

**a** Read the text quickly. Which statement is correct?

- 1 It summarises the complete plot and characters of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.
- 2 It describes Conan Doyle's career, using *The Hound of the Baskervilles* as an example.
- 3 It explains the background to *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and gives the main points of the story.

**b** Read the text again and write true (T) or false (F).

- 1 *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was originally a series of magazine stories.
- 2 People believe that a hound has killed Sir Charles Baskerville.
- 3 Sir Charles was Henry Baskerville's uncle.
- 4 Henry Baskerville comes to see Sherlock Holmes.
- 5 Dr Mortimer is a friend of Sherlock Holmes.
- 6 Dr Mortimer has some shocking new evidence about the mystery.
- 7 Sherlock Holmes believes in scientific explanations.
- 8 Holmes and Watson immediately solve the mystery.

## Hound of the Baskervilles

1 *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is one of the most famous and admired detective stories ever written. Published in 1901 and 1902, it originally appeared in nine monthly instalments in *The Strand* magazine. Like Dickens's serialised novels of the same era, each instalment ended with a suspenseful 'cliff-hanger' that kept author Arthur Conan Doyle's audience clamouring for more.

2 In the story, the old and noble Baskerville family is threatened by a curse: 'A great, black beast, shaped like an enormous wild dog or hound, yet larger than any hound that has ever been seen' terrorises and kills any family member who comes to live at the Baskerville estate. As the story opens, the hound seems to have claimed its latest victim, Sir Charles Baskerville. Sir Charles's nephew, Henry, the new heir to the estate, is about to take up residence the next day. A friend of the family, Dr Mortimer, comes to consult the famous Sherlock Holmes in his rooms at 221b Baker Street, though he admits he doesn't know if the case is more suitable 'for a detective or a priest'. The first instalment of the novel originally ended as Dr Mortimer explains:

3 ... One false statement was made by Barrymore at the inquest. He said that there were no traces upon the ground round the body. He did not observe any. But I did – a short distance away, but fresh and clear.'

'Footprints?'

'Yes, footprints.'

'A man's or a woman's?'

Dr Mortimer looked strangely at us for an instant, and his voice sank almost to a whisper as he answered: 'Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!'



4 Into this atmosphere of ancient secrets, deadly curses and supernatural beasts comes the supremely rational Sherlock Holmes – a man described by his friend Watson as 'the most perfect reasoning and observing machine the world has ever seen'. Piece by piece Holmes and Watson solve the mystery and find the culprit. In the end, they reassure the characters in the novel (as well as Conan Doyle's Victorian readers), that behind the threat of a supernatural 'hound of hell' is a perfectly scientific explanation.