

How does arthur
conan doyle use
features of the
detective in chapter 6
of the hou...

[Literature](#), [Fiction](#)



“The Hound of the Baskervilles” was written by the famous Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930). Doyle is famous for being the creator of one of literature’s greatest characters – the master detective, Sherlock Holmes. Inspired by local legends of ghostly hounds that roamed Dartmoor, the tale was published in 1901, within a few days the novel had become extremely popular with the public. Crime writing was very popular in the 19th century, people found it to be very entertaining.

The “Hound of the Baskervilles” is described as a pure classic of crime fiction.

During this essay I will explore all of the classic features and techniques that Arthur Conan Doyle has used to build tension, I will be focusing mainly on the features of the gothic genre and detective genre that Conan Doyle has used in chapter 6.

Arthur Conan Doyle uses many features of the gothic genre. These include detailed descriptions of wild and isolated landscapes; this classic feature of the gothic genre is portrayed in chapter 6. Conan Doyle uses strong, powerful imagery to emphasize the features he is attempting to portray to the reader. Conan Doyle successfully achieves this whilst describing the moor through the character of Watson:

“... melancholy hill, with a straight jagged summit, dim and vague...”

Here Conan Doyle has used features of the gothic genre he has done this by using words such as “ melancholy” this connotes sadness and gloom. “ Dim” represents no emotion; it’s as if the landscape is empty and cold. Therefore Doyle has successfully represented his feature of wild and isolated landscapes. By using detailed descriptions like the one shown above, Conan Doyle has created tension for the reader. The imagery creates a clear, vivid picture to the reader. They will be able to picture the dark, isolated landscape. Just by describing the landscape the reader can instantly suspect that something bad, scary is going to happen. Another term for this is “ pathetic fallacy” this is when the landscapes and surroundings mirror the characters feelings and emotions.

Conan Doyle used a popular feature of the gothic genre called the ghostly and supernatural. During Victorian times the Victorians seemed to be fascinated in the whole idea of the supernatural world. Many people became interested in ghosts, and witches. It became a popular hot topic during the late 1920s. Conan Doyle used excellent descriptive language presenting the feature of the ghostly and supernatural. An example is shown through the description of the dining room at the great Baskerville Hall:

“...was a place of shadow...”

This quote is an example of the ghostly feature Arthur Conan Doyle is attempting to portray. By using the word “ shadow” it connotes something dark, and something that is unusual standing behind you. Instantly the reader will be able to guess that maybe it is a ghost! The audience during

the 1920s loved the idea of ghosts and witchcraft. This could be one of the reasons why Doyle used this feature in his novel. Personally I think by using this feature he raised tension and suspense.

Another feature that Arthur Conan Doyle uses of the gothic genre is old and ruined buildings. This links nicely with wild and isolated landscapes. Doyle uses a clever writing skill called personification whilst describing the old and ruined buildings:

“...old gabled houses peeped out...”

This quotation is an excellent example of old and ruined buildings. It creates tension, as the reader can start to picture this dark, dim imagery. The use of personification helps to create tension, by making the buildings seem more human like. This makes the building appear more realistic to the reader. As the reader I was able to picture the buildings as a person rather than an object.

Arthur Conan Doyle continues to use this feature throughout chapter 6. He uses it again whilst describing Baskerville Hall:

...” weather bitten pillars...”

Good imagery is used here. Conan Doyle has presented to the reader a vivid image. By saying the pillars have been bitten by weather suggests that the pillars have been there for quite a while, and not been looked after. This brings the reader to believe that the buildings are old and perhaps have

been neglected over time, and that the weather itself is acting like a living thing, terrorizing the building.

Another example of the old and ruined feature is expressed later on in chapter 6. I felt this quotation was an exceptional example of the classic feature:

“...ancient, crenellated, and pierced.”

Conan Doyle has used clearly presented the feature of wild and isolated landscapes through this quote. The language is very precise and obvious to the reader. By using “ ancient” the reader will understand that the building was in fact very old and maybe a little old fashioned. As the reader I think Doyle has effectively used the features of old and ruined buildings. He has used clear, powerful language, creating tension which keeps the reader engaged in the novel, and a little on edge.

The classic feature of imagery of darkness/shadow is used plenty in chapter 6. Arthur Conan Doyle has built tension by using deep imagery, and clever writing skills, for example personification.

Doyle represents imagery through the characters; here he portrays darkness and gloom:

“...at his dark and expressive face.”

Evidently Conan Doyle has represented dark imagery through the characters facial and body expressions. He wants the reader to feel the darkness, and gloom that is going to be presented later on in the novel.

Later on in chapter 6, Arthur Conan Doyle goes on to present darkness and fear through the character of Watson:

“...difficult and dangerous quest.”

This quote represents fear, its also building tension to the reader; they now know something bad is going to happen. It's as if the characters are prepared for what is going to happen. They know its going to be difficult and dangerous in the moor.

Doyle has cleverly described the weather in the novel, this creates tension. Bad, strong storms connote something evil and spooky is going on:

“...the chilling wind, and the darkling sky.”

The author creates a mysterious and gloomy atmosphere. The language is simple yet gives a clear picture. Doyle's repetition of dark brings out negativity. The weather itself represents the mood of the characters and the surroundings. I think by describing the weather Arthur Conan Doyle has built tension.

Another image that I thought was very effective was when the author was describing a building. The imagery was representing darkness and the idea of shadow was used:

“...draped in ivy.”

This image can be interpreted in many ways. It has a double meaning, “Draped in ivy” signifies the building is hiding, and that the ivy is like a shield for the building. This is a clear image, and really brings out what Doyle is attempting to portray.

Another good quote, I thought worked well with describing the imagery of darkness was the following description:

“...through the dark veil.”

Doyle employs personification in this quote, by saying “through the dark veil” he is suggesting the house is in mourning, and is covering itself with a dark, black veil. It’s as if the building has a hidden meaning, but covered by this screen of foliage. This creates tension, as Doyle has described the building as a human. This makes it easier for the reader to relate to.

Arthur Conan Doyle uses a range of characters, from clever detectives to common taxi drivers. With a large variety of characters it gives the reader a bigger picture, and helps them to relate to different characters. The characters seem to keep the flow at a steady pace throughout the novel. The relationship between different characters are mostly calm and complex.

Strong bonds are made between characters, for example Dr James Mortimer and Sir Henry Baskerville become very good friends. This keeps the novel going. Doyle has attempted to balance out the dark, ghostly and supernatural surroundings with blissful, contented friendships:

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“...Surely you will stay have some dinner?”

Doyle wants the reader to not only be engaged in the evil side of the novel but also understand the friendly, cheerful side too. This quote is also revealing Sir Henry's Baskervilles personality. The author is showing that Henry is very laid back person, and has been brought up with polite manners and respect for others. Conan Doyle has cleverly showed Henry as an extremely well mannered, easy going person. This makes the reader almost feel sorry for him, as he is unaware about what lies for him later on in the novel.

Arthur Conan Doyle uses feelings of fear and looming danger frequently throughout chapter 6. A good example of foreshadowing doom is used when Henry first comes across Baskerville Hall. Doyle also uses personification here:

“...glimmered like a ghost...”

This quote presents imagery of darkness. Doyle has used personification once again. The theme of the supernatural is also portrayed. The emotive language Doyle has used creates tension, and gets the reader thinking about the supernatural world!

Another example of looming danger and horror is presented at the end of chapter 6:

“...and gloom...smoke darkened...”

Here Conan Doyle has used emotive language; the idea of darkness is presented through this quote. By using the word “gloom” Doyle is presenting something bad, dark and mysterious is going to happen. This connotation creates tension for the reader. Once again it makes them wonder what will happen.

Another pattern I found was the repetition of the word “black” Conan Doyle frequently uses this word in his descriptions. Words associated with the dark colour are also used. “Darkened” “Gloom” and “Darkling” are all words that are used in Doyle’s exceptionally detailed descriptions. He has carefully presented all the gothic features well, and has built tension effectively.

Arthur Conan Doyle used features of the detective genre too in chapter 6. I will now go on to explain some of the features used to build tension.

The author uses clever detective skills in the novel starting with clues and red herrings. A red herring is a clue/idea that throws the reader completely off track. Conan Doyle uses many red herrings throughout the novel. One example is involving the escaped convict:

“There’s a convict escaped from Prince town sir.”

This is a perfect example of a red herring. Arthur Conan Doyle wants the reader to think that maybe the convict is involved in the mysterious death! However the convict has absolutely nothing to do with the murder. By misdirecting the audience into thinking something else, Doyle has created tension. He is leading the audience on, keeping the reader from the truth!

Red herrings are an excellent way to keep the audience engaged and interested in the novel. It keeps the reader thinking.

Another example of a red herring is when Sherlock Holmes suggests that maybe the Barrymore's' may have been involved in the murder of Sir Charles.

"- - why yes. Barrymore, Sir Charles's butler..."

Here Doyle has used another red herring. He wants the audience to assume that the Barrymore's are suspects. Whilst he knows that they have nothing to do with the murder. But are in fact innocent victims being wrongly accused of a crime they haven't committed!

As a reader, I think it was a very clever technique to use. It keeps you on edge, and makes you think. I felt it made the novel more exciting, and kept tension throughout the story. I thought it was a good idea to misdirect the audience, rather than allow them to be omnipotent all the way through, because it makes it much more exciting and enjoyable to read.

If Doyle had kept the story simple, and straightforward throughout the novel it would have been boring. As the audience have nothing to get their minds thinking and suspecting!

By using red herrings, Doyle successfully built tension. He used this clever feature of the detective genre effectively.

I will talk about another feature of the detective genre used by Doyle; here he has used the clever detective/sidekick feature. He has represented this feature mainly through the characters of Sherlock Holmes, and his partner Watson.

Arthur Conan Doyle has presented Sherlock Holmes and Watson differently to each other. The language Doyle uses for each character is different. He clearly portrays Sherlock Holmes in a much higher status than Watson, and that Sherlock Holmes is in charge! An excellent example of this is in chapter 1, through the conversation of Holmes and Watson:

“...You know my methods. Apply them!”

Here Conan Doyle has used commanding language. He wants the audience to understand that Holmes is the one in control! He wants to show the reader that he is of a much higher status, and that maybe he has more power over people.

Watson acts as Holmes's personal sidekick. Holmes and Watson work together as a team, Holmes being the obvious leader. Throughout the novel Doyle has kept Holmes in charge, and Watson acting as the sidekick.

“ What do you think of that, Watson?”

Most of the time, Holmes asks Watson for his thoughts and opinions on his findings, to keep him involved and active. However we could argue that Sherlock Holmes is reassuring himself by asking Watson for his view.

The pair work well together, and Watson listens attentively into what Holmes finds out. They have a strong friendship, this works well in the novel.

Another feature of the detective genre is the whole idea of who the victim is? This idea can be explored from many different angles.

Evidentially we all know that Sir Charles is the obvious victim in the novel, and Sir Henry is the on going victim. Alternatively we could argue that Sherlock Holmes and Watson are both victims in their rights.

Starting with Holmes, he could be labeled a victim, as he has taken on a stressful, mind working case. This requires a lot of brain power and patience. The audience could be made to feel sorry for him, as he will encounter a lot of stress, and pressure! The twists and turn Conan Doyle has presented may even questions Sherlock Holmes's own words, making him confused.

An example of this is in chapter

Need a quote to back up Sherlock Holmes and the case, it's a hard case?

Another example of the victim feature is portrayed through the character of Watson. The way he is treated, and gets put down by Sherlock Holmes may have an effect on the audience. They may sympathize with Watson and almost feel sorry for him:

"...said Holmes with a mischievous smile..."

This quote suggests that Holmes is "rubbing" it in Watson's face. He has purposely picked at little faults made by Watson, knowing he wouldn't have

made them himself. He is almost putting Watson down. We could argue that maybe Holmes is knocking Watson's self esteem. The author has used this clever emotive language to capture the audience's sympathy for Watson. Therefore in the reader's eye he could be interpreted as a victim.

By using this clever detective of who the victim could be. Doyle has created tension for the reader. He is getting them to think and make their own individual decisions on who the victim is.

To conclude my essay, I would like to summarize and conclude my findings. Starting with the features of the gothic genre. Conan Doyle presents the features of this genre effectively, and builds tension in the appropriate places. He presents the imagery of darkness with strong emotive language; the language has a great impact on the reader. Next is the Detective genre, he has presented Sherlock Holmes in a good light throughout the novel. Holmes was a popular man in the 19th Century therefore Doyle presents him in a bright image. Doyle has been successful in presenting both genres to his maximum potential. He continues to keep the tension flowing throughout the novel which works well.