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HISTORY



VICTORIAN ERA
and
INDUSTRIAL
REVOLUTION

QUEEN VICTORIA



Queen Victoria ruled the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland for more than 63 years. The period of her reign, from 1837 to 1901, became known as the **Victorian Age**.

During the Victorian Age Britain became the largest empire that had ever existed. There were also great changes and developments within Britain in science and technology, culture, and daily life

Born a Princess

Princess Victoria Alexandria was born on May 24, 1819 at Kensington Palace in London. Her father was Edward, the Duke of Kent and her mother was Princess Victoria of Germany. Victoria lived the life of a young royal and her mother was very protective. She had little contact with other children spending most of her days with adult tutors and playing with dolls when she was young. As she grew older she enjoyed painting, drawing, and writing in her diary.

Heir to the Crown

When Victoria was born, she was fifth in line for the crown of the United Kingdom. It seemed unlikely that she would ever be queen. However, after several of her uncles failed to have children, she became heir to the throne of the current king, William IV.

Becoming Queen

When King William IV died in 1837, Victoria became Queen of the United Kingdom at the age of eighteen. Her official coronation took place on June 28, 1838. Victoria was determined to be a good queen and to restore the faith of the people of the United Kingdom in the monarchy. One of the first things she did was to pay off her father's debts. The people liked her from the start.

Victoria didn't know a lot about how to govern, however, she made a good friend and tutor in the Prime Minister at the time, Lord Melbourne. Melbourne advised Victoria on political issues and had considerable influence over her at the start of her reign.

Marrying a Prince

On October 10, 1839 a German Prince named Albert came to visit the royal court. Victoria immediately fell in love. Five days later, they were engaged to be married. Victoria enjoyed married life. She and Albert had 9 children over the next several years. Albert also became her confidant and helped her in navigating the politics of the United Kingdom.

The Victorian Era

The time of Victoria's reign was a period of prosperity and peace for the United Kingdom. It was a time of industrial expansion and the building of railroads. One of the achievements of the time was the Great Exhibition of 1851. A huge building called the

Crystal Palace was built in London that housed a number of technological exhibits from around the world. Prince Albert took part in the planning and it was a huge success.

Albert's Death

On December 14, 1861 Albert passed away from typhoid fever. Victoria went into a deep depression and withdrew from all politics. But eventually Victoria recovered and began to take a strong interest in the British Empire and its colonies.

Grandmother of Europe

Victoria's nine children were married off to royalty throughout much of Europe. She is often called the Grandmother of Europe because so many of Europe's monarchs are her relatives. Her first son, Edward, became king after her and married a princess from Denmark. Her daughter Victoria, the Princess Royal, married the Emperor of Germany. Other children married royals from other areas of Europe including Russia. She had thirty-seven great-grandchildren at the time of her death on January 22, 1901.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The Industrial Revolution, one of the most important changes in the world, started in England before Queen Victoria was born, but strongly developed during her reign. She ruled during the industrialization of England, encouraging tremendous change and expansive growth of England's domestic and foreign power. The Victorian period in England's history shows contrasts: the beauty and richness of the aristocracy versus the poverty and depression of the poor working class. The middle class was essentially nonexistent, but the Industrial Revolution meant that the balance of power shifted from the aristocracy, whose position and wealth was based on land, to the newly rich business leaders. The new aristocracy became one of wealth, not land, and often bought themselves titles, which remained important in British society.

Where did the Industrial Revolution first begin?

The **Industrial Revolution** began in the late 1700s, when machines were invented to make products more easily. The full effects of this revolution only started to be seen during Victoria's reign. Steam-powered machinery meant that factories could produce items more quickly and efficiently than ever before. In particular, Britain became the world leader in iron and steel production. The country grew wealthy through international trade

Steam power also led to dramatic changes in public transportation. When Victoria came to the throne, the **railroads** ran for only a few hundred kilometers. In the 1840s and early 1850s, 8,000 miles (13,000 kilometers) of railroads were built all over Britain, giving people the opportunity to travel cheaply and easily around the country. Railroads also began to spread across other parts of the empire.

In 1851 the Great Exhibition was held in Hyde Park in London. This exhibition was intended to demonstrate Britain's industrial, military, and economic achievements. It also included many of the accomplishments pioneered by the British in its many colonies. The exhibition attracted visitors from all over the world. Britain changes from a rural society to an urban one

In 1837, Britain was still a rural nation with 80% of the population living in the countryside. Most people were farmers or spun wool and cotton to weave into cloth. Soon new machines were invented that could do these jobs in a fraction of the time. This left many people out of work, so they flocked to the towns in search of jobs in new industries. By the middle of the nineteenth century over 50% of the population lived in towns and cities.

The Age of Steam

Victorian engineers developed bigger, faster and more powerful machines that could run

whole factories. This led to a massive increase in the number of factories (particularly in textile factories or mills). By 1870, over 100,000 steam engines were at work throughout Britain. The industry depended on steam and steam depended on coal. The number of coalfields doubled between 1851 and 1881.

The Age of Steel

1856 - Henry Bessemer invented a method for converting iron into steel quickly. Ships, bridges and building could now be bigger. Despite the growing wealth due to trade and commerce, many of the working people, who actually produced the wealth, lived, worked and died in very poor conditions.

Housing

Most cities and towns were not prepared for the great increase of people looking for accommodation to live near their work place. There was a shortage of houses, so many people had to share a room in other people's houses. Rooms were rented to whole families or perhaps several families. Often ten or twelve people shared one room. If there was no rooms to rent, people stayed in lodging houses. Many factory owners built houses for their workers near their factories. The houses were built close together really quickly and cheaply. These houses often had two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs. They were not really big enough for the large families people tended to have during the Victorian time.

The houses also did not have running water and toilets. Up to 100 houses had to share an outdoor pump to get their water and share an outside toilet. To make things worse, the water from the pump was often polluted.

Pollution and ill health

The household rubbish was thrown out into the narrow streets and the air was filled with black smoke from the factories chimneys. Dirty streets and cramped living was a perfect breeding ground for diseases. More than 31,000 people died during an outbreak of cholera in 1832 and lots more were killed by typhus, smallpox and dysentery.

Public Health Act of 1875 banned open sewers, thanks to Joseph Bazalgette's sewage system. Houses were made further apart, rubbish collection was introduced and public health inspectors had to be provided by the local council. They basically had to go round whatever town or city they were employed in and check that sanitation and health of the people was alright.

In 1853, the tax on soap was taken off, meaning poor people could buy it and become more hygienic by washing with it.

Working conditions

Many factory owners put profit above the health and safety of their workers. Children and young women were employed in terrible conditions in textile mills and mines. Furnaces were operated without proper safety checks. Workers in factories and mills were deafened by steam hammers and machinery. Hours were long and there were no holidays.

The Age of Invention. Science and Cultural Expansion

The success of the steam engine and the other inventions that brought about the Industrial Revolution also led to many other new inventions. The Victorian era was one of great scientific and technological advances.

In 1839 **photography** was invented and Victorians rushed to have their portraits taken. Queen Victoria herself was fascinated by the process of photography.

Alexander Graham Bell invented the **telephone** in 1876.

Bicycles became popular in the 1870s, and in 1872 a bicycle known as the penny farthing was introduced. This had a large wheel at the front and a smaller one at the back. The design was used until about 1880, when a bicycle with equal-sized wheels was developed. The first **cars** appeared after 1885.

Gas lighting brightened homes, public buildings, and the streets. By 1879 Joseph Swan had invented an electric light bulb. By the 1880s steam power was being used in power stations to make electricity.

There were developments in medicine and health care, too. The most important of these was pioneered by Joseph Lister. Lister investigated the causes of infection that occurred after patients had undergone surgery. He realized that the infections were caused by **bacteria**. In 1870 he introduced methods of sterilizing surgical instruments and using antiseptics to keep hospitals clean. These methods dramatically reduced infections and deaths.

Charles Darwin was another important scientist of the era. His ideas about **evolution** forever changed the way scientists thought about all living things.

Culture

Many people in Victorian Britain wanted to find out more about the world around them. They went to lectures on science, history, religion, and exploration. In 1845 Parliament said that local councils could set up free libraries, and by the end of the era every large city had its own art gallery, museum, and concert hall.

Victoria and her husband Albert encouraged the arts and literature. Many great writers, including Charles Dickens, the Brontë sisters, and Robert Louis Stevenson, wrote during the Victorian Age. The great artistic movement of the age included artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Everett Millais.

The extension of the railroads meant that travel was more affordable than it had ever been, as well as quicker. By the 1840s the working classes joined the upper classes on seaside holidays. At the seaside, people stayed in boarding houses, paddled, and walked on pleasure piers.



Life and Education

In Britain in 1837, when Victoria came to the throne, the majority of people lived in villages and worked on the land. By the end of her reign most people lived in towns and worked in offices, shops, and factories. The population of Britain more than doubled in the Victorian era, creating a huge demand for food, clothing, and housing. Even more factories and machines were built to meet this demand, and new towns developed.

Education

Most Victorian families were large and only the poorest families did not have servants. Children from rich families were taught at home by a governess. Boys were sent to boarding school around the age of 10. There were few schools for girls until the end of the Victorian era, so girls from wealthy families usually continued to be taught at home.

In early Victorian Britain most poor children did not attend school, so they grew up unable

to read or write. Some went to free charity schools and Sunday schools, which were run by churches.

In 1844 Parliament passed a law stating that children working in factories must be given six half-days of schooling every week. In 1870 another law was passed that required all children between the ages of five and 12 to attend school. Many more schools were built as a result of this.

Teachers in Victorian schools were strict and they could punish children for not learning their lessons or for misbehaving. There could be as many as 70 or 80 students in each class. Lessons were usually reading and copying, or chanting a lesson until it had been memorized.

Paper was expensive so children wrote on slates. After a lesson was completed and the teacher had checked their work, students cleared their slates for the next lesson. Older children sometimes learned to write on paper using pens made out of thin wooden sticks dipped into ink. In many schools pupil-teachers aged 13 and above helped with the teaching. After five years they could become teachers themselves.

Children at Work

Most poor children were sent out to work, often for long hours and little pay. Small children were made to crawl underneath machinery or open and close the ventilation doors in coal mines. Many children had accidents or became ill or died because these jobs were so dangerous.

Until the 1840s children as young as five worked in underground mines for up to 12 hours a day. The Factory Act of 1878 banned employment of children under the age of 10. However, poor families often still sent children out to work because they needed the money. After 1842 the employment of women and children in the mines was made illegal. After 1844 working hours were limited for children and women in factories.

Life was not the same for all children during Victorian times:

Children from working class families	Children from rich families
Had few luxuries. Ate poor food worked long hours Lived in damp, filthy conditions. Many children died of disease.	Usually well fed, clean and well clothed. Didn't need to work Went on holidays Had expensive toys Had pets such as ponies.

Victorian Women

Victorian England was a man's world. More specifically, it was a rich, upper-class, man's world, and even better if you had land, a large house, a title, and a doting wife. Women of this class enjoyed a life full of all the things money could buy; travel, fine clothes, good food and of course, servants and staff to do chores for them. Their goal in life was to marry, have children and raise them in an appropriate and respectful manner.

However in the lower working class, their clothes were vastly different from the luxurious outfits of the upper class women — consisting of rag and cheap cloth, and their homes would be cold, dank and dark. These women were usually single, and relied only upon themselves for support. Life in the workhouses was arduous and dangerous, but they had to work to scrape together any money they could.

Not so different

Although women in the upper and lower classes had many differences, they also had some similarities. Women in the Victorian era were very much seen as second best to men, as a trophy, a wife and a mother, and were expected to be content with this role in society. It was toward the end of the Victorian era that the women's suffrage movement began in the United Kingdom. Women of every class came together to stand against the injustice and inequality of the voting system and to lobby for their right to vote.

So despite the vast differences between the women in this era, their *similarities* encouraged a change that shaped the history of Britain. Between the idealized view of Victorian life demonstrated by upper class women and the less desirable lifestyle of poorer women, we can learn a lot about the society of Victorian Britain, and begin to sense the stirrings of one of the most important and dramatic social changes in history.

Florence Nightingale

Perhaps one of the most famous Victorian women was Florence Nightingale.

Born in Florence, Italy to a wealthy British family she developed a keen interest in nursing which was considered an unsuitable job for someone of her social standing.

Eventually, she trained for three months as a nurse in Germany and became a Superintendent of the Establishment in London's Harley Street.

When the Crimean War broke out in 1854 she used her knowledge to oversee military hospitals where conditions were deplorable.

Her actions, particularly improving cleanliness in the hospitals, raised survival rates from

60% to 98%.

She went on to found the Nightingale School and Home for Nurses at St Thomas Hospital in London.

End of an Era

By the time Queen Victoria died in 1901, almost every area of life had changed dramatically. The empire over which Victoria had presided would not last far into the 1900s. Within 15 years, **World War I** destroyed monarchies and empires all around the world. By the middle of the century there was very little left of the great British Empire



WORLD WAR

I

Key Events of the First World War

Timeline

Many different battles were fought in the First World War and a case can be made for the importance of them all. This list includes some of the most important ones, which had an impact on the whole shape of the war.

1914

- 28 June: Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand is shot in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina
- 29 July: Austria-Hungary invades Serbia
- 1 August: Germany declares war on Russia
- 4 August: Germany invades Belgium; Britain declares war on Germany
- October: The Race to the Sea — the Germans and the British and French try to outflank each other but end up with an unbroken line of trenches along the whole Western Front

1915

- April: Italy signs the Treaty of London and agrees to join the war on the Allied side.
- September: The Russian Tsar, Nicholas II, takes sole command of the Russian army
- October: Bulgaria enters the war on Germany's side
- October–November: Austria-Hungary crushes Serbia

1916

- February 21th: Britain introduces conscription; the Germans attack at Verdun
- May 31th : The British and German fleets fight the indecisive Battle of Jutland off the coast of Denmark
- 1 July: The Allies attack the Germans on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme

- September: The British use tanks for the first time, in the Battle of the Somme
- December: David Lloyd George becomes the British Prime Minister

1917

- January: The French General Nivelle launches his disastrous offensive
- February: The Russian Revolution overthrows Tsar Nicholas II
- November: The British launch the first massed tank attack, against the Germans, at the Battle of Cambrai
- December: The British take Jerusalem from the Turks

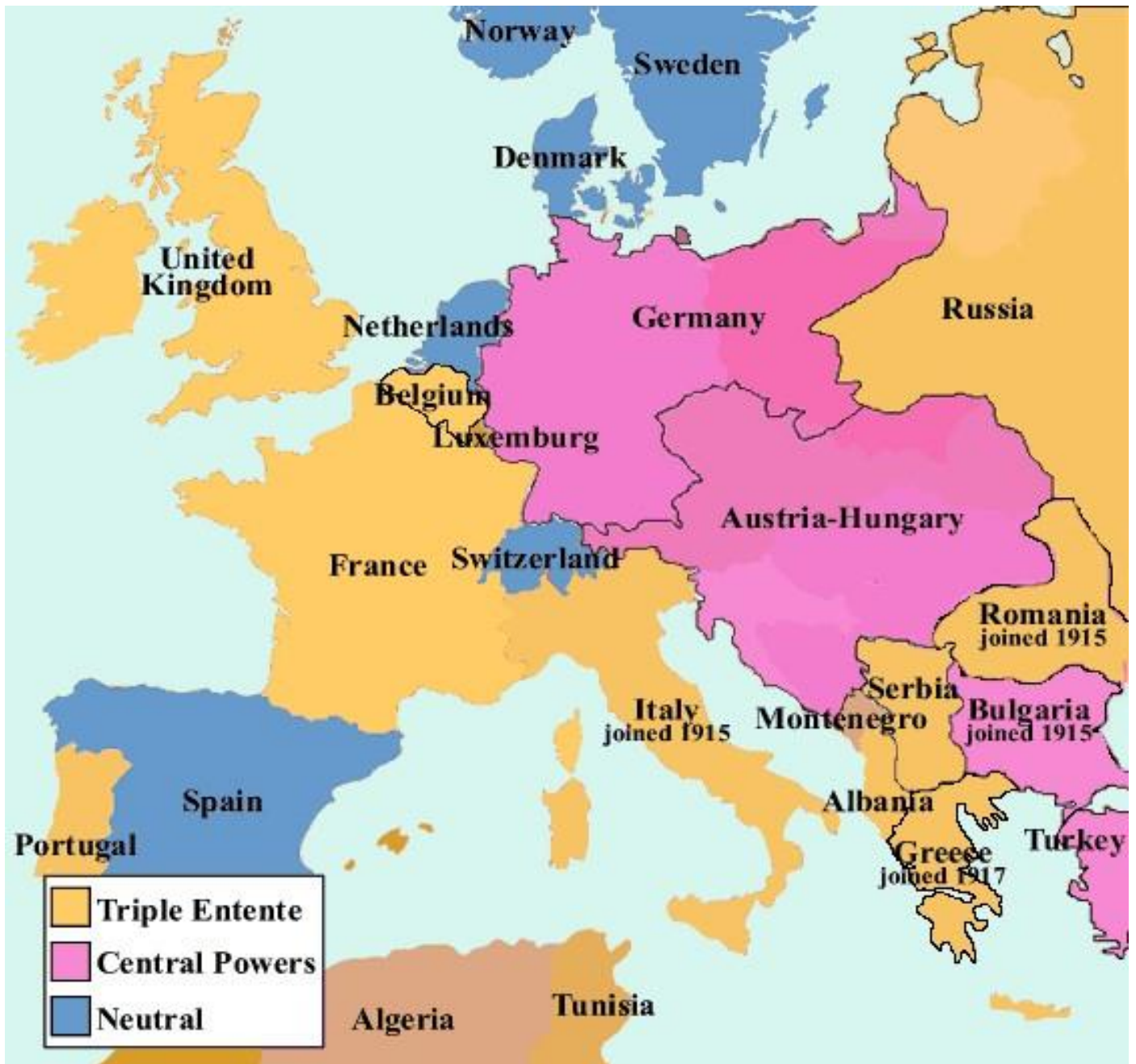
1918

- March: The German Spring Offensive (The Kaiser Battle) begins; the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk confirms Russian withdrawal from the war
- July: The German advance towards Paris is stopped at the River Marne
- August: The British attack at Amiens and push the Germans back to the Hindenburg Line
- September: French and American attacks on German positions take place in the Meuse-Argonne region
- October: The Italians attack the Austro-Hungarians successfully at Vittorio Veneto; the British defeat the Turks at the Battle of Megiddo and conquer Palestine
- November: The German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, abdicates; an armistice is agreed between the Germans and the Allied commander, Marshal Foch

1919

- January: The Paris Peace Conference opens
- 28 June: Germany signs the Treaty of Versailles

Map during World War I



Allied Powers

World War I was fought between two major alliances of countries: the Allied Powers and the Central Powers. The Allied Powers were largely formed as a defense against the aggression of Germany and the Central Powers. They were also known as the Entente Powers because they began as an alliance between France, Britain, and Russia called the Triple Entente.

Countries

France - Germany declared war on France on August 3, 1914. France had been preparing for war after Germany and Russia went to war. The majority of the fighting along the Western Front took place inside of France.

Britain - Britain entered the war when Germany invaded Belgium. They declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914. British troops joined French troops on the Western Front to stop the advance of Germany across Western Europe.

Russia - The Russian Empire was an early entry into the war. Germany declared war on Russia on July 31, 1914. They expected that Russia would defend Serbia against the invasion of Serbia by Germany's ally Austria-Hungary. The Russian Empire also included Poland and Finland. After the Russian Revolution, Russia left the Allied Powers and signed a peace treaty with Germany on March 3, 1918.

United States - The United States tried to remain neutral during the war. However, it entered the war on the side of the Allied Powers on April 6, 1917 when it declared war on Germany. Around 4,355,000 American troops were mobilized during the war with around 116,000 losing their lives.

Other Allied countries included Japan, Italy, Belgium, Brazil, Greece, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia.

Central Powers

World War I was fought between two major alliances of countries: the Allied Powers and the Central Powers. The Central Powers began as an alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary. Later the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria became part of the Central Powers

Countries

Germany - Germany had the largest army and was the primary leader of the Central Powers. Germany's military strategy at the start of the war was called the Schlieffen Plan. This plan called for the quick takeover of France and Western Europe. Then Germany could concentrate its efforts on Eastern Europe and Russia.

Austria-Hungary - World War I essentially began when Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated. Austria-Hungary blamed the assassination on Serbia and subsequently invaded Serbia setting off a chain of events that resulted in the war.

Ottoman Empire - The Ottoman Empire had strong economic ties to Germany and signed a military alliance with Germany in 1914. The entrance into the war led to the eventual downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the country of Turkey in 1923.

Bulgaria - Bulgaria was the last major country to join the war on the side of the Central Powers in 1915. Bulgaria claimed land held by Serbia and was eager to invade Serbia as part of the war.

CONTENT

World War I (WW1) also known as the First World War, was a global war centered in Europe that began on 28th July 1914 and lasted until 11th November 1918. The war lasted exactly four years, three months, and 14 days. Before World War II began in 1939, World War I was called the Great War, the World War, or the War to End all Wars. 135 countries took part in World War I, and more than 15 million people died. See the fact file below for more information about World War I.

World War 1 was a military conflict lasting from 1914 to 1918 which involved nearly all the biggest powers of the world. It involved two opposing alliances — the Allies and the Central Powers. The countries of the Allies included Russia, France, British Empire, Italy, United States, Japan, Rumania, Serbia, Belgium, Greece, Portugal and Montenegro. The countries of the Central Powers included Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria.

World War 1 was triggered on 28 June 1914 by the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his pregnant wife Sophie. Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was the nephew of Emperor Franz Josef and heir to the throne of Austria and Hungary. The assassination was planned by a Serbian terrorist group, called The Black Hand and the man who shot Franz Ferdinand and his wife was a Bosnian revolutionary named Gavrilo Princip.

A primary cause of WW1 was a difference over foreign policy. Although the assassination of Franz Ferdinand triggered WW1, that was only the immediate cause. Differences over foreign policy between the major world powers was the underlying cause of the war.

WW1 had many causes:

- A tangle of alliances made between countries, to maintain a balance power in Europe, which brought about the scale of the conflict.
- The Bosnian Crisis where Austria-Hungary took over the former Turkish province of Bosnia in 1909 angering Serbia.
- Countries were building their military forces, arms and battleships.
- Countries wanted to regain lost territories from previous conflicts and build empires.
- The Moroccan Crisis where Germans were protesting in 1911 against the French possession of Morocco.

World War I was known by several different names. Other names for World War 1 include

'The War to End All Wars', The War of the Nations, WW1 and 'The Great War'.

The Americans joined World War 1 after 128 Americans were killed by a German submarine. In 1915, the British passenger ship Lusitania was sunk by a German submarine. In all, 1,195 passengers, including 128 Americans, lost their lives. Americans were outraged and put pressure on the U.S. government to enter the war. President Woodrow Wilson wanted a peaceful end to the war, but in 1917, when the Germans announced that their submarines would sink any ship that approached Britain, Wilson declared that America would enter the war and restore peace to Europe. The United States entered the war on April 6, 1917.

8 million soldiers died in WW1 and 21 million were injured. 65 million troops were mobilized during the war, 8 million troops died and 21 million troops were wounded. 58,000 British soldiers were lost on the first day at the Battle of the Somme. Chemical weapons were first used in World War I. The chemical was mustard gas.

The United States only spent seven and a half months in actual combat. The U.S. was in the war in actual combat for only seven and a half months during which time 116,000 were killed and 204,000 were wounded. In the Battle of Verdun in 1916, there were over a million casualties in ten months.

By 1918, German citizens were striking and demonstrating against the war. The British navy blocked German ports, which meant that thousands of Germans were starving and the economy was collapsing. Then the German navy suffered a major mutiny. After German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated on November 9th, 1918, the leaders of both sides met at Compiègne, France. The peace armistice was signed on November 11th. By the end of the war four empires — the Russian empire, the Ottoman empire, the German empire, and the Austro-Hungarian empire had collapsed because of the war.

In 1919, The Treaty of Versailles officially ended the WW1. The Treaty required that Germany accept full responsibility for causing the war; make reparations to some Allied

countries; surrender some of its territory to surrounding countries; surrender its African colonies; and limit the size of its military. The Treaty also established the League of Nations to prevent future wars. The League of Nations helped Europe rebuild and fifty-three nations joined by 1923. But the U.S. Senate refused to let the United States join the League of Nations, and as a result, President Wilson, who had established the League, suffered a nervous collapse and spent the rest of his term as an invalid.

Germany joined the League of Nations in 1926, but many Germans were very resentful of the Treaty of Versailles. Germany and Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933. Italy withdrew three years later. The League of Nations was unable to stop German, Italian, and Japanese from expanding their power and taking over smaller countries. Many believe World War I never really ended, and that World War II never would have happened if not for WW1.

World War 1 facts: Why did it start?



A hundred years might seem like a very long time ago, but it isn't really. Your **great-great grandparents** were around then, and they would have lived through, and maybe even taken part in, this terrible conflict.

Lots of history books have been written on World War 1 facts and why it started. But it all boils down to the fact that Europe had split into two large families of countries. The **Allies** — the British Empire, France, Belgium, Russia and later, the USA — were in one family. And the **Central Powers** of Germany,

Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey were in the other. On **4 August 1914**, Germany invaded Belgium, and so, standing by its promise to stick up for Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany. The world was at war...

How long did World War 1 last?

When the First World War began that summer, most people thought it would be over by Christmas. Many believed that Britain was so powerful it could win very quickly. In fact, the First World War lasted **four terrible years**, not four months.

Life in the trenches in World War I



Soldiers in the trenches would spend their days doing chores, firing at the enemy, playing cards and writing letters home. Incredibly, nine out of ten men survived!

By the winter of 1915, the opposing sides had both dug long ditches called trenches which faced each other, in some places just **30m** apart! These lines of narrow trenches stretched from the Belgian coast to Switzerland, and were known as the **Western Front**. Over five million British soldiers spent time living in these muddy, miserable ditches, taking it in turns to be on the **Front Line** — the trench closest to the enemy.

Day-to-day life there was smelly and grim. There were millions of giant rats, overflowing latrines (loos) and terrible lice infestations. Not to mention the dead bodies. Every so often, soldiers on the Front Line would be instructed to leave their trench and venture into dangerous **No Man's Land** (the area between the sides) to try to push back the enemy.

A new type of war

These big guns were new to warfare. This war was very different from conflicts of the past. For the first time, powerful **new weapons** and **vehicles** were used — at sea, on land and in the air — resulting in many people being killed or wounded. In Britain, you could sometimes hear what sounded like thunder coming across the **English Channel** from **Europe**. In fact, it was the huge boom of big guns, called artillery, being fired on the Western Front. **75%** of all men who died in World War 1 were killed by **artillery**.

DID YOU KNOW?



The largest battle of the World War 1 — the **Battle of the Somme** — is known as one of the bloodiest battles in history. It was fought by the French and British against the Germans on both sides of the **River Somme** in **France**, and lasted for more than **five months**. Over a million men were killed or wounded, and it was the first time that a **tank** was used in combat.

Animals during World War I



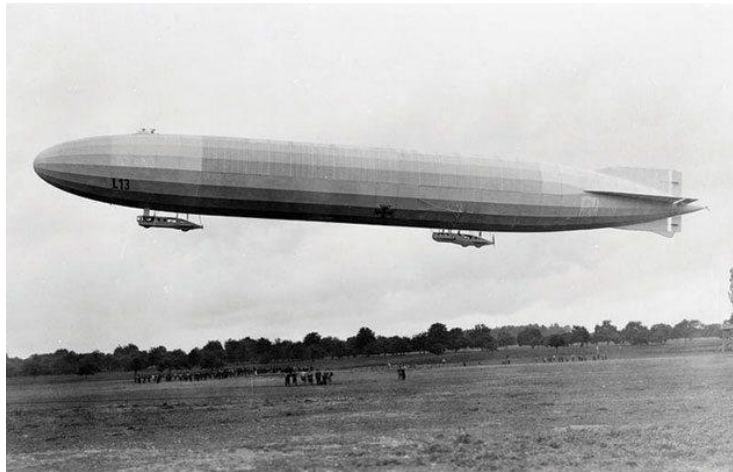
This brave Airedale terrier, called Jim, was trained to spot Zeppelins approaching the Kent coast.

Both on the battlefield and back at home, some incredible creatures helped to transport soldiers and goods — and save lives.

Almost a million horses were involved in the war. Soldiers on horseback were known as the **Cavalry** and horses also pulled some of the **gigantic guns, ambulances** and **supply wagons**. Gas from horse droppings could even be used to power lamps!

British families gave their **pet dogs** to the army so they could carry messages in special tubes on their collars (see above). Dogs were fast, difficult to shoot at, and they also caught rats! **Pet pigeons** were drafted in to carry messages over long distances, often carrying news from the Front Line back to Britain — Germans trained **hawks** to kill any carrier pigeons they saw. **Goldfish** did their bit too — after gas attacks, the gas masks were washed and rinsed. And if the rinsing water killed a goldfish that was placed in it, that meant the masks still had poison on them!

What was life like in Britain during World War 1?



Just because you weren't in the battle fields didn't mean you weren't in the danger zone. Back on the **Home Front**, **Britain** was under attack from all sides.

These enormous Zeppelin airships dropped bombs on ordinary people's homes.

It was the first time in history that Britain had come under threat from the **sky**. Gigantic German airships, known as **Zeppelins** (below), carried out 52 bombing raids on Britain during the war — killing more than 500. People were terrified of them! To avoid Zeppelin attacks, no lights could be used after sunset and loud noises were banned, too. Large scale bombing raids on British cities were carried out during the day by German biplanes called Gothas.

There were threats from the sea, too. Scarborough, Hartlepool and Whitby were the first seaside towns to be shelled by the German navy. **Battlecruisers**, ships with huge guns, launched a surprise attack on 16 December 1914 — 137 people were killed and 592 injured that night alone.

People from across the Britain were urged to fight.

But all these attacks on ordinary people only stirred up hatred against the enemy,

encouraging more British men to **volunteer** and fight for their country against “The Beast”. At the start of the war there were just 350,000 men in the British army. But by 1917, there were 3.5 million! Mind you, in 1916, conscription came in – a rule that said ALL healthy men aged 18 – 41 had to fight.

Women during World War I



Many women worked around the clock in dangerous weapons factories.

Women weren't allowed to join the army, but the war still completely changed their lives – in some ways, for the better!

Before the war, a woman's role was in the **home**. But with the men away at war, help was needed in the **workplace** — and so millions of women went to work in offices, factories, shops, transport and on farms. Many men were horrified by the idea of females working and, even worse, **wearing trousers!** But the women proved that they could do the work of men, and do it just as well. Without the women of Britain growing food and making weapons, the war could not have been won.



The Women's Land Army was made up of 40,000 women. They grew the food that kept people alive!

When the war was over and the soldiers came home, women were made to leave their new jobs and go back into the home. But not all of them wanted to do that anymore! Their experiences during the war eventually led to women getting more freedoms and rights — including the **right to vote!**

Children during World War I



Boy scouts played 'All-Clear' signals on bugles following air raids.

Did you know that **Boy Scouts** and **Girl Guides** had a vital role on the **Home Front**? Girl Guides would make basic **medical equipment** for wounded soldiers, like bandages,

swabs and slings. They also worked **growing vegetables** and **delivering milk**. Boy Scouts **collected eggs** for injured troops, **protected roads** and **railway lines**, and **delivered messages**.

Children were even paid to **collect conkers** which could be turned into explosives! They also **wrote letters** to soldiers and helped to **knit socks and scarves** for the troops in the winter months. Some boys **lied about their age** and went off to fight. The youngest of these, **Sidney Lewis**, was just 12 years old when he joined the army. He was sent home at the age of 13 after fighting in the **Battle of the Somme**, one of the war's bloodiest battles.

Children were also used to carry messages for **MI5**, the **British Secret Service**. The Boy Scouts, who were MI5's first choice for this work, apparently found it hard to keep sensitive secrets, so Britain's agents turned to the **Girl Guides**, instead!



Believe it or not, Winnie The Pooh has his roots in World War I Britain. At the time, a young bear cub called Winnie was one of the most popular attractions at London Zoo. He was a mascot belonging to the Canadian Army, who had been left there for safekeeping. The bear was seen by author A. A. Milne's son Christopher Robin, who renamed his own toy bear Winnie – and it became the inspiration for his dad's book, Winnie The Pooh!

Armistice Day

On the **11th hour** of the **11th day** of the **11th month** in **1918**, World War 1 officially ended when an agreement (known as an **armistice**) was signed by Germany and the Allies.

This date is known as **Armistice Day**, and is still commemorated each year when people wear **paper poppies** to remember those who fought and



died in conflicts around the world — the pretty red flowers were the **only things that grew** on the bloody battlefields of Western Europe.

Sadly, by the time World War 1 was over, more than **18 million** people had been killed worldwide. It was hoped it would be the war to end all wars. But this wasn't to be the case. Just 21 years later, World War 2 broke out.

Propaganda

One of the most common uses of propaganda posters was to persuade men to join the army, such as the famous poster of Lord Kitchener.

The government used posters to try to bring together people from different jobs and backgrounds to help fight the war.

The theme of people from every walk of life joining together to beat the enemy was very popular and made people feel patriotic.

By the end of 1914, over one million people had volunteered to join the army.

Dramatic depictions of events such as the sinking of the Lusitania (where 1,000 civilians died after a passenger ship was attacked by a German submarine in 1915) were used to motivate people to join the army.

Recruitment posters weren't just aimed at men — the government used them to recruit women to help with the war effort too.



Posters weren't just used to recruit people into joining the armed forces: before rationing was introduced, posters encouraged people to cut down on resources that were becoming harder to come by — like bread!

Posters encouraged people to collect hens' eggs to feed wounded soldiers.

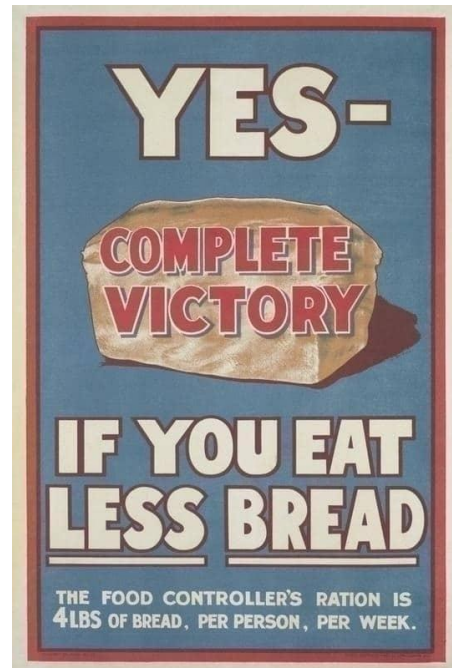
Both girls and boys helped with this job. Many homes kept chickens during the war if they had space outside.

A film from the Ministry of Information asked people to save the bones from their meat. The film said bones could be used to help make munitions and girls helped with the collection.

The Government needed to recruit lots of soldiers and wanted people to work together. So what the public thought about the war really mattered.

They tried hard to persuade people to think in a certain way. This is called propaganda.

Posters were printed that made the army look exciting. Other posters told men it was their duty to join and they would feel proud if they did.



Some posters even tried to make them feel guilty, saying their children would be embarrassed if their father had done nothing in the war!



Stories about bad things the Germans had done were also encouraged. The Government knew people would be angry and even frightened.

Everyone would want Britain to win the war and make the Germans pay for the dreadful things they were supposed to have done.

During World War One, propaganda was employed on a global scale.

Unlike previous wars, this was the first total war in which whole nations and not just professional armies were locked

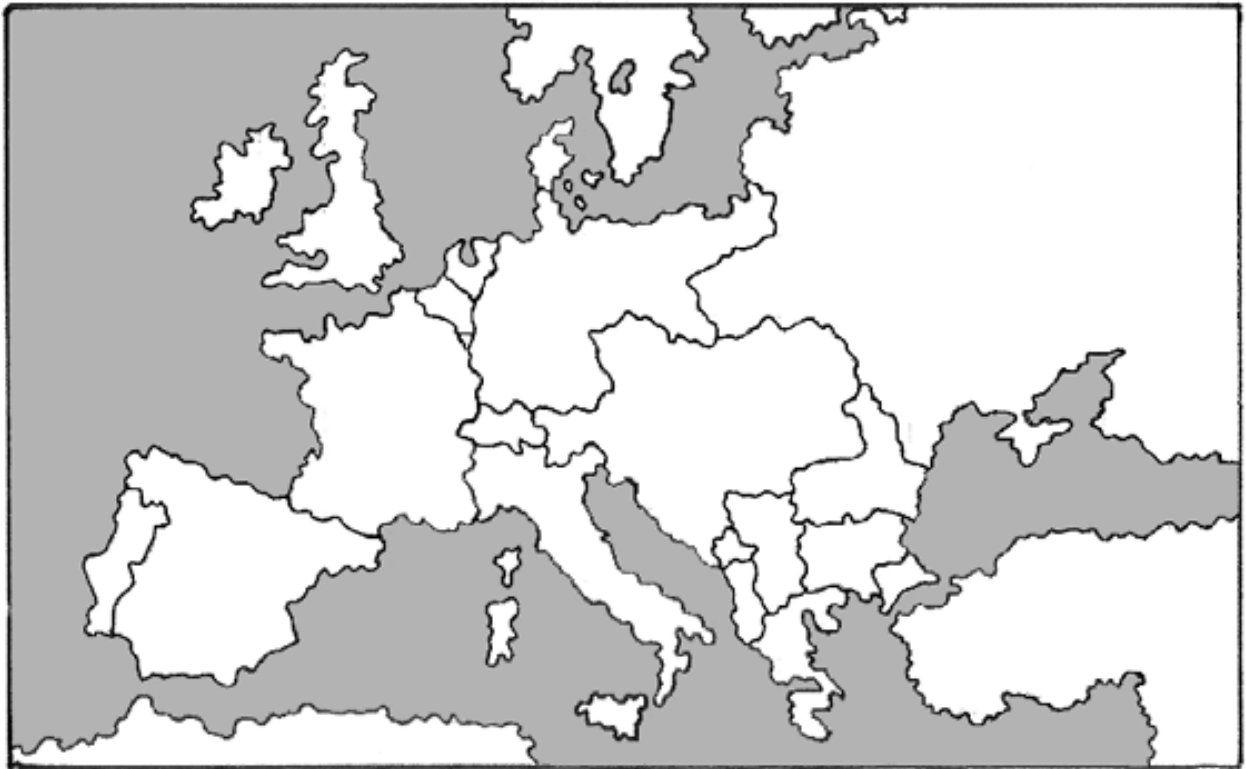
in mortal combat.

This and subsequent modern wars required propaganda to mobilize hatred against the enemy; to convince the population of the justness of the cause; to enlist the active support and cooperation of neutral countries, and to strengthen the support of allies.

Activities

1) Complete the map according to the lesson showing the blocks during the war.

Europe in 1914



2) Causes of the war

1) What three European countries signed an alliance called the Triple Entente?

- Germany, Russia, Italy
- Italy, Austria, Poland
- France, Britain, Russia
- France, Spain, Netherlands
- Austria, Germany, Italy

2) What is it called when a country expands its influence and power into a large empire?

- Despotism
- Communism
- Socialism
- Imperialism
- Absolutism

3) Which two countries had become wealthy through creating vast worldwide empires?

- Britain and France
- Germany and France
- Russia and Britain
- Russia and Germany
- Germany and Britain

4) What single event triggered the start of World War I?

- The bombing of Pearl Harbor
- The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand
- Germany invaded Poland
- The alliance formed between Germany and Austria
- The death of the Tsar of Russia

5) Who was Archduke Ferdinand?

- The leader of Germany's armed forces
- The future Tsar of Russia
- The heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary
- The British ambassador to Germany
- The leader of the French government

6) What country declared war on Serbia at the very start of World War I?

- Germany
- Russia
- Italy
- France
- Austria-Hungary

7) Why do some historians believe that Germany wanted to start World War I?

- Germany felt that the war was going to happen
- Germany felt surrounded by enemies
- Germany felt that the sooner the war began, the better chance they had
- All of the above
- None of the above

8) Which side was the United States on at the start of the war?

- Germany and Austria
- Britain and France
- The United States was neutral at the start of the war
- All of the above

9) Which of the following was a cause that contributed to the start of World War I?

- Imperialism
- Secret Alliances
- Politics
- National pride
- All of the above

10) World War I was mostly fought between the countries of what continent?

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- North America
- South America

3) Propaganda in 1916 - Explore what life was like as a child in 1916!

Create a poster that could be used in the war. Explain the aim and include information about it.



- 4) Explain the role of children and women during the war.
- 5) Make a timeline full of interesting facts including all the items listed in the writtentimeline. You can add pictures, drawings, etc.



HISTORY
The First
World War
by Jillian Powell



Collins
Big Cat
Progress

A black and white photograph showing the silhouettes of three soldiers walking across a battlefield. They are carrying large packs and rifles. The background is a cloudy sky. In the distance, a structure resembling a pillbox or bunker is visible on the right.

The First World War

Jillian Powell

The First World War

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Written by Jillian Powell

Collins

The war begins

It was June 1914. **Archduke** Franz Ferdinand was next in line to the throne of Austria-Hungary. When he and his wife were visiting Bosnia, a gunman shot them dead. The gunman wanted Bosnia to join with Serbia, instead of being ruled by Austria-Hungary.



This photograph shows Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife minutes before they were shot.

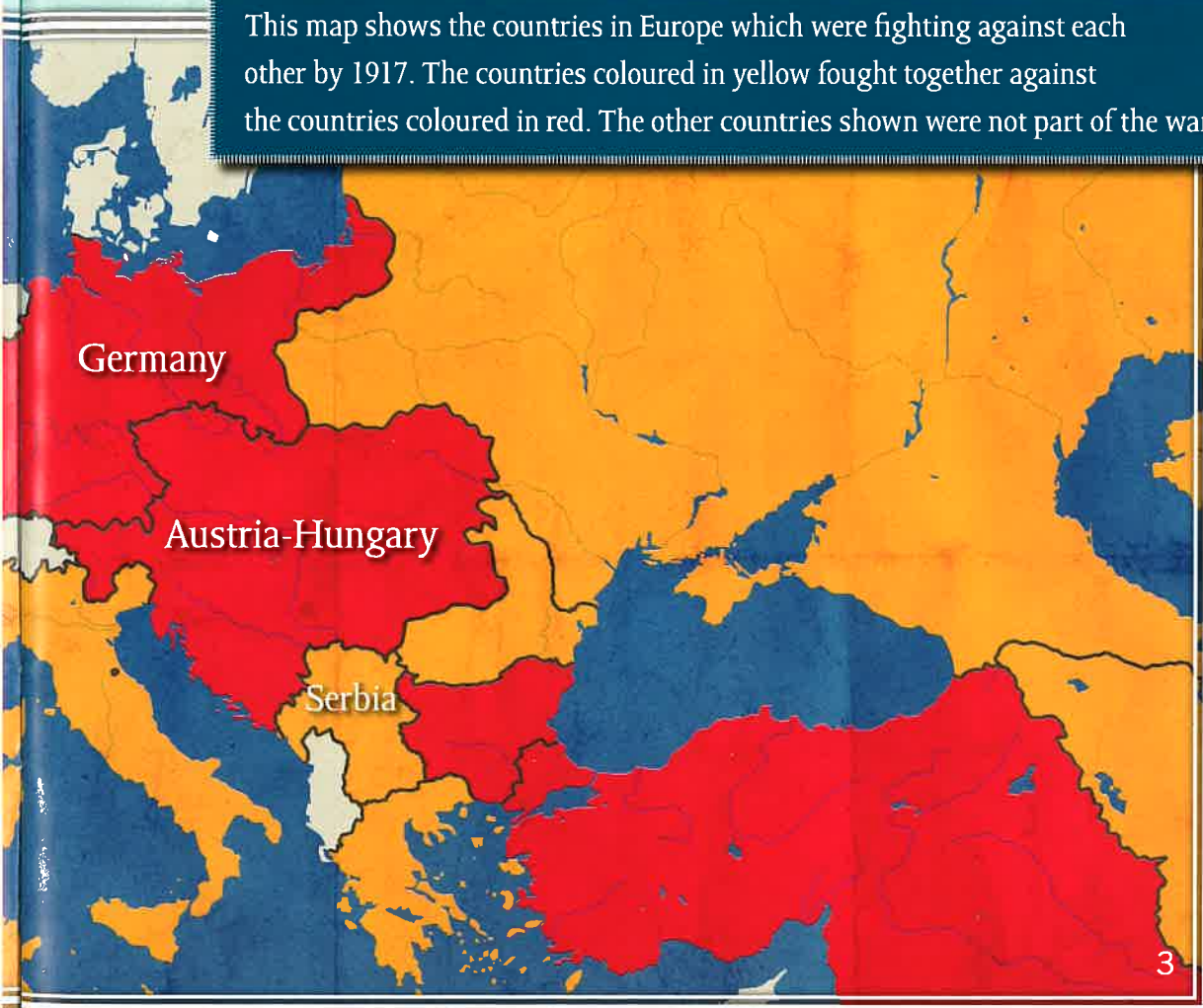


The First World War lasted from 1914 to 1918. It killed around 23 million people and injured millions more.

Britain went to war with Germany on 4 August 1914, after Germany sent troops to invade France through Belgium, which was not at war.

Many men joined up to fight for Britain. The war was fought on land, in the air and at sea.

This map shows the countries in Europe which were fighting against each other by 1917. The countries coloured in yellow fought together against the countries coloured in red. The other countries shown were not part of the war.



The call to war

In the first few months after Britain went to war, more than 750,000 men joined the army. Many saw the war as a great adventure and joined up with friends from their towns, factories or football teams.

The new soldiers went to training camps for months of fitness and weapons training. All over Britain, people came out to watch them on parade before they were sent by special trains and troop ships to the battlegrounds.



4

soldiers practising bayonet fighting



soldiers in Southampton
marching to a troop ship

By 1916, more soldiers were needed because fewer men were **volunteering**, so the government passed a law to make all young and middle-aged men fight for Britain. Not all people agreed with this law, which was called conscription. Some men were punished for refusing to fight.

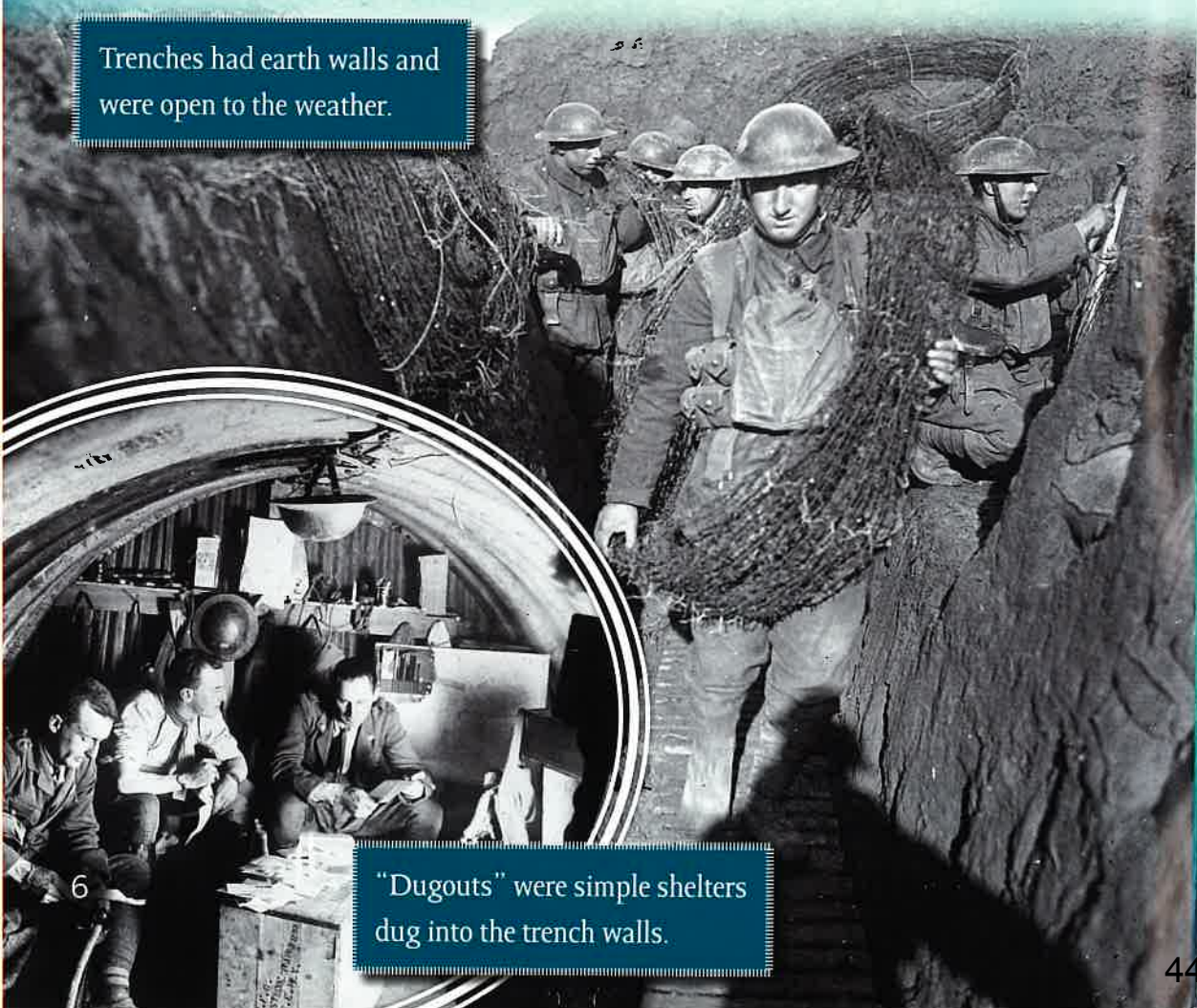
The battlegrounds

On land, the war was fought between soldiers in trenches.

Trenches were deep ditches dug to protect soldiers from the dangers of the open battlefield. Barbed wire was put in front of the trenches to keep enemy soldiers out.

But men were not safe in the trenches either. They were targets for the guns and bombs of the enemy.

Trenches had earth walls and were open to the weather.



"Dugouts" were simple shelters dug into the trench walls.



To take land from the enemy, soldiers had to leave their trenches by climbing “over the top” and crossing the land between the trenches. They called this “No Man’s Land”. Once in the open, it was easier for the enemy to shoot at them or blow them up with **shells**.

Trench life

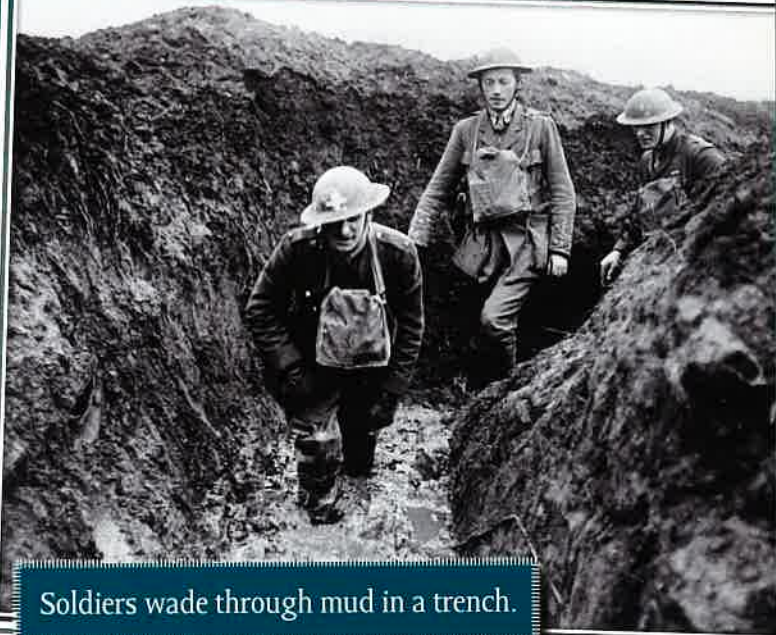
Life in the trenches was hard. There was constant danger and noise from shells and gunfire. Soldiers took turns to man the trenches for a few days at a time.

They slept in dugout shelters or on steps cut into the walls. They lived mostly on tinned food, like corned beef, and dry biscuits because it was hard to get and cook fresh food.



In winter it was often below freezing, and rain turned the land to mud and the trenches flooded. The men were sometimes up to their waists in water and had to live in wet clothes until they dried out.

Early in the war, many men in the trenches suffered from “trench foot”, which made their feet red, swollen and painful. It was caused by wearing boots that stayed damp in the cold and mud. As the war went on, soldiers learnt to rub their feet with whale grease and change their socks to prevent trench foot.



Soldiers waded through mud in a trench.



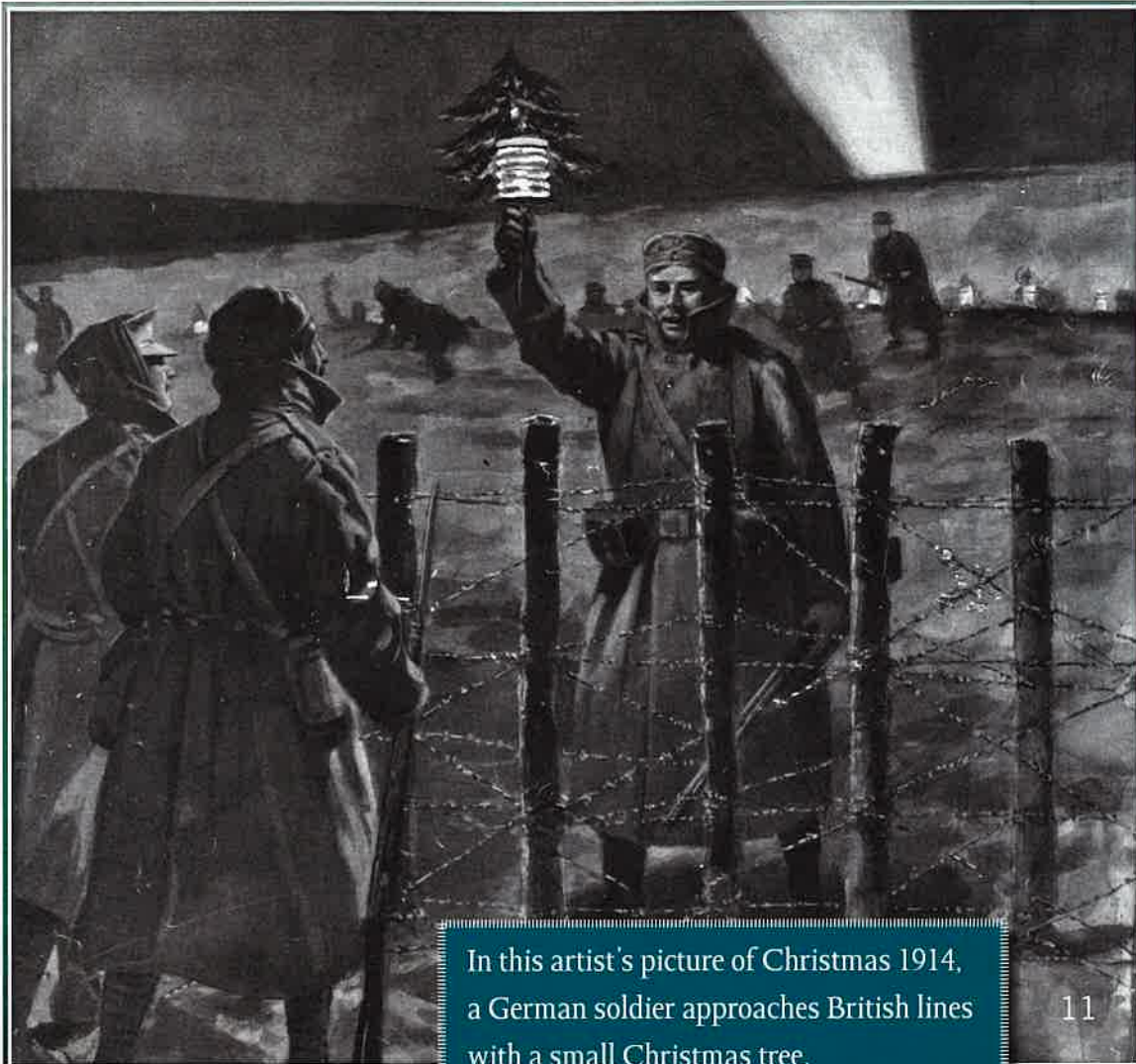
A medical officer inspects soldiers' feet.

Keeping spirits up

When they were not in the trenches, the soldiers had time to rest behind the fighting lines. Some took up hobbies like drawing and woodcarving. They sang songs, played cards, wrote home and visited cafés. They looked forward to getting letters and parcels of food from their families. Sometimes the **Red Cross** also sent the soldiers extra supplies.



When the first Christmas of the war came, small groups of British and German soldiers stopped fighting and crossed to enemy trenches to swap gifts and play football. There were no orders telling soldiers to do this – the men just decided to do it themselves. But it was now clear the war wouldn't be a short one, and some army **generals** worried that this could weaken their soldiers' will to fight.



In this artist's picture of Christmas 1914, a German soldier approaches British lines with a small Christmas tree.

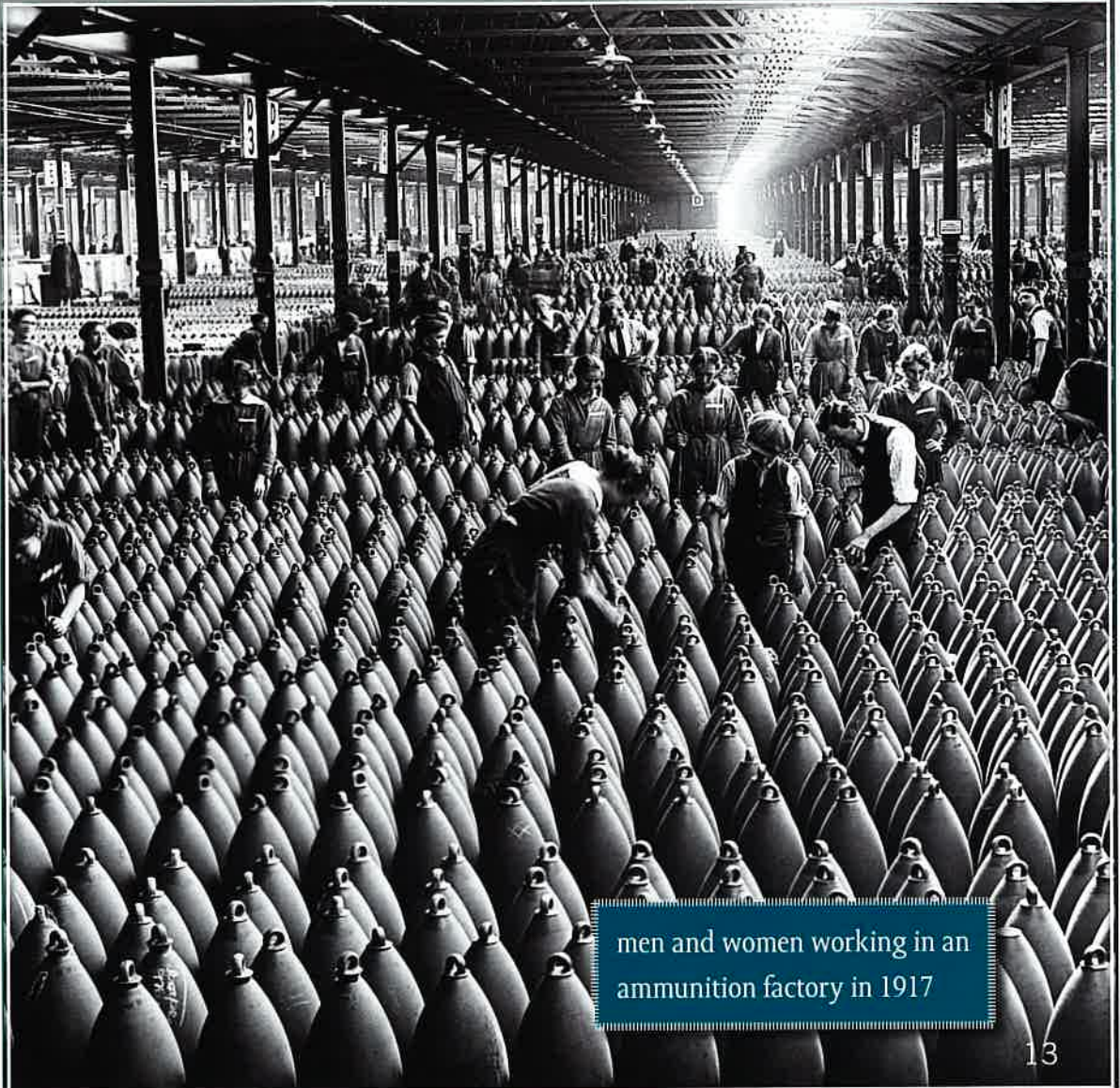
Weapons

Trench warfare led to new weapons and ways of fighting. From inside the trenches men fired shells from **mortars** and bullets from machine guns at their enemy. Behind the trench lines, **artillery** guns fired shells across large distances. Some shells were packed with explosives to destroy trenches and enemy guns, killing and injuring anyone in range. Other shells exploded and released deadly metal pieces called shrapnel. Soldiers wore steel helmets to protect their heads from shrapnel.

When soldiers reached an enemy trench on foot, they attacked with hand grenades, knives, clubs and bayonets.



British soldiers and the **Allies** used so many shells and bullets that a special government department was set up to make sure that they had enough weapons and **ammunition** to keep fighting. New factories were opened and others were taken over to make guns, shells, planes and tanks.



men and women working in an ammunition factory in 1917

Planes, tanks and submarines

Planes were widely used by both sides in the war. In the early years of the war, pilots flew over enemy lines to map and photograph enemy trenches, weapons stores and gun positions. This meant guns on the ground could be aimed at enemy targets.

As the war went on, planes were also used to attack the enemy by firing machine guns and dropping bombs. Midair gunfights often broke out between Allied and German planes. Flying was still a very new skill, and was often very dangerous.



The British first began using tanks in 1916 to try to break through enemy defences.

The tanks were covered in armour and had rolling tracks which could travel over broken ground, but they moved slowly and often broke down.



At sea, **submarines** attacked enemy ships, and British and German ships formed **blockades** to cut off important supplies to each other's countries.



Poison gas

Both sides looked for new weapons to win the war. The French and Germans had begun trying out gas as a weapon in the first year of the war.

By 1916, both sides were firing shells that released poison gas where they landed. When men breathed the gas in, it choked them, killing some and damaging the lungs of others. Gas masks were sent to protect the soldiers in the trenches.



This picture shows German troops in a poison gas cloud. The soldiers are wearing gas masks.

In 1917, the Germans began using mustard gas which soldiers feared because they could not see or smell it. It could make them sick hours after they had breathed it in, burning their skin, eyes, and lungs. It could kill soldiers several days or even weeks after contact with it, or make its victims go blind.

Soldiers rang bells or banged on tin pans to warn of gas attacks to give men time to put their masks on.



Battlefield hospitals

Millions of men were wounded during attacks. Hospitals were set up in tents and in empty houses or churches near to the trenches to give injured soldiers urgent treatment. Motor ambulances and wagons pulled by horses carried the wounded to the hospitals.

If men were fit to fight again after their treatment, they were sent back. But if they were too sick or wounded to carry on, they were sent home for more treatment.





Soldiers carry a wounded man over the top of a trench.

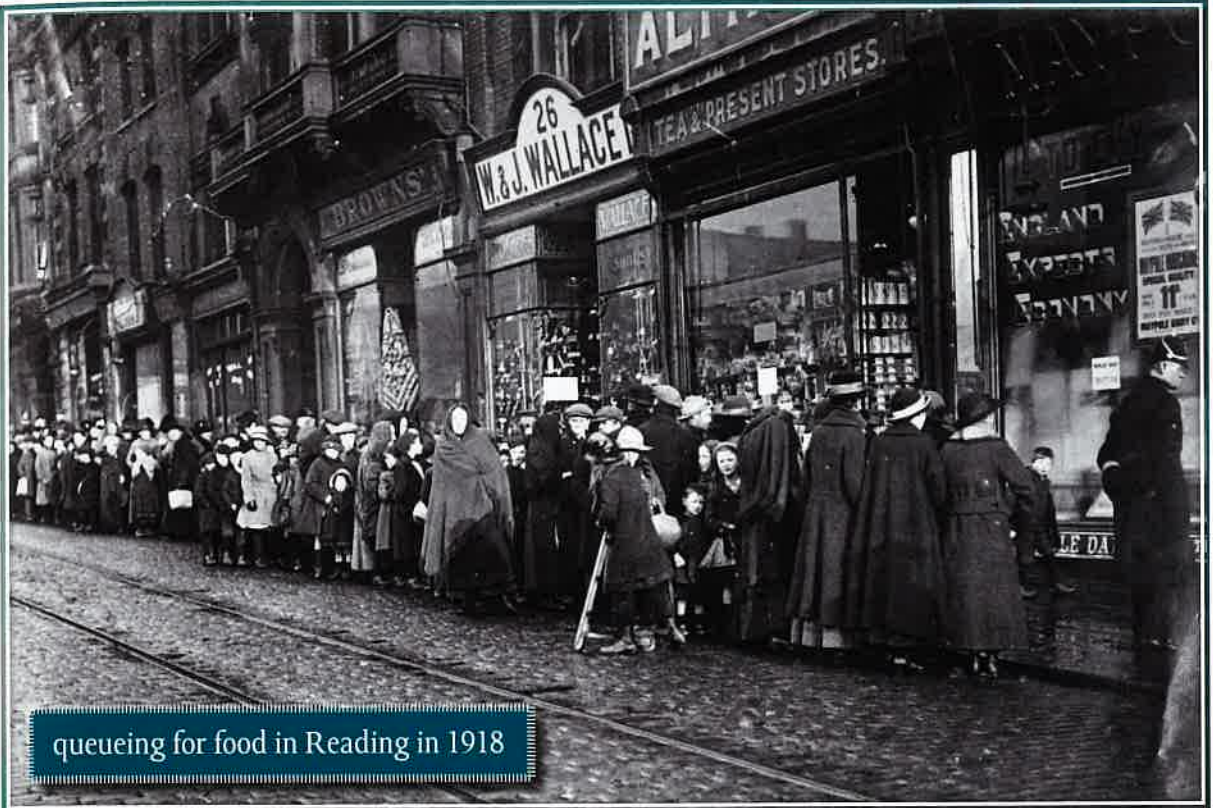
Some men suffered from “shell shock”. This was an illness that doctors only began to understand as the war went on. It could be brought on by shocking events, facing extreme danger for a long time, or the constant noise of guns and shelling. Soldiers with shell shock suffered extreme panic attacks and nightmares, which made them unable to fight.

The home front

At home, many people wanted to help the **war effort**. Some gave money or sold flags to raise funds to help the wounded. Others packed food parcels and knitted socks for the troops. People were keen to hear news of the war, but because there was no radio or television, they read newspapers and went to cinemas to find out what was happening.



These nurses are selling paper flags, worn like badges, to raise money for the war.



queueing for food in Reading in 1918

In Britain, the war took men and horses away from farms, and the German submarine blockade at sea made it harder for food from other countries to arrive by ship. To make sure that people got enough to eat, the government started rationing for the first time in 1918.

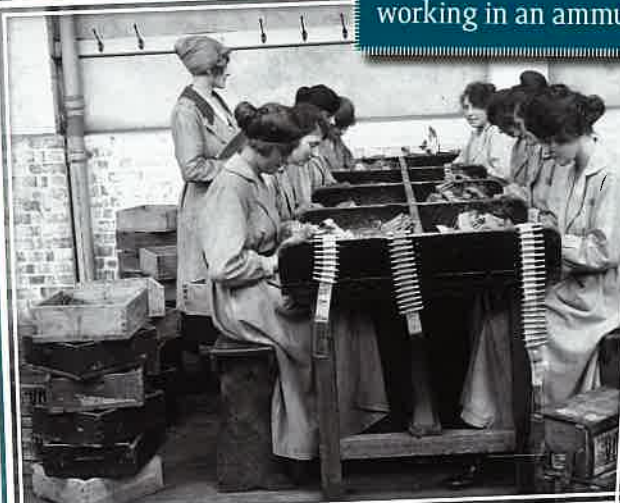
Rationing meant that people had to use coupons to buy their share of sugar, meat, butter and cheese each week.

During the war, Germany used **airships** and bomber planes to attack Britain. Allied planes also bombed Germany. This was done to try to destroy weapons factories and to make ordinary people feel afraid.

Women and children in wartime

With many men away fighting, women took over jobs in transport, farming and factories that were usually done by men. Some women joined women's units in the armed forces. They looked after army trucks or did kitchen, office and telephone work. Others joined medical services like the Red Cross, as nurses.

working in an ammunition factory



working on a farm



fixing a car wheel



Children helped with the war effort too by driving milk carts, growing food on allotments and working in shops and on farms.

With their fathers away, many children also had to do more at home, such as looking after younger brothers and sisters while their mothers worked. Some older children wanted to do even more and lied about their age to join the army.

The First World War changed many children's lives forever when their fathers or elder brothers were killed.



Schoolboys dig up potatoes planted in their school playing field.

The end of the war

In 1916, the Allies began a “big push” to attack German trenches in the Somme valley in France to try to end the war. The Battle of the Somme lasted for four months and there were over a million **casualties**, but neither side won.

The Allies tried again to end the war with a huge battle at Ypres in Belgium, during the summer of 1917. Heavy rain turned the land to mud, and both sides were worn down again without a victory.



But by then, things had begun to change. At sea, German submarines had been attacking Allied ships, even those carrying **civilians**. In 1915 they had sunk the passenger ship, the *Lusitania*. Hundreds of people, including many Americans, drowned. This was one of the events that led the USA to join the war against Germany in 1917.

In 1918, German forces began a series of huge attacks on the Allied troops in France and Belgium. They gained land but could not break through completely. The Allies fought to push the German army back, and were finally able to win the war.

American troops marching in France in 1918

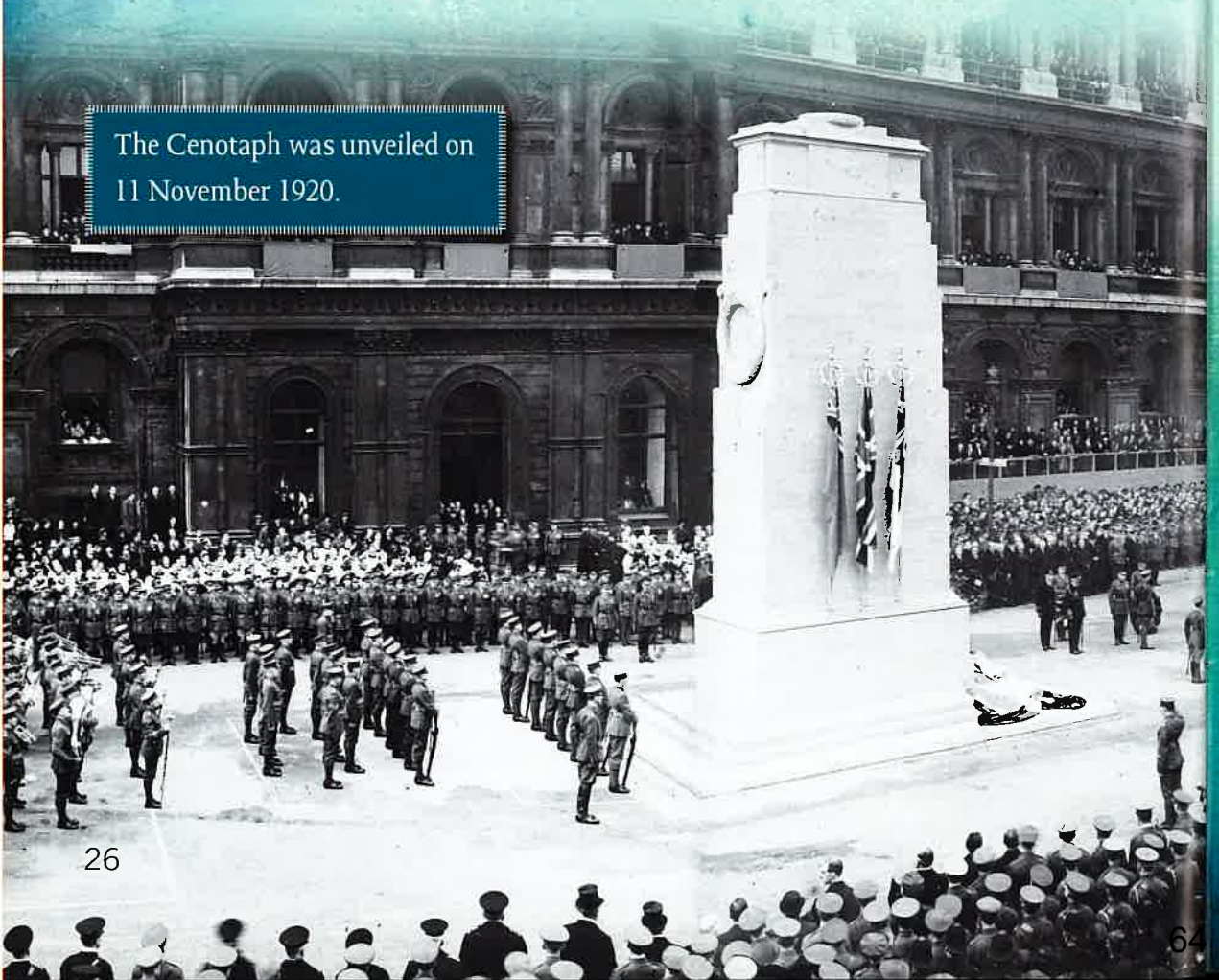


Peace and remembrance

The war ended in 1918, at 11:00 a.m. on 11 November when the fighting stopped. This date is now called **Armistice Day**.


The countries that had been fighting met to make peace. People felt that it was important to remember the war and those who had died. In London, the **Cenotaph** was built and the tomb of the Unknown Warrior was placed in Westminster Abbey to remember the soldiers whose bodies had never been found.

The Cenotaph was unveiled on
11 November 1920.





People began selling poppies on Armistice Day each year to raise funds for wounded soldiers. Poppies became a symbol for fallen soldiers because red poppies grew on the battlefields in France and Belgium. Today, when we wear a poppy on 11 November, we remember them, and the men and women who have died in wars since.



Poppies like this one were sold in Britain from 1921.

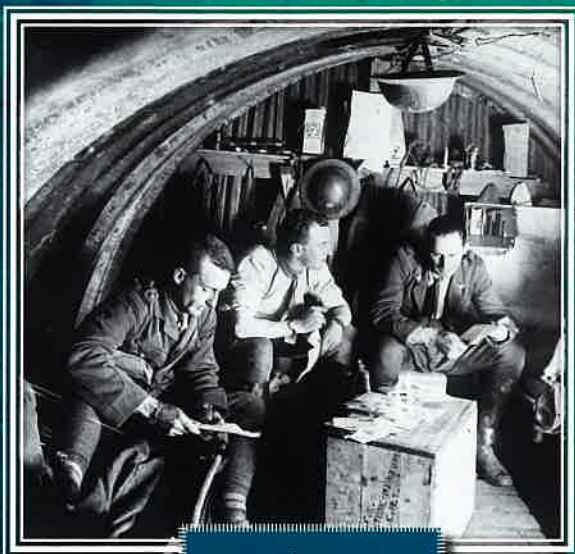
Glossary

airships	aircraft like huge balloons with engines, that can be steered
Allies	the countries which fought together against Germany
ammunition	objects or explosive materials that are fired from weapons
Archduke	a high-ranking nobleman
armistice	an agreement to end a war
artillery	heavy guns like cannons
bayonet	a long knife that can be fixed to the end of a gun
blockade	using ships and submarines to stop ships using a port
casualties	soldiers injured, killed, missing or taken prisoner
Cenotaph	a memorial in London built to honour those killed in war
civilians	people who were not in the army, navy or air force
generals	army leaders
mortars	weapons that fire explosive ammunition
Red Cross	a charity that cares for people affected by wars and disasters
shells	bombs made by filling steel cases with explosive materials
submarines	sea craft that can travel both on and under water
volunteering	offering to do something without being made to
war effort	joining together to try and win the war

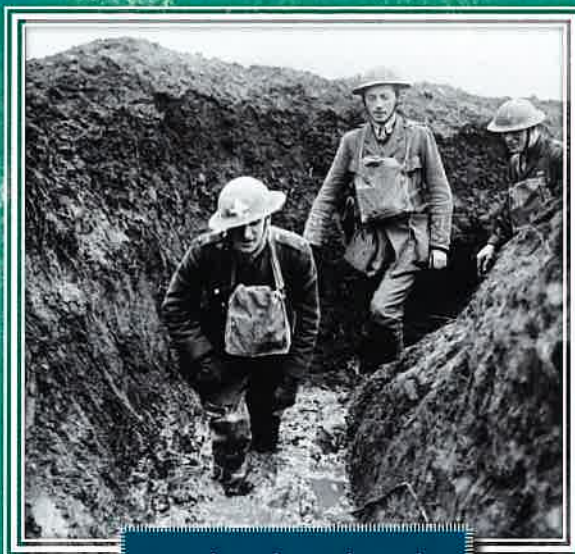
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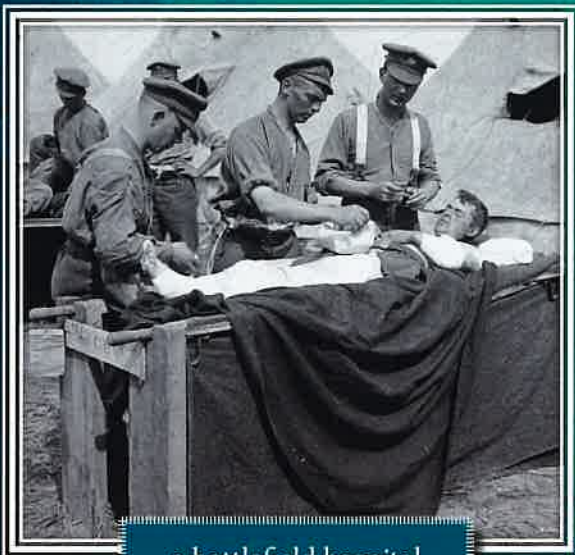
War in the trenches



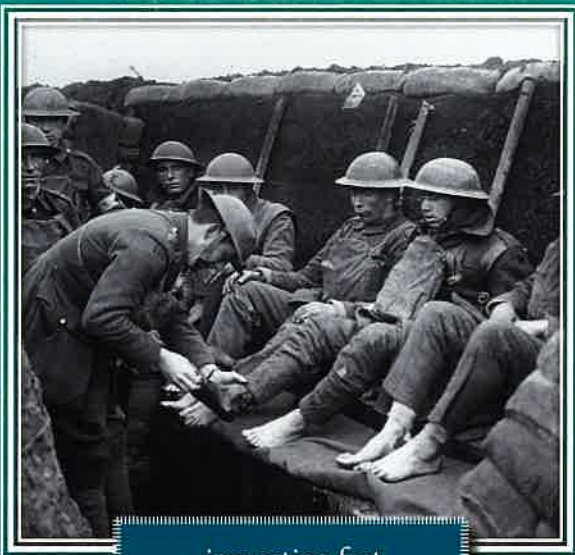
a dugout



wading through mud

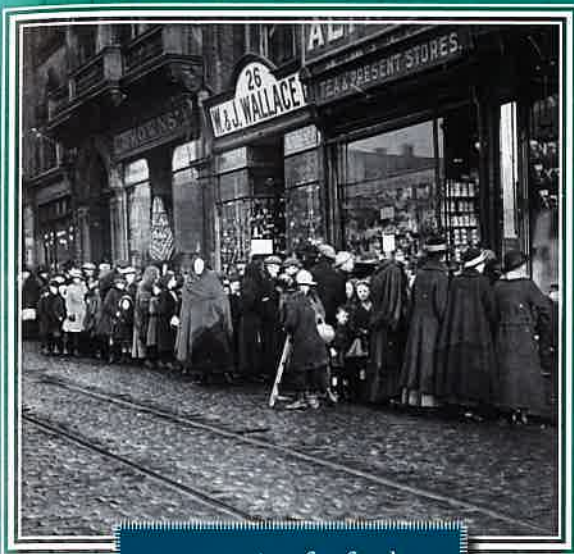


a battlefield hospital

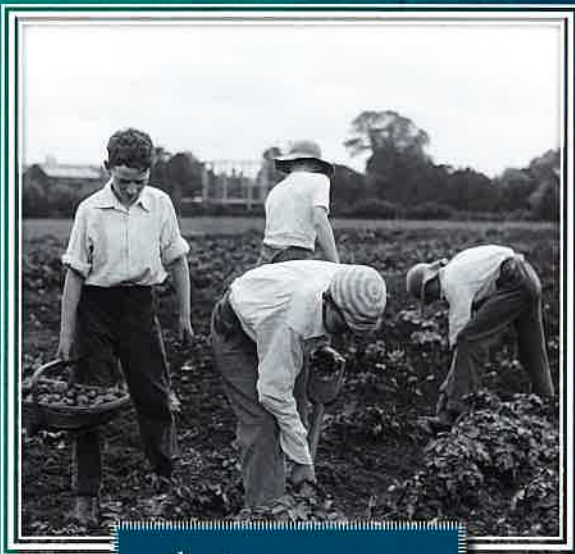


inspecting feet

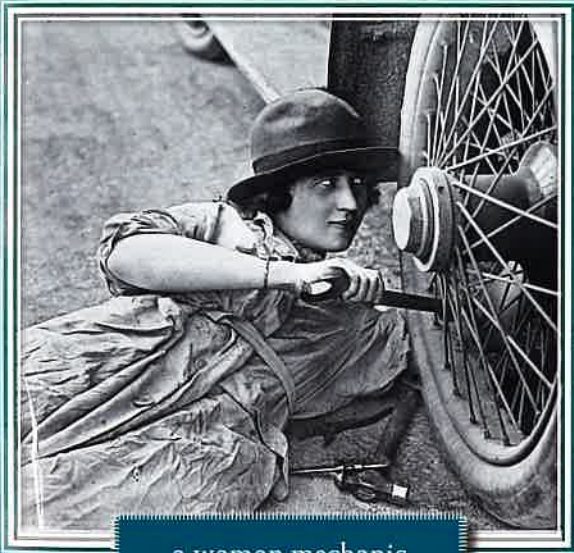
War at home



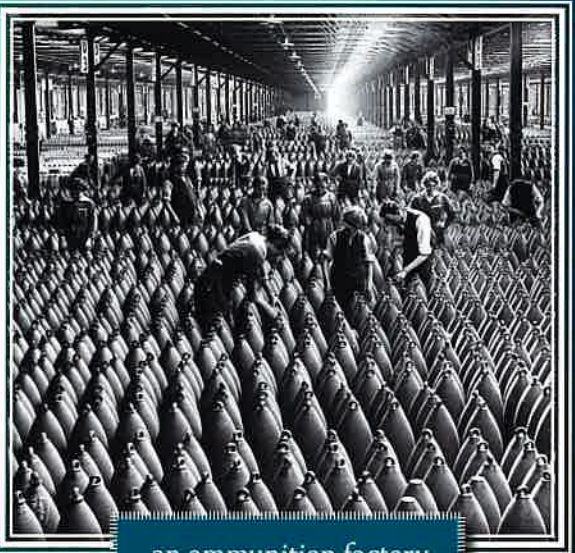
queuing for food



digging up potatoes



a woman mechanic



an ammunition factory



LITERATURE



LITERATURE

Victorian

Ghost Stories

Usborne

Usborne Classics Retold

A dark, atmospheric illustration of a ghostly figure with a pale, skeletal face and long, dark hair, set against a deep purple and blue background with misty, ethereal light effects.

VICTORIAN GHOST STORIES

Retold by Mike Stocks



ABOUT VICTORIAN GHOST STORIES

The original versions of the stories in this book were written in the second half of the 19th century, during the reign of Queen Victoria. Some first appeared in books, but most were published in the many magazines that began appearing at this time. Ghost stories became hugely popular. There were many reasons for this.

The 19th century saw an immense growth in the study and application of science and technology all over the western world, but particularly in the United Kingdom. During the Victorian era, there were enormous advances in building, public transportation (the main railway system dates from this period) and public health (this was when the first large hospitals were built). It was a time when many people believed that science and knowledge would eventually answer all the world's questions and solve all its problems. Dr. Simson in "The Open Door" is one of these people.

But not everybody had Dr. Simson's supreme faith in science. Many people were well aware of the dreadful conditions suffered by the poor in large cities, where problems seemed to get worse rather

than better as the century wore on. As more people journeyed abroad, they saw famine and devastation in Africa and India; they also saw the horror of war. (This is the period when the first war photographs were published.) This led many people to question science and progress; some also began to question traditional religious beliefs as well. This was the first time that large numbers of people claimed to be atheists – not to believe in God – and many were punished for saying this in public. Even among people who still believed, there were disagreements about religious practice. (This period of history saw more new religious sects and alternative religions than any before it.)

This loss of old beliefs and the search for new ones partly explains the Victorian crazes for hypnotism, discovered at the beginning of the century by the physician Anton Mesmer; phrenology, the practice of feeling the bumps on a person's skull to learn about their personality; and spiritualism. Spiritualism was based on the belief that the dead could contact the living, and was popular throughout America and Europe in the 1850s. In *Victorian Ghost Stories*, dead beings make themselves known to the living – particularly when they have met horrible deaths. This idea is contained in both "A Fatal Promise" and in "The Four-fifteen Express". In "The Demon Dog" an animal returns from the grave to avenge its master. In "A Long-distance Call" a dead woman telephones her husband from beyond the grave, summoning him to join her. In this story in particular there is a

conflict between what the characters know rationally – that the telephone cannot be ringing because it has been disconnected – and what is actually happening to them. It is also about the fight between the world of modern technology and something much more sinister and primitive.

This idea that some things cannot be known or explained in rational terms has its roots in writing and painting from earlier in the century. Knowledgeable though they were about scientific developments, writers like Byron, Shelley and Wordsworth were interested above all in ideas, emotions and feelings, and their writings were partly a reaction to the restrictions of the scientific world. In the same way, some of the stories in this book go beyond the basic concept of hauntings and deal also with obsessions and strange, unexplained feelings. This in turn links to later developments in 19th-century thought, particularly in the theories of Sigmund Freud, who examined the workings of the human mind. This may be why these stories still have the power to scare and disturb – not only do they tell us about things we can't quite explain, but they also touch fears that lurk deep within each and every one of us.

THE DEMON DOG



It all started two years ago. I went to stay with my friend Kilmoyle in Ireland. Lily, my wife, was pregnant, and didn't want me to go. Knowing what I know now, I wish I never had.

It was at a party in London that I'd bumped into Kilmoyle, and he had immediately invited me over for a visit. He was a very grand friend, a lord, the owner of a castle with a huge estate, and I just couldn't resist the prospect of all that fishing and shooting. He also mentioned something about evicting a non-paying tenant from one of his cottages. It sounded like an adventure, and I could hardly remember the last time I'd had one of those. Lily, however, had a bad feeling about it from the beginning, having heard that Kilmoyle was an intolerant and harsh landlord.

"What have his tenants got to do with you, anyway?" she said. "Let him do his own dirty work."

But all I could think about were the plump fish in Kilmoyle's ponds, and the plumper grouse on his moors, and I wasn't disappointed when I arrived. We spent three whole days fishing and shooting.

On the fourth day, we began the eviction. The tenant was an old man. He had lived there most of his life, but hadn't paid a penny of rent in years.

"It's such a paltry sum that frankly, old chap, it's barely worth collecting," Kilmoyle admitted, "but I'll be blowed if I'm going to allow someone to make a fool of me."

Our plan was to give the old man twenty-four hours notice to leave or pay. If that didn't work, Kilmoyle explained, we would use "a more direct method."

It was a beautiful stone cottage, small and snug, sitting in the middle of the loveliest valley I'd ever

seen. As we came up to the side of the building, I saw the tenant through the window. He was relaxing by the hearth with a pipe in his mouth and a huge, brown dog at his feet. His weather-beaten face was as dark as teak, and his hair, snow-white, hung down to his shoulders. The room was dirty and in disarray, and it looked like the cottage was in urgent need of repair.

We knocked on the window and banged on the door, and Kilmoyle bellowed a few insults as well, but the old man didn't take the slightest bit of notice. He just sat there, calm and resolute, puffing on his pipe. Eventually Kilmoyle got bored, and thrust the eviction notice under the front door.

"You miserable scoundrel! I'll smoke you out like a rat if I have to!" he shouted angrily.

After that we went for a ride and did some more fishing, ending the day with a couple of bottles of champagne at dinner. Perhaps it was the champagne that prompted Kilmoyle to make his offer: he would give me the cottage rent-free for two years, on condition that I organized and paid for the necessary repairs. I accepted immediately. I didn't think it would cost much to make improvements and, once the baby had arrived, I thought Lily would like nothing better than to spend a couple of summers there.

The next day, feeling slightly the worse for wear because of the champagne, we rode over to the cottage. The old man was sitting in the same chair by the hearth, his pipe clenched between his teeth as

before. The dog was nowhere to be seen. Kilmoyle rapped briskly on the window.

"I say, you in there, come out at once! I won't be ignored any longer. I know you can hear me. This is your last warning."

In answer, the fellow picked up a shotgun at his feet and calmly aimed at us. We threw ourselves to the ground just before he emptied both barrels through the glass.

If I'd been feeling a bit uneasy about smoking this old man out of his cottage, I wasn't any more. We boarded up the other windows, working from the sides in case he fired again, plugged the gaps around the door with mud, and lit a big fire under the broken window. The wind was blowing in just the right direction, and very soon there was thick, acrid smoke billowing into the building.

In his place I wouldn't have lasted five minutes, but he must have been made of sterner stuff, enduring the smoke for nearly half an hour. Just as we were wondering whether we should put the fire out in case the smoke killed him, he kicked the door open and staggered out. He fired wildly at us, missing by a long way, and then collapsed on the ground, black with smoke, coughing uncontrollably. We quickly dragged him away from the house, wrenching the gun from his grip at the same time, and Kilmoyle poured a drop of whiskey down his throat.

Less than an hour later we had put out the fire, emptied the house of its few contents, and boarded it

up so that no one else could get in.

Kilmoyle offered to take the old man to the nearest village, where he was said to have relatives, but he refused this offer and went staggering off by himself. Feeling satisfied with a job well done, we got ready to go. Just at that moment we heard a horrible, grief-ridden moan from behind the building.

"Now what?" Kilmoyle said impatiently.

We found the old man standing next to a miserable little pigsty a few yards from the house.

A spark from the fire must have landed on its thatched roof, because the sty had burned to the ground.



“My dog, my dog!” the old man screamed.

It seemed the dog had been tied up inside. Now it was dead. I felt sorry, but it was no one’s fault, just bad luck. The crackling noise of the fire, together with the gusty wind, must have drowned out its anguished howlings. The old man was distraught, moaning and shouting and crying all at the same time.

“I say,” Kilmoyle called out, his refined accent sounding rather ridiculous, “I say, I’m sorry about your dog. Of course, you must see that it was an accident.”

I felt a sudden stab of pity or guilt. I was consumed by the desire to help in some way, but couldn’t think of how. The dog was dead. No one could bring it back. But perhaps if I had done something to make amends – anything – or made some gesture of sympathy, then my family would have been spared what happened in the weeks and months that followed.

The old man fell silent, looking up at Kilmoyle where he sat on his magnificent horse. He looked across at me, and to him I probably looked just as high and mighty as Kilmoyle. He spat on the ground, three times, before launching into a stream of invective. I couldn’t understand a word – it must have been in Gaelic – but I knew that it wasn’t very friendly.

“Come on,” Kilmoyle said to me, swinging his horse around. Together we cantered away.

“What was he saying?” I asked Kilmoyle a little later, when we were trotting to the stables.

“He was cursing.”

“Cursing? You mean swearing?”

“No, I mean cursing – laying a curse on us,” Kilmoyle laughed. “We’re going to be haunted by the spirits of those we’ve wronged. Our lives will end in terror and misery. Our loved ones will not be spared. The spirits will not rest until they have been avenged!”

He smiled as he got down from his horse and gave the reins to a stableboy. “Of course, it’s absolute nonsense.”

“Oh,” I said, “of course.”

The following day I received a letter from Lily’s sister, telling me to return home at once; Lily wasn’t



well. Lily's health was poor at the best of times, but to fall ill in the eighth month of her pregnancy was a particularly worrying development. When I told Kilmoyle about it, he immediately offered to drive me to the station in his trap.

We were tearing down the road that led to the nearest town when, taking a sharp corner fairly fast, the horses suddenly swerved, and the wheel on the near side of the trap left the ground.

"Good heavens, we've run over something!"

Kilmoyle reined in the horses and we got out to investigate. It was a dog, a dead dog. It was charred and blackened, so we knew it was the same dog that we had inadvertently killed the day before. Then we saw the old man sitting a little way from the roadside. He was making a strange wailing noise. Kilmoyle yelled at him, wanting to know why he had left the dog's body in the middle of the road, but the old man didn't even notice us. He was too grief-stricken. It was a pathetic sight, but once again I did nothing to help him. All I could think about was my wife, and after moving the burned carcass from the road, we continued with our journey.

Three weeks later, back in England, I became the proud father of a son, whom we named George. Lily recovered quite well after my return. The birth didn't present any major problems, so the three of us were a very happy little family. But that was before the slow process of tragedy started to unfold.

One evening Lily and I were sitting in the drawing

room, chatting and looking at the garden through the open window. The baby was sleeping in another room with the nanny. After a while, Lily fell asleep. I went to my study to write some letters, but I hadn't been there long when I heard Lily screaming. I flung down my pen and ran as fast as I could to the drawing room, where I found her trembling, white as a sheet, clinging to the nanny.

"In the garden," she whispered, pointing outside with a shaking hand. "It's out there!"

"What is?"

She was too frightened to tell me. I told the nanny to look after her, and went out into the garden, but although I searched it thoroughly I didn't find anything. When I went back inside Lily had recovered enough to tell me what she had seen.

She had been lying back in her chair, half dozing, when a heavy pressure on her shoulder woke her up. At the same time she felt a hot, panting breath on her cheek. She jolted upright, crying out, "Who's that, who is it?" She couldn't see anything, but she heard the pit-pat of some animal – "a tiger or a wolf?" – padding across the room to the window. Then she had screamed, and the nanny and I had come running to her aid.

Well, it was my opinion that she had been dreaming. I thought it was one of those vivid dreams that can occur in that semi-conscious stage between sleeping and waking. Lily wouldn't hear of this at first, but the doctor I sent for agreed, saying that it was the only

explanation. I put her to bed, and the doctor gave her a sleeping potion. Later, in my study, he suggested that Lily should have a rest in the country. He said her nerves were weak.

"Peace and quiet and lots of fresh air, that's what she needs," he said.

I told him about the cottage in Ireland. I had employed builders to renovate the interior, and they were due to complete the work soon.

"Perfect," he said. "The sooner you can get out there the better."

The situation didn't improve while we waited for the cottage to be ready. Lily was always worried about the baby, forever thinking that something was going to happen to him. I thought this was the perfectly natural anxiety of any new mother, so I'm afraid I didn't take it seriously. Sometimes, if George wasn't with us, Lily started to tremble with fear, convinced that the nanny had left him alone and he was in terrible danger. One night she even woke up screaming that something was wrong. I jumped out of bed and rushed up to the nursery. The boy was sleeping soundly.

"Has it gone?" Lily asked me when I got back to our room.

"Has what gone?"

"The dog."

"What dog?"

"The dog that ran up the stairs!" she shrieked.

"Lily," I said, "there's no dog, you must have had a nightmare."

"No!" she shouted angrily. "It was real!"

Why didn't I listen to Lily? Why didn't I understand that she could see something I couldn't? Every time there was a similar incident, I told her that it was her nerves, or a bad dream, or a shadow on the wall. Instead of listening to what she was saying to me, I would call the doctor. And rather than take into account her frantic wish to stay where we were, I went ahead with the preparations for our move to Ireland, convinced that it was the right thing to do.

I wrote to Kilmoyle several times during that period, to let him know my plans and to ask how the cottage was looking. It was very odd, but he never replied. And when our little household finally arrived in Ireland at the beginning of the summer, we still hadn't heard from him.

The cottage looked superb, and I couldn't help congratulating myself for persisting with the move in the face of Lily's opposition. Even she was entranced by its beauty, and we spent a happy hour planning where to put everything. Our baby son, now six months old, gurgled away happily on the nanny's lap, and all in all I felt sure that our luck had turned.

I'd arranged for some local men to come around in the afternoon to carry the furniture into the cottage. They were all rather small, wiry men, but they could carry more with one hand than I could with two. Lily directed them, filling up the rooms one at a time.

Watching them carry a large dresser through the

front door, she noticed that they were stepping over the threshold in a curious way. As they approached the door they walked normally enough – as normally as is possible when you're weighed down with a heavy oak dresser – but as soon as they got near the door they seemed to step over something with a long, strange, careful stride.

"Why are they doing that?" Lily whispered to me, pointing at one of the men discreetly.

"I don't know. Ask them."

Lily giggled. "All right," she said, "I will."

When the men brought in the next piece of furniture, Lily was as good as her word.

"Why are you stepping over the threshold in that funny way?" she said to one of them.

He looked her in the eye briefly, then resumed his work. Lily, exasperated by his lack of response, walked gaily out of the cottage and stood just outside.

"See," she said, "you can do it if you really want to," and she twirled around in front of the door.

Once again, he stayed silent. Lily, embarrassed and frustrated, stamped her foot in a sudden show of petulance.

"Tell me!" she nearly shouted.

The oldest man, a grim-faced, grey-haired fellow of about fifty, stopped his work and looked at her silently. His companions did the same. He waited for a few moments. Then he said:

"It's a grave, Ma'am. That's where the old man buried his dog."

Then he picked up one end of a wardrobe, and one

of the other men picked up the other end, both of them waiting for Lily to move out of the way.

Lily stood stock-still for a few moments, her rosy cheeks blanching, before giving a little whimper and staggering to one side. I rushed to help her, leading her to the back of the cottage, where the nanny was playing with the baby.

"I stamped on the grave," she whispered, distraught, the tears rolling down her face.

"Don't be silly," I whispered back. "It's just a dog."

Lily shook her head.

"Take us away from here, please, take us away!"

The nanny looked on, confused, and the baby began to cry.

"Lily, we've only just arrived! What would it look like if we left on the day we arrived?"

"I don't care! We mustn't stay here, not for a day or an hour or a minute! What do I have to say to convince you? Why do you never listen to me? Why?"

It's a question I've often asked myself ever since that dreadful day. As usual, I ignored Lily's concerns. I told her that as soon as the men had gone, we would all sit down and have a cup of tea to calm down our nerves. Then I would go to see Kilmoyle, and she could think about whether she really wanted us to go home. If she still did, then – well, I'd think about it.

"But we have to leave right away!" Lily insisted.

I refused even to answer her. When she saw that I wouldn't be moved, she calmed down a little. I went to Kilmoyle's castle leaving her sitting in a

rocking chair with the baby on her knee.

The castle seemed strangely quiet when I arrived. There were no lights in any of the windows, and no servants or gardeners bustling around. I rang the bell. When the door finally opened, the butler, still buttoning up his collar, looked surprised.

"Is Lord Kilmoyle at home?" I asked.

"No sir."

"When do you expect him back?"

The butler hesitated.

"I don't rightly know, sir."

"Today? Next week?"

"I'm afraid I can't say, sir."

"Why on earth not, man?"

The butler shrugged uneasily, as though he wasn't sure what to tell me. I was convinced that there was something odd going on, and I was determined to find out what it was.

"Look here, Reynolds – it is Reynolds, isn't it?"

"Yes sir."

"Well look here, Reynolds," I repeated, pulling some coins out of my pocket, "Lord Kilmoyle is an old friend of mine. We go back a long way, and I'm sure he'd want me to know when I can expect him back. Perhaps this will jog your memory," I suggested, placing the coins in his hand.

Reynolds looked down at them dubiously.

"That's very kind of you, sir, but I'm afraid it doesn't help, for the simple reason that I don't know when he's expected back." He put the coins back in my own

hand, which made me feel very foolish. "You see, sir," he said hesitantly, "there's been a change come over his Lordship these past few months, and he has had to, to go away."

The way Reynolds stressed those words – he has had to go away – made me shiver inside for some reason. I paused before replying, and then Reynolds suddenly told me what had happened.

"You see, sir, he's lost his wits."

"Lost his wits?" I exploded. "Kilmoyle's one of the sanest, most down-to-earth men I know!"

"Yes sir. Unfortunately he thinks he is being pursued by some sort of, er . . . demon, sir. As a result, his health has suffered to an alarming extent, requiring his removal to, erm . . ."

Reynolds coughed discreetly.

"To a what? A hospital?"

"Not exactly sir. An asylum. A lunatic asylum."

There was a long, uneasy silence as we both contemplated this fact.

"Frankly sir, the estate is in total confusion at present, which explains why you were kept waiting so long. Please accept my apologies, sir."

"Yes, Reynolds, yes. Of course."

"Thank you, sir. Good day."

He started to close the door.

"Oh, Reynolds, just one thing before I go."

"Yes sir?"

"This . . . demon – what sort of demon is it supposed to be?"

"I believe it to be a dog, sir."

I mounted my horse and we cantered off. An uneasiness in the pit of my stomach quickly developed into rank fear, and by the time I was in sight of the cottage the horse was galloping at top speed. As I reined in, I could hear Lily's anguished shrieks from inside.

"The dog! The dog!"

"But ma'am, what dog?" I heard the nanny say, and then I was through the door.

"Lily, what is it?"



"Didn't you see? The dog. It was huge! It came up from the grave, and it took my baby! It took my precious baby!"

She started to scream and howl in grief. I rushed into the nursery with the nanny close on my heels.

"But – I don't understand – he was here just a minute ago," she whispered.

"You didn't see a dog?" I cried, absolutely beside myself with fear.

"No sir, I, I didn't."

I ran out of the nursery, through all the other rooms, and then outside, searching for him desperately and hopelessly. All the time Lily was screaming. I thought about what she had said – "It came up from the grave, it took my baby."

"Look after her!" I yelled to the nanny, and I grabbed a spade that was lying in the little garden and ran to the front door. Frantically I started to dig, just by the threshold.

The old man had dug deep, because the soil started to pile up behind me. Eventually my shovel hit a bundle wrapped in tarpaulin. I quickly cleared away the soil on top of it and lifted it out. I paused. In the background Lily was wailing, and the nanny was doing her best to calm her down. With a heavy heart I unwrapped the tarpaulin. I found . . . I found the old man's dog, charred and rotting. There was no sign of my son.

I felt a small glimmer of hope, that perhaps George had been taken by someone, and that we might find him if we organized a search party. As I shovelled the

soil back into the grave, I tried to remember where the nearest police station was.

Then I saw it, there in the soil, dirty and torn but unmistakably his – a torn shred of George's blue blanket. I sank to my knees, sobbing, and heard, as though it were from someone else, an unbearable wail coming from deep inside me. I felt that my life had finished. My son was dead.

In the two years since our baby was taken away from us, the spirit of the old man's dog has continued its cruel vengeance. Kilmoyle was the first to succumb, haunted day and night until his tortured mind and body couldn't stand it. He's dead.

What do I care about that? Yesterday my wife died in my arms. All this time she has struggled against the curse, sometimes seeing the dog so often that she descended into madness. At other times, though, she seemed to be free of it, and I would begin to hope that we could rebuild our lives. But yesterday morning she saw it again, for the last time. I heard her screaming from the bedroom – "Keep it away from me, keep it away from me!" – as if she were being attacked. I ran up to her as fast as I could, finding her almost unconscious. She died soon after.

Well. It's all over now. My friend is dead, my son is dead, my wife is dead. Only I have been spared, though why, I don't know. I don't doubt the demon exists, but for some reason, I've never seen . . .

What's that? That noise . . . a scratching noise at the door . . . No, it's gone, there's nothing . . . Just a minute . . . There it is again, that scratching noise, and now . . . I can hear the sound of something padding across the hall outside.

Something is trying to get in.

A LONG-DISTANCE CALL



We are all going to die. Nothing could be more inevitable, or true. But why do we die, and what happens after? Something happened to me once which gave me an insight into those questions.

It was a tragedy when my friend Vincent's wife died. He was much older than her, and so as well as feeling great grief, he also suffered a sort of baffled surprise that she had died before him. They had married in 1876, when he was forty and she was twenty-five, and

had enjoyed over twenty years together. They were very different people, which is perhaps why they got along so well.

Vincent was by no means a weak or passive man, but he could sometimes seem so when compared with Alison. She was boisterous and dominant, though not a tyrant. She loved Vincent very much, and there's no doubt she made him happy, but there was one thing about Alison which I disliked: her ferocious possessiveness. Despite the fact that he was devoted to her, despite the fact that he was incapable of loving anyone else, she became jealous for the smallest reason.

If Vincent chatted for too long with a female acquaintance, Alison would march up to him and whisk him off. It was unnecessary and rude, but I suppose most marriages have their peculiarities, and this was theirs.

It was Vincent's nature just to put up with the way she behaved, but the consequence was that they eventually offended nearly everyone they knew and, as the years passed, they became more and more isolated and dependent on each other. When Alison died at the age of forty-nine, after an illness lasting about two months, Vincent had few friends left. Perhaps the only reason that he was still in contact with me was that I hadn't married, so there was no partner Alison could offend. Even I hadn't seen him for some years, and didn't regard myself as a close friend any more.

I was surprised – embarrassed, even – when, after the funeral, he asked me to stay with him for a while.

The idea didn't appeal to me. And was I really the only friend he could muster? However, I felt that I had little choice but to agree. Someone had to keep him company, at least for a few days, and yet it almost seemed to stress how alone he was without his wife.

He lived way out in the country, in a tiny village called Ellerdon. I loathe the country. Whenever I go there, people always want me to kill animals. They expect me to get on a horse and chase a fox across three counties until the fox drops dead, or shoot a



perfectly healthy duck out of the sky. There's no doubt in my mind that the country is a very strange place indeed, and that the people who live there are even stranger. While I couldn't refuse Vincent's request to stay with him, I anticipated a very dull time. In fact, I couldn't help feeling more sorry for myself than I was feeling for him.

The evening after the funeral was incredibly gloomy, as you would expect. Vincent and I sat together in his library. There wasn't much to say. His wife was dead. He had loved her, and now he had to live without her. My presence seemed to help him a little. I read the paper, and he pretended to read a book, although I knew his thoughts were far away. A grandfather clock ticked the time away loudly.

After an hour or two, Jenkins entered the room. Jenkins had been Vincent's servant for more years than either of them could remember. There was something oddly soothing in the way he plodded slowly across the library to us.

"A glass of port, sir?"

"Thank you Jenkins, yes."

Watching him pour the port, I couldn't help thinking that, now Alison was dead, Jenkins was almost certainly the most important person in Vincent's life.

"I thought I might ride with the hunt tomorrow," Vincent said, not aware how much this made my heart sink. "It'll help me to keep my mind off Alison. Why don't you come along too? It must be ages since you rode."

"I don't enjoy it, Vincent. It's a bit gory for me."

"Nonsense. Most of the time we never get near a fox. And you're an excellent horseman."

"I'm sorry Vincent, but I really dislike riding and I absolutely can't stand fox hunting."

It was at this point that the phone rang.

Now, there is nothing unusual about a ringing telephone. I was vaguely surprised that Vincent had a telephone, but apart from that, I could see nothing alarming or frightening about it ringing. I say this because as soon as it started, Vincent jumped up from his chair with a strange, yelping noise. It was rather like the amazed squeal of a newly injured animal.

The telephone continued to ring. I looked at Vincent. His face was nearly white, and his eyes were bulging out of his head as he stared, unblinking, at the telephone. I don't know how long we remained like this, with me staring at Vincent and Vincent staring at the telephone. It was long enough for the device to stop ringing. After a few moments, Vincent sank back down in his chair.

I wasn't sure what to say. Clearly his grief had left him in an unstable condition.

"Sudden noises can be very startling," I murmured eventually, conscious that it was a pointless thing to say, but that something had to be said to break the deafening silence.

Vincent didn't answer.

"I didn't know that you could get telephones this far out in the country," I continued.

Eventually Vincent raised his head and spoke, slowly. "I had the telephone put in when Alison fell ill. It links her sickroom with the library. If I was down here and she wanted me, then she could just ring."

"Yes," I said sympathetically. "I can see why you were so startled now. It must have been . . . well, it must have been quite a painful reminder for you."

Once again, Vincent fell silent.

"Who was ringing you, do you think?" I asked, desperately trying to fill the quiet. "Obviously it was one of the servants, but I can't think which one it would be. I mean, as well as being thoughtless, it's just not right for a servant to ring you up. You'll have to have a word with them."

Vincent gave me a look that was a mixture of confusion and fear.

"It wasn't one of the servants," he answered, practically whispering.

"Oh? Who was it then?"

Shaking his head, he got up from his chair once more. He walked over to the phone, picked it up, and held it out in front of me. The wire hung down limply.

"I disconnected it when she died," he said in a strange, flat voice.

I felt an uncomfortable sensation creep over me, along my arms and legs and up the back of my neck. Though consciously remaining in control of my outward gestures and expressions, my heart was pounding a rapid and irregular beat.

"These things can generally be . . . explained," I suggested gently.

"Can they?"

"Of course."

"How?"

"Oh, you know."

Vincent looked at me, almost angrily.

"No," he said, "no, I do not know."

"A tasteless trick, or —"

"But the wretched thing isn't even connected!" he said emphatically, swinging the wire from left to right.

"It could be an electrical storm in the air," I said feebly, "a storm like that might produce some sort of — bizarre effect. Maybe it's something like that which has, er . . ."

My voice tailed away. Vincent was looking at me, perhaps with some justification, as if he thought I were a complete idiot. Then the telephone started to ring again. It was chilling. There was something even more terrible about it this time — he was still holding it.

For a few moments he gazed at the telephone with helpless horror, as if it were a venomous snake. I clutched my chair, feeling spasms of panic pulse through my body. Perhaps I even gasped. Vincent gave the same yelp of fear and shock as before, then slammed the instrument down on the desk and stepped away from it. I could see the loose end of the wire draped across the desk and hanging over the edge. But the ringing continued.

"Are you going to answer it?" I managed to

whisper eventually.

"No, I am not."

The room suddenly seemed darker.

"Well," I said, hoping I sounded braver than I felt, "if you aren't, I am."

I reached across cautiously and put my hand on the receiver, my fingers closing slowly around it. My courage failed slightly when I felt the vibrations produced by the ringing, as I'd been hoping that the sound was coming from elsewhere, that someone was playing a sick joke.

"Hello?" I said.

There was a crackling, hissing noise, followed by a voice. It was faint and distant, but utterly unmistakable. It was Alison.

"Tell my husband I'm expecting him tomorrow."

I waited for her to say something else or for the line to go dead. Neither happened. The hissing and crackling continued, as though the connection were to a place far away.

"Hello?" I said again loudly, then, when there was no reply, I put down the receiver and turned to Vincent.

"No one there," I said.

At six o'clock the following morning, when Vincent came down wearing the scarlet coat of the Ellerdon Hunt, I was already up. He looked as though his night had been as troubled as mine. We exchanged greetings, but neither of us said anything about the previous night. He was amazed to see me up so early.

"Instead of going on the hunt," I said during breakfast, as casually as I could, "I was wondering if you'd like to go on a long walk with me."

"A long walk?"

"Yes."

"With you? I thought you didn't like walking?"

"Yes, er . . . I just thought it might do you good."

He looked at me curiously.

"Well, it's very nice of you to suggest it. How about tomorrow? You see, the thing is, we can go on a walk any time we like, but there isn't another hunt for three weeks."

"No," I said slowly, "I suppose not. Do you think I could . . . Is it too late to . . . I . . . Can I come on the hunt too?"

Vincent eyed me strangely.

"If you like."

I stuck to him like a leech that day. Wherever he went, I was there, trying to anticipate and prevent the accident which I was sure was going to happen. I attempted, whenever I could, to jump the hedges and the fences first, often shouting warnings over my shoulder about what was on the other side. He didn't exactly appreciate this advice.

Once, I headed him off from jumping a gate. It wasn't high, and the ground was firm, but it gave me a bad feeling as we approached. I was prepared to do anything to stop him from taking it, so I swung to the right and into his horse's flank, which made him veer off course. He was furious.

"What on earth are you playing at?" he yelled in uncharacteristic rage. "We'll lose the pack!"

"Sorry Vincent – accident. I'm a bit rusty."

"Rusty? Rusty my foot! You did it on purpose!"

Jumping a low hedge farther down the field, we raced after our companions. The mud flew from the horses' hooves, and the steam rose in the winter air.



There was a kill that day. The fox, exhausted, tried to take refuge in a rabbit hole, but got stuck a short way in. As we galloped up, the hounds were already digging it out. Suddenly they had it, dragging it out and tearing it to pieces in seconds. Normally the sight would have sickened me, but all I felt was relief. The

danger to Vincent was over. There would be no more galloping and jumping that day – just lots of congratulations and backslapping, and no one, to my knowledge, had ever died from that.

“What was wrong with you out there?” Vincent asked me as we made our way home later.

“What do you mean?”

“You know what I mean. You ruined my day.”

“Let’s go on that long walk,” I suggested, changing the subject.

He looked at me dubiously.

“Hmm. All right, we’ll go on a walk. Perhaps you’ve got more sense in you when you’re not on a horse.”

I allowed myself a brief smile as he trotted away. I was almost sure that I had saved the man’s life, and he was now out of harm’s way.

“I know,” he said eagerly, “let’s take a couple of shotguns – we can shoot some snipe.”

I won’t relate what happened on the walk, because nothing of much interest did. Suffice to say that, just as he had survived the fox hunt, so he survived the walk, even though we took two shotguns. He survived the long road home. At no point did he fall over and crack his head open, as I thought he would, or suffer a heart attack, which was my constant expectation.

We sat in the library after dinner. I was relieved that the telephone remained silent. Jenkins came in at exactly the same time as the previous evening.

“Glass of port, sir?”

“Thank you Jenkins, yes.”

By the end of the evening I’d convinced myself that Alison’s voice had been either some sort of trick, a delusion, an unexplained natural phenomenon or even a figment of my imagination. After all, half-scared out of my wits by the ringing of the disconnected telephone, what could be more natural than my brain inventing something even more scary to explain it?

As for the ringing itself, I decided it had to be the product of a some sort of malicious joke. I decided to examine the phone when Vincent had gone to bed. If there was anything suspicious I would talk to Jenkins, who might have ideas as to who the culprit was.

“Well, I’m going to bed,” said Vincent eventually.

“Goodnight, Vincent.”

“Goodnight. And . . .”

“Yes?”

“Thanks for staying on like this. I do appreciate it. I’m not used to being alone. I’ve barely spent a day apart from Alison in twenty years. It feels so strange.”

“Yes. I’m afraid it’s going to be difficult for a long time, Vincent.”

He nodded sadly. “Yes. I suppose so.”

He made his way clumsily to the door – he had drunk rather more wine than usual at dinner – and then paused.

“That business with the phone last night . . .”

“Yes?”

“I don’t want to sound silly, but . . . well, there

wasn't anyone there, was there? I mean, on the other end of the line?"

"No. No, of course not."

"No, sorry. Silly to ask."

He opened the door, turned to look at me, gave me a curious half-smile, then left the room. I was impatient to examine the telephone, but before I began I waited a few minutes to make absolutely sure that he wasn't coming back.

It was while I was dismantling the receiver that I heard it – a single gunshot, somewhere in the house. For some reason, the first thing I did was to look at the clock. It was one minute to midnight.

I ran out of the library and up the stairs to Vincent's bedroom. I stopped in the doorway. A man was standing over a body in the middle of the room. In his hand he was holding a gun, from which a thin wisp of smoke was still curling.

"Jenkins!"

"Yes sir," he answered, with ridiculous formality.

"Jenkins . . . why?"

"I'm afraid I haven't the faintest idea, sir."

"Give me the gun."

"May I place it over here instead, sir?" he said, putting it on a chest of drawers. "You might get your fingerprints on it otherwise."

Too shocked to answer, I just stared at him.

"And now sir, if you will excuse me, I think it would be appropriate if I send for the police."

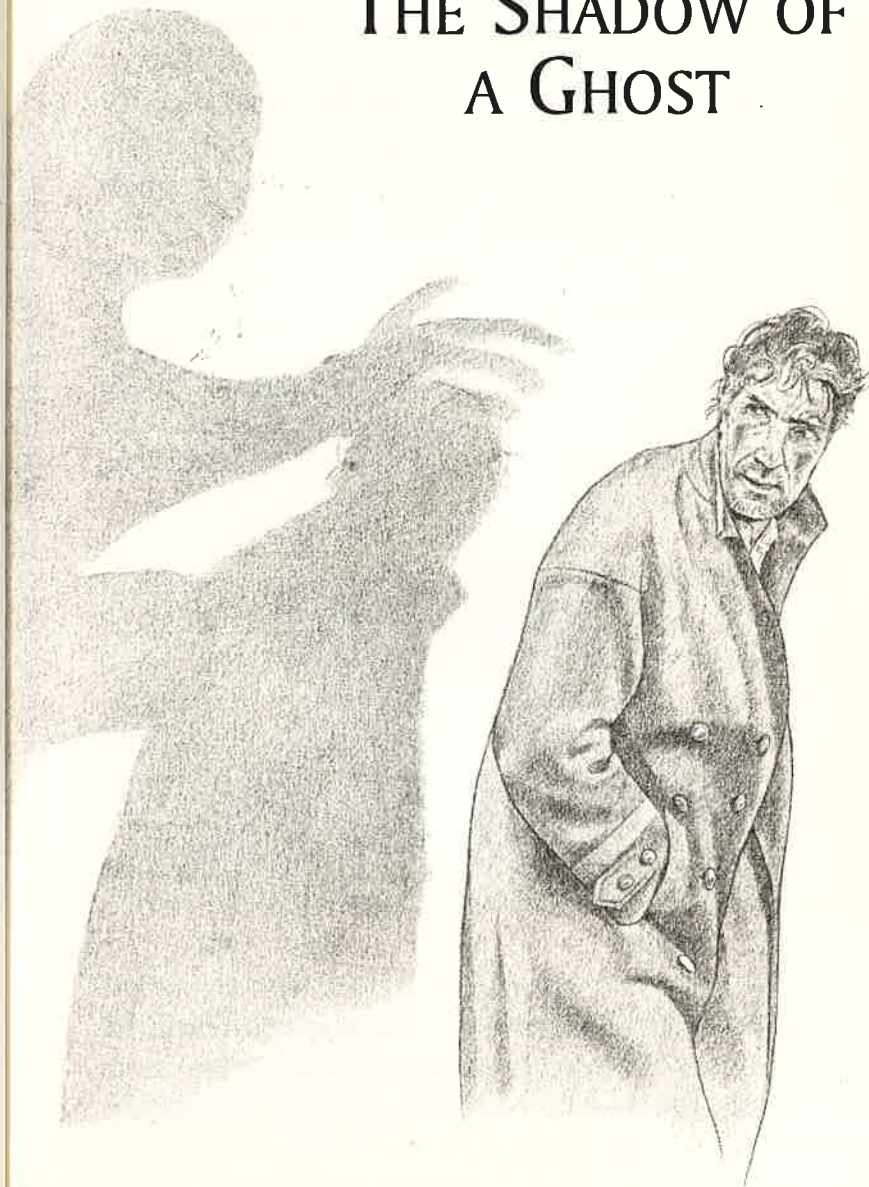
He glided past noiselessly and made his way downstairs. I walked into the room slowly, and looked



down at Vincent lying on the floor, a single bullet wound in the back of his head. His eyes were closed, and he had a faint smile on his face. He looked happy and at peace. I had no doubt that he was with Alison.

After all, she was expecting him.

THE SHADOW OF A GHOST



My sister Lettie has a broken heart. There's nothing very unusual about this, of course, but no one ever suffered that fate in a stranger, more frightening way than Lettie.

She met George Mason at a wedding, and they fell in love at first sight. He was an officer in the Navy by profession, and a rather ambitious one too, so when he got the chance to go on an expedition to the Arctic, he jumped at it. The purpose of the trip was to discover the fate of Sir John Franklin, the explorer who, together with his two ships, had vanished in 1845. Lettie took a lot of persuading, because George would be away for two years, but in the end she agreed that he should go. It was a decision she has regretted ever since.

My brother Harry used to live with us in those days. He's quite a famous painter now, but then he was just a lowly student at art school. Lettie asked him to paint George's portrait before the expedition set out. Harry approached his task very seriously, making George endure half a dozen lengthy sittings, during which he expounded his ideas about art. Maybe my brother didn't fully understand his own theories, because the finished painting was, in my opinion, terrible.

Lettie thought the portait was "exquisite and beautiful", however, while Harry pronounced it "easily my finest work to date." They bought an enormous gilt frame of the sort that usually displays renowned prime ministers or great generals. It

weighed half as much as George himself, and looked quite ridiculous on our dining room wall, but as long as it made Lettie and Harry happy I didn't mind.

Three weeks before George's ship, *The Pioneer*, was due to sail, George brought a colleague to our house for dinner. His name was Vincent Grieve, and he held the title of ship's surgeon.



We greeted him in a friendly way, but I took an instant dislike to the man. He had a hard, calculating face, and there was something cruel in his expression. I didn't trust him, and the way he behaved that evening didn't do anything to change this feeling. To

our amazement, he tried to flirt with Lettie, although he knew she and George were engaged. Lettie made it crystal clear to him that his attention was unwelcome, while George and I dropped stronger and stronger hints that his conduct was unacceptable, but the man was incredibly thick-skinned. He seemed to have absolutely no idea how much he was offending us.

At dinner, I put him between myself and my wife, Rachel. On the other side of the table, below George's portrait, were Lettie, George and Harry.

"I wonder if I might change seats with somebody?" he asked suddenly, halfway through the first course.

"If you wish," I said, puzzled. "You can have mine."

"I'd rather sit on that side of the table, if you don't mind," he said emphatically. "It's that portrait, you see. I don't like to look at it. It's eyes are rather – well, I find them rather disturbing."

A short silence followed this peculiar comment.

"Take my seat, Mr. Grieve," Lettie offered, half standing up.

"No, no, I wouldn't dream of it," he quickly answered. "Please, I insist, I won't have you disturbed, I simply won't allow it."

"Well in that case," George muttered, "you'd better have mine."

"So kind," Grieve said, with a strange smile.

I took this as a blatant and shameless ploy to sit next to Lettie, and indeed he spent the rest of the evening trying to talk only to her.

When George was leaving that evening, I asked him if he was going to bring his colleague home with him again. He replied that although the man could be pleasant enough company on a ship, he didn't know how to behave in a home. He wouldn't be welcome any more.

But the seed had been sown. Taking advantage of the introduction to our household, Grieve didn't wait to be invited again. He called the very next day, and the day after that, and many days following that, until soon he was a more frequent visitor than George himself – though far less welcome.

I would have told Grieve not to visit, but he was a very slippery customer, and he always seemed to have some legitimate excuse. He often brought, or pretended to be bringing, some little message for Lettie from George. Anyway, as *The Pioneer* would be leaving soon, it seemed best simply to put up with the situation rather than making a fuss.

The day before the ship sailed, Grieve did something completely unforgivable. By some subterfuge or other he managed to get Lettie alone, and he told her that he loved her. He said he knew that she was already engaged, but that didn't stop another man from loving her too. Lettie was furious and ordered him out of the house. Yet even on the doorstep, as she tried to shut the door on him, he persisted with his unwanted attentions, grabbing her hand against her will.

"Two years is a long time," he whispered to her,

“and who knows whether George will still love you at the end of it!”

“You – how dare you!”

“Then you will remember, my darling, that I love you a million times more than he does!”

I was very angry when Lettie told me about this incident after he had left, but eventually she persuaded me not to confront Grieve about it. *The Pioneer* was sailing the next day, so she didn't think it was worth causing any trouble.

Lettie cried her eyes out that evening, and George wasn't much better. They were deeply in love, and the thought of not seeing each other for two years,



maybe more, was almost unbearable.

“Don't go!” I heard Lettie weep as I was passing the sitting room. “Please, please don't go!”

“I love you, but I must go!” George said, his voice breaking, as Lettie's crying became even louder.

I moved on, shaking my head sadly. The thought of Lettie being so unhappy made me unhappy too, and I wished that George wasn't so ambitious and adventurous. Why couldn't he just stay at home and work in an office, like me?

The two lovers talked until dawn, when George had to tear himself away. I was there to comfort Lettie. I led her away from the open front door, where she had been standing, shivering, for ten minutes, and into the dining room. I sat her down on a sofa. All I could do was be there for her as she sobbed on my shoulder, or stared adoringly at the portrait of the man she loved.

Lettie received two letters from George over the next few months. In the second letter, however, he told her that he probably wouldn't be able to write again. *The Pioneer* was about to enter very high latitudes, where only exploratory missions went, and it was unlikely that they would encounter any ships which could bring letters back for them. After that, there was a long silence, and an anxious, lonely year for Lettie.

We heard of the expedition once in the papers. A returning Russian expedition had come across them. Their ship was stranded in ice for the winter, but they

were continuing the search for Franklin on foot across the frozen wastes.

Winter passed, and spring came. One evening, an unusually warm one, we were sitting in the dining room after an early dinner – Lettie, Harry, Rachel and myself. Harry was looking out of the window aimlessly. Rachel and I were writing letters. Lettie was sitting silently on the sofa. It was an ordinary evening.

Suddenly, a chill seemed to sweep into the room. It wasn't the wind or a breeze, because the curtains didn't move. It was a feeling of deathly cold which lasted just a few seconds. I looked up, almost in alarm, as its icy fingers brushed across me. Lettie was shivering too.

"Perhaps we're having a taste of George's polar weather," I joked. My wife stared at me in a faintly puzzled way, as did Harry.

I glanced up at George's portrait . . . and the shock I had was so intense that I couldn't even gasp. A sort of feverish, panicked heat replaced the previous feeling of icy cold because, in the place of George's head, I saw a weeping skull. I stared at it hard, willing it to go away, but there was no denying the empty eye sockets, the gleaming teeth, the fleshless cheekbones. It was the face of death.

Without saying a word, I got up from my chair and walked straight over to the painting. As I drew nearer, a strange mist seemed to pass across it. By the time I was standing close to it, all I could see was George's face once more. The horrible, spectral skull had faded

away and vanished.

"Poor George," I whispered unconsciously.

Lettie looked up. If the tone of my voice hadn't alarmed her, the look on my face did. Her eyes grew wide in fear.

"What do you mean?" she said breathlessly. "Have you heard anything?"

"No, of course not Lettie, I've heard nothing at all, I just –"

"Oh Robert, tell me what you've heard!"

"Nothing at all, I promise you. I was just thinking about him, that's all, and about the hardship he must be experiencing. It must have been that sudden cold feeling that did it."

"Cold feeling!" exclaimed my brother by the window. "Cold feeling! How on earth could you feel cold on a sweltering evening like this?"

"There was a sudden chill in the air earlier," I said, becoming slightly irritated. "I'm surprised you didn't feel it yourself. It passed through the room a few moments ago."

"Robert, are you feeling all right?" my wife asked. "It's very warm tonight. Perhaps you're coming down with flu. Do you have a temperature?"

"You didn't feel cold?"

"No, my dear."

Lettie, pale and wide-eyed, was staring at me.

"I did," she said quietly, and she left the room. Rachel, much confused, hurried after her.

"What's the date, Harry?" I asked, after a moment's thought.

"The twenty-third of May. Why do you want to know?" I told him to make a note of it in his diary, but I refused to say any more than that.

"You and Lettie are both as crazy as each other," he said, shaking his head.

Lettie and I never mentioned what occurred that night. But deep down I was convinced that something terrible had happened to George, and from that day on, though I hoped against hope that I was wrong, I dreaded the arrival of bad news.



At long last the day came, as I knew it would. I was lingering over my breakfast early one morning when Harry came bursting into the dining room. He looked flushed and agitated.

"Is she down yet?" he asked.

"Who?"

"Lettie."

"No, why?"

"Robert, something awful has happened!" he cried, handing me a page torn from *The Daily News*.

PIONEER FAILS TO FIND FRANKLIN

OFFICER'S DEATH ENDS DOOMED POLAR TRIP

The expedition to discover the fate of Captain Franklin has failed. *The Pioneer*, a British ship which set out eighteen months ago, has been forced to turn back. The crew is suffering from hunger, exhaustion and lack of supplies. One member of the crew is reported to have died. He was George Mason, a young officer.

The Pioneer is the third expedition that has tried to trace Captian Franklin, who disappeared in . . .

After I had read it, Harry and I looked at each other with tears in our eyes.

"Poor George."

"Poor Lettie."

"We mustn't let her see this," my brother said.

"Oh, how are we going to tell her?" I cried.

At that moment Harry clutched at my arm.

"Hush!"

I turned to the door. There was Lettie, her face as pale as death and an expression of absolute despair in her eyes. I don't know how much she had heard, but it was enough. I sprang forward, but she waved me away, turned around, and went straight back upstairs. Since that day, I have never heard her laugh or seen her smile.

Months passed. I read in the paper that *The Pioneer* had arrived back in England, but I didn't tell anyone. The expedition was of no interest to any of us now, and just the mention of its name would cause Lettie a great deal of pain.

One afternoon shortly after this, there was a loud knock at the front door. When our servant opened it, I heard a voice I recognized but couldn't quite place. Then the servant came into the room and handed me a visiting card which said: Vincent Grieve, Surgeon.

"Show him in," I said. "And if your mistress and Miss Lettie return, tell them I have someone with me on business and don't want to be disturbed – for any reason whatsoever."

I went out into the hall to meet Grieve. I was very relieved that Lettie was out when he arrived. When I saw him, he looked changed, horribly changed. He was paler than ever, hollow-eyed and hollow-cheeked, and he had acquired a strange stoop. His eyes, which had once looked so crafty and cunning, now looked merely frightened, like

those of a hunted beast. Three times in the space of a few seconds he looked furtively over his shoulder, as if he was afraid that something was following him. In truth I felt utter repugnance for him, and I shuddered as we shook hands.

"The expedition was one of terrible hardship," I said, trying to sound sympathetic.

"I wish I'd never gone on it," he answered in a fierce, half-mad whisper.

"Well, come into the dining room."

He grabbed my arm.

"Is the portrait still there?"

"Of course."

"Cover it up!" he begged.

"What?"

"Cover it up!"

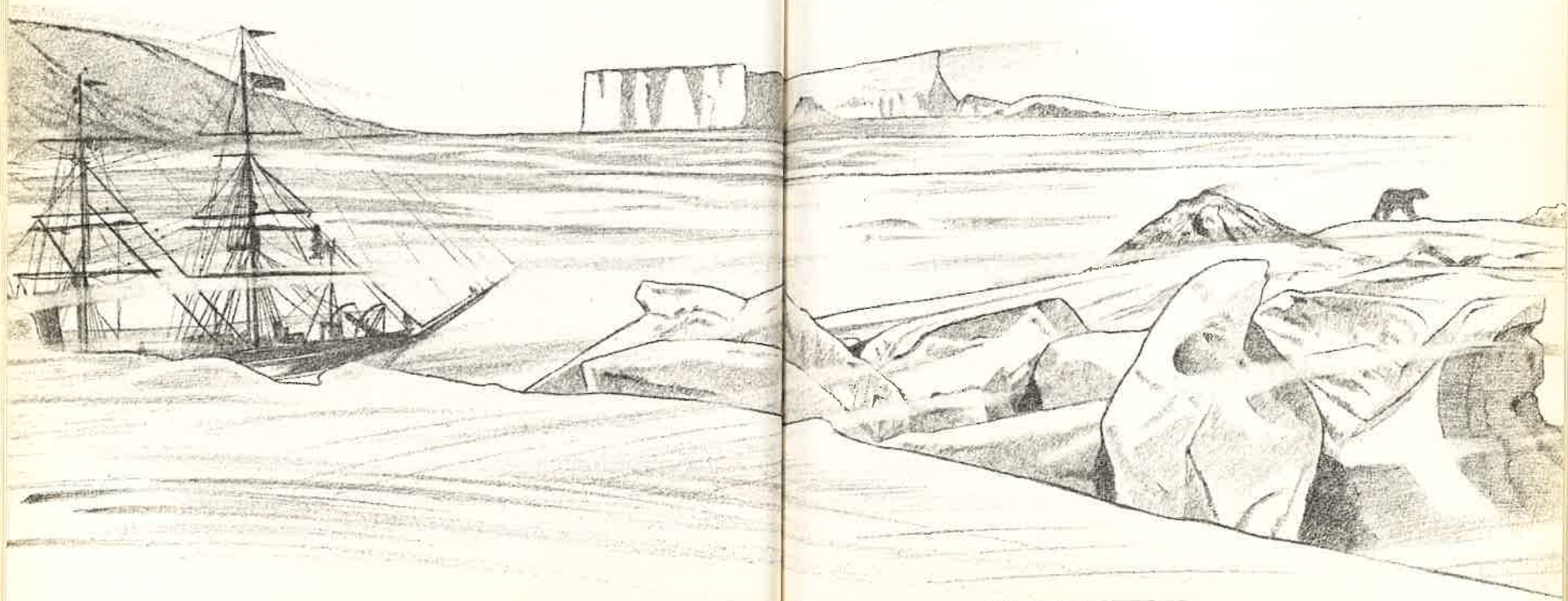
"All right," I replied, after a moment's hesitation.

Wondering what on earth had made me agree to this odd request, I went into the dining room before him, found a tablecloth and draped it over George's picture.

Then Grieve followed me into the room and I started to speak. I was very blunt. I said that I was glad to see him safely returned from the expedition, and I would be grateful to hear how George had died. However, I told him firmly that he could not see Lettie, and that he should never call at our house again. He took this quietly, sinking slowly down onto the sofa and sighing deeply. He looked so very weak and drained that I offered him a glass of wine,

which he greedily drank down. He stayed silent until I asked him about George's death.

The story was told nervously, in a low, halting voice. I noticed that he continually looked to one side, almost as if he were scared of someone overhearing him. He described how, on the long trek back across the ice to the ship, when the crew was close to starvation, they had spotted a polar bear about a mile away, on shifting ice. A polar bear would have been the difference between life and death to the crew of



The Pioneer. He and George volunteered to hunt it.

The conditions were very dangerous, and they had to take extreme care as they clambered over the treacherous icebergs, leaving their heavy fur coats behind to give themselves extra agility. One particular iceberg was ridged like the roof of a house, with a smooth, dangerous slope on one side that descended to the edge of a great precipice. They scrambled up to the top of the ridge and started to crawl along it.

But then George momentarily lost his concentration, and his footing.

"I shouted," Grieve said in a hoarse whisper, "but it was too late. The surface was like glass. George tried to fling himself back onto the ridge, but he slipped onto his knees and went farther down the slope. I stretched out my hands – he couldn't reach. He was slipping down the icy slope. There was something . . . horrible in that long, slow slide. Horrible. I watched him. He pulled his gloves off and tried to dig his fingernails in to the ice, but it had no effect. I shouted again, but there was nothing I could do. He was sliding ever closer to the edge of the precipice."

Grieve paused and wiped his sweating brow with a handkerchief. He hesitated before saying more, and I thought I saw the old, cunning look in his eyes again.

"George knew that he was moments away from death," Grieve continued at last, in a quiet whisper, "and he called out to me. With the last words that he ever spoke he told me to come here when I got back, and to say goodbye! To you, and . . . and to her!"

His voice broke. He struggled to regain control over himself.

"He told me to promise. I did as he asked, and he disappeared over the edge forever. A prayer came to my lips, and –"

Grieve's jaw had suddenly dropped in amazement, and his eyeballs almost sprang out of his head. He pointed at the portrait behind me and screamed like an animal caught in a snare, before dropping to the floor on his knees.

"Cover it up!" he shrieked.

I turned around and looked at the portrait. While Grieve had been speaking, the tablecloth had somehow slipped down, revealing George's face, staring out of the background with a new, accusing expression. Down his cheeks were flowing tears, red tears – tears of blood!

"Get out!" I shouted at the cowering creature that was Vincent Grieve. "Get out!"

"Your, your sister is not here?" he asked in a tortured whisper.

"No. Now go. Go! Leave this house and never come back."

I virtually picked him up and dragged him to the front door.

"Wait," I called, just before pushing him out of my house, "tell me one thing. When exactly did George die?"

"Why?"

"Just tell me."

"The twenty-third of May."

He staggered down the garden path just as Harry arrived back home from his day at art school. I didn't try to explain what had happened. Who would believe what I had seen in George's portrait? I shuddered when I remembered the twenty-third of May, when that chill feeling had swept through Lettie and me; at that very moment, thousands of miles away in the lonely, frozen wastes of the Arctic, George had fallen to his icy death.

Harry and I watched as the loathsome man crept

furtively away.

"My God," I suddenly breathed.

"What is it?"

"Can you see anything strange about him at the moment?" I asked my brother.

"No, just his nasty, cowed way of walking, and the wretched . . . Robert! He has a double shadow!"

It was true. Two shadows were following his departing figure. That was why he glanced behind him continually. He was being followed by something, something which no one could see, but which cast its own shadow.

Two days later, I returned home from a walk and found the household in total confusion. Despite my words, Vincent Grieve had visited us again. Unfortunately, my wife had been upstairs at the time, and Harry was at his studio. Without waiting for the servant to announce him, Grieve had walked straight into the dining room, where Lettie had been sitting reading. Apparently he had edged anxiously along the wall with the portrait on it, then sat directly underneath the painting so that he didn't have to look at it.

Grieve was unwell and in a state of absolute exhaustion, but he insisted on declaring to Lettie that he loved her. She angrily rejected him. But he told her that it was George's dying wish that he, Vincent Grieve, should comfort her in her grief, help her to recover, and then, eventually, marry her.

Lettie stared at his thin face and his mad, desperate

eyes, utterly appalled. At that moment a loud, snapping noise came from above. Grieve looked up, to see George's portrait plummeting down the wall. It struck him heavily on the head and knocked him to the ground. Rachel heard the noise from upstairs and ran down to see what had happened. When she entered the room a few seconds later, she found Grieve lying unconscious on the floor, with Lettie still staring at him in horror. Rachel had sent for the doctor, and now Grieve was being tended in a spare room on the third floor.

I was livid. I ran upstairs with the intention of ordering him to get out of my house, but the man was delirious. The doctor explained that Grieve was in a critical condition, and that to move him might be fatal. In other words, I had to provide a bed for this miserable specimen of humanity, perhaps for days or even weeks. It was a repulsive idea, and I immediately employed a nurse, so that my family could avoid him completely.

In fact, as it turned out, Grieve left our house even sooner than I hoped. In the middle of that night, a scream pierced the darkness and my sleep. I rushed to Grieve's room, where the sound had come from. Standing outside it, hugging each other in terror, were Lettie and the nurse.

Opening the door and glancing inside, I saw him sitting up in bed, completely crazed. I shut the door and locked it, then tried to calm Lettie and the nurse down. My wife and Harry arrived moments later. We

led the two distraught women downstairs and made them tea. Eventually Lettie was calm enough to tell us what had happened.

The nurse had come into her room, complaining that she was too scared to watch over her patient because he had two shadows. Lettie had agreed to go and see for herself. When they went into his room, she could see that the nurse was right; the flickering candlelight appeared to cast two shadows of Vincent Grieve on the wall. It was as she was looking down at him in a mixture of wonder and horror that he opened his eyes. There was such a burden of suffering and guilt in his look that for a moment she felt forced to return his gaze.

"It was the memory of your face that made me do it!" he hissed. "We were at the top of the ridge. I pushed him, and he fell onto the wrong side of the ridge. Then I realized what I had done, so I held out my hands to . . . to help him. To stop him falling. To save him. He was slipping away, but I just managed to grasp his fingertips. We stayed like that, catching our breath. Then we looked at each other, and I . . ."

"You what?" Lettie whispered.

"There, in front of my eyes, was the face of the man you loved," Grieve groaned, "and I hated him. If it wasn't for him, you'd love me."

"No!"

"I let go of one of his hands. His body shifted on the ice. I waited for a moment. If he had shouted,

or screamed, or begged . . . But he was so calm. I let go of his other hand. He slid away from me. He slid away, slowly, slowly, and all the time he was staring at me, staring at me, all the time, until . . ."

"Until what?"

"Until he slipped over the edge of the precipice."

Grieve had suddenly pointed at something Lettie couldn't see, the thing that was casting the second shadow on the wall.

"But that didn't stop him – he's still staring at me. Even now, after all this time. Wherever I go, he's staring. He never stops. He never leaves me. He'll be staring at me until I die!"

It was at this point that Lettie had run screaming from the room.

I was no longer prepared to have this murderer in my house, not under any circumstances. I ran up the stairs. I'm not sure what I meant to do – take him to the police station, or just throw him out of the front door, I neither knew nor cared. As I was fumbling to unlock the door to his room, I could hear him screaming inside.

"No, don't – I beg you. Don't let go! No! No! No-oooooooo!"

I burst into the room to find the bed empty and the window wide open. I rushed over to it. Grieve was sliding slowly, inexorably, down the wet, black slope of the roof outside. His fingers were scrabbling frantically at the tiles, his nails scratching against them horribly. He was looking in my direction,

gazing imploringly up at the window, but I couldn't help feeling that he was looking straight through me at someone else.

"Stop staring at me!" he screamed.

He slipped over the edge of the roof, and fell to his death below.

A FATAL PROMISE



→ ad
Half the young men in the village were in love with May Forster. She was the nicest girl by far – intelligent, pretty and funny, not to mention rich. She was as polite to farm workers out in the fields as to the sons of a lord at a ball. I would have proposed to her myself if I thought she might say yes, but I was convinced

she'd end up with some stunningly handsome, obscenely wealthy aristocrat. I never even attempted to court her, though lots of my friends did, especially John Charrington.

Just the thought of John Charrington marrying May Forster used to make me laugh. He was a pleasant enough sort of man, but he wasn't much to look at, and he could be a bit slow at times. He wasn't exactly a barrel of laughs, either. And yet I'll say this about him: whenever he set out to do something, he generally did it. He was like a little terrier, never giving up, holding on grimly no matter what anyone told him.

He first asked her to marry him when he was twenty-one. She refused. He asked her again two years later. She refused again. When he asked her for a third time, just after he'd bought a small farm, not only did she refuse, she told him never to ask her again. She went even further – she said that she didn't want to hurt his feelings, but she'd rather live on a desert island all by herself than contemplate a life married to him.

Poor old John. We all felt a bit sorry for him, although it was his own fault. If someone doesn't love you, they don't love you, so there's no point making yourself into a laughing stock.

A few months after this happened, John came into the local inn, where some of us used to meet on a Saturday evening, looking more than usually pleased with himself.

"Are you doing anything on Saturday the fourth of

September?" he asked me.

"Haven't a clue," I answered. "It's months away."

"The thing is, I want to ask you something."

"What is it?"

He smiled at me, a great big beam that looked a bit strange on that face of his, which was usually so grave.

"Well?" I asked.

"Will you be my best man?"

After I got over the initial shock, I shook him firmly by the hand and announced the good news to the entire room.

"John's getting married!"

Everyone clustered around, clapping him on the back, and someone went to the bar to see if there was any champagne. I was really delighted, because for some time I'd been thinking about what a fool he was making himself look over May Forster. "There are plenty of other fish in the sea," I used to tell him, to which he always replied, rather pompously: "No, Peter, there's only one fish in the sea." Now, finally, it looked as though he'd come around to my way of thinking.

The champagne appeared. I opened it myself, after giving the bottle a good shake, so that for a minute everyone was holding out their glasses and laughing.

"Who's the lucky girl, John?" someone called.

"May Forster," he said.

There was a brief silence before we all burst out laughing. It wasn't like John to tell a joke, but when

he did it was always a good one.

"But it's true!" he said.

"You don't mean it?" I asked.

"Of course I mean it," he told me, frowning, as though he was completely astonished that I could doubt it. "Didn't I always say I'd marry May Forster?"

"Yes, but —"

"Well now you know the day: Saturday the fourth of September."

We all began clapping him on the back once more, as if the fact of marrying May Forster, as opposed to anyone else, required a new and even more enthusiastic display of congratulations.

"What does she see in you, John?" joked James Giles, although perhaps there was an edge to the question — he'd once been turned down by May himself.

"Don't you know?"

"No," said James, to general laughter.

In all honesty, I could see his point of view. James was all the things that John wasn't: clever, witty and good-looking. It was ridiculous to think that May would prefer to marry John, who was rather plain and ordinary and, well, boring.

"Well I'll tell you," John said calmly, and in such a way that we all leaned forward and listened more carefully, as though we might learn something: "I never, ever, give up."

I thought a lot about John and May in the next week. I couldn't help feeling that she was making a big mistake. It didn't seem right to me that she should choose to marry a man just because he wouldn't stop

pestering her. Someone's persistence was hardly a decent basis for one of the biggest decisions of her life. Where was the love? Where was the passion? How were they going to live together for the rest of their days? But the next time I saw May, I stopped asking questions like that.

She blushed like a schoolgirl when I congratulated her, and tears of happiness — yes, tears — formed in her eyes, as though she could scarcely believe her luck in marrying such a wonderful man. I was left in no doubt that she adored him.

Something else happened around that time which revealed John to me in a completely new light. I was walking home one summer evening, after a very enjoyable time at the inn with my friends, and I decided to take a short cut through the churchyard. I climbed over the wall and began threading my way through the graves to the other side.

I saw May, sitting on a flat tomb, with the full glory of the evening light illuminating her face, filtering through her rich, chestnut-brown hair. She was so breathtakingly beautiful that I just stopped in my tracks and stared. John was lying down in the grass at her feet. Her expression was so tender and loving that a kind of regret swept through me, a regret that she didn't love me.

"Darling!" I heard John say. "Nothing could take me away from you! I'd come back from the dead for you if I had to!"

I didn't know he was capable of such passion,

and I stole away from the scene quietly, very moved. My opinion of their relationship was utterly revised. They were head over heels in love.

July and August passed, and the wedding drew near. Two days before the actual day, I had to go to Oxford on business. The train was late. I was standing on the platform, looking at my watch and grumbling to myself, when I saw John and May. They were walking up and down, arm in arm, at the far end of the platform, unaware of the bustle around them. I didn't want to interrupt, so I buried my nose in a newspaper until the train arrived. John got on, but May stayed behind.

"Hello!" John exclaimed when he saw me — I'd walked up through the train until I found him.

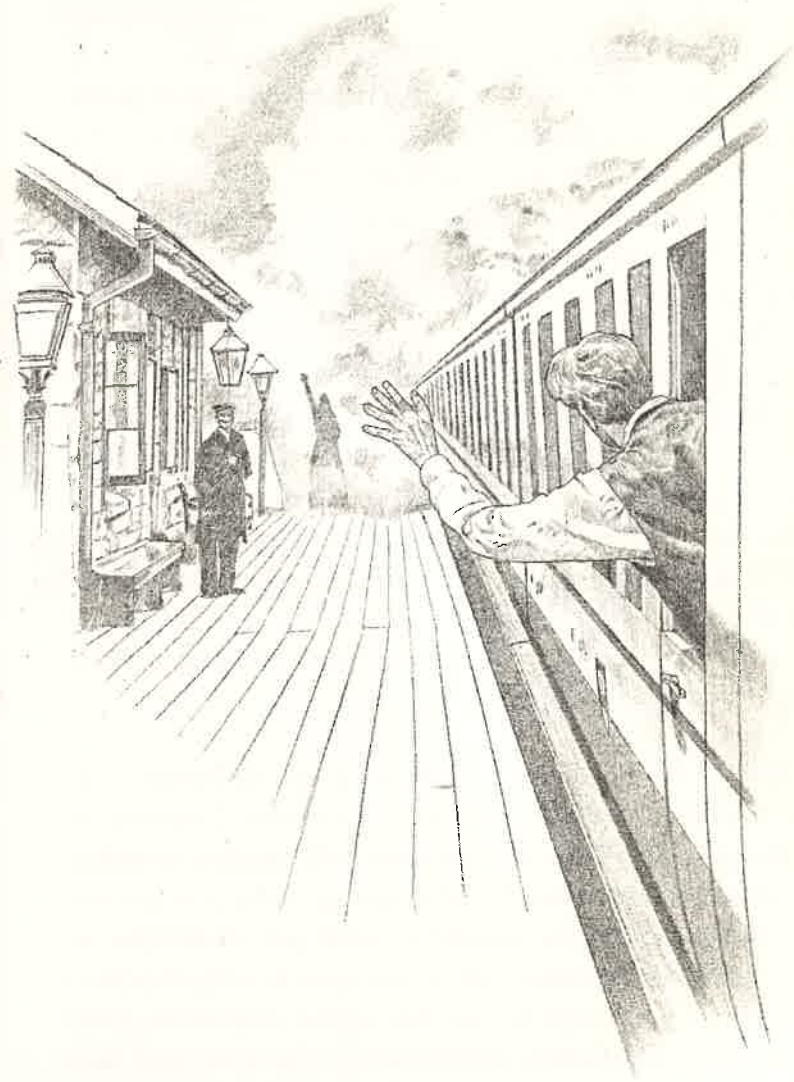
"Where are you off to?" I asked.

"Visiting Mr. Banbridge, my godfather," he replied, before leaning out of the window to talk to May. I saw that her eyes were red-rimmed, and I was struck once again, and not without a tinge of envy, by the intensity of her love.

"I wish you wouldn't go, John," I heard her say, "not just before the wedding like this. What if something happens?"

"Do you think I'd let anything stop our wedding?" he asked. "No chance! Try not to worry, May."

"Don't go," she whispered just as the train started to pull away, and in such a pleading way that, if she had been talking to me, I would have thrown my suitcase out of the window and jumped after it.



But John had decided to go, and once he had decided to do something he never changed his mind.

"I'll be back tomorrow," he called, "or definitely on Saturday in time for the wedding! I promise!"

The train built up speed, and soon May was just a small figure in a cloud of steam, waving.

"I'm afraid Mr. Banbridge is really ill," John said glumly, sitting back, "and he's sent for me, so I feel I have to go. He's been very good to me over the years, and as I said to May, I'll be back in time."

"But what if . . . what if Mr. Banbridge dies, John?"

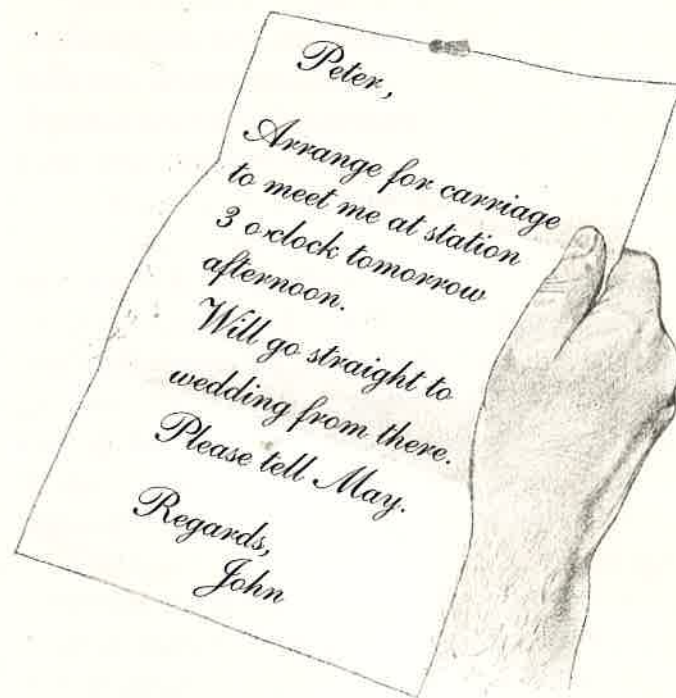
"Alive or dead, I mean to be married on Saturday!"

He opened the newspaper, rather grumpily, and started to do the crossword. Two hours later, when the train pulled into Oxford, he'd only completed a few clues, but he was still working at it doggedly.

"It might take weeks, but I'll finish this crossword," he claimed.

That was the sort of man he was, ridiculous and impressive, both at the same time.

When I got back from Oxford late the following day, the first thing I did was go to John's house. I wanted to reassure myself that he was back. It's the sort of thing you like to know when you're going to be a best man the following afternoon. Well, he wasn't there, but at least there was a letter waiting for me when I got home. It told me to arrange for the carriage to meet him at the station at three o'clock the following afternoon and take him straight to the wedding. It also asked me to pass this information on to May.



Three o'clock! He intended to arrive with only half an hour to spare! In one sense it was a relief to know his plans, but that letter also made me very angry. Half an hour left no margin for error, and it seemed like an insult to May to take a risk like that.

If May was upset or annoyed, she didn't show it. I explained that John and I would come straight to the church from the station.

"He's so good," she said. "He wouldn't have the heart to turn Mr. Banbridge down. Only . . . he will turn up on time, Peter, won't he?"

I reassured May that there was no doubt about this, although I was far from certain myself, and after trying to cheer her up with some chatter and a couple of jokes about married life, I said goodnight and went home to bed.

The fourth of September was the longest day of my life. I woke up early, with butterflies in my stomach, and spent the morning pacing up and down restlessly. I'd start to read a book, and then realize I'd been looking at the same page for five minutes without taking in a word of it; or I'd take a stroll in the garden to check how the vegetables were doing, then completely forget why I'd gone out there.

Old Tom Stringham was in the garden, a man who did some work for me occasionally. I'm afraid I was a bit sharp with him, telling him off for something that wasn't his fault.

"Very well, sir," he answered, so meekly that it made me feel guilty.

"Sorry Tom - didn't mean to snap. I'm just a little nervous about this wedding."

"I'm sure you'll be fine, sir. Happy with your speech?"

"Yes, yes, I'm not worried about that. It's John I'm worried about. What if he doesn't make it?"

"Don't you bother yourself with Mr. Charrington, sir. Why, you can set your watch by that man."

"That's true."

"Mark my words sir, John Charrington won't be late."

"Yes. Thank you, Tom."

"Happy to oblige, sir, and good luck to you. I may walk up to the church myself later on."

"Perhaps I'll see you there."

At the station at half-past two, in my top hat and tails, I attracted several admiring glances. The sky, which had been a brilliant blue all morning, was taking on a threatening aspect, but I was far too preoccupied with John's imminent arrival to worry about rain. My eyes were fixed on the hands of the old clock that hung down over the platform. Never, in my entire life, have I seen a clock measure out time more slowly. By the time it chimed three, I was extremely tense.

The train was late. I stood on the edge of the platform, looking along the track for the first sight of it. It seemed like ages before I saw a puff of steam in the distance. As I strained to see, the engine gradually came into view, although at such a sluggish pace that I was cursing the driver in my mind. It seemed to creep into the station, as though the driver could barely be bothered to make the last few yards. But at last it had arrived, and I could, at last, stop worrying about John, and start worrying about ordinary things, such as if I had the ring, and whether my speech would be well-received at the reception.

The doors swung open to let out all the passengers, who piled up their luggage and hailed porters. I couldn't see John, but the platform was crowded. I

thought he'd appear by my side at any moment – but as the people dispersed, no John appeared. I willed him to be there, to emerge from a carriage or a cluster of people and put my fears to rest, but fewer and fewer people were left on the platform. The train steamed out of the station. He had missed it.

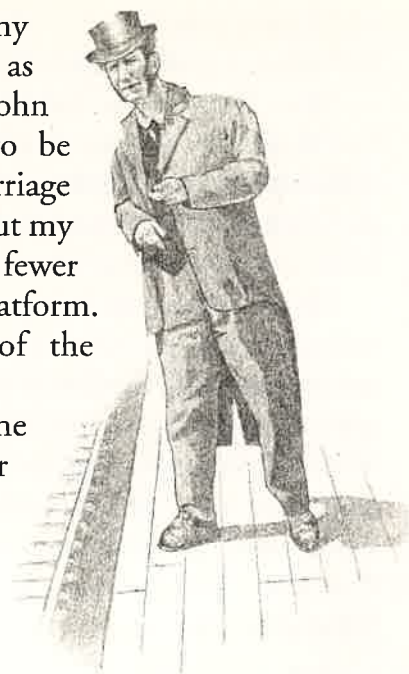
I was livid. What a fool he was! There wasn't another train for over half an hour. Even if we drove like the wind, we would be at least forty-five minutes late. I was very angry, more for May than for me. He had no right to treat her so badly.

If things seemed grim then, they looked even worse when the next train arrived. John wasn't on that one either. I rushed out to the carriage.

“Drive to the church!”

Anxiety replaced anger. What on earth had become of him? Had he been taken ill? In which case, why didn't he send a telegram? Had there been an accident? I grimaced when I thought of the news I was going to have to break to May and her family, waiting at the church with all their friends.

It was five past four when, the sky now heavy with ominous black clouds, the carriage drew up at the



churchyard gate. I was surprised to see a crowd of eager onlookers outside the door; it was as though they were waiting for the happy couple to emerge from the church, which was, of course, impossible. I hurried up to them in a mad panic, hearing comments such as “That's the best man” and “Better late than never!” as I approached. Just to the left I saw my gardener, Tom, and – perhaps because I wasn't looking forward to facing May and telling her the awful news that there wasn't going to be a wedding – I paused to speak to him.

“A sorry mess, Tom, isn't it?” I whispered.

“Yes indeed, sir. Sorry you're late, sir. Sure it wasn't your fault.”

“Me? It's John, not me. He wasn't at the station.”

“But he's here, sir.”

“Here?”

“Yes sir, he arrived at half-past three on the dot. Like I said, sir, you can set your watch by John Charrington.”

A feeling of intense dismay flooded through me as I thought that whatever had happened must have somehow been my fault – I had ruined the wedding.

“It's probably all over by now,” Tom continued. “They asked James Giles to step into your shoes.”

While I was still reeling with shock, Tom touched me on the elbow and began to whisper in my ear discreetly.

“Between you and me, something's gone badly wrong. Not just you being late sir, if you'll excuse me for saying so, but in my opinion

Mr. Charrington looked mighty peculiar.”

“What are you saying, Tom?”

“I think he’s been drinking.”

“Drinking?”

“Yes sir. I think he’s been drinking a lot. He turned up here all dirty and dusty, as if he’d taken a tumble, sir, and his face was as white as a sheet, with a nasty mark on the forehead. He walked up this here path, sir, as you are standing on now, in a mighty strange manner, and in he went with his eyes fixed straight ahead, white as a ghost – not a glance or a word for any of us, and him being such a down-to-earth and friendly sort of man as a rule, sir.”

I had never heard Tom make such a long speech before in his life. I was just preparing to slip into the church and try to salvage what I could from the situation, when I noticed the crowd shifting and straining to see what was going on, and I realized that the bride and groom were about to come out. All down the path the waiting villagers were holding handfuls of rice to throw over John and May, and from the bell tower overhead came the lilting peal of the wedding bells.

Out they came. Looking just as Tom had described him, if not even worse, John walked slowly past. I tried to catch his eye, but he glanced neither left nor right. He looked so ghastly that the crowd hesitated, not sure whether to throw their rice, and a mood of intense gloom seemed to settle over everyone, pervading the churchyard with a feeling almost of despair. It was at that instant that the cheery wedding peal petered

out, replaced, within a few seconds, by a sound which made my heart stop: a single, mournful, tolling bell; the grim knell of a funeral . . .

I looked at May, holding onto John’s arm and staring down blankly at the ground. She was shivering,



as though utterly freezing, and she was almost as ashen as he was. Her wedding dress of white silk added to the effect, so that the only part of her which wasn’t deathly-pale was her dark-brown hair. She looked as if she was in a state of shock.

Suddenly the bellringers came tumbling out of the church door, panic etched on their faces. In a confused scramble, they pushed the relatives of the bride and groom out of their way.

“You should be ashamed of yourselves!” someone in the crowd shouted at them.

"It's not us!" one of them replied, his eyes wide with terror. "We don't know what happened, we were just, we . . . the bells are playing themselves! There's no one up there!"

Apparently unaware of the confusion and fear this claim provoked, John and May reached the carriage waiting to take them to the reception and climbed in. The door slammed shut behind them.

"May God have mercy on them," I heard old Tom whisper in a hoarse voice.

Half the crowd began to babble and talk, while the other half walked away in frightened silence, some crossing themselves. I suddenly found Mr. Forster, May's father, standing at my side.

"If I'd seen him in that state before the service I'd have called the whole thing off," he muttered. "And you, Peter – how did you allow him to arrive in that condition? Why were you late?"

"I'm so sorry, I . . ."

"There's no use in apologizing, man! The damage has already been done." A mixture of anger and sadness flashed in his eyes. Then he turned his back on me, marched away and went to comfort his wife, who was crying quietly by the church door.

I was feeling quite ill from a mixture of emotions: shame and embarrassment at missing the service, and, well, outright fear about John and May. What on earth was going on? Even so, I decided that I had to do the best I could from that point on, and I began to escort people into the carriages that were to take them to the

reception. Soon the carriages were full, and we were ready to set off.

The bride and groom's carriage went first, with the other carriages following. However, the pace was so slow that it was like being in a funeral cortège rather than a wedding procession. I was with May's family in the second carriage, and I shouted to the driver of the first to speed up.

"I'm doing my best sir," he called back in a puzzled voice, "but it's the horses – they won't go any faster."

We decided to overtake the carriage, and I gestured to the carriages behind ours to follow. We thought that if the guests were already waiting at the reception to welcome the bride and groom, it would create a better atmosphere, and the rest of the day might pass off more successfully than the actual wedding had.

As we passed the front carriage, I couldn't help looking in, but there was nothing to see. The curtain was drawn. The pace of the horses was painfully slow. The driver shook the reins, becoming quite angry, yet the horses took no notice of him whatsoever, as though they were being restrained by an outside force. This only added to the sense of uneasiness and confusion we all felt.

At May's house, all the guests assembled on the steps outside the front door and on the gravel driveway, some of us doing our best to seem chatty and cheerful. But above us, rolling storm clouds rumbled, and nothing could dispel the deep feeling of gloom I felt inside. This feeling only intensified when the bride

and groom's carriage finally came crunching up the drive to stop in front of us. Mr. Forster and I walked forward. The curtain, which had been closed before, was now drawn back, revealing . . . nothing.

"Coachman, it's empty!" Mr. Forster exclaimed.

"But I drove straight here, sir," the coachman answered, "and I swear there wasn't anyone got out."

Mr. Forster opened the door. For some moments we just stared at the scene inside. The carriage wasn't empty. May was cowering on the floor, her hands clamped over her face, staring out of the gaps between her fingers with wild, unseeing eyes. John was nowhere to be seen.

"May!" shouted her father in a strangled cry, lifting her out of the carriage.

I looked at her, half-dead in his arms. She was white, so white, and her face was engraved with horror. She had the look of someone who has stared into the eyes of the unknown. I have never before witnessed such desolation. I hope I never will again. As for her hair, her beautiful, shining, dark-brown hair . . . every strand of it was as white as snow.

A tremendous crack of thunder overhead broke the stillness, and signified the start of utter chaos. May's mother fainted, collapsing to the ground, and suddenly, as rain fell out of the sky to drench us in seconds, everyone was shouting or screaming or running around madly. Some went off to call for a doctor, and still more were just screaming out of pure, hysterical terror. In the middle of it, Mr. Forster and I stood silent and unmoving, he with his daughter lying

limply in his arms, tears streaming down his cheeks.

I felt someone tugging at my elbow. Looking down, I saw a small boy, frightened and bewildered, holding up a piece of paper.

"Are you Mr. Templer, sir?"

"What? Yes."

"Telegram, sir."

"What?"

"Telegram."

I took it from him mechanically, my senses so battered by tragedy and baffled by the inexplicable that I was barely aware of what I was doing. The boy stared up at me, waiting.

"Aren't you going to read it sir?"

"What? Oh, yes, yes of course."

I opened the envelope. My eyes scanned the words without taking in their meaning. The letters swam in front of me. I shook my head, narrowed my eyes and, with great difficulty, started to read.

Heartbreaking news . . . John thrown from horse on way to Oxford Station at one o'clock . . . died instantly . . . sending this in hope you receive it before wedding . . . Profound sympathies to May and family . . . Mrs. Banbridge

John had died in Oxford at one o'clock – and he had married May Forster at half-past three, in the presence of half the village. What happened in the carriage on the way to May's house? No one knows. No one ever will. They brought John Charrington's body from Oxford and buried him in the churchyard. As for poor May, she never regained consciousness again. She died of shock, and was buried next to him.

The graves were near the spot where I'd seen May and John only a few months before, when May looked more beautiful than it's possible to imagine, and John made what turned out to be a fatal promise: that if he had to, he would come back from the dead for her.

THE FOUR-FIFTEEN EXPRESS



In 1857, after a six month trip to Poland and the Baltic States, I returned to England for Christmas. I planned to spend the holiday with my good friends Isobel and Jonathan Jelf, who lived in the village of Dumbleton, near Clayborough. I usually spent Christmas with my friends and I have many very happy memories of those times. Yet, as it turned out, my memories of Christmas 1857 weren't to be quite as pleasant as the rest.

Clayborough lies on the East Anglian Line which runs from London to Crampton. I arrived at the station in London with plenty of time to spare. It was the fourth of December, a cold and foggy day.

Wanting a compartment to myself, I had a quiet word with the guard, a big, ruddy-faced fellow with a fine set of whiskers. He led me down the platform to an empty compartment and gave me a key, telling me to lock the door so no one else could get in. When I got out at Clayborough, I was to leave the key under the seat. I was more than happy with this arrangement, because I was rather tired and didn't feel like making polite small talk with strangers.

I have to admit that I felt rather smug when, glancing outside, I saw a hunched figure hurrying along the carriage. At least, I said to myself, he wouldn't be able to get into my compartment. As if to confirm this, he stopped outside the door and rattled the handle. However, to my great astonishment, he had a key as well. He unlocked the door and let himself in.

As soon as I got a clear look at him, I realized I knew him. He was a tall man, thin-lipped and stooping, with a gloomy expression.

He had a large, battered document case, which he carefully placed under his seat. Several times I saw him pat the outside of his jacket, as though checking that something in an inside pocket was still there.

He was John Derry, a lawyer I had met at Dumbleton three years before. Isobel was his cousin. I couldn't help thinking that time had been unkind to him, since we last saw each other. He was very pale, almost alarmingly pale, with a restless, anguished look in his eyes, but when we started to talk he gave no hint that anything was wrong.

"Mr. Derry, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's right."

"I had the pleasure of meeting you at Dumbleton a few years ago."

"I thought I recognized you," he said, peering at me closely. "I'm afraid I've forgotten your..."

"Langford, William Langford. I've known Jonathan and Isobel for years. I'm spending Christmas with them. Perhaps you are too?"

"Oh no, not me," said Mr. Derry, puffing out his chest with an air of self-importance. "I shall be far too busy to celebrate Christmas this year. I'm engaged on crucial business concerning the new branch line from Blackwater to Stockbridge, which you'll know about, of course."

I explained that I had been out of the country for

some time and had no knowledge of it.

"I'm surprised," he said in a reproving voice, as if everyone in Poland and the Baltic States must have been talking about little else. "Stockbridge needs a branch line if it's to remain a flourishing town, and I have been overseeing the project. I'm one of the directors of the East Anglian Line," he said proudly.

Talkative, pompous, obsessed with the new branch line from Blackwater to Stockbridge, Mr. Derry methodically outlined the main obstacles he had met during the course of his work: the greed of the landowners, the indifference of the people of Stockbridge, the objections of the local newspaper, each of which Mr. Derry elaborated on in merciless, mind-numbing detail.

In less than ten minutes I was struggling against a tidal wave of sleep and boredom. My companion, ignoring the enormous yawns that were overpowering me, went on to tell me even more information about the proposed new branch line, until my head ached and my eyelids quivered with fatigue. At length I was roused by these words:

"Seventy-five thousand pounds, cash down!"

"Seventy-five thousand," I said, in as lively a voice as I could manage, "cash down."

"A large sum to carry around," he whispered, patting the side of his jacket. That revived me a bit.

"You don't mean to say you have seventy-five thousand pounds in your pocket?" I exclaimed.

"My good sir," said Mr. Derry in great irritation,

"didn't I first tell you that fact not forty-five minutes ago? The seventy-five thousand pounds has to be handed over to a Stockbridge landowner by half-past seven this evening."

"But how will you get to Stockbridge from Blackwater by half-past seven? There isn't a branch line between those towns yet."

"To Stockbridge?" echoed the lawyer, as if I had just said the strangest thing he had ever heard. "To Stockbridge? I thought I'd just explained that the landowner's lawyer has offices in Mallingford, less than a mile from Blackwater. Obviously I will walk."

"I'm sorry," I stammered, "I think I must have misunderstood you." Or dozed off, more likely.

"I think you must," he said, reprovingly.

"Would you like me to take a message to your cousin?" I asked, in an attempt to get him off the subject of his cherished railway.

"You may wish her," he said, "a very merry Christmas. And you may advise her," he added after a moment's thought, chuckling to himself, "not to burn down the blue bedroom while someone is staying in it. It is not a very festive act."

"There was a fire in your room once?"

"There was indeed, and very unpleasant it was. Are we here?" he asked as the train slowed down. "Time has flown past."

Not for me it hadn't. I was glad to see the back of him. As he put on his coat, the door which connected the compartment with the corridor opened and the

guard with the ruddy face and big whiskers came in.

"Tickets please!"

"I'm going to Clayborough," I said.

"Very well, sir," he answered, checking my ticket before going out into the corridor again.

"He didn't ask to see yours," I said to Mr. Derry, rather surprised.

"They never do," he replied. "I travel free. Everyone on the East Anglian Line knows who I am."

"Blackwater! Blackwater!" shouted a porter on the platform as the train drew into the station.

"It's been extremely interesting talking to you," said Mr. Derry, which was no doubt true – for him.

"I wish you a good evening."

"Good evening," I replied, holding out my hand.

He hesitated so emphatically that I found myself looking down at my hand, as if there were something wrong with it. For some reason, Derry wouldn't, or couldn't, shake it. Instead he lifted his hat slightly, nodded curtly, and stepped out onto the platform.

Leaning forward to watch this curious man, I stepped on something. It turned out to be a cigar case, of dark morocco leather, with John Derry's initials on the side in a silver monogram. I sprang out of the carriage and called out to the guard.

"When do we depart?"

"Two minutes, sir."

I dashed along the platform as fast as my legs could carry me. I could see him distinctly about halfway along the platform. As I got nearer, I saw that he had

stopped to talk to someone in the middle of a crowd of people.

There was a gaslight quite close to them which, as I quickly threaded my way through the crowd, clearly illuminated their faces. Mr. Derry, with a dubious expression, was listening to his companion. This man was considerably younger and shorter than he was, with a red face and sandy hair, wearing a grey suit.

"Mr. Derry!"

He wheeled around at my shout and gazed at me with watery eyes. At the same instant, I somehow collided with a burly porter who was coming the other way. We bounced off each other. My eyes were turned away from Mr. Derry for a second at the most, perhaps only half a second. But in that time he and the other man had . . . had vanished!

I looked around me, stupefied. It was impossible that the two men could have disappeared so quickly, but they were nowhere to be seen. Had they vanished into thin air? Had the platform swallowed them up? Where were they?

"Are you all right, sir?" said the porter I'd bumped into. "You look a little dazed."

"There were two men standing here, just moments ago," I said. "Did you see them?"

"Can't say I did, sir."

A long blast from the train's whistle indicated that it was about to depart.

I saw the guard standing outside my carriage door,



waving at me frantically. I glanced around one last time, then set off as fast as the crowd would allow. I reached my carriage just as the train was pulling slowly out of the station, and was bundled through the door by the guard. Then, breathless and bewildered, still holding John Derry's cigar case in my hand, I flopped back into my seat.

It was the strangest thing I had ever encountered. One moment they were there, talking, with the gaslight shining on their faces, and the next moment — they were gone. Where? How? I couldn't stop thinking about it, and the event was still spinning through my brain when I was met by my friends at Dumbleton.

“Hope you don't mind,” Jonathan said, “but we've got some dinner guests. Dry old sticks, I'm afraid. Half a dozen of 'em. Decided to do the lot in one fell swoop, then we don't have to see them again until Easter.”

I won't describe the guests or the dinner in great detail. There was a country baronet and a country baroness; there was a parson; there was a governess; there was a turkey, and a haunch of venison; and there was conversation, of sorts. To the left of me two ladies discussed their dogs, while to the right of me two gentlemen discussed their horses. It was dreadfully dull, and indeed, became so excruciating that eventually the conversation petered out entirely.

Jonathan, wearing a fixed smile on his face, stared earnestly into his wine glass. Isobel looked

as though she was trying to think of something to say, though with little hope of success. Someone coughed. Prompted by this awkward pause, I made the unhappy mistake of telling part of my story.

"By the way, Isobel, today I met a relation of yours on the train."

"Indeed?" she said, looking at me gratefully. "Who was it?"

"Your cousin, John Derry. He told me to wish you a very merry Christmas."

Isobel looked at me, utterly startled, as though I were crazy. Jonathan put down his wine glass rather too heavily, so that some of it sloshed onto the tablecloth. I had no idea why my words had provoked this reaction, so I pressed on with Mr. Derry's joke.

"And he asked me to tell you," I continued desperately, "not to burn down the blue room when there's someone staying in it!"

Before I reached the end of my sentence, I became aware that the other guests were staring at me, wide-eyed and disapproving. Absolute silence greeted my anecdote. I felt as though I had said something which, for some reason unknown to me, was unforgivable. I sat there, miserable and embarrassed, not daring to say another word, until the parson, a decent and kind-hearted man called Prendergast, rescued me.

"You've been abroad for some time haven't you, Mr. Langford? In Poland, and, and the Baltic, isn't it? You must have had many interesting experiences while you were there."

I felt very grateful to him, and we began a rather lame conversation which, after a few minutes, thawed the awkward atmosphere a little. Nevertheless, I was relieved when dinner was over. The ladies retired to the drawing room immediately, while the gentlemen stayed behind.

"What on earth did I do wrong?" I whispered to the parson as the servants cleared the table.

"You embarrassed Isobel, in front of the cream of local society, by talking about John Derry."

"But is there something wrong with mentioning John Derry? He's her cousin, after all."

"I'll tell you what's wrong with it," he replied, dropping his voice to a barely audible whisper. "Three months ago, John Derry took seventy-five thousand pounds of company money and disappeared."

"Perhaps you met someone else, whom you mistook for my cousin," Isobel said later, after the guests had gone and I had apologized profusely for my blunder.

"Impossible."

"The fact that he talked about the fire in the blue room," Jonathan said, "proves that it was him. There was a bird's nest in the chimney, you see, William, so the room was smoked out. Tell me, how did he look?"

"Absolutely awful, in fact. And he behaved rather oddly. Wouldn't shake my hand. Nothing wrong with his powers of speech though," I added

ruefully. "That's what makes me think he's innocent. He didn't show a trace of guilt, not even when the guard came around."

"And you're sure it was him?" Isobel asked again. Rather crossly, I fetched the cigar case from my room.

"Oh," she said sadly, when I handed it to her. "This is definitely his, he's had it for years and years. It's got his initials on it, in that funny design."

"What a mystery," Jonathan sighed, shaking his head. "I think you and I should go to Blackwater tomorrow, William, and try to sort this out."

"Until a few months ago," the stationmaster at Blackwater told us, "Mr. Derry was a regular visitor here because of the new branch line. But then, gentlemen, I'm sorry to say there was a bit of a scandal."

"So you haven't seen him here recently? Yesterday, for example?"

"Good heavens, no, this is the last place he'd think of showing himself. Everyone here knows what he looks like and what he did. He'd be arrested on sight!"

"My friend came down from London yesterday on the four-fifteen, and saw Mr. Derry on the train."

"With the greatest respect sir," said the stationmaster, "I find that very difficult to believe."

"Perhaps you can ask the guard who was on that train," I replied. "Big fellow with bushy whiskers. He saw him too. Do you know the man I mean?"

"Benjamin Somers. As honest a man as I ever met. He's here now, as luck would have it, waiting to board the eleven-forty."

The man was sent for. I recognized him at once.

"Somers," the stationmaster started, "do you know what Mr. John Derry looks like?"

"The dirty dog who robbed all that money, sir?"

"Yes."

"Know him anywhere, sir."

"Was he on the four-fifteen express yesterday?"

"The four-fifteen? Yesterday? No sir."

"But you must have seen him!" I exclaimed. "He was sitting in the same carriage as me!"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I haven't laid eyes on him for months," the guard said emphatically, "and if I had, I would've arrested the filthy robber myself."

"Well, gentlemen, sorry we can't be of any help," said the stationmaster. "However I think I can safely say that Mr. Derry was not on the four-fifteen express yesterday. Now, if you don't mind, I've got work to do."

"But . . ." I cried.

"Good day to you," was his curt reply.

We were left standing on the platform, watching the retreating backs of the stationmaster and the guard. For some moments we were silent.

"Now look here," Jonathan said suddenly, "are you sure you're all right? You're not a bit under the weather from all that travel, maybe?"

"Of course I'm all right!" I responded. "You'll be telling me I dreamed it all next."

"It's not beyond the bounds of possibility . . ."
 "And this is a dream as well, I suppose?" I said angrily, waving the cigar case under his nose.



I was infuriated by the episode at Blackwater station, and wanted the mystery cleared up. I wrote to the chairman of the East Anglian Line, telling him roughly what had happened, and received a request from him to attend an interview at which Benjamin Somers would be present. I assumed the purpose of the interview was to investigate

whether the guard was an accomplice to John Derry's crime. I was wrong.

I was shown into the boardroom of the company, where nine or ten grave-looking gentlemen, the directors, were seated around a large table. Three clerks sat at a separate desk. The chairman of the board introduced himself and thanked me for coming.

"This is a great puzzle about Mr. John Derry, Mr. Langford."

"Yes indeed."

"You claim to have seen him on the four-fifteen express from London to Crampton, on, er . . ." He looked down at a piece of paper; "on the the fourth of December. Is that correct?"

"That's right. I can prove it. He left his cigar case behind. Here it is."

The chairman turned it over in his hands before passing it to the other directors.

"This is quite extraordinary," he muttered to himself. "Did you talk to Mr. Derry?"

"Yes, or rather, he talked to me. He told me all about the new branch line from Blackwater to Stockbridge – construction costs, legal issues, land purchase. He was carrying seventy-five thousand pounds in cash."

"He claimed to have seventy-five thousand pounds with him?"

"Yes. He said it was for buying land."

"Are you aware," another board member asked, "that John Derry stole that exact amount of money

more than three months ago?"

"Yes. I wasn't then, but I am now."

"And yet he didn't seem guilty or unduly concerned?"

"No."

Two of the other board members began whispering to each other. If they meant to stop me from overhearing, it didn't work.

"Most unlikely," I heard one of them say.

"And as for that cigar case," whispered the other, "he must have got hold of it from somewhere else."

I felt myself flush bright red with indignation – they thought I was lying! I was beginning to regret ever having heard the name John Derry.

"Mr. Langford, no doubt you're aware that the company has offered a five thousand pound reward for any information pertaining to the whereabouts of Mr. Derry and the seventy-five thousand pounds."

My mouth actually fell open as I realized what he was implying. He thought I was making the whole thing up in order to get a reward.

"I had no idea there was such a reward," I said furiously, "and I very much resent what you seem to be suggesting!"

"I'm not suggesting anything," came the calm reply. "I merely wanted to establish if you knew about the reward. Mr. Pilkington, send for Somers, please."

While I sat fuming in my chair, a clerk went to get the guard, Benjamin Somers. The two of us

exchanged some hostile looks.

"Somers," the chairman began, "this is Mr. Langford, as I think you already know. He has told us that on the fourth of December, Mr. John Derry was on the four-fifteen from London to Crampton. In fact, they even shared a compartment. Mr. Langford has a cigar case to prove it. Was Mr. Derry in the carriage?"



"No sir."

"Why should I believe you, Somers?"

"Begging your pardon sir, but I've worked for this company nigh on thirty years now, and I've always done my best for it."

"Perhaps. Nevertheless, I want you to tell us plainly your side of the story."

"Well, I'm not used to making speeches, sir, but this gentleman . . ."

"Mr. Langford, Somers."

"Yes sir, Mr. Langford. Well, he came up to me on the platform at London, and he asked for a private compartment."

"A private compartment?" said the chairman, his eyebrows rising in surprise.

"Yes sir. So I showed him to a compartment and gave him the key. Told him to lock the door, and leave the key under the seat when he got off at Clayborough."

"Is this true, Mr. Langford?"

"Well, yes, but . . ."

"Mr. Langford," said another member of the board impatiently, "on the one hand you claim to have shared a compartment with Mr. John Derry, and on the other you claim to have locked yourself into a private compartment. Wouldn't you say there was something of a discrepancy there?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"Carry on, Somers," ordered the chairman with a weary sigh.

"Yes sir. The next time I saw the gentleman was after I'd checked his ticket at Blackwater. He went chasing off down the platform in a most peculiar manner, sir."

Reddening with anger and embarrassment once more, I attempted to explain.

"That was when I realized that Mr. Derry had left his cigar case. I was simply returning it to him,

and I was running because I didn't want to miss the train."

"And were you successful in finding Mr. Derry?"

"Er, well . . ."

"Yes or no?"

"Well, yes, I suppose."

"And yet you failed to give him the cigar case."

"I'm afraid it didn't prove . . . possible."

"Why ever not?"

"Well," I said desperately, "if I can tell you what happened . . ."

"By all means."

And so I launched into my peculiar story. I explained how I had fought my way through the crowd to get to Mr. Derry and the man who was talking to him.

"He was with someone?" the chairman asked.

"Yes."

"You'd recognize the man?"

"Oh yes. He was small and slight, with sandy hair, quite a red face, wearing a grey suit."

"You must have been quite close to notice all that," observed a member of the board.

"Yes."

"And yet you still failed to return the cigar case to Mr. Derry."

"Er . . . I'm afraid so."

"The question which springs to mind, Mr. Langford," said the chairman bluntly, "is why?"

I looked around the table, almost frantically. How

could I expect them to understand what occurred on that day? How could I myself understand it? Maybe Jonathan was right. Maybe I did dream it . . .

"Well, I ran up to Mr. Derry and his companion, shouting his name, and he turned around to look at me, and at that instant I bumped into someone, and then, and then . . ."

"Yes, Mr. Langford?"

"And then, Mr. Derry, he sort of, well, vanished. Vanished, as if into thin air."

The disbelieving silence which greeted this claim was almost unbearable.

"How far away did you say you were at the time?" someone asked eventually.

"About three yards."

I smiled weakly. Everyone was looking at me as if I were a complete idiot. Somers shook his head sadly, almost in pity.

"I'm afraid this has been a waste of time," the chairman said, shuffling some papers and standing up. "Gentlemen, let us get back to work. Somers, please accept my apologies. As for you, Mr. Langford, consider yourself fortunate that the police are not involved. It is my profound belief that you intended to defraud this company of five thousand pounds."

The injustice of it! And yet, how could what I was claiming be true? Why would a man who had stolen seventy-five thousand pounds from the company reappear three months later on the company's train? And how could that same man disappear into thin air

in an instant? I thought I was going insane. I slumped down in my chair, clutching the monogrammed cigar case to my chest as though desperately clinging to my own sanity.

The board members were preparing to leave and various clerks were buzzing around. That's when I saw him. He came into the room with a sheaf of papers in his arms, distributing them to the other clerks. A small man, of slight build, with sandy hair and a red face . . .

"That's him!" I yelled at the top of my voice.

The room fell silent. The clerk looked at me, apparently baffled, showing no sign of recognition whatsoever.

"That, sir, is Mr. Raikes, our senior clerk," said the chairman of the board. "Really, Mr. Langford, I think we've heard enough of your ludicrous . . ."

"I don't care if it's the Queen herself!" I exclaimed in excitement. "That's the man who was talking to John Derry!"

At the name 'Derry', Raikes' eyes briefly widened, but that was the only sign of alarm he gave, and only I noticed it.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Langford, but this meeting is now over, and I must insist that you . . ."

"Please," I implored, "please, you must question him."

"Don't listen to another word from him," one of the directors said, "the man's insane."

Something in my eyes must have made the

chairman give me one last chance, against his better judgement.

"Very well, Mr. Langford. What should I ask him?"

"Where were you," I said to Raikes directly, "on the afternoon of the fourth of this month?"

"I was here," Raikes answered, "in the office. Check the ledger if you don't believe me."

"Check it," the chairman told the clerk called Pilkington. While everyone waited tensely, Pilkington fetched the ledger.

"Ah yes," he said after flicking through it for a minute or so. "On the fourth of December, many of us were hard at work on the Carter-Watkins pig iron accounts. I was involved myself, together with Gray, Flower, Morrow, Raikes . . ."

"Yes," said the chairman, "the Carter-Watkins pig iron accounts. I remember that day distinctly. Well, Mr. Langford, I've had quite enough of this nonsense. Not only do you try to swindle us of five thousand pounds, but you try to ruin a man who is perfectly innocent. Mr. Pilkington, call the police."

While he was saying all this, I had been staring at Raikes, and Raikes had been staring at me. There are some forms of communication that go deeper than words. My eyes were boring into his eyes, saying, Guilty, you're guilty! As for his eyes . . . his eyes said Yes, I'm guilty, I'm guilty! He slumped to his knees.

"I can't stand it any more!" he cried. "I was there! I met Mr. Derry on the platform!"

"But, but you were here," stammered Mr. Pilkington. "The Carter-Watkins pig iron accounts, you were here."

"Not then," whimpered Raikes, "I don't know about that, I can't explain it. I was there before, on the twenty-fourth of September."

"But that was the day Mr. Derry took the seventy-five thousand pounds to Mallingford," breathed the chairman.

"Yes. I knew he was going, so I took the day off. I met him at Blackwater station and pretended it was a coincidence. I told him that there was a shortcut to



Mallingford and offered to show him. He came with me, and I . . . it was in a field.”

“Raikes,” someone whispered, “what are you saying?”

“Oh, the blood, the blood,” Raikes wailed. “I didn’t mean to kill him! I didn’t mean to!”

He collapsed, sobbing, into a pathetic heap, shielding his face from our horrified gaze.

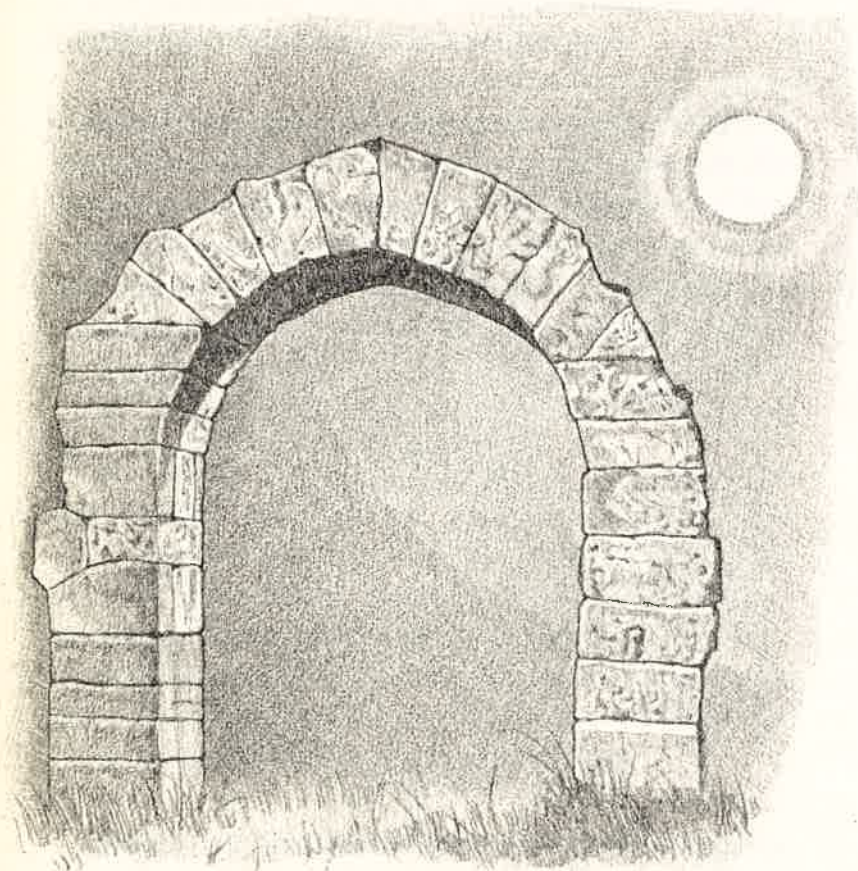
John Derry was murdered on the twenty-fourth of September, 1857. Who – or what – did I meet on the fourth of December? I have had twelve years to think about this question. I believe his anguished spirit was reaching out from beyond the grave, haunting the four-fifteen express until someone, somehow, cleared his name. Who knows how many other passengers talked with him, who had never met him before, and knew nothing of his circumstances?

But I find it even more difficult to understand that on that day, I also saw the ghost of a man who wasn’t dead. I saw Raikes on the platform talking to John Derry, and yet, at the same time, the living, breathing, real Raikes was in an office in London, working diligently with his colleagues as they pored over their accounts ledgers. Is it possible for the living, as well as the dead, to have ghosts?

Raikes is certainly dead now. He was found guilty of murder, sentenced to death, and hanged. Every Christmas, when I visit my old friends Jonathan and Isobel, I can’t help shuddering when the train reaches

Blackwater, and I always look out of the window in case I see them – the ghosts of a murderer and a murderer’s victim.

THE OPEN DOOR



After living for many years in India, in 1866 my family came back to Scotland. My wife, Agatha, found us the perfect house to live in, a Georgian mansion. We liked it because it was so secluded, and we were looking forward to a peaceful summer, with nothing more exciting than the odd grouse shoot to interrupt our days. Well, we got more than we bargained for – we got an encounter with terror, a terror that brought my son Roland close to death.

The name of the house is Brentwood, and it stands on a fine slope of the Pentland Hills, looking out over Edinburgh and the River Forth. There are extensive grounds, and in an overgrown part of them is the ruin of the house which stood here before ours. It's a desolate and eerie place, in a terrible state of decay, with enormous cedar trees uprooting its foundations, but enough remains to show how impressive the building once was. There's no roof, and the walls that are left are crumbling, but there is the stump of a tower still standing at one corner. If you hack away at the long grass, you sometimes come across some broken pottery or old floor tiles.

One part of the ruin affected me particularly. It was a large stone arch, standing alone with nothing around it but debris and grass. It was said to be all that remained of the servants' quarters. Once, it would have held a door, a door separating the wilderness outside from the warmth within. Now it stood without purpose, empty and forlorn. In our first weeks at Brentwood, I didn't understand why that open doorway made me feel so uneasy. Just being near it made great waves of

melancholy wash over me, no matter how cheerful I might have been only a few minutes before. Later, I was to understand only too well.

Halfway through the summer, I had to leave Brentwood for six weeks to do some business in London. While I was there, Agatha's letters made no mention of any trouble with Roland. So I was doubly shocked on returning to my London lodgings one evening, after three days in Kent with an old friend, to find a new letter marked URGENT waiting for me, as well as a telegram delivered that very day:

FOR GOD'S SAKE WHY DON'T YOU COME? . . .
 ROLAND MUCH WORSE . . . COME BACK RIGHT
 AWAY . . . AGATHA

I started packing immediately, and I caught the first available train to Scotland. Every minute of the journey felt like an hour, and I passed it by reading my wife's letter over and over again. She told me that Roland was very sick indeed. The first sign of illness she had noticed, soon after I left, was a particular look in his eyes. Much to my alarm and confusion, she described this look as "haunted".

This haunted look had become more pronounced day by day, and soon Roland was returning from school in the afternoons with his face "as white as a sheet", and sweat "streaming down his cheeks and neck". He refused to tell his mother what was wrong. Eventually she sent for the doctor, Dr. Simson, who confined Roland to his bed. Since then, he had slipped in and out of a dangerous fever.

I arrived in Edinburgh in the failing light of a summer's evening. The carriage I took to Brentwood seemed to creep along the dark country lane, although in reality the horses were almost galloping. I couldn't help thinking that Roland might be dead. When the horses at last thundered up the gravel drive of Brentwood, I could see my wife waiting for me at the door. I jumped out of the carriage.

"He is sleeping," she said in a whisper, and I briefly closed my eyes in relief.

Sitting with Agatha in the room next to Roland's bedroom, I learned more about his illness. What I heard worried me more than I can describe. Roland was insisting to Dr. Simson that he wasn't really ill, it was just that he was so scared of something that it was making him ill.

"What is it he's scared of?" I asked her.

"A voice in the ruins. He says it comes from nowhere, and that it doesn't have a body."

Of course, this story had made Dr. Simson more convinced that the child was seriously ill. I asked Agatha what the voice was supposed to say.



My wife's eyes filled with tears and she shook her head, as though it were too painful to tell me.

At that moment I heard Roland call out in such terror that I jumped to my feet in alarm.

"Oh, mother, let me in! Mother, let me in!"

"What does he mean?" I asked her in a horrified whisper. "What does he mean, 'Let me in?'"

But Agatha was so upset that she couldn't answer.

I went to my son, who was sitting up in bed, shivering and sweating, holding the bedclothes up to his chin. His hair was damp and lank, his eyes were like a frightened rabbit's. The nightmare, if that's what it was, had traumatized him. He turned his face slowly to mine and, realizing it was me, managed to smile.

"Papa, you're here."

I sat down on the edge of the bed and held his hand, feeling his pulse pounding fast and furious under the skin.

"Oh Papa, the doctor doesn't understand anything at all!" he panted excitedly, "he makes me stay in bed all day, he . . . I . . . there's nothing wrong with me really, Papa. You've got to tell him."

"We can talk about it later on, Roland," I murmured, wanting to calm him down, but he was too worked up to listen to me, and in the end I didn't have a choice but to hear him out.

"Papa, I'm not sick, it's just that I can hear someone in the grounds who is suffering, horribly, and his voice calls out to me, but when I look there's no one there. I can't stand it!"

His eyes shone so wildly, his face was so white, that my heart sank. He looked half-crazed.

"And what does the voice say, Roland?" I asked, although I was fairly sure that I knew already.

He raised himself up from the bed and put his face close to mine, looking straight into my eyes as he shrieked the words at me with so much intensity that I shuddered.

"Oh, mother, mother, let me in! Let me in, mother, let me in!"

Was it an hallucination? Was it an extreme fever? Was it insanity? I couldn't tell. I thought it was wisest to pretend to believe him.

"This is very disturbing, Roland. Something has

to be done about it.”

“I knew you would take me seriously, father. That doctor doesn’t believe me, but you do, don’t you?”

“I certainly believe that something has frightened you very much indeed. Perhaps there was a lost child out there,” I suggested.

My son suddenly grabbed my shoulder, clutching it hard with his thin hand.

“But what if it isn’t a living person?” he whispered. “What if it’s a ghost?”

My spirits sank even lower. It’s unbearable to see someone you love so much in such a hysterical state.

“Papa, promise me that you’ll help it. Promise me! It’s in terrible, terrible trouble. It’s out there, all by itself, just, just suffering. I can’t stand it!”

He burst into tears, and I heard myself promising, pledging, vowing to help the . . . ghost. Once I had done this his crying petered out, and soon he was quite calm, and almost cheerful.

“I knew you would know what to do,” he said.

He fell asleep, exhausted by his outburst.

I was the most perplexed man in the country. The health of my son depended on my being able to help a ghost. Even if I assumed the ghost existed, which I didn’t, how was I supposed to help it? What was I supposed to do? I decided to visit the ruins immediately, and I took my butler, Bagley. He was a large, imposing man who had been in my service, in one way or another, for more than fifteen years. In India, where he had been a soldier with me, he had

looked death in the face on a number of occasions. He was one of the most reliable people I had ever met. I told him to get a lamp, and then we set off.



It was quite dark, but as we arrived at the ruin I decided to extinguish the light. I didn’t really expect to find anyone, but if there was some sort of intruder scaring the wits out of my son, then I intended to catch him. We stood next to the stump of the tower, under a cedar tree that seemed to fill the sky.

“Bagley,” I whispered, “if you see anyone, or hear anyone, then be ready to seize him.”

“Yes sir.”

We made our way through the crumbling building. The darkness was unsettling, and the faint breath of

wind that disturbed the air had an eerie quality to it. The ruin was certainly a very gloomy place at night, and I felt reluctant to be there at all. If I had been on my own, I probably would have gone home and come back in the morning. But Bagley was calm and imperturbable – a good man to have with you in a tricky situation.

Suddenly I crashed into something, and I couldn't help uttering a little cry of surprise. I reached out with my hands, and found that I had bumped into the old doorway. That same sensation of melancholy which I always felt in that place swept over me. And then, without warning, I heard it.

Close by us, at our feet, there was a sigh. Not a groan, not a moan, not anything as definite as that. Just a sigh, but it was more horrible to hear than anyone can imagine. The blood chilled in my veins. A shiver stole along my spine. I sprang back like a terrified animal, then heard it a second time – a long, soft sigh, emptying an inexpressible burden of sadness into the still and lonely night.

It had a chilling effect, like something cold creeping over me, up into my hair, and down to my feet. The terror intensified when the sigh changed into a wailing full of human misery and pain, that made the blood curdle. My hands shook, but I managed to light my lantern. We were inside what would have been the servants' quarters, had anything remained of them except for the doorway. And it was from the doorway that the sound came.

I saw Bagley – he was lying on the ground, crying, his hands over his ears. I was so shocked at this sight that I dropped the lamp. It went out, so I had to scrabble around on my hands and knees in the doorway to find it. I was now exactly where the sound was coming from. It was crying and crying, as though pleading for life, or something even more important than life. Then the words began. I shook with terror.

“Oh, mother, mother! Let me in! Let me in, mother, let me in!”

It was unbearable, that call, that plea, there in the empty doorway of the ruin. It went on and on. No wonder Roland had gone wild with pity and fear. At last the words died away, to be replaced by broken sobs and moaning.

“In the name of God,” I shouted, still on my knees in the doorway, “who are you?”

I was startled by a large, black shape staggering over to me. It was Bagley.

“Come in!” he shrieked. “For pity's sake, whatever you are, be done with it and enter.”

He stumbled over me and fell. I half caught him, and lowered him to the ground. The voice died down. I swear that it seemed to move away, leaving the cottage and going away into the gardens and the night. For some minutes I just lay there, more or less on top of Bagley, recovering my courage. Then I groped around for my lamp. When I lit it, and looked at Bagley's face, I could see that he was half-crazed with shock.

I had some brandy with me, which revived him a little. It was an alarming and amazing sight to see this

once brave soldier reduced to such a pathetic state. I helped him back to the house, where I told some of the other servants to put him to bed. Then I went to the library and sat alone. It had been a terrible night. I had no idea what to do. Worse still, I had no idea what to say to Roland.

"You've got an epidemic in your house, Mortimer," said Dr. Simson the next day. He called in every morning to see Roland. "First your son, and now your butler raving about a voice, not to mention all the other servants in a flap – and if I'm not mistaken, it's starting to infect you as well."

Simson was a very rational man, who thought that every effect had a cause, and who pinned all his faith in science. I didn't enjoy being mocked by him.

"Well, as you can't put us all to bed," I told him, "maybe you should suspend your disbelief for a few minutes and listen to what happened last night."

He shrugged his shoulders, but listened to my story in silence. I told him the truth, but at the end of it he was entirely unconvinced.

"My dear fellow!" he exclaimed, in such a condescending way that it made my blood boil. "My dear fellow, I've heard the same story from your boy. And no doubt your butler, when he recovers enough sanity to string a sentence together, will tell me the same. As I said, it's an epidemic. Whenever one person falls victim to this sort of delusion, you can guarantee that another will follow soon after."

"All right then," I answered, trying to remain calm,

"how do you account for what we heard?"

"Any number of things. It might be a trick of the wind or an echo, or perhaps it's an acoustic disturbance, or a . . ."

"Come with me tonight and judge for yourself."

Dr. Simson laughed loudly.

"And become known as the ghost-hunting doctor? It would ruin my reputation!"

"Well there you have it," I taunted him. "You use the language of the scientist to mock the notion, yet you refuse even to examine the evidence. Do you call that science?"

"Very well," he said after a moment, in the measured tones of a man who is hiding his irritation. "But I'm warning you now, I'll prove that this story of yours is all nonsense."

"Nothing would please me more," I told him.

We arranged to meet shortly before midnight, and Dr. Simson went on his way, annoyed.

"I suppose you'll be having priests and bishops crawling all over the place next," was his parting shot, "holding up crucifixes, exorcizing devils, denouncing demons. It's all stuff and nonsense, Mortimer!"

I laughed, but in fact Simson's taunt was prophetic. When I told my wife about what had happened on the previous evening, her first words to me were:

"We have to get a minister, a man of God."

I admit that in this matter, I agreed with Simson. I didn't want a priest roaming around my grounds, swinging an incense burner over my rhododendrons while intoning antique Latin chants. But Agatha was

adamant. She told me to contact a minister called Dr. Moncrieff, a very old man, long retired, who lived by himself in a secluded cottage a few miles away.

"He will know what to do," said my wife trustingly, in much the same way as Roland had thought I would know what to do.

"Perhaps that's your dreaded voice, Mortimer!" Simson laughed, clapping me on the back heartily as an owl hooted in the distance. We were standing by the doorway with Dr. Moncrieff. A thin moon was peeping through the clouds above, and occasionally I saw bats wheel across its sliver of light. Simson seemed entirely unaffected by the mournful mood of the place, telling jokes and keeping up a cheery stream of banter. I didn't find the jokes funny, but then only I knew what we were waiting for and how dreadful it was.

Simson had been absolutely disgusted when I had arrived with the minister. If Dr. Moncrieff sensed Simson's hostility, he didn't show it. In fact Dr. Moncrieff had barely uttered two words all evening. When I had gone to see him earlier in the day, he had listened carefully to my story, sighed, and said, "Maybe the Lord will provide a way, Colonel Mortimer."

Now, the three of us waited for the ghost. The scene was well-lit, because we had each brought a lamp or lantern. We had been waiting for over an hour, a fact which Simson reminded me of all too often.

"It's always the same with this sort of thing," he said, shaking his head. "Ghosts, spirits, seances, mediums . . . A doubter's presence soon proves that the supernatural doesn't exist. I'm surprised at you, Mortimer, very surprised indeed. The only thing we're likely to hear tonight is . . ."

He continued in this vein while I stood silent, staring out into the blackness beyond the light. I was intensely disappointed and, yes, embarrassed.

"Mysterious manifestations do not seem to enjoy my company," Simson said, thoroughly relishing his victory. "Why do you think that is, Mortimer? Mm?" He chuckled to himself, then lit a cigar. I was completely furious with him for being so dismissive. Whatever he personally thought about the existence of the ghost, the fact was that some unexplained presence had brought my son to death's door.

"No," he concluded to himself, sighing, "I'm not popular with our supernatural friends, but we shall stay here for as long as you like. Never let it be said that Doctor Andrew Simson did not give the apparition every chance. You won't hear any complaints from me, Mortimer. Not a word. Not a peep." He paused. "But when you do think we've been standing here in the chilly night for quite long enough, let me know, won't you? There's a good chap."

I was livid, and I would have replied very rudely indeed if, at the very moment that Simson stopped speaking, there had not been an eerie moaning noise.

"Don't play silly games, Mortimer," Simson said in an angry voice.

"I can assure you that I'm not," I answered, with equal hostility. "How could I make a noise like that? It sounds as if it's some distance away."

"It's probably that blasted minister of yours."

The haunting sound appeared to be approaching us from some distance away in the grounds. We listened intently. The sound changed to little pants and fierce sobs, getting closer and closer, as though a person in distress were walking to where we were.

"There's a child out there!" Simson whispered urgently. "What's a child doing out so late?"

I remained silent. I knew that it wasn't a child, not a living one anyway. Simson moved into the empty doorway and held out his lamp.

"We'll soon see who it is. There's nothing like a good dose of light to flush out a ghost."

But the light only illuminated what we could see already: the walls all around us, crumbling; the trunks of the cedar trees disappearing into the darkness, and the faint track that led up to the open doorway.

Now the voice was only inches away. It started a mournful whimpering that made Simson sink to his knees.

"What in the world is it?" he called to me just as it began howling with a piercing, unbearable grief.

Simson's body went into a spasm of shock, his limbs twitching horribly, his head thrashing on his shoulders, before the voice wailed the plea which I felt I had already heard a thousand times, a plea which had to be answered if Roland was to get better.

"Oh mother . . . oh mother, mother, let me in, mother! Let me in, let me in!"

I grabbed Simson and pulled him away from the open doorway. The spasm had passed. He stared at me incredulously, holding onto my hand like a terrified three-year-old child, before staring back at the open door, trying to see the thing which couldn't be seen, the voice that had no body.

It was then that I heard Dr. Moncrieff calling out to the voice in an amazed, echoing cry.

"William! William! Oh, God preserve us William! Is that really ye'self?"

These simple words dismayed me. I thought that the old man had become deranged, like Bagley, and gone mad with terror. I abandoned Simson and rushed across to the minister. His large lantern was placed by his feet, illuminating his figure in the strangest way.

"Dr. Moncrieff! Are you all right?" I shouted, seizing him by the arms.

He didn't answer, shaking me off roughly so he could concentrate on the voice. His face was paler than I thought a human face could be. He held out his hands in front of him, and although they were trembling, I was suddenly struck with the absolute certainty that he was not afraid. Meanwhile, the voice had altered into a wretched sobbing. Dr. Moncrieff called out again.

"Why d'ye come here, William, frightening these strangers with your wailing? Your mother isnae here, lad! She cannae let you in! William, cease haunting her poor, ruined door!"



The sobbing of the voice grew louder and, if possible, even more insistent. The minister closed his eyes and stayed silent for a moment, as though drawing on inner reserves of strength.

“Away home, ye wandering spirit!” he suddenly commanded in powerful, ringing tones. “Away home! Your mother is with the Lord, William. He’ll let you in, though it’s late. D’ye hear?”

He sank to his knees. I, too, found myself on my knees. The sobbing voice started to fade away from us. Bit by bit, I felt it move back through the bushes.

“Lord,” the minister cried into the night, “take this lost soul into thy heavenly habitations. Fix him fast within thy everlasting love.”

At the exact instant when the minister said “love”, and without consciously deciding on the action, I sprang forward, launching myself towards the open doorway to catch something which I thought had made a violent movement. There was nothing there, but the illusion was so strong that I crashed into the doorway, banging my head and shoulder on the rough stone. Later, much later, when I was able to reflect on this peculiar event, I concluded that I had somehow felt – that is the only word which begins to describe it – felt the passing of a soul from one place to another.

I lay on the ground, half-dazed for a moment, before Simson helped me up. He was trembling and cold, his mouth hanging open, his speech broken and inarticulate.

“It’s . . . it’s gone!” he whispered.

We both looked at the minister, still on his knees, the light shining around his long white hair like a halo, his arms outstretched to the unseen heavens above. A strange and solemn stillness settled on us. The minister was not aware of our presence. I will never know how long Simson and I stood watching him, like awed sentinels. But at last he rose from his knees, gave a heavy sigh, picked up his lantern, and turned away.

He began to walk to his small, stone cottage a mile away over the hill. We fell in step behind him and escorted him in silence to his door. The sky was clearer than it had been for many nights, shining high over the trees with here and there a star faintly gleaming. The air had a soft, serene quality to it. Nature seemed to be at peace with herself again. I thought of Roland, and smiled.

I visited Dr. Moncrieff a few days later. He listened to my eager expressions of gratitude politely enough, and seemed pleased to hear that Roland was making a full recovery. But at first he was reluctant to talk about the amazing events at the open door, and, not wanting to press him, I soon decided that it was time to go home. Then, suddenly, as I was putting my coat on to leave, he said:

“Well now, Colonel Mortimer, I suppose ye’ll be wanting to hear about young William.”

I nodded.

“He lived in these parts. He was a very young man when I was a very young man,” Dr. Moncrieff said,



smiling, "which will tell ye how long ago it was. But he was weak, that one, selfish and feckless, the bane of his mother's life. He was forever causing her heartache and trouble. Then one day – ach, such a long time ago it was – one day, he just went away, leaving his poor, wee mother to fend for herself. The high and mighty folk in the old house were long gone – the place was tumbling down even then, and they had all moved away. Only William's mother, who was a servant of theirs, remained here. And William went away. Where he got to while he was gone, nobody knows."

The old man sighed and shook his head.

"It was twenty years afore he returned. Twenty years! By that time he was rich, Colonel Mortimer, rich, and every pound and penny of it earned by his own industry, for he was a changed man from the wild thing of his youth. Only, he had put off his return to his homeland, year on year, until it was too late. His poor mother had broken under the weight of her poverty. She passed away just two days before William himself came back. It was a tragedy. There was such a terrible scene," he sighed.

"I had just moved to these parts as a newly ordained minster, and they brought me over to the old house, and there he was, raging with grief, flinging himself at the door and begging to be let in. Ach well. I never thought I'd experience the same scene again, and more than sixty years later!"

"What happened to him?" I asked.

"He was never a whole man ever after. He took to

drink, gambled his fortune away, and died."

It's many years now since these events took place. I'm happy to say that Roland has grown up to be a strong, healthy man with a wife and family of his own. They visit us whenever they can. Agatha and I pass our time well enough. We're getting old, and do less than we used to. But we go for a walk every day in the warmer months, and if we pass by the old ruin, I find myself thinking about William, the tortured soul who cried outside a door that wasn't there, night after night, year after year, with nobody to take any notice until Roland heard his cries. Agatha never tires of hearing about it. But as for Simson, well, I'm afraid he still calls it "nøthing but a lot of mumbo jumbo". He came to Brentwood only the other day, to treat a chest complaint I suffer from now and again, and he refused point-blank to admit what we both know happened all those years ago.

"Stuff and nonsense," he said shortly. "It was just the union of certain electrical impulses that, in conjunction with highly unusual atmospheric conditions, resulted in a very rare but entirely natural aural effect. I thought so at the time, and I haven't changed my mind since. It takes more than a breath of wind and a jumped-up witch doctor to make me believe in ghosts. Now, open your mouth Mortimer, and say 'aaaaah' for me."

"Aaaaah," I said.

The years have given Simson the excuse he needs to deny what happened that night. We are in a new age now, of telephones and electric lights and

horseless carriages, and Simson has welcomed it with open arms. For him, science is the new God, and science can explain everything. But then, as Roland so aptly pointed out to me when he was just a small boy, Simson doesn't understand anything at all.

MORE VICTORIAN GHOST STORIES

Many thousands of ghost stories were published during the 19th century – some were written by the most famous authors of the time. They range from tales of unexplained beings to more ghoulish and bloodthirsty subjects. Many of these have been republished in new collections and can be found in bookshops, and some are now available as e-texts on the Internet. A few recommended authors, and examples of their work, can be found below.

E. F. Benson (1867-1940): Most famous for his *Mapp and Lucia* detective novels, Benson also wrote many ghost stories, including “The Room in the Tower” and “The Bus-conductor”.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870): Dickens was one of the most successful Victorian writers of ghost stories. Ghosts appear in his novel *A Christmas Carol* (1843), and in many tales he wrote for his magazine *All the Year Round*; these include “To Be Taken With a Grain of Salt”, “No. 1 Branch Line: The Signalman” and “The Ghost in Master B’s Room”.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930): Famous for his *Sherlock Holmes* mystery novels, Conan Doyle was fascinated by ghosts, spiritualism and the paranormal. *Round the Fire*, a series of stories written for *The Strand* magazine, includes “The Sealed Room” and “The Brown Hand”.

Amelia Edwards (1831-1892): Edwards was one of the most eminent 19th-century Egyptologists, organizing archaeological expeditions there. Her ghost stories include “The New Pass” and “The Phantom Coach”, as well as “The Four-fifteen Express” which is retold in this book.

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865): Famous for her novels of industrial life such as *Mary Barton* and *Cranford*, Gaskell also wrote many ghost stories, including “The Crooked Branch” and “The Old Nurse’s Story”.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928): As well as his novels set in rural England, like *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy also published a number of successful ghost stories, including “The Three Strangers” and “The Withered Arm”.

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873): A journalist and publisher based in Dublin, Le Fanu wrote many ghost and mystery tales. Many people regard “Schalken the Painter” as one of the finest 19th-century ghost stories. His other works include

“An Authentic Narrative of a Haunted House” and “An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street”.

Edith Nesbit (1858-1924): Best known for her children’s novel *The Railway Children*, she also wrote many ghost stories, including “John Charrington’s Wedding” (retold in this book as “A Fatal Promise”), “The Mystery of the Semi-detached”, “The Shadow” and “The Ebony Frame”.

Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849): An American master of macabre and mysterious tales, Poe wrote several highly atmospheric novels, including *The Fall of the House of Usher*. His short stories include “The Masque of the Red Death”.

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894): Stevenson’s writing ranges from travel memoirs to poetry, though he is probably most famous for his two classic adventure novels *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. “The Body Snatcher” is his best-known ghost story.

Bram Stoker (1847-1912): An Irish writer, famous for the classic vampire novel *Dracula*, Stoker also wrote many other horror and fantasy tales, including “The Judge’s House” and “The Castle of the King”.

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896): Her most famous work is *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, a novel written in protest at the practice of slavery in the American

South. Her many ghost stories include “The Ghost in the Mill” and “The Ghost in the Cap’n Brown House”.

H. G. Wells (1866-1946): Best known for early science fiction works such as *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds*, Wells also wrote ghost stories, such as “The Inexperienced Ghost” and “The Red Room”.

Edith Wharton (1862-1937): An American writer whose books mainly deal with life in New York, Wharton was also an excellent writer of ghost stories. They include “Afterward” and “The Triumph of Night”.



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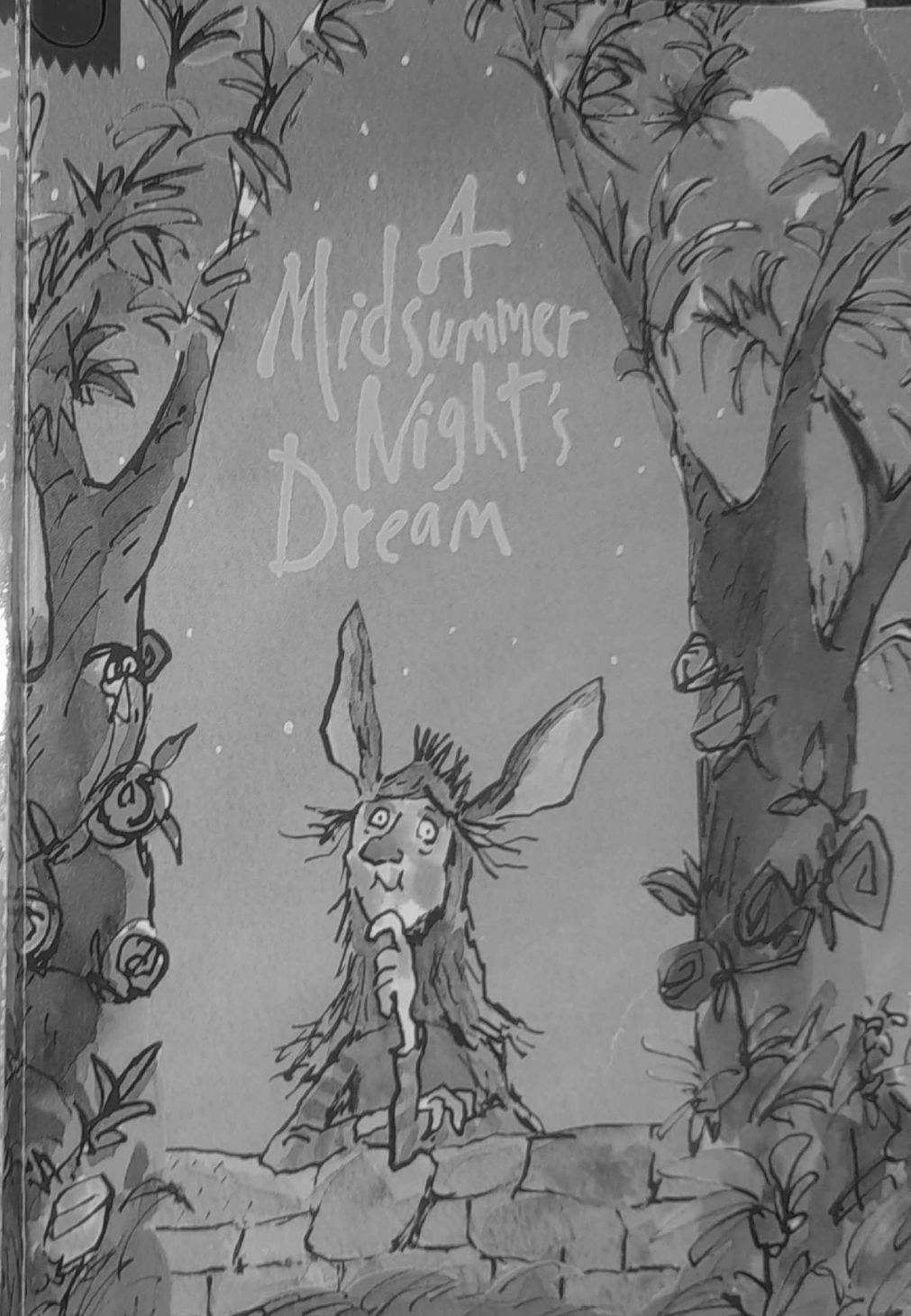
With notes on:

Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre

Love and Magic in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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A Midsummer Night's Dream



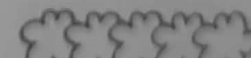
A Midsummer Night's Dream



A Shakespeare Story

RETOLD BY ANDREW MATTHEWS

ILLUSTRATED BY TONY ROSS



To Hannah, love you more than...

A.M.

For Laura K.

T.R.



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Cast list



Hermia

In love with Lysander



Helena

Friend to Hermia
In love with Demetrius



Demetrius

Betrothed to Hermia



Lysander

In love with Hermia



Oberon

King of the Fairies



Titania

Queen of the Fairies



Puck

An Elf



Bottom

A Weaver

The Scene

In and around Athens, Ancient Greece.

Ay me, for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth,

Lysander; I.i.



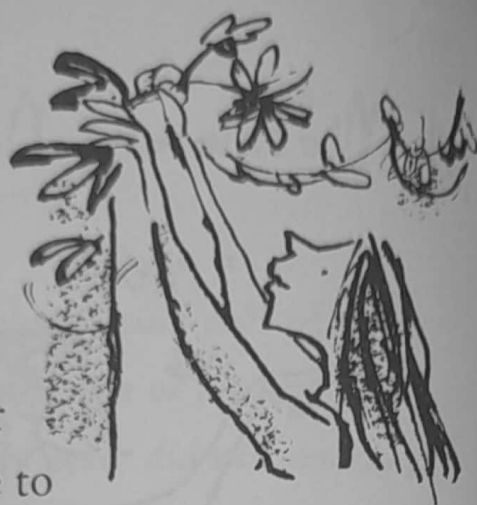
A Midsummer Night's Dream



When the path of true love runs smoothly,
the world seems a wonderful place – all
bright skies and smiling faces.

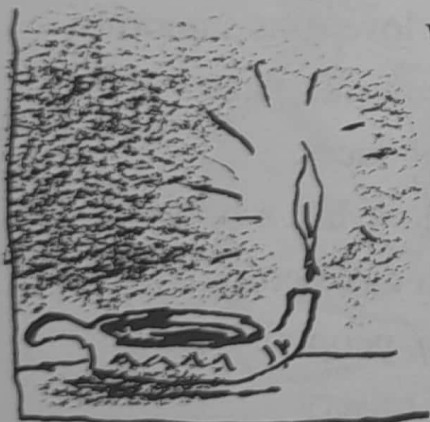
Unfortunately, true love has a habit of
wandering off the path and getting lost,
and when that happens people's lives get
lost too, in a tangle of misery.

Take the love of Duke Theseus of Athens and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, for instance. They were to



be married, and their happiness spread through the whole of Athens. People had decorated their houses with flowers, and left lamps burning in their windows at night, so that the streets twinkled like a

city of stars. Everybody was joyful and excited as they prepared to celebrate the Duke's wedding day. Well, almost everybody...



* * *

On the day before the royal wedding, two friends met by chance in the market square: golden-haired Hermia, and black-haired Helena, both beautiful and both with secrets that made their hearts ache.



For a while, the two friends chatted about nothing in particular. Then Helena noticed a look in Hermia's deep blue eyes that made her ask, "Is everything all right, Hermia?"

Hermia looked so sad and serious.

"I am to marry Demetrius tomorrow," she replied.



"Demetrius!" said Helena softly. Now her heart was aching worse than ever. Night after night she had cried herself to sleep, whispering Demetrius's name, knowing that her love for him was hopeless.

Many years ago the families of Hermia and Demetrius had agreed that, when they were of age, their daughter and son should marry. "You must be the happiest young woman in Athens!" sighed Helena.

"I've never been so miserable in my life!" Hermia declared. "You see, I don't love Demetrius."

"You don't?" cried Helena, amazed.





“I’m in love with Lysander,” Hermia confessed, and she began to describe all the things that made Lysander so wonderful.

Helena thought about Lysander, with his curly brown hair and broad smile. He was *quite* handsome, she supposed, but he didn’t have Demetrius’s dark, brooding good looks. Why on earth did Hermia find him so attractive?

“Of course, I told my father that I didn’t wish to marry Demetrius,” Hermia said, “and he went straight to him to

explain – but you know how stubborn Demetrius can be. He lost his temper and said it didn’t matter who I loved, our marriage had been arranged and it must go ahead, no matter what. His stupid pride’s been hurt, that’s all – he doesn’t love me a bit.”

“Then who does he love?” Helena enquired eagerly.

“No one, except for himself,” said Hermia.

“I *can’t* marry someone I don’t love, and I know it will cause a scandal, but Lysander and I are going to run away together!”

“*When?*” Helena asked.



"Tonight," Hermia told her. "I'm meeting him at midnight in the wood outside the city walls. We plan to travel through the night, and in the morning we'll find a little temple where we can be married. Oh, Helena, it will be so *romantic*! Please say that you're happy for me!"

"Of course I am," said Helena. "I'm overjoyed."



And she was overjoyed – for herself. 'At last, this is my chance!' she thought.

'If I visit Demetrius tonight and tell him that Hermia and Lysander have gone off together, he'll forget about his pride...and then...when I tell him how I feel about him, he'll be so flattered, he'll fall in love with me. Love always finds a way!'



Which is true, but love doesn't always find the way that people expect, as Helena was about to find out. For it was not only in the human world that love was causing unhappiness; although Helena and Hermia did not know it, two different worlds would meet in the wood outside Athens that night, and the result would be chaos.

* * *

Oberon, King of the Fairies, was a creature of darkness and shadows, while his wife, Queen Titania, was moonlight and silver. The two loved each



other dearly, but they had quarrelled bitterly. Titania had taken a little orphan boy as a page, and made such a fuss of the lad that Oberon had become very jealous. He wanted the page for himself.



That midsummer's night, in a clearing in the wood, Titania was singing to her page, while fairy servants fluttered around her like glittering moths.

When Oberon appeared, Titania's silvery eyes darkened. "Fairies, let us leave this place at once!" she said haughtily.



“Wait, Titania!” snapped Oberon.
“This quarrel of ours has gone on long
enough. You say I have no reason to be
jealous of the boy – very well, prove it!
Give him to me!”



18

“Not for all your fairy kingdom!”
hissed Titania. She raised her left hand,
and sent a ball of blue fire roaring across
the glade, straight at Oberon’s head.



19

Oberon spoke a word of magic, and the fire turned to water that burst over him, drenching his clothes. By the time he had rubbed the water from his eyes, the glade was empty and Oberon was alone. "I'll make you sorry for this, Titania!" he vowed. Then, lifting his dripping head, he called out, "Puck? Come to me, now!"

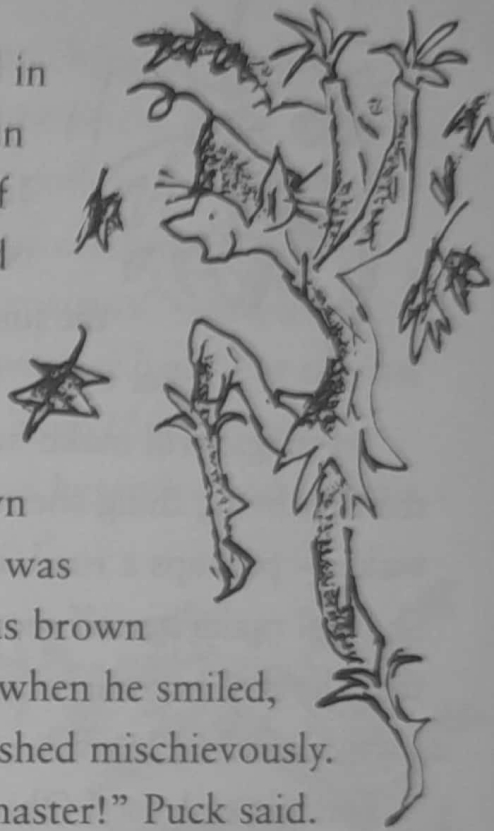


A breeze sighed in the branches, as an elf dropped out of the air and landed at Oberon's feet.

The elf was dressed in leaves that had been sewn together. His hair was tangled, his skin as brown as chestnuts, and when he smiled, his white teeth flashed mischievously. "Command me, master!" Puck said.

"I mean to teach the Queen a lesson," said Oberon. "Go, search the Earth and fetch me the flower called Love in Idleness."

"I will fly faster than a falling star!" said Puck, and with that he had vanished.





A cruel smile played on Oberon's lips. "When Titania is asleep, I will drop the juice of the flower in her eyes," he said to himself.

"Its magic will make her fall in love with the first living thing she sees when she wakes – perhaps a toad, or even a spider! She will make herself seem so ridiculous, that she will beg me to break the spell, and I will...after she's given me the page!"

This plan pleased Oberon so much that he began to laugh – but his laugh was cut short when he heard human voices approaching. With a wave of his fingers, Oberon made himself vanish among the shadows.



Demetrius, out searching for Hermia, halted in the middle of the glade, while he considered which path to take. This gave Helena a chance to catch up with him. "Wait for me, Demetrius!" she pleaded. Demetrius scowled at her. "For the last time, Helena, go home!" he shouted angrily. "I can find Lysander and Hermia without your help."



“But you don’t understand!”
Helena exclaimed.
“I love you! I’ve always loved you!”

She tried to put her arms around Demetrius, but he ducked away. “Well I don’t love you!” he said roughly. “So go away and leave me alone!”

And he ran off through the moonlight.



“Oh, Demetrius!” sobbed Helena, running after him.
“I would follow you through fire, just to be near you!”

* * *

When the glade was once more still and silent, Oberon came out of the darkness. His face was thoughtful. “I must help that lovely maiden!” he whispered. “I know how cruel it is to love someone whose heart is so cold.”

A wind brushed the Fairy King’s cheek, and there stood Puck, holding a sprig of glimmering white flowers.



“Take two blossoms and search the woods for a young human couple,” Oberon said to him. “Squeeze the juice of the petals into the young man’s eyes, but do it when you are sure that the maiden will be the first thing he sees.”



“At once, master!” Puck said with a bow, and then he was gone.

Then Oberon went to find Titania. He found her sleeping alone on a bank of violets, and the air was heavy with their sweet perfume. As he dropped juice from the magic flowers on to Titania’s eyelids, Oberon murmured:

*“What you see when you awake,
Do it for your true love take!”*



* * *

At that very moment, in another part of the wood, Puck was putting magic juice into the eyes of a young man he had found sleeping next to a young woman at the foot of a pine tree.



“When he wakes and sees her, his love for her will drive him mad!” Puck giggled, and he leapt into the air, like a grasshopper in a summer meadow.

28

But, as bad luck would have it, Puck had found the wrong couple. Those sleeping under the tree were Lysander and Hermia, who had got lost in the wood and exhausted themselves trying to find the way out.

And as bad luck would also have it, a few seconds after Puck had left them, Helena wandered by, searching for Demetrius. Blinded by tears, Helena did not notice Lysander and Hermia until she stumbled over Lysander's legs.



29

He woke, saw her, and his eyes bulged like a frog's as the magic went to work.

"Lysander?" gasped Helena.

"What are you doing here? I mean, you

mustn't be here! Get away quickly!

Demetrius is looking for you, and if he



finds you..." Her voice

trailed off – there was a strange look about

Lysander, and it made her feel uncomfortable.

"Why are you staring at me like that?" she asked.

"Because at last I have found my own true love," said Lysander. "Helena, can't you see how much I love you?"

Helena stepped back, laughing nervously. "Don't be silly, Lysander!" she said. "You love Hermia...don't you?"

"Hermia, who is she?" scoffed Lysander, scrambling to his feet. "How could I love anyone but you, with your eyes like stars, your hair as black as ravens' wings, and your skin as soft as...?"



“That’s quite enough of that!” said Helena. “This is some sort of midsummer madness!”



“Madness? Yes, I’m mad!” said Lysander. “Mad with love for you! Come to my arms, and cool the fires of my passion with your kisses!”

He moved towards Helena, but she turned and fled. Lysander followed her, shouting, “There’s no escape from love, Helena! This was meant to be!”

Their loud voices and pounding footsteps woke Hermia. “Lysander, where are you?” she muttered sleepily. “Don’t wander off on your own, my love. You might be eaten by a lion, or a bear...” The very thought made her wide awake, and she sat up. “Or I might be eaten, come to that!” she said with a shudder. “I’m coming to find you, Lysander, so we can be eaten together!”



* * *

Not five paces from the bank of violets where Titania lay asleep, a group of Athenians had gathered in secret to rehearse a play that they meant to perform for Duke Theseus after his wedding. One of the actors, a weaver called Bottom, was

behind a tree, waiting to appear when he heard his cue.



“I’ll show them how it’s done!” Bottom

said to himself.

“When the Duke sees what a fine actor I am, he’ll give me a purse of gold, or my name’s not Nick Bottom!”

34

He glanced up, and saw a strange orange light circling the tree.

“Now what’s that, I wonder?” he muttered.

“A firefly perhaps?”

It was Puck.

He had noticed the actors as he flew by on his way back to Oberon, and had seen

a chance to make mischief.

“Behold, the Queen’s new love!” he said. Magic sparks showered down from his fingertips on to the weaver.



35

Immediately Bottom's face began to sprout hair, and his nose and ears grew longer and longer. His body was unchanged, so Bottom had no idea that anything was wrong, until he heard his cue and stepped out from behind a tree.



Bottom had meant his entrance to be dramatic, and it certainly was. The other actors took one look at the donkey-headed monster coming towards them, and raced away screaming and shouting.



“What’s the matter with them?” said Bottom, scratching his chin. “My word, my beard has grown quickly today! I’ll need a good shave before the performance tomorrow!” He paced this way and that, puzzling out why his friends had left in such a hurry. “O-o-h! I see-haw, hee-haw!” he said at last. “They’re trying to frighten me by leaving me alone in the wood in the dark! Well it won’t work! It takes more than that to frighten a man like me-haw, hee-haw!”

And to prove how brave he was, Bottom began to sing. His voice was part human, part donkey and it sounded like the squealing of rusty hinges. It woke Queen Titania from her sleep on the bank of violets. "Do I hear an angel singing?" she said, and raised herself on one elbow and gazed at Bottom. "Adorable human, I have fallen wildly in love with you!" she told him.



38

"Really?" said Bottom, not the least alarmed by the sudden appearance of the Fairy Queen. He was sure it was all part of the trick his friends were playing.

"Sit beside me, so I can stroke your long, silky ears!" Titania purred. "My servants will bring you anything you desire."

"I wouldn't say no to some supper," said Bottom. "Nothing fancy – a bale of hay or a bag of oats would suit me fine!"

From up above came the sound of Puck's laughter, like the peeling of tiny bells.

* * *



39

Oberon's laughter set every owl in the wood hooting. "My proud Queen, in love with a donkey?" he cried. "Well done, Puck! Titania will think twice before she defies me again! But what of the humans?"



"I did as you commanded, master," said Puck. "I found them..."

A voice made him turn his head, and he saw Demetrius stamping along the path, dragging Hermia by the arm.

"That is the fellow!" said Oberon. "But who is that with him?"

"He is not the one I cast the spell on!"

Puck yelped.

"Quickly," said Oberon. "Make yourself invisible before they see us!"

* * *

Hermia was thoroughly miserable. Everything had gone wrong: she had found Demetrius instead of Lysander, and Demetrius was in such a foul temper that she feared the worst. "Oh, where is Lysander?" she wailed. "You've killed him, haven't you, you brute?"

Moonlight shifted and shivered as Oberon and Puck reappeared. "This is the man," said Oberon, peering down at Demetrius. "Search the wood for a black-haired maiden, and bring her here. When she is close by I will put magic juice in his eyes and wake him."

"Yes, master!

But tell me, is

human love

always so

complicated?"

Puck asked

curiously.

"Just do

as I have

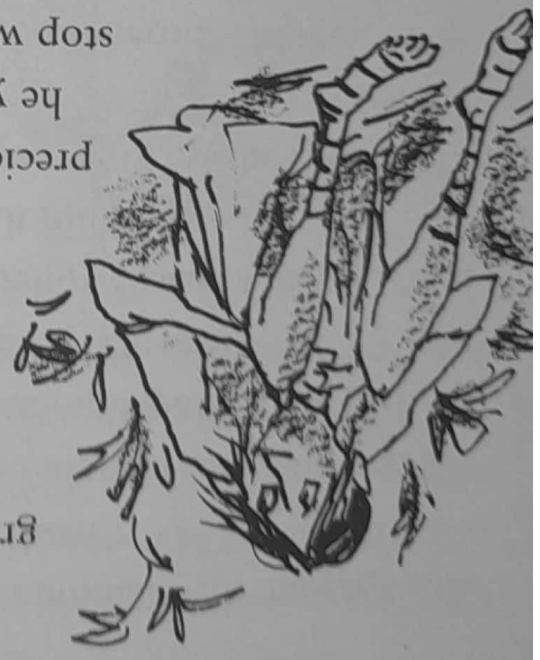
commanded!"

snapped Oberon.

* * *



With a weary groan, Demetrius let Hermia go and slumped to the ground. "I haven't touched your precious Lysander!" Now he yawned. "Now stop whining and get some sleep. When it's light, we'll find our way out of this accursed wood." "I won't rest until I find Lysander!" Hermia said defiantly. "Just as you wish," said Demetrius. "I'm too tired to argue any more." He lay back among the ferns and closed his eyes. He heard Hermia walking away, and then he fell into a deep sleep.



Helena was still running, with Lysander just a few steps behind her. So many bewildering things had happened to her, that when an orange light appeared above the path in front of her, she was not surprised – in fact, a curious idea suddenly popped into her mind – Puck’s magic had put it there. Helena became convinced that if she followed the light, it would lead her



back to Athens, and sanity. Over streams and through clearings the light led her, until at last she came to a deep thicket of ferns, where she paused for breath.

“Helena, marry me!” she heard Lysander shout.

“I don’t want you!” she shouted back.

“I want Demetrius!”



“And here I am my love!” said Demetrius, springing up out of the ferns nearby, his eyes glowing with magic.



“Hold me, let me melt in your sweetness!”

Helena did not bother to wonder why Demetrius had changed his mind: her dreams had come true, and she was about to rush into his arms



when Lysander ran between them.

“Keep away from her, Demetrius!”

Lysander said hotly.

“Helena is mine!”

“Lysander...is that you?” called a voice, and Hermia came stumbling out of the bushes. Brambles had torn the hem of her dress, and there were leaves and twigs stuck in her hair. “Thank the gods you’re safe!” she said, weeping for joy. “Why did you leave me, my only love?”

“Because I can’t bear the sight of you!” said Lysander. “I want to marry Helena.”



“So do I!” Demetrius exclaimed. “And since she can’t marry both of us, we’ll have to settle the matter, man to man!” He pushed Lysander’s chest, knocking him backwards, then Lysander pushed Demetrius.



Hermia stared at Helena, her eyes blazing. “You witch! You’ve stolen my Lysander!” she screamed.

“I haven’t

stolen anybody!” Helena replied angrily. “This is all some cruel trick, isn’t it? The three of you plotted together to make a fool of me – and I thought you were my friend!” “Our friendship ended when you took Lysander away from me!” snarled Hermia.



"So do I!" Demetrius exclaimed. "And since she can't marry both of us, we'll have to settle the matter, man to man!"

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"Our friendship ended when you took Lysander away from me!" snarled Hermia.



Titania did not notice Puck and Oberon, or the sleeping lovers. She could see nothing but Bottom, whose jaws were stretched open in a wide yawn. "Are you weary, dearest one?" she asked him tenderly. "Rest with me on these soft ferns."

* * *

of lovers will unravel when they wake." As Puck hurried about his task, the air was filled with the singing of fairy voices. "The Queen!" Puck muttered in alarm. "The Queen is coming!"

said Oberon. "This knot

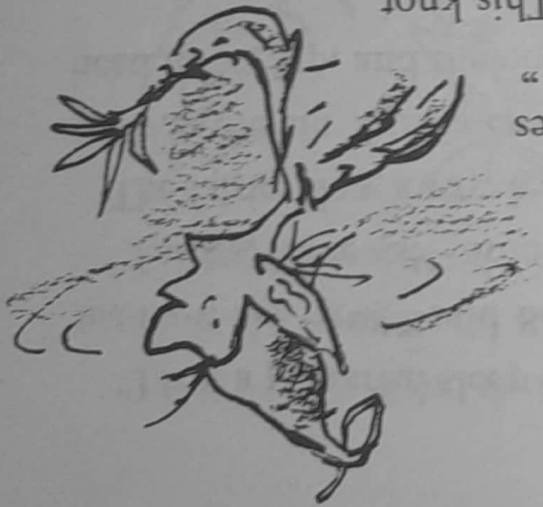
with fairy juice!"

"Smear their eyes

beside them.

magically

Puck appeared



And there might have been a serious fight, if Oberon had not cast a sleeping spell on all four of them. They dropped to the ground like ripe apples, Hermia falling close to Lysander and Helena collapsing at Demetrius's side.

"I feel a powerful sleep coming over me-haw, hee-haw!" said Bottom.

"Fairies, leave us!" ordered Titania.

The fairies flew away, leaving bright trails in the air. Titania cradled Bottom's head in her lap, and they both dozed.



Oberon and Puck crept close. Puck began to grin, but he stopped when he saw the sorrow in his master's eyes.



"There is no laughter in this!" Oberon sighed. "How I long for Titania to smile at me, as she smiled at this creature, and to feel her soft arms around me as I sleep! Break the spell on the human, Puck, while I deal with the Queen."

Oberon moved his hands, weaving shadows into magic as he chanted:

*"Be the way you used to be,
See the way you used to see,
Wake, my Queen, and come to me!"*



Titania opened her eyes, and when she saw Oberon she flew into his arms. "I am so glad that you are here, my love!" she said. "I had the strangest dream! I dreamed that I had fallen in love with a..."

"We will never quarrel again," Oberon promised. "Keep your page – have fifty pages if you wish! What does it matter, as long as we are together?"

Puck saw that the sky was getting lighter. "It's almost dawn, master!" he warned.

"Then we must leave!" said Oberon, and he, Titania and Puck faded into the pale morning light.



* * *

When the sun rose, its light woke Demetrius and Helena, who fell in love at first sight, then Lysander and Hermia, who fell in love all over again. There was much smiling, sighing and kissing, and soon Demetrius said, "Today is Duke Theseus's wedding day, as well as mine and Helena's. Come, my friends, the priest can marry us all at the same ceremony!"



56



And the lovers hurried off towards Athens, laughing every step of the way, the paths of their true love running smoothly at last.

57

* * *

And as for Bottom, he woke some time later and clambered stiffly to his feet. "I thought I was...!" He mumbled. "I thought I had...!" Anxiously, he felt his face and ears, and then sighed with relief.



"What a midsummer night's dream!" he exclaimed. "I'll write a poem about it, and read it to Duke Theseus and his bride, and the Duke will say: 'Well done, noble Bottom! Here's some gold for you!'"

And he stumbled away through the ferns, making up lines of poetry and reciting them out loud as he went.

*The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of
man hath not seen, man's hand is not able
to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his
heart to report what my dream was.*

Bottom; IV.i.

Love and Magic in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare brings together two worlds; the human world of Athens, and the fairy world of the woods outside the city. One world is ruled by law, the other by magic, and in both worlds trouble is brewing.

In the woods outside Athens, Oberon and Titania are busy arguing over a page boy. Meanwhile Demetrius, who is as stubborn as Oberon, is insisting on marrying Hermia, even though she loves someone else. Add a group of bickering actors, and Puck, a mischievous sprite, and madness follows.

The humans are made to love the wrong partners, and Titania falls in love with one of

the actors, who has the head of a donkey!

When the human lovers begin to fight one another, the play comes close to tragedy, but magic sets things right. The humans find their true loves and Oberon realises that his love for Titania is stronger than his pride.

The Elizabethans believed in a 'midsummer madness' that was caused by the heat of the summer sun, and many of the characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* behave as if they have been touched by this madness.

The fairy world and the human world are thrown into chaos by love, and Shakespeare pokes fun at how lovers behave. And in the character of Bottom he makes fun of actors – and even playwrights like himself too!



Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre

Some of Shakespeare's most famous plays were first performed at the Globe Theatre, which was built on the South Bank of the River Thames in 1599.

Going to the Globe was a different experience from going to the theatre today. The building was roughly circular in shape, but with flat sides: a little like a doughnut crossed with a fifty-pence piece. Because the Globe was an open-air theatre, plays were only put on during daylight hours in spring and summer. People paid a penny to stand in the central space and watch a play, and this part of the audience became known as 'the groundlings' because they stood on the ground. A place in the tiers of seating beneath the thatched roof, where there was a slightly better view and less chance of being rained on, cost extra.

The Elizabethans did not bath very often and the audiences at the Globe were smelly. Fine ladies and gentlemen in the more expensive seats sniffed perfume and bags of sweetly-scented herbs to cover the stink rising from the groundlings.

There were no actresses on the stage; all the female characters in Shakespeare's plays would have been acted by boys, wearing wigs and make-up. Audiences were not well-behaved. People clapped and cheered when their favourite actors came on stage; bad actors were jeered at and sometimes pelted with whatever came to hand.

Most Londoners worked hard to make a living and in their precious free time they liked to be entertained. Shakespeare understood the magic of the theatre so well that today, almost four hundred years after his death, his plays still cast a spell over the thousands of people that go to see them.





**The
Witches
by Roald Dahl**

Chapter One: A NOTE ABOUT WITCHES



1) What do you know about witches in regular fairy tales?

Where do they live?

What do they look like?

What are they like?

What do they wear? (clothes and accessories)

Do they have any pets?

What special feelings characterize them?

2) **THE WITCHES** is not a regular fairy tale! Write at least three differences you can find between witches in fairy tales and **THE REAL WITCHES** described in your book:

Which of these regular-looking women is the WITCH?!



Chapter Two: MY GRANDMOTHER

1) Cross out the words which DO NOT describe what Grandma is like:

evil	young	kind	slim	a liar
a cigar smoker	affectionate	rude	trustful	tender
pessimistic	medium-built	bilingual	a wrinkled lady	
a story-teller	sporty	adorable	a coward	

2) Now write antonyms of the words you have just crossed out in exercise 1. write sentences as in the example:

Grandma isn't evil, she is a very good person.

She _____



3) Answer these questions about the boy and his early life.

a. *Where were his parents from? Why did they decide to live in England?*

b. *How often did he visit his grandma? Why?*

c. *What happened after his parents died in the accident?*

4) Complete this chart about the missing children:

Name	Age	Where were they?	What were they doing?	What happened to them?
<i>Ranghild</i>				
	X	<i>She was in the street</i>		
	X	X	X	<i>She turned into a large white chicken</i>
	X	X	X	
<i>Leif</i>				



5) ROLE-PLAY!

Imagine the dialogue between Ranghild and the witch. How did the evil "woman" convince the kid to go away with her? Work in groups. Write their conversation, including Ranghild's little sister and mother. Then role-play it!

Chapter three: HOW TO RECOGNIZE A WITCH

1) How can we spot a witch?

Upper part of the body	Lower part of the body
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) Answer the questions below

- a. *How do children smell for witches?*
.....
- b. *What's Grandma's recommendations as regards baths?*
.....
- c. *What's special about Grandma's hand?*
.....

Chapter four : THE GRAND HIGH WITCH

1) Match the two halves to complete the sentences:

1. A man carrying a brief-case	a. to go back to London
2. Grandma is asked	b. can make grown-ups eat their own children.
3. On their trip to England, Grandma	c. according to the country where they live.
4. Witches are completely different	d. delivered a will to grandma.
5. Witches also	e. got to her favourite subject: witches.

2) Complete the text using one of the words in the box below:

LECTURE - SWAPPING - MEETING - SOCIETY - YEAR - COMMUNICATE - FRIENDS - COUNTRY - ENGLAND - DETESTABLE

Witches really are a _____ breed. They have a secret _____ in every country but they only know each other in their own _____. They cannot _____ with any foreign witches. But, for example, witches in _____ are all _____, speaking on the phone, and _____ recipes. Once a _____, they have a secret _____ to get a _____ from the 'Grand High Witch of All The World'.

3) True or False? Justify your answers with information from the story:

a. The boy is very enthusiastic about going back to England.

b. The boy doesn't know why his grandmother hasn't got a thumb.

c. Witches love turning children into animals.

d. Witches usually work as teachers.

3) Look at the pictures and write a short paragraph describing the scene and giving as many details as possible:



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4) VOCABULARY

Read the following text and replace the underlined words with a suitable synonym:

Witches are actually (_____) a detestable breed. They dress up (_____) themselves as adorable (_____) ladies, when secretly, they want to squish and squelch all the wretched children they hate (_____). Fortunately (_____), one boy and his grandmother know how to spot (_____) these evil creatures – but can they get rid of them for ever (_____)?

5) Answer the following questions:

a. Who was the man in a black suit and why did he visit Grandma?

.....
.....

b. Why did they decide to go to England?

.....
.....

c. What were their favourite conversations about? Why?

.....
.....

d. How does Grandma describe the Grand High Witch?

.....
.....

e. Why is it said that the witches have so much money?

.....
.....

f. What happened to the boy when he was up the tree house?

.....
.....

Chapter Six: THE MEETING

1. Before reading the chapter, look at this picture. It was taken during "The Meeting." Can you notice anything suspicious about these women? Write three reasons:



-
-
-
-

2. ~~SYNONYM RACE!~~

Reread "The Meeting" and find one synonym for each of these words:

Darling:

Lovely:

Observed:

Get ready:

Supposed:

Very small:

Amazed:

Crazy:

Not attractive:

Shocking:

Became:

Stay quite:

Went unconscious:

Complete:

Think:

Total:

3. What conclusion did the boy come to? Do you agree with him?

.....

.....

Chapter Seven: FRIZZLED LIKE A FRITTER

1. The Grand High Witch speaks weird! Can you get her? Write her words in correct English:

"You may rreee-moof your vigs!"

"Vitches of Inkland!"

"Miserrable vitches"

"Vee do not wont these children"

"Von child a veek is not good to me"

2. One of the witches said "A// of them! We can't possibly wipe out *all* of them!! Explain why that was a terrible mistake.



CONTEST!

*Try and do the
Grand High Witch!
Start practising!*

Chapter eight: Formula 86 Delayed Action Mouse-Taker

1. Read the following lines said by the Grand High Witch and match them to the correct English version:

The grand High Witch'

	+ Vee vil vipe them all away! + They are vurse than dogs! + Vee vil flush them down the drain! + Children are semlling of dogs' drrrroppings!	
--	--	--

Correct English

	•Children are smelling of dogs' droppings! •They are worse than dogs! •We will wipe them all away! •We will wipe them all away!	
--	--	--

2. Complete the following text using the words in the box:



The Grand High Witch was standing in front of the _____ talking about how kids should be scrubbed off the _____, when she started speaking about a _____! Every _____ would buy a _____ to make children buy things.

Suddenly, one of the witches got so _____ that she decided to _____ the kids with _____ chocolate and sweets.

The room _____ silent when the Grand High Witch

3. Are the sentences True or False? Justify your answers and correct the false ones.

- a) The Grand High Witch was really pleased with the idea of feeding the kids with poisoned sweets. _____

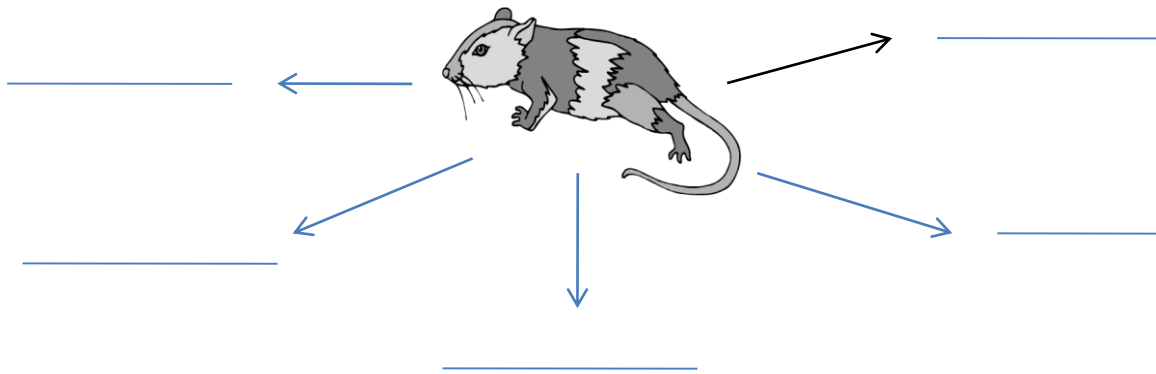
- b) The sweets would be filled with a magic formula created by the Grand High Witch herself. _____

- c) The formula would start to work any moment of the day. _____

- d) Twenty six minutes after drinking the potion, the child is not longer a child. _____



4. VOCABULARY: Scan the text and find words related to 'mouse':



5. Role-play:

Imagine a conversation between the Grand High Witch and one of the witches from the audience. The witch says something dull and the Grand High Witch reacts in a nasty way. Write the dialogue between both witches.





Chapter nine: The Recipe

1. Read the paragraph and correct the mistakes in it:

The Grand High Witch has a majestic plan to get rid of children. First, English witches have to leave their jobs. Then, she will give each of them money to buy the best toy-shops in each neighbourhood of England and organise a Great Gala Opening. During the Opening, the witches have to give children free sweets and lollipops. But those sweets and chocolates are poisoned! They contain FORMULA 86 DELAYED MOUSE_MAKER! After each child eats the chocolate nothing happens immediately. The children go home feeling fine and they go to bed feeling porefectly well the following morning. But when htey arrive at the bus stop, the Formula starts working. Children start to shrink and grow hair and withing twenty minutes, each child becomes a mouse! But that us not the end of it. When teachers see their classrooms full of mice, they run to get mouse-traps. They put some bread in the mouse-traps. And then Snappety-snap! There are mouse-heads rolling across all school-floors in England!

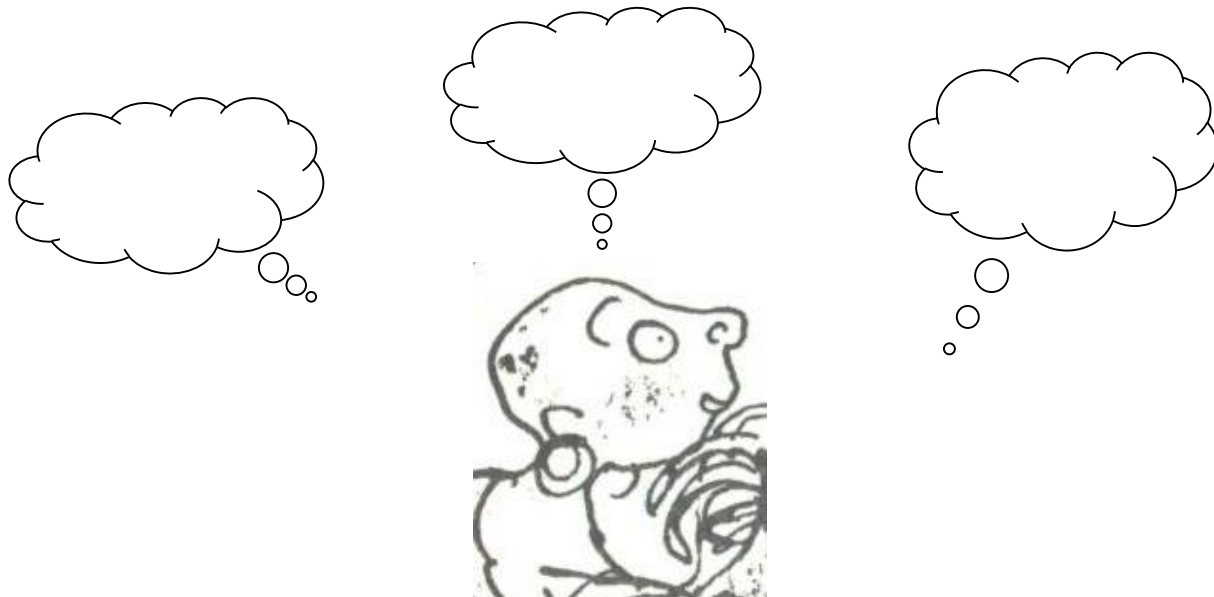
2. Choose three quotes from the text and find other words to express the same meaning:

E.g. Attention now! ⇒ Concentrate!

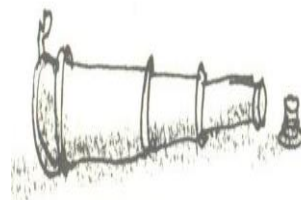
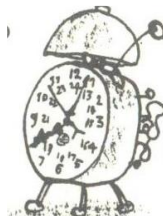
1. ' _____ ' ,
2. ' _____ ' ,
3. ' _____ ' ,

- a. ' _____ ' ,
- b. ' _____ ' ,
- c. ' _____ ' ,

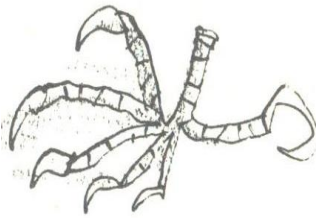
3. What things would the witches like to do to the children if they see them:

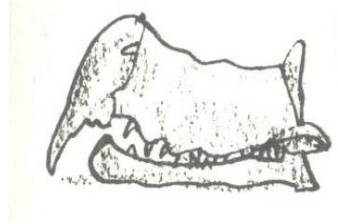


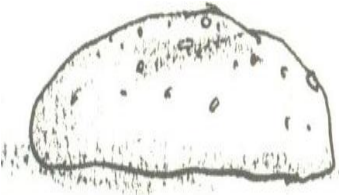
4. Look at the pictures. Explain each one baring in mind the different steps of the recipe:

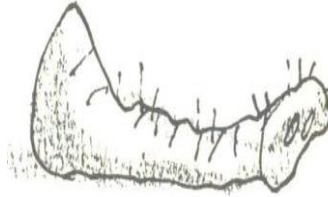












5. Complete the correct answer:

- The Grand High Witch's advise about the recipe was
- Witches will have to set their alarm clocks to go off at
-were recognised immediately by the boy.



Chapter ten: Bruno Jenkind Disappears

1. Read the information about Bruno Jenkins and complete the file below. Then draw his face:

MISSING-PERSON

Name: Bruno Jenkins

Age: _____

Height: _____

Weight: _____

Hair: _____

Eyes: _____

Last seen: _____

Wearing: _____

Distinguishing Marks/Habits: _____



2. Answer the following questions:

- a) What was Bruno doing when the boy saw him? _____
- b) What happened to his magnifying glass? _____
- c) After eating the chocolate, what happened to Bruno Jenkins? _____



Chapter eleven: The Ancient Ones.

1. Look for other words to say the same thing:

- 'It comes to me, said the Grand High Witch, 'that you ancient vuns vill not be able to climb high trrrrees in search of grrrrruntles' eggs.'

- You ancient vuns have served me vell over many years" said the Grand High Witch.

2. Match the adjectives with the correct character:

- Grand High Witch
- Audience of witches
- Trees
- Delayed Action Mouse-Maker
- Bottle
- Manager
- Tables
- Tall witch's nose-holes
- Dogs' droppings

- small and tiny.
- ridiculous.
- dangerous eyes.
- ancient.
- strong and foul.
- long.
- limited quantity.
- good, kind, generous and thoughtful.
- huge curvy.
- high.
- old and feeble.

3. Write the sequence of events in Chapter 11:

➤ Event 1: _____

➤ Event 2: _____

➤ Event 3: _____

➤ Event 4: _____

4. What would you do if you were the boy hiding in the middle of the witches' audiences:

5. Draw the boy's face when he listens that the witches are looking for him:



Chapter thirteen: Bruno

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a mouse?

ADVANTAGES

DISADVANTAGES

2. Look at the boy's changes. He used to be a boy and now he is a mouse.
What are the differences and similarities? If possible, use comparatives.

Differences

Similarities

3. Answer the questions below.

- What does Bruno feel about being a mouse?

- How is the boy going to solve this problem?

- Where are Bruno and the boy going to go first? Why?

4. Imagine how the conversation between the grandmamma and the boy would be. Take into consideration that the boy is now in a mouse's body. Would she realize it right away? Would it be hard for the boy to demonstrate that he is her grandson?



Grandmamma: _____

Boy: _____

Grandmamma: _____

Boy: _____

Grandmamma: _____

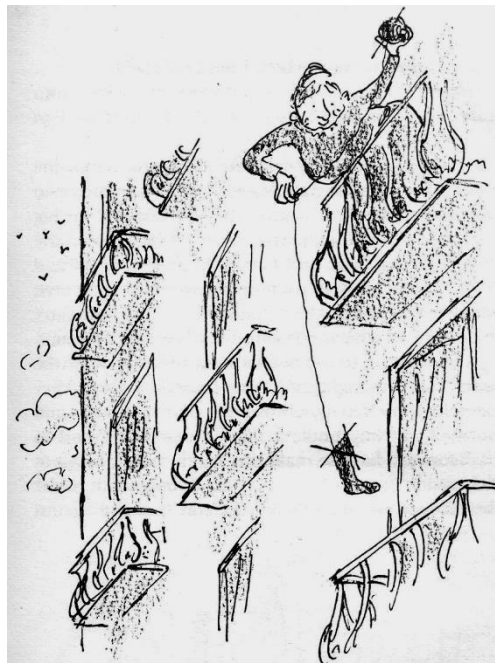
Boy: _____

Grandmamma: _____

Boy: _____

1. Put these events in order. This is how the mouse found the little bottle!

- _____ The mouse (the boy) jumped out of the sock and ran into The Grand High Witch's bedroom.
- _____ The mouse (the boy) started skittering round and trying to search the room.
- _____ The grandmother put the mouse (the boy) in the sock and started lowering him over the balcony.
- _____ The mouse (the boy) jumped on to the bed to get better view of the room.
- _____ The mouse (the boy) found a little bottle!
- _____ The mouse (the boy) saw a frog jumping across the Carpet and disappearing under the bed.
- _____ The mouse (the boy) lowered himself over the edge of the bed and wormed his way underneath the mattress.



2. Please complete

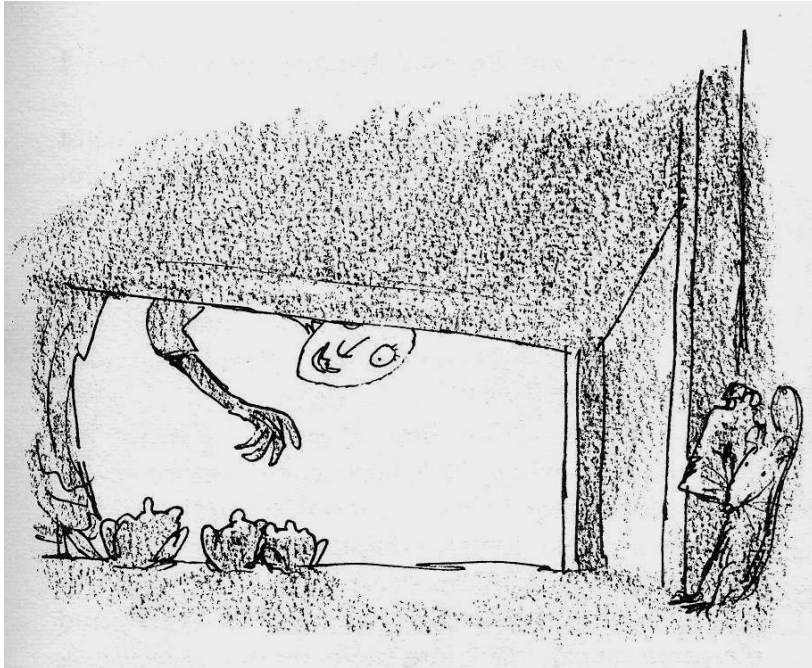
Frogs can _____

Frogs cannot _____

Mice can _____

Mice cannot _____

3. The Grand High Witch came into her bedroom when the mouse was still there. What would you do if you were the mouse?



4. Complete the sentences with the synonym of the adjective used in the book.

“I’m only a _____ mouse”.

“There was the same _____ smell”.

“No witch would be _____ enough to leave anything suspicious.”

“My head suddenly bumped against something _____ inside the mattress above me.”

“I examined the _____ bottle.”

“Those _____ eyes were the saddest thing.”

“She is the most _____ woman in the _____ world.”



Arts

Unit 1: The Theatre

A theater is a place where people go to see plays and other performances. The word theater can also refer to everything involved in producing a live staged performance. The most common form of theater is a drama, or play. A drama is a story that is acted out for an audience. Other kinds of theatrical productions may feature elements other than a story. They include musicals, puppet shows, circuses, operas, and ballets and other dance performances.

Inside the Theater

The main part of a theater is the stage. The most common kind is called a proscenium stage. On that type of stage the action takes place under a large arch. The audience views the production from the front of the stage, as though looking through a wall of a room. Some theaters have a thrust stage, which extends partly into the seating area. The audience sits on three sides of the extended section of a thrust stage. In an arena stage the audience surrounds the stage. An arena stage is also called theater-in-the-round.

Other important parts of the theater include the backstage area and the dressing rooms. There is also a booth where technicians control the lighting and sound.

People in Theater

Many people work together to create theater. In a play actors have the most visible roles. The main people behind the scenes are the producer and the director. As the play's main businessperson, a producer obtains and manages all the money. The director decides how the play will be brought to life. This involves overseeing the actors and the behind-the-scenes crew. The director also runs rehearsals, or practices. A playwright writes the script, which contains the words the actors say.

The stage manager oversees all behind-the-scenes activity during the production. The set designer creates backdrops and furniture. The property master manages the small items, or props, used onstage. Lighting experts focus light on the stage to concentrate

on certain activity and to set a mood. The makeup artist and costume designer help the actors look their parts.

Other types of theatrical productions may involve other people with special talents. For example, in puppet theater various people design, make, and operate the puppets. In productions featuring dance a person called a choreographer may make up all the dance steps and movements. Musicians and composers may be a key part of productions that use music.

History

Early Theater

In ancient Greece plays were performed as part of special festivals. The audience sat on seats carved into the side of a hill overlooking the stage. Some ancient Greek theaters could seat as many as 20,000 people.

In Europe during the Middle Ages (ad 500–1500) plays were often related to Christianity. At first they were performed in churches. Later they were performed outdoors—on the church steps, on decorated platforms, or sometimes even in wagons.

In the 1300s a type of theater called Noh was developed in Japan. Noh plays combine words, music, and dance to portray legends. Men or boys play all the parts, including the female characters. The actors do not act out scenes. Instead they use their movements and appearance as symbols to suggest the story. A Noh play takes place on a thrust stage. The stage has four pillars topped by a curving temple roof.

The Renaissance (1300s to 1500s) was a period of great artistic creation in Europe. The large theaters built then set the pattern for today's theaters. Grand spectacles staged in these theaters were usually for the upper classes. The common people went to see groups of traveling actors perform comic entertainment outdoors.

In the late 1500s many theaters opened in London, England. The most famous was the Globe Theater, where William Shakespeare staged many of his plays. The Globe had a thrust stage that

extended halfway into an open courtyard. The common people stood in the courtyard. Wealthier members of the audience sat in seats. During Shakespeare's time women did not perform in plays. The female characters were played by men or boys who dressed as women.

Modern Theater

In Japan in the 1600s a new form of drama called Kabuki appeared. It focused on singing, dancing, and mime (movement without words). Actors in a Kabuki play wear striking costumes and makeup. They use elaborate gestures to show strong emotions. Kabuki is performed on a thrust stage. A narrow, raised platform extends through the audience from the stage to the back of the theater. The actors use the platform for dancing and for important entrances and exits. A female dancer developed Kabuki. But after the 1650s only men acted in the plays.

Kabuki is related to a form of Japanese puppet theater called Bunraku. In Bunraku the performers move around large dolls to act out a drama. One of the performers chants the words of the story. Puppet theater also has a long tradition in many other countries, including Indonesia, Turkey, India, and China. In Europe puppet shows presented favorite characters in entertaining stories.

In Europe during the 1600s many theaters began to use the proscenium, or arch, stage. This is the type of stage seen in many modern theaters.

Several actors in Europe and North America in the 1700s and 1800s developed new ideas about acting. Before then actors often read their parts as if they were making a speech. The English actor David Garrick developed a more natural acting style. He delivered his lines in the spirit of the character he was playing.

In the 1800s New York City became the theatrical center of the United States, as London was in England. In the 1900s people began performing theater in a greater variety of places. More cities and towns around the world built new theaters.

Unit 2: Fiction

Definition

- ★ Fiction refers to any type of literature that's created from the imagination and typically has a narrative. It describes imaginary events and people. Usually, this comes in the form of books and stories.
- ★ Fiction is any creative work, chiefly any narrative work, portraying individuals, events, or places that are imaginary, or in ways that are imaginary.

The word 'fiction' comes from the Latin word '*fictus*', which means 'to form' - fiction is stories that are 'formed' and created by a writer.

Fictional pieces are inconsistent with history, fact, or plausibility. In a narrow sense, "fiction" refers to written narratives, such as novels and short stories. More broadly, however, fiction encompasses imaginary narratives expressed in any medium, including not just writings but also live theatrical performances, films, television programs, radio dramas, comics, role-playing games, and video games.

There are many types of genres within fiction including mysteries, science fiction, romance, fantasy, and crime thrillers.

The fictionality of a work is publicly marketed, so the audience expects the work to deviate from the real world rather than presenting characters who are actual people. Because fiction is understood to not fully adhere to the real world, the themes and context of a work are open to interpretation.

Fiction is the opposite of non-fiction. It can be based on facts or real events, but the majority of the content has been curated by the writer using their own imagination. Creators of non-fiction works assume responsibility for presenting only information (and sometimes opinion) based in historical and factual reality.

History

Storytelling has existed in all human cultures, and each culture incorporates different elements of truth and fiction into storytelling. Early fiction was closely associated with history and myth. Greek poets developed fictional stories that were told first through oral storytelling and then in writing. Prose fiction was developed in Ancient Greece, influenced by the storytelling traditions of Asia and Egypt. Distinctly fictional work was not recognized as separate from historical or mythological stories until the imperial period.

As fiction writing developed in Ancient Greece, characters and scenarios were emphasized to better connect with the audience, including elements such as romance, piracy, and religious ceremonies. Heroic romance was developed in medieval Europe, incorporating elements associated with fantasy, including supernatural elements.

The structure of the modern novel was developed by Miguel de Cervantes with *Don Quixote* in the early-17th century. The novel became a primary medium of fiction in the 18th and 19th centuries. Realism developed as a literary style at this time. New forms of mass media developed in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, including popular-fiction magazines and early film. Interactive fiction was developed in the late-20th century through video games.

Formats

Traditionally, fiction includes novels, short stories, fables, legends, myths, fairy tales, epic and narrative poetry, plays (including operas, musicals, dramas, puppet plays, and various kinds of theatrical dances). However, fiction may also encompass comic books, and many animated cartoons, stop motions, anime, manga, films, video games, radio programs and television programs.

Unit 3: Improvisation

Definition

- ★ Improvisation is the activity of making or doing something not planned beforehand, using whatever can be found. It is about making up things off the top of your head (you improvise what you are saying!).
- ★ Improvisation in the performing arts is a very spontaneous performance without specific or scripted preparation. In improv, you perform without previously rehearsing the specifics of a scene or game.

Improvisation can be thought of as an "on the spot" spontaneous moment of sudden inventiveness that can just come to mind, body and spirit as an inspiration. For some gifted performers, no preparation or training is needed.

Improvisation in any art form can occur more often if it is practiced as a way of encouraging creative behavior. That practice includes learning to use one's intuition, as well as learning technical skills within the domain in which one is improvising. This can be when an individual or group is acting, dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, talking, creating artworks, problem-solving, or reacting in the moment and in response to the stimulus of one's immediate environment and inner feelings. This can result in the invention of new thought patterns, new practices, new structures or symbols, and/or new ways to act.

Music

Musical improvisation is usually defined as the spontaneous performance of music without previous preparation or any written notes. In other words, the art of improvisation can be understood as composing music "on the fly".

Improvisation can take place as a solo performance, or with other players. When done well, it often elicits gratifying emotional responses from the audience. Notable improvisational musicians include Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven.

Improvised freestyle rap is commonly practiced as a part of rappers' creative processes, as a "finished product" for release on recordings (when the improvisation is judged good enough), as a spiritual event, as a means of verbal combat in battle rap, and, simply, for fun.

As mentioned above, studies have suggested that improvisation allows a musician to relax the control filters in their mind during this exercise.

Theatre

Improvisation, in theatre, is the playing of dramatic scenes without written dialogue and with minimal or no predetermined dramatic activity.

Dance

Improvisation is used as a choreographic tool in dance composition. Experimenting with the concepts of shape, space, time, and energy while moving without inhibition or cognitive thinking can create unique and innovative movement designs, spatial configuration, dynamics, and unpredictable rhythms. Improvisation without inhibition allows the choreographer to connect to their deepest creative self, which in turn clears the way for pure invention.

Unit 4: Dramatic Text

A dramatic text is a literary composition, designed to be represented on stage. It is part of a communicative process, since it is designed to be read and represented. This type of text is called *dramatic* because its content is designed to represent the typical drama of lyrical or literary narratives.

A drama is a type of story acted out before an audience, often in a theater. Dramas are commonly called plays. Other forms of literature, such as novels and short stories, are meant to be read by individuals. But through staged productions dramas are shared with many people at once.

Elements of drama

A person called a playwright, or a dramatist, writes the play's text. The major elements of a play, or drama, include the characters and the plot. The characters, or the people in the story, often come into conflict with each other over something. For example, they may desire the same throne, princess, or treasure. The plot is what happens during the play and how the conflicts are settled.

In a play the characters use their words and movements to tell the story. Often the characters talk to each other. The words of their conversations are known as dialogue. Sometimes, however, a character will make a speech while alone onstage or with the other characters silent. This creates the illusion that the audience can hear the character's thoughts.

A playwright might write dialogue that sounds natural, or how people of a particular time and place actually talk. Or the dialogue may be very formal. For instance, sometimes the characters' words are written in poetry. In some dramas the characters may sing or chant their words.

The playwright also writes short instructions, called stage directions, in the text. Some stage directions tell the actors what to do, such as when and where to enter the stage. Other directions may describe what a character looks like. They may also indicate the time and place of the action. The play's designers use these descriptions to create the scenery, costumes, and lighting.

Dramatic Traditions

Different dramatic traditions developed in Asia and the West (Europe and North America). In the dramas of many cultures in Asia, dance, gestures, and music are often as important as the words. Asian dramas often use familiar stories as a base. They also tend to have a formal style. The actors may follow a set of rules about the facial expressions and body movements they use to tell the story.

On the other hand, Western dramas tend to focus on telling a new story through dialogue. Traditionally, Western dramas have been divided into two broad types: tragedies and comedies. Tragedies are serious stories about heroic individuals. They have a sad ending. Comedies are less serious and have a happy ending. Modern comedies are often funny. Today many Western dramas mix elements of tragedy and comedy.

History

Early Forms

Scholars believe that drama dates back to the time of the earliest peoples. Drama probably began as part of religious festivals and ceremonies. These took place in many cultures, including those of ancient Egypt, India, and China.

Western drama has its roots in ancient Greece. The great age of Greek drama was the 400s bce. Greek drama was written in poetry. A few actors portrayed all the play's characters. Greek playwrights also wrote parts for a group called the chorus. The chorus stood off to the side and described and explained the action. Greek tragedies told about important people and events from legends or history. The comedies from this period often made fun of the day's political figures.

During the Middle Ages (500–1500 ce) in Europe most drama was based in Christianity. Some plays of the period told stories from the Bible. Others dramatized the lives of Christian saints or presented a moral lesson.

In the 1300s in Japan a new form of drama, called Noh, developed. A Noh drama presents classic Japanese legends using movement, music, and words. About 230 of the classical Noh stories are still performed today. A man named Zeami wrote 90 of them. He is considered the greatest Noh playwright.

The 1500s and 1600s were a great period for drama in England and Spain. Playwrights wrote in a wide range of styles. The greatest playwright of this period was William Shakespeare of England. He wrote complex, action-filled plays with realistic characters.

In the 1600s Jean Racine and other French dramatists wrote plays set in ancient Greece. Their plays featured grand themes and poetic language. The French playwright Molière wrote a different type of play. His comedies poked fun at the fashions and faults of French society of the time.

In the 1700s in Japan a type of puppet theater called Bunraku reached its artistic height. A man named Chikamatsu Monzaemon wrote Bunraku plays that were admired as both literature and entertainment. He wrote historical romances as well as tragedies about ordinary people of his time.

Modern Drama

In the 1800s and early 1900s many Western plays focused on ordinary people rather than kings, warriors, or legendary heroes. These plays explored the characters' inner struggles. Many plays also dealt with social problems, such as corruption and greed in society. Henrik Ibsen of Norway and Anton Chekhov of Russia wrote plays in this realistic style. In England George Bernard Shaw used humor to attack society's problems. Eugene O'Neill of the United States used some of the themes of ancient tragedies. But he placed them in more modern times among everyday characters.

After World War II ended in 1945 many people felt discouraged about the state of the world. Some European playwrights wrote plots and dialogue that made little sense. This was meant to show that life is ridiculous. Their plays came to be known as Theater of the Absurd.

Other playwrights continued to explore familiar topics. In the United States Arthur Miller wrote dramas that focused on the inner lives and family conflicts of strong characters. Similar themes appeared in the plays of Tennessee Williams. Williams often set his plays in the southern United States.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries playwrights of many different backgrounds began to produce notable dramas. Starting in the 1960s several African American dramatists, such as August Wilson, became successful. Social problems and the conflicts of ordinary people continued to provide material for playwrights. But many playwrights also experimented with bold, fresh ways of telling their stories.

Unit 5: Elements of a play

The six elements of a play¹

PLOT

The plot is the arrangement of events or incidents on the stage. The plot is composed of “clearly defined problems for characters to solve.”

The Plot is different from Story, which is a chronological detailing of events that happened on and off stage. Events happening off stage are introduced through exposition (narrative dialogue). The playwright must create a plot that is both credible and astonishing.

The dramatic structure is how the plot or story of a play is laid out, including a beginning, a middle and an end. Plays may also include subplots, which are smaller stories that allow the audience to follow the journey of different characters and events within the plot. Plays also feature an element of conflict, which does not necessarily mean a fight or argument but instead an obstacle that needs to be overcome.

A typical dramatic structure is linear, with events occurring chronologically. This might include:

- exposition - introduces background events and characters
- rising action - a series of events that create suspense in the narrative
- climax - the part of the story where the suspense reaches its highest part
- falling action - the main conflict starts to resolve
- resolution - the conclusion of the story where questions are answered and loose ends are tied up

Structures can also be non-linear, with the action of the play moving forwards and back in time. This is done through the use of flashbacks and flashforwards, to help make the play more exciting or to highlight points through contrast and juxtaposition.

¹ Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z6vwcqt/video>

Alternatively, plays may follow a cyclical structure, with the play ending at the same time as it began. This can be exciting for the audience as they try to work out how the character ended up in the position they see at the start of the play.

Traditionally, plays use acts and scenes to help define particular moments in time, and a new scene will show the audience that the action is taking place in a different location.

SETTING

This is the social, cultural and historical context.

When exploring or performing a play, it is important that its context is understood, including when and where the play was written and when and where it is set. Context is usually divided into three categories:

Social - the way people lived and what they believed when the play was written and set

Cultural - the arts and popular interests associated with a particular time and place

Historical - what was happening in the world when the play was written and set

When rehearsing or studying a play, the context will inform a range of artistic decisions. For example, the historical context of a play will influence design decisions. A play that is set in the Georgian era will use costumes and set associated with that period in history.

A group of eight men and women stand around a central two characters in a ballroom, all dressed in green Georgian costumes.

The Way of the World, Shakespeare Theatre Company

The social context may impact character relationships and how actors use their performance skills to interpret their characters.

Sometimes, directors choose to move away from a play's original context and set it in a different period in time or a different part of the world. For example, a play may have been written hundreds of years ago but may contain themes or issues that are still

prominent today, and staging the play in a different context can highlight the relevance of the play to a modern audience.

CHARACTER

Characters are the people (sometimes animals or ideas) portrayed by the actors in the play. They are the main actors within a work of fiction that carry out the story. It is the characters who move the action, or plot, of the play forward. The characters are the agents of the plot.

Characters typically take the form of humans with names, identities, and character traits, and they engage in actions and speech. Characters may be entirely imaginary, or they may have a basis in real-life individuals. They provide the motivations (reasons) for the events of the plot. The characters of a play face and overcome obstacles that we can recognize. They provide the vehicle for conflict.

Fictional characters can be perceived similarly to real people by the audience. First impressions are influential in how a character is initially perceived, while familiarity with a character results in expected behaviors. Characters that behave contrary to their previous characterization can be confusing to the audience. The audience can also form social connections with characters, feeling for them as if they were real.

THEME

Theme is the underlying idea or message presented by a work. It is more abstract than other elements and can be applied to other circumstances as a broader concept.

The theme is the reason why the playwright wrote the play, i.e. the genre of a play refers to the type of story being told and is decided by the playwright. The style of a play is how the work is presented on stage.

For example, a play in the tragedy genre features a serious plot with a sad ending, whereas a comedy features a light-hearted plot with a happy ending.

Epic theatre seeks to educate the audience about political issues. It uses a range of dramatic devices to remind the audience that

they are watching a play, keeping the audience intellectually and politically engaged.

Physical theatre, on the other hand, is a style of theatre where the storytelling or emotional content is achieved through physical movement, rather than just dialogue. Melodrama is a style that features a highly dramatic plot, an over-the-top acting style and stock characters.

Many modern plays incorporate a range of different genres and performance styles, each with its own characteristics. Plays that mix genres and styles like this are known as mixed form.

LANGUAGE

Characters facing and overcoming recognizable obstacles need to express themselves. Dramatic dialogue consists of two parts: narrative and dramatic.

RHYTHM

Rhythm is the heart of the play. Plot, character, language, and spectacle all have their individual rhythms in time.

The combination of all these rhythms create the impelling force of the play leading to a final climax. The rhythm also creates mood.

SPECTACLE

This refers to the visual elements of a play: sets, costumes, special effects, etc. Spectacle is everything that the audience sees as they watch the play. Everything that is seen or heard on stage. Actors, sets, costumes, lights and sound. All plays have spectacle—some emphasize spectacle more than others.