

AQA English Language Paper 1:  
Practice questions using *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

---

NB All page numbers are taken from the Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group 1959 edition.

In this extract (from Chapter 14) the detective Sherlock Holmes and his friend Dr Watson are on the moor, investigating the mysterious death of Charles Baskerville and the legend of the gigantic hound.

- 1 I have said that over the great Grimpen Mire there hung a dense, white fog. It was  
2 drifting slowly in our direction and banked itself up like a wall on that side of us, low,  
3 but thick and well defined. The moon shone on it, and it looked like a great  
4 shimmering icefield, with the heads of the distant tors as rocks borne upon its surface.  
5 Holmes's face was turned towards it, and he muttered impatiently as he watched its  
6 sluggish drift ...
- 7 ... Every minute that white woolly plain which covered one half of the moor was  
8 drifting closer and closer to the house. Already the first thin wisps of it were curling  
9 across the golden square of the lighted window. The farther wall of the orchard was  
10 already invisible, and the trees were standing out of a swirl of white vapour. As we  
11 watched it the fog-wreaths came crawling round both corners of the house and rolled  
12 slowly into one dense bank, on which the upper floor and the roof floated like a  
13 strange ship upon a shadowy sea. Holmes struck his hand passionately upon the rock in  
14 front of us, and stamped his feet in his impatience.
- 15 'If he isn't out in quarter of an hour the path will be covered. In half an hour we won't  
16 be able to see our hands in front of us.'
- 17 'Shall we move farther back upon higher ground?'
- 18 'Yes, I think it would be as well.'
- 19 So as the fog-bank flowed onwards we fell back before it until we were half a mile  
20 from the house, and still that dense white sea, with the moon silvering its upper edge,  
21 swept slowly and inexorably on ...
- 22 ... 'Hist!' cried Holmes, and I heard the sharp click of a cocking pistol. 'Look out! It's  
23 coming!'
- 24 There was a thin, crisp, continuous patter from somewhere in the heart of that  
25 crawling bank. The cloud was within fifty yards of where we lay, and we glared at it,  
26 all three, uncertain what horror was about to break from the heart of it. I was at  
27 Holmes's elbow, and I glanced for an instant at his face. It was pale and exultant, his  
28 eyes shining brightly in the moonlight. But suddenly they started forward in a rigid  
29 fixed stare, and his lips parted in amazement. At the same instant Lestrade gave a yell  
30 of terror and threw himself face downwards upon the ground. I sprang to my feet, my  
31 inert hand grasping my pistol, my mind paralyzed by the dreadful shape which had  
32 sprung out upon us from the shadows of the fog. A hound it was, an  
33 enormous coal-black hound, but not such a hound as mortal eyes have ever seen.

35 Fire burst from its open mouth, its eyes glowed with a smouldering glare, its muzzle  
36 and hackles and dewlap were outlined in flickering flame. Never in the delirious  
37 dream of a disordered brain could anything more savage, more appalling, more hellish  
38 be conceived than that dark form and savage face which broke upon us out of the wall  
39 of fog.

40 With long bounds the huge black creature was leaping down the track, following hard  
41 upon the footsteps of our friend. So paralyzed were we by the apparition that we  
42 allowed him to pass before we had recovered our nerve. Then Holmes and I both fired  
43 together, and the creature gave a hideous howl, which showed that one at least had  
44 hit him. He did not pause, however, but bounded onwards. Far away on the path we  
45 saw Sir Henry looking back, his face white in the moonlight, his hands raised in horror,  
46 glaring helplessly at the frightful thing which was hunting him down.

- Q1. Read again the paragraph that begins 'There was a thin, crisp, continuous patter.'  
List four details given in this paragraph to describe the hound's appearance.

[4 marks]

- Q2. Look in detail at this extract from lines 8 to 18 of the source:

I have said that over the great Grimpen Mire there hung a dense, white fog. It was drifting slowly in our direction and banked itself up like a wall on that side of us, low, but thick and well defined. The moon shone on it, and it looked like a great shimmering icefield, with the heads of the distant tors as rocks borne upon its surface. Holmes's face was turned towards it, and he muttered impatiently as he watched its sluggish drift ...

... Every minute that white woolly plain which covered one half of the moor was drifting closer and closer to the house. Already the first thin wisps of it were curling across the golden square of the lighted window. The farther wall of the orchard was already invisible, and the trees were standing out of a swirl of white vapour. As we watched it the fog-wreaths came crawling round both corners of the house and rolled slowly into one dense bank, on which the upper floor and the roof floated like a strange ship upon a shadowy sea. Holmes struck his hand passionately upon the rock in front of us, and stamped his feet in his impatience.

'If he isn't out in quarter of an hour the path will be covered. In half an hour we won't be able to see our hands in front of us.'

How does the writer use language here to describe the effects of the fog?

You could include the writer's choice of:

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

[8 marks]

**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 could write about:

- 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.

**[8 marks]**

**Q4.** Focus this part of your answer on the second part of the source, from line 22 to the end. A student, having read this part of the extract, said: ‘The writer makes this part of the story very dramatic.’

**To what extent do you agree?**

In your response, you could:

- write about your own impressions of the characters
- evaluate how the writer has created these impressions
- support your opinions with references to the text.

**[20 marks]**