

- 1 Work in pairs. Write a list of famous detectives in fiction, the cinema, or on television. Compare your list with your partner.
- 2 Read the text about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. What were Conan Doyle's other interests apart from writing Sherlock Holmes stories?
- 3 Find the words (1–10) in the text and match them to their definitions (a–j).

1 historical novels	6 subscription	
2 science fiction	7 set	
3 non-fiction	8 miscarriages of justice	
4 main characters	9 translated	
5 serial	10 adapted	

- a the money you pay every year to receive copies of a magazine
- b when courts find innocent people guilty
- c books about real people and events
- d rewritten in a different language
- e stories written in a period in the past
- f a story published in different parts
- g changed so that it works as a film
- h with the action taking place in a particular place and time
- i the most important people in the story
- j stories about life in the future

- 4 Read the text again. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the false sentences.
 - 1 Conan Doyle wrote short stories at school.
 - 2 *A Study in Scarlet* was his first novel.
 - 3 Conan Doyle found great success working as a doctor.
 - 4 Conan Doyle stopped writing Sherlock Holmes stories because he wanted to concentrate on medicine.
 - 5 Conan Doyle tried to become a politician.
 - 6 Sherlock Holmes managed to release two men from prison.
 - 7 Conan Doyle's most famous line is 'Elementary, my dear Watson!'

Elementary, my dear Watson!

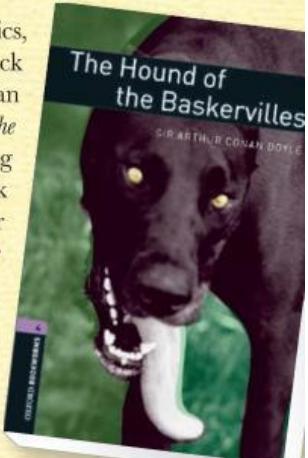
Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was a Scottish writer who wrote detective stories, plays, historical novels, science fiction, and non-fiction. He was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on 22 May 1859. He attended boarding school in England, and although he was unhappy there, he was very popular with the other students because of his talent for telling amazing stories. After leaving school in 1875, he studied medicine at Edinburgh University, where he began writing short stories. After university he became a ship's doctor and travelled to the West African coast. In 1882, he returned to the United Kingdom and worked as a doctor in Plymouth before setting up his own medical practice in Southsea.

At the same time, Conan Doyle began to establish himself as a writer. He wrote several historical novels, but it was with the detective novel *A Study in Scarlet*, whose two main characters were Sherlock Holmes and his assistant Dr Watson, that he found his greatest success. When he moved his medical practice to London, not a single patient entered his consulting room, and he used the time to write a series of short stories featuring Sherlock Holmes. The stories were first published as a serial in *The Strand* magazine, and were hugely popular. However, Conan Doyle felt that he should be writing more serious literature, and decided to kill off Sherlock Holmes, saying that 'he takes my mind from better things'. In 1893, in the story *The Final Problem*, Sherlock Holmes and his enemy Professor Moriarty both died in Switzerland. Sherlock Holmes fans were furious, and 20,000 readers cancelled their subscription to *The Strand*.

After an unsuccessful attempt to enter politics, Conan Doyle decided to write one more Sherlock Holmes story, which was set in an earlier period than *The Final Problem*, and this became *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which was a great success. After being knighted by King Edward VII, who was a Sherlock Holmes fan, Conan Doyle brought his character back to life and wrote a new series of stories for *The Strand*, called *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

As well as writing detective fiction, Conan Doyle took an interest in real cases of injustice, and two men were released from prison because he proved, Sherlock Holmes-style, that they could not have committed the crimes. After this, the Court of Criminal Appeal was established in 1907 to ensure that other miscarriages of justice could be corrected.

After spending the last part of his life studying spiritualism, Conan Doyle died, aged 71, on 7 July 1930. He is buried in Hampshire, England. The Sherlock Holmes stories have been translated into many languages, and adapted for theatre and film. It is the films, not the Sherlock Holmes stories themselves, which produced the famous line 'Elementary, my dear Watson!', which people still sometimes say when they think a problem is easy to solve.



5 The *Hound of the Baskervilles* is set on the moors of Dartmoor, near where Conan Doyle was a doctor in Plymouth. It was originally a serial in *The Strand* magazine from 1901 to 1902. In the story, Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson are called to investigate a *curse over the house of the Baskerville family. Read the extract from the story. What have people seen on the moor?

* a word or phrase that has the power to make bad things happen

The Problem

'Sir Charles had left his footprints all over that little bit of the path where he was standing. I couldn't see any other prints.'

Sherlock Holmes hit his knee with his hand angrily. 'I like to look closely at these things myself,' he said. 'Oh, Dr Mortimer, why didn't you call me immediately?'

'Mr Holmes, the best detective in the world can't help with some things,' said Mortimer.

'You mean things that are outside the laws of nature – supernatural things?' asked Holmes.

'I didn't say so exactly,' replied Mortimer. 'But since Sir Charles died, I have heard about a number of things that seem to be supernatural. Several people have seen an animal on the moor that looks like an enormous hound. They all agree that it was a huge creature, which shone with a strange light like a ghost. I have questioned these people carefully. They are all sensible people. They all tell the same story. Although they have only seen the creature far away, it is exactly like the hell-hound of the Baskerville story. The people are very frightened, and only the bravest man will cross the moor at night.'

'And you, a man of science, believe that the creature is supernatural – something from another world?' asked Holmes.

'I don't know what to believe,' said Dr Mortimer.

'But you must agree that the footprints were made by a living creature, not a ghost?'

'When the hound first appeared two hundred and fifty years ago, it was real enough to tear out Sir Hugo's throat ... But it was a supernatural hell-hound,' said Dr Mortimer.

'If you think that Sir Charles' death was caused by something supernatural, my detective work can't help you,' said Holmes, rather coldly.

'Perhaps,' said Mortimer. 'But you can help me by advising me what to do for Sir Henry Baskerville. He arrives in London by train in exactly,' Dr Mortimer looked at his watch, 'one hour and a quarter.'

'Sir Henry is now head of the Baskerville family?' asked Holmes.

'Yes,' said Dr Mortimer. 'He is the last of the Baskervilles. The family lawyers contacted him in the USA. He has come to England immediately by ship. He landed this morning. Now, Mr Holmes, what do you advise me to do with him?'

'Why should he not go to the family home?' asked Holmes.

'Because so many Baskervilles who go there die horrible deaths. But Sir Charles' good work must go on. If it doesn't, all the people on the Baskerville lands will be much poorer. If the Baskerville family leaves the Hall, that is what will happen. I don't know what to do. This is why I came to you for advice.'

Holmes thought for a little while. Then he said: 'You think it is too dangerous for any Baskerville to live at the Hall because of this supernatural hell-hound. Well, I think you should go and meet Sir Henry Baskerville. Say nothing to him about this. I shall give you my advice in twenty-four hours. At ten o'clock tomorrow morning, Dr Mortimer, I would like you to bring Sir Henry Baskerville here.'

[Extract taken from: Oxford Bookworms stage 4, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*]

6 Find words in the text which mean ...

- open, rough, windy land, usually on hills and without trees
- a kind of dog used for catching wild animals
- the spirit of a person or animal that appears after they have died
- a large country house
- to pull something into pieces.
- marks on the ground made by feet or shoes
- people who are qualified to advise people about the law
- the front part of the neck, which food goes down
- practical and rational

7 Read the extract again and answer the questions.

- Why was Sherlock Holmes angry?
- Why are the people frightened?
- Why does Sherlock Holmes think the animal isn't a ghost?
- Who is Sir Henry?
- Why has Dr Mortimer asked Sherlock Holmes for help?
- What does Sherlock Holmes suggest?

What do you think?

The detective story is one of the most popular forms of fiction. Discuss these questions with your partner.

- Do you like detective stories? Why?/Why not? Why do you think these stories are so popular?
- Who is your favourite detective in fiction? Why?
- What is the typical sequence of events in a classic detective story?

PROJECT

Write a review for a website selling books and DVDs about a detective story you have read, or a TV series or film featuring a detective.

Use the Internet, newspapers, and magazines to help you. Include information about:

- the author
- the setting
- the characters
- the detective
- the plot