

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, 1902

In this extract, the narrator – Doctor Watson – and Sir Henry Baskerville are trying to solve the mystery of what the butler, Barrymore, is doing in the middle of the night.

And now I pass on to the mystery of the sobs in the night, of the tear-stained face of Mrs. Barrymore, of the secret journey of the butler to the western lattice window. Congratulate me, my dear Holmes, and tell me that I have not disappointed you as an agent -- that you do not regret the confidence which you showed in me when you sent me down. All these things have by one night's work been thoroughly cleared up. 5

I have said "by one night's work," but, in truth, it was by two nights' work, for on the first night we drew entirely blank. I sat up with Sir Henry in his rooms until nearly three o'clock in the morning, but no sound of any sort did we hear except the chiming clock upon the stairs. It was a most miserable vigil and ended by each of us falling asleep in our chairs. Fortunately, we were not discouraged and we determined to try again. The next night we lowered the lamp and sat smoking cigarettes without making the least sound. It was incredible how slowly the hours crawled by, and yet we were helped through it by the same sort of patient interest which the hunter must feel as he watches the trap into which he hopes the game may wander. One o'clock struck, and two, and we had almost for the second time given it up in despair when in an instant we both sat bolt upright in our chairs with all our weary senses keenly on the alert once more. We had heard the creak of a step in the passage. 10 15

Very stealthily we heard it pass along until it died away in the distance. Then Sir Henry gently opened his door and we set out in pursuit. Already our man had gone round the gallery and the corridor was all in darkness. Softly, we followed until we had come into the other wing. We were just in time to catch a glimpse of the tall, black-bearded figure, his shoulders rounded as he tiptoed down the passage. Then he passed through the same door as before, and the light of the candle framed it in the darkness and shot one single yellow beam across the gloom of the corridor. We shuffled cautiously towards it, trying every plank before we dared to put our whole weight upon it. We had taken the precaution of leaving our boots behind us, but, even so, the old floor boards snapped and creaked beneath our tread. Sometimes it seemed impossible that he should fail to hear our approach. However, the man is fortunately rather deaf, and he was entirely preoccupied in that which he was doing. When at last we reached the door and peeped through we found him crouching at the window, candle in hand, his white face pressed against the window pane, exactly as I had seen him two nights before. 20 25 30 35

We had arranged no plan of campaign, but Sir Henry is a man to whom the most direct way is always the most natural. He walked into the room and, as he did so, Barrymore sprang up from the window with a sharp hiss of his breath and stood trembling before us. His dark eyes, glaring out of the white mask of his face, were full of horror and astonishment as he gazed from Sir Henry to me. 40

"What are you doing here, Barrymore?"

"Nothing, sir." His agitation was so great that he could hardly speak, and the shadows sprang up and down from the shaking of his candle. "It was the window, sir. I go round at night to see that they are fastened."

"On the second floor?"

45

"Yes, sir, all the windows."

"Look here, Barrymore," said Sir Henry sternly, "we have made up our minds to have the truth out of you, so it will save you trouble to tell it sooner rather than later. Come, now! No lies! What were you doing at that window?"

The fellow looked at us in a helpless way, and he wrung his hands together like one who is in the last extremity of doubt and misery.

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"I was doing no harm, sir. I was holding a candle to the window."

"And why were you holding a candle to the window?"

"Don't ask me, Sir Henry -- don't ask me! I give you my word, sir, that it is not my secret, and that I cannot tell it. If it concerned only myself I would not try to keep it from you."

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A sudden idea occurred to me and I took the candle from the trembling hand of the butler.

"He must have been holding it as a signal," I said. "Let us see if there is any answer." I held it as he had done, and stared out into the darkness of the night. Vaguely I could make out the black bank of the trees and the lighter expanse of the moor, for the moon was behind the clouds. And then I gave a cry of surprise, for a tiny pin-point of yellow light had suddenly transfixed the dark veil, and glowed steadily in the centre of the black square framed by the window.

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"There it is!" I cried.

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Q1: List four details from lines 1 to 5 about the “mystery” Dr Watson speaks of.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

[4 marks]

Q2: Read again lines 20 to 35 of the source:

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How does the writer use language here to develop suspense for the reader?

[8 marks]

In your answer you should write about:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms

Q3: You now need to think about the whole of the source.

How has the writer **structured** the text to **interest** you as a reader?
You should write about:

[8 marks]

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the extract develops
- any other structural features that interest you.