, the physical shape of his head. In fact, he admires Holmes' skull so much that he covets it.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, there was a study of criminology called phrenology. Phrenologists believed that they could tell everything they needed to know about someone's personality and mentality just by examining the shape of that person's head. Law enforcement officers who employed phrenology thought that they could judge whether a person was a criminal according to his head shape alone. Today, unfortunately, many people still judge others by their appearance, according to race, skin tone, or even style of clothing.

Write a letter to your local chief of police, telling her that it is not fair to judge a suspect solely on the basis of that person's physical appearance.

10. Holmes considers himself an "enthusiast" of crime solving. It is his passion for solving crimes that makes him such a good detective. What would you say is your passion? Do you have a love for music or for art? Do you love sports or writing? Does your love for a particular activity make you want to try harder when you participate in it? Write a short section for a self-help book about living a full life. In this section, explain how having a passion for a pastime can motivate you to excel in that activity.

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11. Sherlock Holmes' technique is to take the presented facts, and draw conclusions based on those facts. This is not necessarily a complex technique; it just takes a person who can pick up on the subtleties of a situation and draw the right conclusions. Actually, the same techniques that Holmes uses are used to solve everyday puzzles or riddles.

Write a riddle of your own. Choose an everyday household object. Then, write a paragraph in which you describe the object in great detail. Wait until the end of the paragraph to reveal what the object is. You may write of the use of the object, its size, its shape, its color, or where it can be found. When you are finished with the paragraph, write a statement that reveals what the object is. This will be the solution to your riddle. Here is an example for you:

What kind of object is long, thin, and usually yellow? It is an object that is essential for schoolwork but can also be helpful at a grocery store. I'll bet that you have one at your house right now, because this object is a pencil.