



Adventure XXVII – The Hound of the Baskervilles

1. Why can this story be called “a ghost story which belongs more to the literature of skepticism than the literature of belief”?
2. Does the absence of Sherlock Holmes from so much of the story enhance or detract from our enjoyment? Consider such things peculiar to detective fiction as “suspense” and interest in learning what will happen next.
3. With Holmes absent, we must depend on Dr. Watson’s account as it stands with no one to contradict it. Does this suggest what we are asked to accept, what we must believe?
4. Note the exchanges between Holmes and Watson. What can we assume about the nature of their relationship in spite of Holmes’ caustic remarks? How can you support this assumption?
5. Suggest reasons for our being given such a lengthy account of the Baskerville legend. Why is it presented as an ancient document and not an account just narrated by Dr. Mortimer?
6. Give a brief biographical sketch of Sir Charles Baskerville, based on what we are told in the newspaper account of his death. What purpose does the newspaper account serve as contrasted to the presentation of the legend? What effect does Dr. Mortimer’s first hand account have?
7. Can you account for the frequent references to scientific matters? (The work of Monsieur Bertillon, Holmes’ work, that of Dr. Mortimer, for example) What seems to be the purpose of the repetition of a phrase like “man of science” in a story of this sort?



J. Randolph Cox
January 22, 1994