

Aspects of Narrative: Mystery (Hound of the Baskervilles)

Context

Mystery is a genre of literature whose stories focus on a puzzling crime, situation, or circumstance that needs to be solved. The term comes from the Latin *mysterium*, meaning "a secret thing." Stories can be either fictional or nonfictional, and can focus on both supernatural and non-supernatural topics. Many mystery stories involve what is called a "whodunit" scenario, meaning the mystery revolves around the uncovering a culprit or criminal. Mysteries began to gain popularity in the Victorian era, mostly in the form of gothic literature, which was primarily for women. Since then it has developed in both form and reach, and has become a widely read genre among male and female readers of all ages. Mysteries are important because they feature topics that are usually both fascinating and troubling to the human mind—unsolved crimes, unexplained questions and events in natural and human history, supernatural curiosities, and so on. Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* fits perfectly within this tradition. The novel makes use of the typical Gothic themes and symbols—a family curse and the legend of a paranormal and diabolical dog, a hero stranded in a strange place, the transgression of moral taboos, gloomy manors and ruins harboring sinister secrets, flickering lights, dark shadows, and eerie, fog-covered landscapes. Sherlock Holmes attacks the legend of the Baskerville curse with reason and the scientific methods of observation, analysis, and conclusion. Yet when Sherlock Holmes takes leave from the story and Watson drives the plot, Gothic elements take over.

Narrative Summary

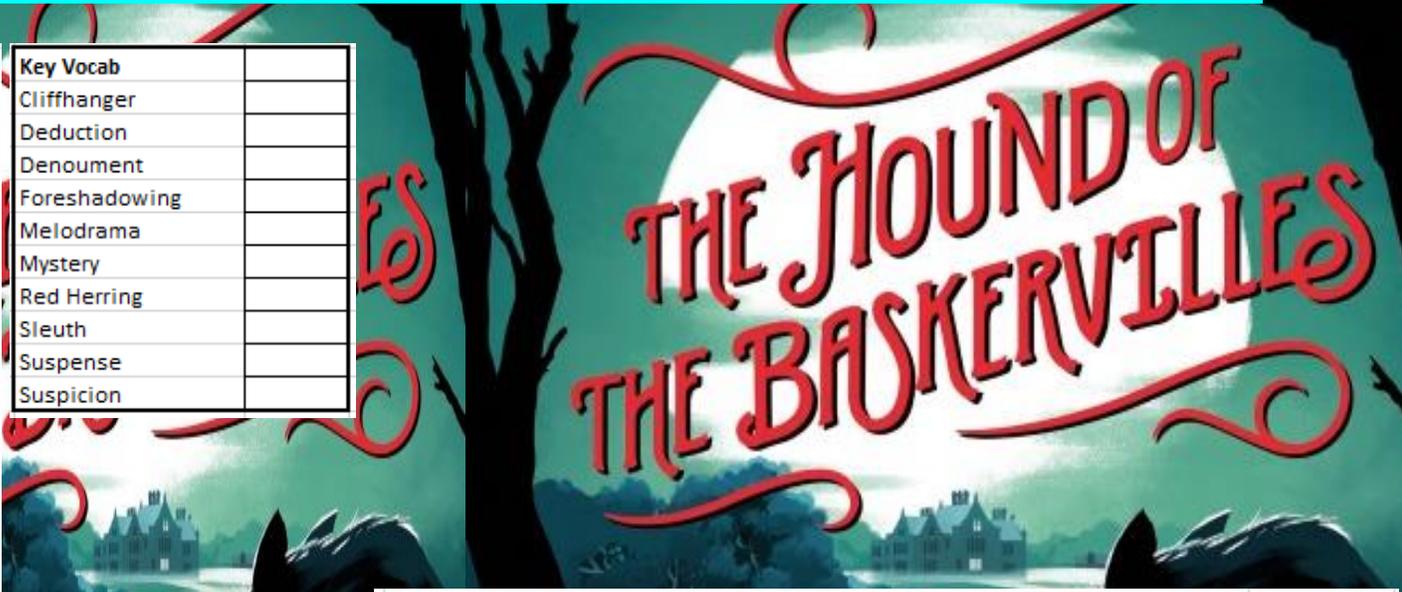
story is set in the moors at Baskerville Hall and the nearby Grimpen Mire, and the action takes place mostly at night, when the terrifying hound howls for blood. After Sir Charles Baskerville is found dead with his face twisted in stark terror, Holmes is called upon to protect his heir, Sir Henry Baskerville. Narrating the story is Holmes's assistant, Dr. Watson, who is sent to Dartmoor while the busy Holmes remains in London. Upon his arrival, Watson learns that an escaped convict is on the loose. More unsettling events occur, including the appearance of an unknown figure on the moor. Watson later discovers that the mysterious person is Holmes, who has been conducting his own investigation. Holmes deduces that the killer is Jack Stapleton, a neighbour who is actually Rodger Baskerville. Hoping to inherit the family estate, he has plotted to kill his relatives using a vicious hound that he has painted with phosphorous to appear sinister. The superstitious Charles suffered a heart attack after being frightened by the animal. Stapleton also hopes to kill Henry Baskerville but is thwarted by Holmes. Afterward Stapleton flees and is believed to have died, swallowed by Grimpen Mire.

Key Vocab

Cliffhanger	
Deduction	
Denouement	
Foreshadowing	
Melodrama	
Mystery	
Red Herring	
Sleuth	
Suspense	
Suspicion	

Themes / Ideas

Justice & Judgement	
Isolation	
Lies & Deceit	



Reading

Skills 1: Retrieve, Interpret, Infer, Consider	
Skills 2: Analyse Methods (language), Analyse Methods (structure)	

Writing

Letter: Explain Point of View	
Article: Argue	
Adverbs, Verbs (modal, imperative)	
Sentences: Simple, Compound, Complex	
Hyphens, Brackets, Colons, Apostrophes	

Media

Mise En Scene	
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Assessment

HT3: Reading: Analyse a Mystery prose extract (method, theme, context, structure)	
HT4: Writing: Article: Argue	
Spoken English: Perform	

Aspects of Narrative: Mystery (Ruby in the Smoke)

Context

Mystery is a genre of literature whose stories focus on a puzzling crime, situation, or circumstance that needs to be solved. The term comes from the Latin *mysterium*, meaning “a secret thing.” Stories can be either fictional or nonfictional, and can focus on both supernatural and non-supernatural topics. Many mystery stories involve what is called a “whodunit” scenario, meaning the mystery revolves around the uncovering a culprit or criminal. Mysteries began to gain popularity in the Victorian era, mostly in the form of gothic literature, which was primarily for women. Since then it has developed in both form and reach, and has become a widely read genre among male and female readers of all ages. Mysteries are important because they feature topics that are usually both fascinating and troubling to the human mind—unsolved crimes, unexplained questions and events in natural and human history, supernatural curiosities, and so on. *Ruby In The Smoke* is set in 1872, on the very cusp of the modern world, and the series that starts with *The Ruby* goes on to touch some modern concerns: feminism, socialism, new technologies, new forms of social relations. It was a time when, for example, it was just beginning to be possible for a woman to find an occupation that was more interesting than teaching or domestic service. Sally's background, though unusual, is not impossible; and the things her father has taught her – about keeping accounts, about shooting a pistol – become the very things her life will depend on. "Furthermore, the dark background of the story (the smoke of the title) has its roots in historical truth. There really was an opium trade between India and China run by and for the British Government, and this country went to war with China to force that country to accept the opium we wanted to sell there.

Narrative Summary

After the sudden death of her father, Sally Lockhart is forced to go to live in London with an obnoxious cousin. There, she receives an anonymous letter containing a warning so dire that it makes a man die of fear at her feet. Determined to discover the truth about what happened to her father, Sally is soon plunged into a dangerous and terrifying adventure that takes her to the dark heart of Victorian London.

Themes / Ideas

Justice & Judgement	
Isolation	
Lies & Deceit	

Key Vocab

Cliffhanger	
Deduction	
Denouement	
Foreshadowing	
Melodrama	
Mystery	
Red Herring	
Sleuth	
Suspense	
Suspicion	

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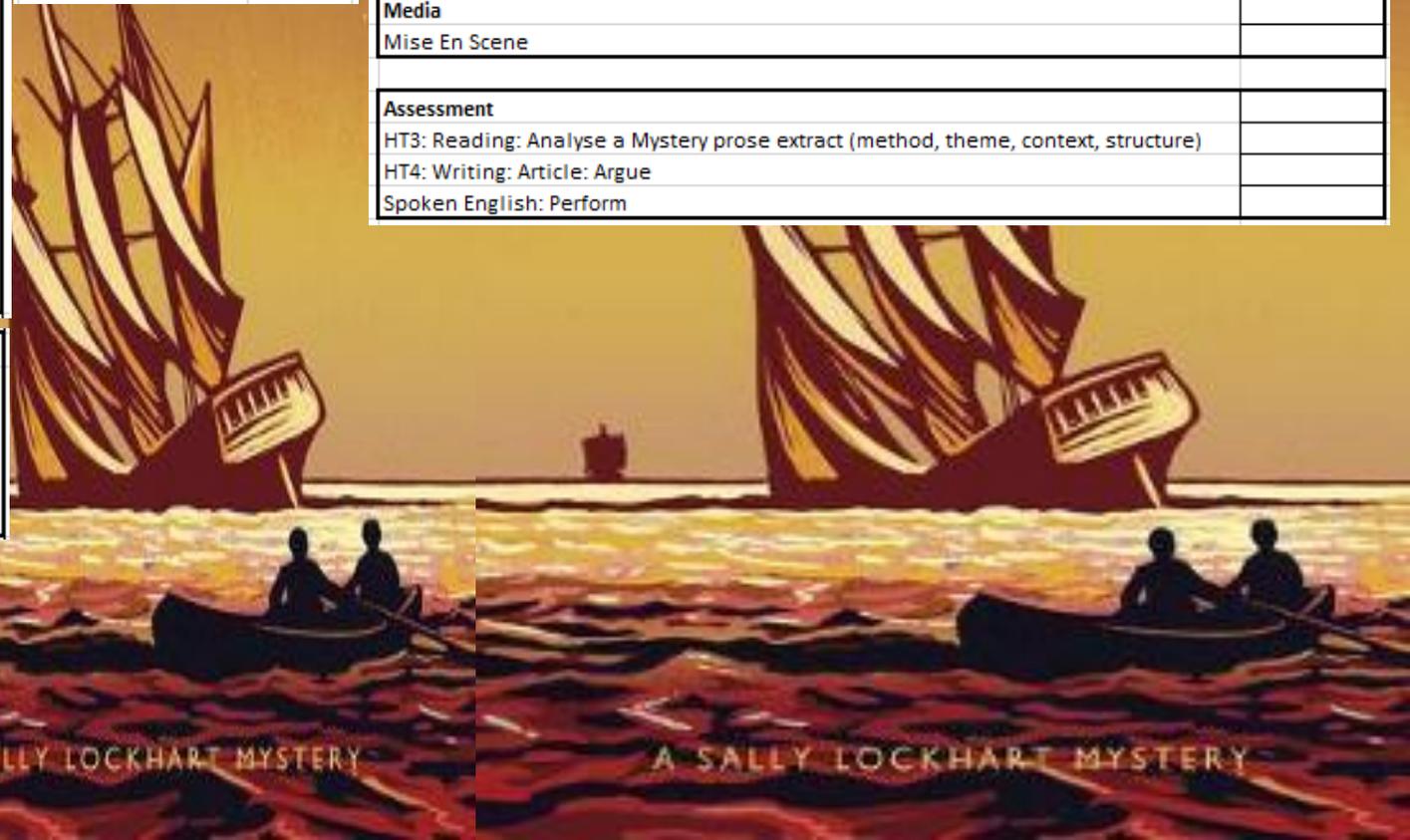
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