



WCT's 2023/2024

SEASON STUDY GUIDE:

***Ken Ludwig's Baskerville: A
Sherlock Holmes Mystery***



**WESTERN
CANADA
THEATRE**

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Play Synopsis

The play is afoot. A walking stick is mysteriously left at 221B Baker Street by an unknown visitor. Legend spreads about a deadly hound stalking the moor. The new heir to a large family fortune might be the next victim of an unknown killer. Not to worry, dear Watson, everyone's favourite detective is on the case! Join Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson as they try to crack the case of The Hound of the Baskervilles before a family curse dooms its newest heir and everyone else caught in the crosshairs.

Characters:

Sherlock Holmes – the famous English detective, who is very intelligent and loves solving mysteries.

Doctor John Watson – Sherlock's best friend and mystery solving partner. Watson is also very intelligent but is also a bit more empathetic to those around him.

There are three other actors in the show, and they play a variety of characters. Below is the list of characters that each actor will be playing.

Actor One – Dr. Mortimer, Baron Scarpia, Man with Black Beard, Lucy, Milker, Castilian Desk Clerk, Train Conductor, Trap Driver, Barrymore, Stapleton, Victor, Doctor McCann, Country Farmer, Sir John Falstaff

Actor Two – Sir Charles, Baskerville, Daisy, Sir Hugo, Bradley the Tobacconist, Sir Henry, Wilson, Inspector Lestrade

Actor Three (Typically played by a woman) - Mrs. Hudson, Maiden, Shepherdess, Floria Tosca, Cartwright, German Maid, Baby,

Mrs. Clayton, Mrs. Barrymore, Miss Stapleton, Nurse Malloy, Winnie, Nurse MacKeeble, Laura Lyons.

About the Playwright:

Ken Ludwig is an incredible playwright, who has written over 30 plays and musicals during the course of his career. He has had six on Broadway and seven in London's West End. He is a graduate from Harvard and Cambridge University and has won many awards for his efforts including two Tony Awards and two Laurence Olivier Awards.



Fun Facts

- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle went to medical school before he began writing and one of his most influential teachers, Dr. Joseph Bell, inspired the character of Sherlock Holmes later in life.
- This play is one of the three plays that Ludwig has written about Sherlock Holmes.
- Harry Houdini and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle were once friends.
- There have been over 250 portrayals of Sherlock Holmes on screen, not including radio plays and stage productions.
- The Hound of the Baskervilles was published eight years after Doyle wrote 'The Final Problem,' where the character Holmes dies. However, this novel takes place two years before that event.
 - o Additionally, even though Doyle killed off Holmes, he brought him back to life in a later novel and claimed that Holmes had faked his death.

ACTIVITIES

Engaging in the Core Competencies: Communication, Thinking, Personal, and Social

Activity #1: Create Your Own Mystery!

This is a great writing activity for a classroom setting, or fun at home. Create your own mystery using the classic elements of a case; the crime, suspects, evidence, and how the mystery is solved. The crime can be anything from a missing whiteboard marker to the fridge mysteriously missing. Have fun with your mystery and write yourself in as the lead detective, then read the mystery aloud to the class or a group of family and friends to see if they can solve the mystery.

Activity #2: Create and Host a Classroom Murder Mystery

Host a murder mystery party, but in the classroom! Most times when creating your own murder mystery, there doesn't have to be an actual 'murder' in the case to tone it down for children. To learn more about how to create your own murder mystery in the classroom, check out this website: [How to Host a Classroom Murder Mystery – Engaging and Effective Teaching](#)

Activity #3: Word Search

Sherlock Holmes

W A T S O N K M A H Y A X Y R
J D O C T O R X G V Q Y M G Z
X Y Z S D D F M W J F S A K Q
B S W X U M D N I Y T H E B R
P B M C X S D M R V C E B K Y
E S A Y A Y P O N L O R E F X
M V U S S S H E P M D L F B N
B H I Z K T E O C M F O C K J
M O M D J E E Z L T D C R K A
A U O Y E O R R Y M Y K K A E
N N O X E N Z V Y N E J U H H
O D R H I M C I I G X S B E K
R F U T W Q O E E L O M D N T
N G X X H B P X R Q L U A R Q
Y Y S T A P L E T O N E L Y N

Baskerville

Stapleton

Sherlock

Case

Evidence

Suspect

Mystery

Holmes

Henry

Doctor

Watson

Moor

Hound

Manor

SPOILERS AHEAD, DO NOT READ UNLESS YOU WANT TO BE SPOILED

Post-Show Discussion and Ideas

1. Did you see the ending coming? When did you figure out that the villain was Stapleton?
2. This show has a lot of physical humor (also known as slapstick) that includes all the characters at some point or another; what was your favourite comedic part?
3. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote an incredibly iconic character that has become legendary on screen, in novels, and on the stage. Can you think of any other fictional character that comes close to this amount of fame?

Scene-By-Scene

Act One - Prologue:

We are in the Baskerville Hall, where we see Sir Charles Baskerville and Barrymore, one of the attendants on the property. Sir Charles walks out into the mist and says he wants to hang around the garden for a bit longer, so Barrymore leaves him alone. Sir Charles then becomes terrified, and we hear that something big is chasing him. We hear roars, galloping, and a sudden scream from Sir Charles, then the lights black out.

Scene One:

The lights come up on 221B Baker Street with Doctor Watson addressing the audience, talking about how a walking stick was left at their house by an unknown visitor. Mrs. Hudson enters with the stick, and Sherlock Holmes enters afterwards. Sherlock and Watson begin to inspect the cane, Watson is wrong about his investigations and Sherlock is right.

The owner of the cane (Doctor Mortimer) then comes to the door to talk to Holmes and Watson in person. He reveals he was a friend of Sir Charles, who died suddenly three weeks ago. He reads out a manuscript from 1742 that Sir Charles gave to Mortimer for safekeeping, which describes Hugo Baskerville and his “wild, profane and godless nature.” The manuscript then describes that while Hugo was chasing down this woman he held as prisoner, she died of fear and he was found being eaten by a giant, supernatural hound.

Doctor Mortimer claims that even though Sir Charles death was ruled as natural causes, he’s convinced that there was foul play involved, and possibly the supernatural hound is the cause. He then asks the gentlemen what he should do with this information, because Sir Henry Baskerville is coming from America. Holmes says to bring Sir Henry to Baker Street tomorrow morning.

Scene Two:

That evening, Watson and Holmes are discussing the case while Holmes is smoking tobacco. Holmes believes something dangerous must have approached Sir Charles and that’s why he ran away from the house instead of towards it when

he was threatened. Holmes then says to Watson they need to leave, as they'll be late for the opera.

Scene Three:

Watson and Holmes are at the opera, and Watson addresses the audience once more. He describes how Holmes loves the opera, and how even though he may look at peace, his mind is whirring and sorting clues.

Scene Four:

The next morning in Baker Street. Doctor Mortimer has brought Sir Henry to see Holmes and Watson. Sir Henry reveals that he received a letter at his hotel this morning, even though no one knew he was staying at that hotel. They read the letter, noticing that all the letters are cut out of a magazine or newspaper, except the last word 'moor.' The letter states "As you value your life or your reason, keep away from the moor."

Holmes asks if anyone has been following them, but they admit they haven't seen anyone. Holmes instructs them to walk straight back to their hotel room, and that him and Watson will join them for lunch at 1pm. Once they leave, Holmes and Watson leave, intending to follow them about fifty yards behind them.

Scene Five:

Watson and Holmes are following Sir Henry and Dr. Mortimer and realize that a man in a black beard is also following them via cab. Once the man with the black beard discovers that Holmes and Watson saw him, he has the cab go as fast as it can to get away from them. Holmes grabs the number off the cab and leads Watson to the Messenger Office.

Scene Six:

Inside the Messenger Office we meet Lucy and Wilson, who work at the office and know Holmes from a previous mystery. Holmes calls for Cartwright, a young teen that helps Holmes with jobs. Milker also enters and asks to help with whatever Holmes and Watson need. Holmes then gives the boys a job that entails going to each hotel in Charing Cross, going through their refuse, and looking for a particular page of *The Times* with words cut out of it.

Scene Seven:

Holmes and Watson arrive at Northumberland Hotel where Sir Henry is staying, check the register for clues and run into Inspector Lestrade, who is also on the same case. Once he realizes Holmes and Watson are taking care of the case, he leaves, and Sir Henry enters looking for his missing boot. Dr Mortimer arrives, and they all discuss who the man in the black beard could be, whether it is Sir Charles's butler, if it is a man or a woman, and if their motive is Sir Henry's inheritance. They all agree that Dr Mortimer, Watson, and Sir Henry will go to the estate, and Holmes will stay behind to work on a different case.

Scene Eight:

At the train station, Holmes and Watson are saying goodbye. Holmes tells Watson about a man that escaped Princetown Prison last month, that is coincidentally very close to Baskerville. He also explains that there is a scientist named Stapleton that lives nearby with his sister, and to look out for the Barrymore's and Dr Mortimer. A cab woman, Mrs Clayton, comes up to Holmes and Watson and says she was the driver the night that they were following Sir Henry. They question her about her passenger that evening, and she says that he was a detective and that she was supposed to stay quiet. She discusses where she drove that evening with him and says that he told her that he was Sherlock Holmes.

After the cab driver leaves, Sir Henry and Dr Mortimer arrive. Holmes warns Sir Henry to avoid the moor in the dark, and to never leave the house without Watson. They all leave on the train, saying goodbye to Holmes.

Scene Nine:

Watson, Dr Mortimer, and Sir Henry arrive in Grimpen Station, taking a trap to Baskerville Hall.

Scene Ten:

Arriving at Baskerville Hall, Watson and Sir Henry are greeted by Mr. and Mrs. Barrymore. The Barrymore's reveal that they are planning on leaving the estate as soon as Sir Henry is settled, and then they show Sir Henry and Watson to their rooms.

Scene Eleven:

Mrs. Barrymore shows Watson his room, and Watson notices that his window can see the moor. Once Mrs. Barrymore leaves, Watson begins a letter to Holmes.

Scene Twelve:

Holmes is pacing his apartment and reading Watson's letter aloud.

Scene Thirteen:

Stapleton is trying to catch butterflies outside the manor and introduces himself to Watson. Stapleton discusses the legend of the hound, and says that the locals are very gullible, and that this fear over a legendary creature is most likely what led to Sir Charles's death. Stapleton also knows who Watson and Holmes are, but Watson doesn't confirm or deny this. Stapleton then explains what the Grimpen Mire is – bright green sink holes in the moor.

Watson meets Miss Stapleton, who asks him to go back to London immediately before Stapleton comes back. Once Stapleton returns, Miss Stapleton realizes she mistook Watson for Sir Henry. The Stapletons explain to Watson why they live by the manor, before Stapleton gets distracted by another butterfly and dashes off.

Once he leaves, Miss Stapleton apologizes for mistaking Watson for Sir Henry again, and says that there is 'no escape' and warns him of the curse. Sir Henry arrives, and he and Miss Stapleton have a 'love at first sight' moment. They introduce themselves to each other, and Miss Stapleton warns Sir Henry of the curse and tells him to leave as well. Suddenly, they hear a howl in the distance, and Miss Stapleton says it's the cursed hound. She becomes hysterical, and then faints in Sir Henry's arms.

Scene Fourteen:

We're back in 221B Baker Street, Holmes is discussing the case with Milker and Cartwright. They didn't find anything in the trash at the hotels, but they have a letter from Watson that Holmes asks them to read, as his eyes are bandaged.

After reading the first half of the letter, Holmes tears off his bandages because he can't stand not reading the letter himself. Watson then describes in his letter that he's seen a wiry figure at night by the rocks, who he calls 'the Man of Mystery.'

Watson then describes that last night he woke up to someone passing by his room. He got out of bed and woke Sir Henry to tell him.

Scene Fifteen:

Watson wakes up Sir Henry and they go to follow the man pacing the hallways and find that it's Mr. Barrymore who is now at a large window overlooking the moor. He stands with a candle and is seemingly making signals with his hand and the candle to someone in the distance. They try to get Mr. Barrymore to tell them who he was signaling, but he refuses to tell. Mrs. Barrymore comes out and also says that he cannot tell them who it is.

Mrs. Barrymore relents and tells Watson and Sir Henry that her brother is out on the moor, and they signal each other when he needs food. He's a convict who escaped prison, so she is trying to take care of him. Sir Henry tells Mr. Barrymore to take Mrs. Barrymore back to her rooms, and that they'll discuss it in the morning.

Once they leave, Watson and Sir Henry agree to go after the convict.

Scene Sixteen:

Watson and Sir Henry are in the moor with their pistols, looking for the creature that is making all the noise. Victor appears and attacks them both, and hits Watson hard with a rock. Victor runs away, and Sir Henry presumes that Watson is dead.

END OF ACT ONE

Act Two – Scene One:

The scene starts with a replay of the end of Act One. Once the last line is said, everything fades away and Watson sits up and narrates to the audience that he wasn't dead. He was carried back to the manor and attended by a doctor and a nurse. While being attended by the nurse, Holmes sneaks in and scares Watson. Holmes then goes over the list of suspects with Watson, and all the suspects come out and face the audience as he does this.

Holmes announces he's leaving again and disappears before Sir Henry arrives looking for Watson. Sir Henry says that he is going to the moor unaccompanied, even though Holmes told him not to, because he must see Miss Stapleton.

Scene Two:

Stapleton is hunting butterflies while Miss Stapleton and Sir Henry meet in secret. Sir Henry proposes and Miss Stapleton says yes. They kiss and Stapleton enters the scene extremely furious at what he sees. They argue, and Stapleton leaves with Miss Stapleton. Watson, witnessing the whole thing, comes to talk with Sir Henry after they've left. Stapleton comes to apologize for his behavior and invites Sir Henry for dinner on Friday to discuss matters more.

Scene Three:

Mrs. Barrymore needs to speak with Sir Henry and Watson because she admits that she knows something about Sir Charles's death that she hasn't spoken about previously. She says that he was out in the moor that night to meet a woman with the initials L.L. who had sent him a letter begging to meet him.

Scene Four:

Watson and Sir Henry go to the local doctor to see if he knows anyone with the initials L.L. and find him on his walk home (it is very windy).

Scene Five:

The doctor reveals to Watson and Sir Henry that there is a woman in town with the initials L.L. and that is Laura Lyons.

The three of them then discuss this 'Man of Mystery' that they all keep seeing on the rocks, muttering to himself and looking over the village. The doctor says that he lives in one of the stone huts at the Black Tor. The doctor leaves to return to his patients, and Watson and Sir Henry decide to confront the Man of Mystery.

Scene Six:

Watson and Sir Henry are attempting to go down a steep hill to confront the Man of Mystery, but they lose their footing and slide down the hill to the stone hut. They go inside and find diaries depicting what Watson and Sir Henry are doing at every moment of the day. Sir Henry leaves with his revolver to see if he can find the man who's following them.

A twig snaps outside the hut, so Watson takes out his revolver and hides before the Man of Mystery enters the hut. He draws a pistol, knowing that someone is in his hut. Watson springs out with his revolver, pointing it at the Man of Mystery, and discovers that the Man of Mystery is in fact Sherlock Holmes.

Holmes reveals that Laura Lyons and Stapleton are quite close, and also reveals that Miss Stapleton is not Stapleton's sister, but his wife!

Then there is a scream of horror outside, and the sound of the hound. Holmes and Watson discover a body lying amid the bushes and think it is Sir Henry, but thankfully it's not. It's Victor.

Stapleton appears and seems very surprised to see Sir Henry. Holmes and Watson claim they haven't been able to solve the mystery, so they are heading back to London. Miss Stapleton appears and is very happy to see Holmes.

Scene Seven:

Holmes and Watson are at the train station, meeting up with Holmes's two young workers Milker and Cartwright. Holmes receives a letter from them and then declares that they must go to Laura Lyons for proof.

Scene Eight:

Laura Lyons is typing at her work while Holmes and Watson arrive. She admits to sending Sir Charles the letter but denies going to meet him at the gate on the night of the murder. Holmes claims that she is lying, and tells her that Miss

Stapleton and Mr. Stapleton are married, not brother and sister. Holmes proves it to her by showing her a photograph of the couple taken in York with the names Mr. And Mrs. Vandeleur. Lyons says that Stapleton lied to her and said that he offered her marriage if she could divorce her husband. Holmes says that for her safety, she should not leave the room she's in until tomorrow morning.

Scene Nine:

Holmes and Watson return to Baskerville and are discussing with Sir Henry what he's going to do tonight. They tell him that he is supposed to let the Stapleton's know that he intends to walk home, through the moor. Holmes then looks at the many portraits of Sir Henry's ancestors and discovers that one of them looks remarkably like Stapleton. They realize that he must be the son of the black sheep son of the brother who died in South America. That is Stapleton's motive for killing Sir Charles and now Sir Henry, because if he succeeds, he will inherit everything.

Scene Ten:

Holmes and Watson meet up with Lestrade and convince him to come along to the moors to help catch the criminal.

Scene Eleven:

Holmes, Watson and Lestrade are in the moor waiting for Sir Henry to appear. Stapleton comes out of the house and goes to a shed with a key and unlocks the door. Scuffling and dog noises are heard from the shed, Stapleton shuts the door, locks it, and returns to the house.

A dense fog comes over the moor, obscuring their view. Lestrade leaves to go to higher ground to see if he can see anything. In the distance, Sir Henry and Stapleton bid goodnight and Sir Henry begins to walk up the path to the moor alone.

Stapleton unlocks the door with the dog inside, and the hound goes after Sir Henry. Holmes and Watson shoot the dog, and after a fight the hound is defeated, and Sir Henry is alright.

Scene Twelve:

Holmes, Watson and Lestrade enter Stapleton's house to look for him but find Miss Stapleton gagged. They release her and she asks if Henry is alright. Sir Henry appears and they embrace. Miss Stapleton tells Lestrade, Holmes and Watson that Stapleton most likely fled to an old tin mine on an island in the heart of the Mire. Miss Stapleton, however, moved his markers so he wouldn't know how to get to the island safely, and they all look out the window and see that Stapleton got sucked into the Mire.

Scene Thirteen:

Holmes and Watson are back at 221B Baker Street and Watson narrates to the audience that this case troubled Holmes deeply, so it took a while for Watson to discuss the entire case with him so Watson could write it down. Holmes enters and reveals how the mystery was solved, explaining every piece of evidence. Sir Henry and Miss Stapleton arrive and announce that they were getting married as soon as the law allowed, and they asked Watson to be the best man.

Scene Fourteen:

Holmes, Watson, Sir Henry, and Miss Stapleton all go to the opera in celebration. Sir Henry and Miss Stapleton thank them for all their help. Suddenly, an actor in the opera stammers and falls onto the stage, revealing a knife in his back. Holmes and Watson immediately get on the case, ending the show.

END OF PLAY

More Information:

1. Western Canada Theatre: www.wctlive.ca
2. Ken Ludwig: www.kenludwig.com
3. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: www.conandoyleestate.com

Bibliography:

The Hound of the Baskervilles novel by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

[11 Fascinating Facts About Arthur Conan Doyle | Mental Floss](#)

[Ken Ludwig - Wikipedia](#)

[List of actors who have played Sherlock Holmes - Wikipedia](#)