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## Symbolism in the Hound of the Baskerville by Arthur Conan

Symbolism is when authors use items to signify certain ideas by giving them a meaning that is different from what it literally represents. Most authors use this literary device in their books, because it adds to the deepness of the book. Symbolism allows the author to give a deeper meaning to a concept. In the classic mystery, *The Hound of the Baskerville* by Arthur Conan Doyle, symbolism is utilized. The three items that Doyle applied symbolism to were the moor, the hound and Stapleton's nets.

The moor is portrayed as darkness and eeriness. The moor is not a place that many people visit and explore, in fact most people are actually scared of it and tend to avoid it. Watson describes the moor when he says, "Over the green squares...like some fantastic landscape in a dream" (39). Here Doyle reveals that the moor is a place that gives people chills when they see it. He does this through the character Watson, because in this quote words with negative connotations such as "strange, gray and melancholy" are used to show how the moor looks. Doyle utilizes another dark and unsavory word when he writes, "If on that forbidding moor...that he would bravely share it" (39). This depicts that the moor looks threatening. It also shows that nothing good is ever thought to be associated with the moor. This is proven to be right because the moor is in fact the home of the horrifying hound.

Doyle uses the Hound to symbolize death. The beast is suspected to have killed many characters throughout the book, and it seems as though he is always around when someone gets murdered. Dr. Mortimer informed Holmes of evidence that he found near Sir Charles Baskerville's body and according to him, "they were the footprints of a gigantic hound" (13). Dr. Mortimer clearly states that he saw footprints of a hound next to a body in this quote. This was not the only crime that the cold-blooded brute was linked with. Sherlock says that, "Uncle and nephew have been murdered—the one frightened to death by the very sight of the beast" (95-96). This tells the readers that the monster has yet again been connected with a death. Sherlock also says that the creature frightened someone to death, so just the appearance of it can kill a man. Even though the animal is always associated with deaths in this story, it is definitely not the only killer. Every dog has a master. The hound was taking its orders from a man named Stapleton all along.

Stapleton, the antagonist, had a hobby of catching butterflies, and the net he used was a symbol that represented the feeling of being trapped or trapping someone else like a butterfly. Both Sherlock and Watson metaphorically use the nets to show how they were either hoaxed

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themselves or how they will hoax someone else. When Watson has an epiphany he states, "Always there was this feeling...entangled in its meshes" (89). Watson succeeds in portraying his feelings of being fooled. He is trying to explain that he has always felt like something was happening around him and indeed someone was always following him. Doyle wants the reader to envision Watson as a butterfly caught in a net. Even Sherlock utilized the net, but he used it to explain the feeling of catching Stapleton. Holmes says, "The nets are all in place... he has got through the meshes."(103) Sherlock is telling Watson that they did indeed get enough evidence to blame the murders on Stapleton, but they will have to wait to find out if he will be caught or if he will slyly escape out of the nets. Stapleton's nets were definitely not used for only catching butterflies.

Arthur Conan Doyle uses the moor, hound and Stapleton's nets as symbols in The Hound of the Baskervilles. The moor represents a frightening place in the story where no man dares to enter. The hound represents death and is always associated with the murders in the book. Stapleton's nets represent being trapped or trapping others. The symbolism in this murder mystery helped the book obtain a deeper meaning.

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