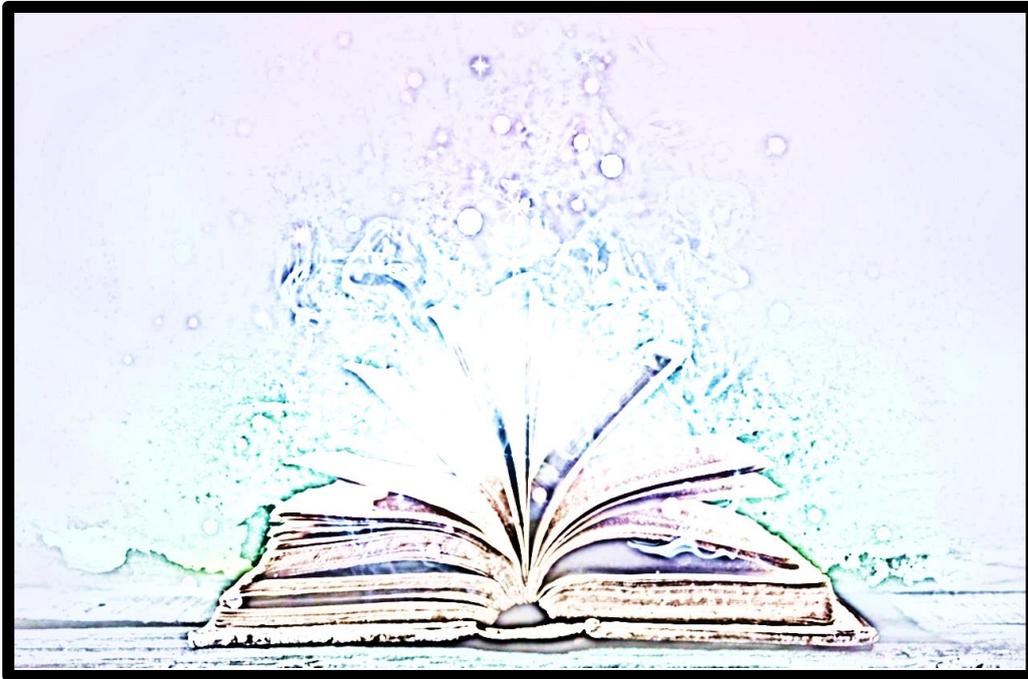


# English Transition Booklet

This booklet belongs to:

## Stories to Interest, Intrigue and Inspire.



- Enjoy reading these stories, answering the questions, and doing the tasks that follow.
- Try to make your work thoughtful and imaginative, and as neat and accurate as you can.
- Your new English teacher will enjoy seeing all that you have achieved when you join us at King Charles I School.

Task	Short Story
1	'All Summer in a Day' by Ray Bradbury and 'The Singing Lesson' by Katherine Mansfield
2	'Lamb to the Slaughter' by Roald Dahl and 'Click-Clack the Rattlebag' by Neil Gaiman
3	'Half a Man' by Michael Morpurgo and 'The Necklace' by Guy du Maupassant
4	'Don't Ask Jack' by Neil Gaiman and 'And When Did You Last See Your Father?'
5	'Butterflies are Free' by Jan Fenimore and 'Blood for Chiaka' by Chidinma Ogbonna
6	'A Sound of Thunder' by Ray Bradbury; 'The Endless Tale' by James Baldwin and 'The Stone Boy' by Gina Berriault

# All Summer in a Day by Ray Bradbury

Read and enjoy the story below. Try to picture and hear it as you read.

"Ready?"

"Now?"

"Soon."

5 "Do the scientists really know? Will it happen today, will it?"

"Look, look; see for yourself!"

The children pressed to each other like so many roses, so many weeds, intermixed, peering out for a look at the hidden sun.

10 It rained. It had been raining for seven years; thousands upon thousands of days compounded and filled from one end to the other with rain, with the drum and gush of water, with the sweet crystal fall of showers and the concussion of storms so heavy they were tidal waves come over the islands. A thousand forests had been crushed under the rain and grown up a thousand times to be crushed again. And this was the way life was forever on the planet Venus, and this was the schoolroom of the children of the rocket men  
15 and women who had come to a raining world to set up civilization and live out their lives.

"It's stopping, it's stopping!"

"Yes, yes!"

20 Margot stood apart from them, from these children who could never remember a time when there wasn't rain and rain and rain. They were all nine years old, and if there had been a day, seven years ago, when the sun came out for an hour and showed its face to the stunned world, they could not recall. Sometimes, at night, she heard them stir, in remembrance, and she knew they were dreaming and remembering gold or a yellow crayon or a coin large enough to buy the world with. She knew they thought they remembered a warmness, like a blushing in the face, in the body, in the arms and legs and trembling hands.  
25 But then they always awoke to the tattering drum, the endless shaking down of clear bead necklaces upon the roof, the walk, the gardens, the forests, and their dreams were gone.

All day yesterday they had read in class about the sun. About how like a lemon it was, and how hot. And they had written small stories or essays or poems about it:

30 I think the sun is a flower;  
That blooms for just one hour.

That was Margot's poem, read in a quiet voice in the still classroom while the rain was falling outside.

"Aw, you didn't write that!" protested one of the boys.

"I did," said Margot, "I did."

35 "William!" said the teacher.

But that was yesterday. Now the rain was slackening, and the children were crushed in the great thick windows.

"Where's teacher?"

"She'll be back."

40 "She'd better hurry; we'll miss it!"

They turned on themselves, like a feverish wheel, all tumbling spokes. Margot stood alone. She was a very frail girl who looked as if she had been lost in the rain for years and the rain had washed out the blue from her eyes and the red from her mouth and the yellow from her hair. She was an old photograph dusted from an album, whitened away, and if she  
45 spoke at all her voice would be a ghost. Now she stood, separate, staring at the rain and the loud wet world beyond the huge glass.

"What're you looking at?" said William.

Margot said nothing.

"Speak when you're spoken to."

50 He gave her a shove. But she did not move; rather she let herself be moved only by him and nothing else. They edged away from her; they would not look at her. She felt them go away. And this was because she would play no games with them in the echoing tunnels of the underground city. If they tagged her and ran, she stood blinking after them and did not follow. When the class sang songs about happiness and life and games her lips barely  
55 moved. Only when they sang about the sun and the summer did her lips move as she watched the drenched windows.

And then, of course, the biggest crime of all was that she had come here only five years ago from Earth, and she remembered the sun and the way the sun was and the sky was when she was four in Ohio. And they, they had been on Venus all their lives, and they had been  
60 only two years old when last the sun came out and had long since forgotten the colour and heat of it and the way it really was. But Margot remembered.

"It's like a penny," she said once, eyes closed.

"No, it's not!" the children cried.

"It's like a fire," she said, "in the stove."

65 "You're lying, you don't remember!" cried the children.

But she remembered and stood quietly apart from all of them and watched the patterning windows. And once, a month ago, she had refused to shower in the school shower rooms, had clutched her hands to her ears and over her head, screaming the water mustn't touch her head. So, after that, dimly, dimly; she sensed it, she was different, and they knew her  
70 difference and kept away.

There was talk that her father and mother were taking her back to Earth next year; it seemed vital to her that they do so, though it would mean the loss of thousands of dollars to her family. And so, the children hated her for all these reasons of big and little consequence. They hated her pale snow face, her waiting silence, her thinness, and her  
75 possible future.

"Get away!" The boy gave her another push. "What're you waiting for?"

Then, for the first time, she turned and looked at him. And what she was waiting for was in her eyes.

"Well, don't wait around here!" cried the boy savagely: "You won't see nothing!"

80 Her lips moved.

"Nothing!" he cried. "It was all a joke, wasn't it?" He turned to the other children.

"Nothing's happening today: Is it?"

They all blinked at him and then, understanding, laughed and shook their heads.

"Nothing, nothing!"

85 "Oh, but," Margot whispered, her eyes helpless. "But this is the day, the scientists predict, they say, they know, the sun. . ."

"All a joke!" said the boy and seized her roughly. "Hey, everyone, let's put her in a closet before teacher comes!"

"No," said Margot, falling back.

90 They surged about her, caught her up and bore her, protesting, and then pleading, and then crying, back into a tunnel, a room, a closet, where they slammed and locked the door. They stood looking at the door and saw it tremble from her beating and throwing herself against it. They heard her muffled cries. Then, smiling, they turned and went out and back down the tunnel, just as the teacher arrived.

95 "Ready, children?" She glanced at her watch.

"Yes!" said everyone.

"Are we all here?"

"Yes!"

The rain slackened still more. They crowded to the huge door.

100 The rain stopped.

It was as if, in the midst of a film, concerning an avalanche, a tornado, a hurricane, a volcanic eruption, something had, first, gone wrong with the sound apparatus, thus muffling and finally cutting off all noise, all of the blasts and repercussions and thunders, and then, second, ripped the film from the projector and inserted in its place a peaceful tropical slide which did not move or tremor. The world ground to a standstill. The silence was so immense and unbelievable that you felt your ears had been stuffed or you had lost your hearing altogether. The children put their hands to their ears. They stood apart. The door slid back and the smell of the silent, waiting world came into them.

The sun came out.

110 It was the colour of flaming bronze and it was very large. And the sky around it was a blazing blue tile colour. And the jungle burned with sunlight as the children, released from their spell, rushed out, yelling, into the springtime.

"Now, don't go too far," called the teacher after them. "You've only two hours, you know. You wouldn't want to get caught out!"

115 But they were running and turning their faces up to the sky and feeling the sun on their cheeks like a warm iron; they were taking off their jackets and letting the sun burn their arms.

"Oh, it's better than the sunlamps, isn't it?"

"Much, much better!"

120 They stopped running and stood in the great jungle that covered Venus, that grew and never stopped growing, tumultuously, even as you watched it. It was a nest of octopi, clustering up great arms of flesh-like weed, wavering, flowering this brief spring. It was the colour of rubber and ash, this jungle, from the many years without sun. It was the colour of stones and white cheeses and ink, and it was the colour of the moon.

125 The children lay out, laughing, on the jungle mattress, and heard it sigh and squeak under them, resilient and alive. They ran among the trees, they slipped and fell, they pushed each other, they played hide-and-seek and tag, but most of all they squinted at the sun until the tears ran down their faces, they put their hands up to that yellowness and that amazing blueness and they breathed of the fresh, fresh air and listened and listened to the silence  
130 which suspended them in a blessed sea of no sound and no motion. They looked at everything and savoured everything. Then, wildly, like animals escaped from their caves, they ran and ran in shouting circles. They ran for an hour and did not stop running.

And then –

In the midst of their running one of the girls wailed.

135 Everyone stopped.

The girl, standing in the open, held out her hand.

"Oh, look, look," she said trembling.

They came slowly to look at her opened palm. In the centre of it, cupped and huge, was a single raindrop.

140 She began to cry, looking at it. They glanced quietly at the sky.

"Oh. Oh."

A few cold drops fell on their noses and their cheeks and their mouths. The sun faded behind a stir of mist. A wind blew cool around them. They turned and started to walk back toward the underground house, their hands at their sides, their smiles vanishing away. A  
145 boom of thunder startled them and like leaves before a new hurricane, they tumbled upon each other and ran. Lightning struck ten miles away, five miles away, a mile, a half mile. The sky darkened into midnight in a flash.

They stood in the doorway of the underground for a moment until it was raining hard. Then they closed the door and heard the gigantic sound of the rain falling in tons and avalanches,  
150 everywhere and forever.

"Will it be seven more years?"

"Yes. Seven."

Then one of them gave a little cry, "Margot!"

"What?"

155 "She's still in the closet where we locked her."

"Margot."

They stood as if someone had driven them, like so many stakes, into the floor. They looked at each other and then looked away: They glanced out at the world that was raining now and raining and raining steadily. They could not meet each other's glances. Their faces were  
160 solemn and pale. They looked at their hands and feet, their faces down.

"Margot."

One of the girls said, "Well. . .?"

No one moved.

"Go on," whispered the girl.

165 They walked slowly down the hall in the sound of cold rain. They turned through the doorway to the room in the sound of the storm and thunder, lightning on their faces, blue and terrible. They walked over to the closet door slowly and stood by it. Behind the closet door was only silence.

They unlocked the door, even more slowly, and let Margot out.

170

## Key Vocabulary:

**compounded** (line 9): (a) combined or mixed together, or (b) made worse – the writer is using both of these meanings at the same time.

**concussion** (line 10): temporary damage to the brain caused by a fall or hit on the head or by violent shaking – the writer uses this word in a metaphorical way to suggest the impact of the constant rain.

**closet** (lines 86, 90, 154, 166): a cupboard or a small room with a door, used for storing things – a word used in America more than Britain.

**repercussions** (line 102): the effects that an action, event, or decision have on something, especially bad effects – the writer is using the word here to describe a storm or volcano, because it also reminds us of the word ‘percussion’ which is a drumming or beating sound.

**tumultuously** (line 120): noisy and constantly moving with chaos and confusion.

**mattress** (line 124): the part of a bed that you lie on, made of a strong cloth cover filled with firm but comfortable material – the writer is using this word metaphorically to describe the floor of the jungle covered with plants to make it soft but firm.

**resilient** (line 125): not damaged or harmed easily, and able to improve quickly after being ill, injured or hurt.

**savoured** (line 130): to enjoy food or another experience slowly, in order to get as much pleasure from it as much as possible – the writer is using this word which often associated with enjoying food to show how much the children were enjoying playing in the sunshine – it’s spelt the American way here, because the writer is American; in Britain we spell it ‘savoured’.

**Note on American spellings:** The word ‘colour’ is used several times in this story – we’ve left it spelt the American way, as Ray Bradbury is an American writer; in Britain, we spell it ‘colour’. Also, in line 130 ‘savoured’ is used (British spelling: ‘savoured’) and line 137 the word ‘centre’ is used (British spelling: ‘centre’).

**Questions:** Write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

**1. In lines 1 to 16,** how is life on the planet Venus described? How do you think the school children feel?

**2. In lines 17 to 93,** how is Margot described? Try to include details about who she is and what kind of personality you think she has. How is she different to the other children?

**3. In lines 94 to 131,** what happens when the sun comes out? Include details of its appearance and the reactions of the children.

**4. In lines 132 to 168,** at the end of the story, what do the children realize? How do they react and why?

**5. What did this unusual story make you think about?** What are the main ideas or themes in it? What do you think Ray Bradbury was saying through this story?

**Follow-up Tasks:** Spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

**1. Go through the Key Vocabulary list** and learn the words and their meanings. Then, write sentences of your own with each word in them.

(e.g. 'The terrible weather compounded the bad mood she was already in.')

**2. Do some research on the internet,** if you have access, and write a paragraph about the writer of this story, Ray Bradbury.

**3. Write your own story** inspired by reading this one. Write as imaginatively, neatly and accurately as you can. Look up spellings and try to get your punctuation right.

Here's some ideas for your story:

- it could be a science-fiction (sci-fi) story – that is a story set in the future and/or in space or on another planet
- it could be a story in which someone is treated unfairly by others
- it could be a story where a strange or unusual event happens
- it could be a sequel that follows on from this story, when Margot is let out of the closet.

## The Singing Lesson by Katherine Mansfield

Read and enjoy the story below. Try to picture and hear it as you read.

5 With despair--cold, sharp despair--buried deep in her heart like a wicked knife, Miss Meadows, in cap and gown and carrying a little baton, trod the cold corridors that led to the music hall. Girls of all ages, rosy from the air, and bubbling over with that gleeful excitement that comes from running to school on a fine autumn morning, hurried, skipped, fluttered by; from the hollow class-rooms came a quick drumming of voices; a bell rang; a voice like a bird cried, "Muriel."

And then there came from the staircase a tremendous knock-knock-knocking. Someone had dropped her dumbbells.

The Science Mistress stopped Miss Meadows.

10 "Good morning," she cried, in her sweet, affected drawl. "Isn't it cold? It might be win-ter."

Miss Meadows stared in hatred at the Science Mistress. Everything about her was sweet, pale, like honey. You would not have been surprised to see a bee caught in the tangles of that yellow hair.

"It is rather sharp," said Miss Meadows, grimly.

15 The other smiled her sugary smile.

"You look fro-zen," said she. Her blue eyes opened wide; there came a mocking light in them. (Had she noticed anything?)

"Oh, not quite as bad as that," said Miss Meadows, and she gave the Science Mistress, in exchange for her smile, a quick grimace and passed on...

20 Forms Four, Five, and Six were assembled in the music hall. The noise was deafening. On the platform, by the piano, stood Mary Beazley, Miss Meadows' favourite, who played accompaniments. She was turning the music stool. When she saw Miss Meadows, she gave a loud, warning.

25 "Shsh! girls!" and Miss Meadows, her hands thrust in her sleeves, the baton under her arm, strode down the centre aisle, mounted the steps, turned sharply, seized the brass music stand, planted it in front of her, and gave two sharp taps with her baton for silence.

"Silence, please! Immediately!" and, looking at nobody, her glance swept over that sea of coloured flannel blouses, with bobbing pink faces and hands, quivering butterfly hair-bows, and music-books outspread. She knew perfectly well what they were thinking.

30 "Meady is in a wax."

Well, let them think it! Her eyelids quivered; she tossed her head, defying them. What could the thoughts of those creatures' matter to someone who stood there bleeding to death, pierced to the heart, to the heart, by such a letter...

35 'I feel more and more strongly that our marriage would be a mistake. Not that I do not love you. I love you as much as it is possible for me to love any woman, but, truth to tell, I have come to the conclusion that I am not a marrying man, and the idea of settling down fills me with nothing but--' and the word "disgust" was scratched out lightly and "regret" written over the top.'

40 Miss Meadows stalked over to the piano. And Mary Beazley, who was waiting for this moment, bent forward; her curls fell over her cheeks while she breathed.

"Good morning, Miss Meadows."

45 She motioned towards rather than handed to her mistress a beautiful yellow chrysanthemum. This little ritual of the flower had been gone through for ages and ages, quite a term and a half. It was as much part of the lesson as opening the piano. But this morning, instead of taking it up, instead of tucking it into her belt while she leant over Mary and said, "Thank you, Mary. How very nice! Turn to page thirty-two," what was Mary's horror when Miss Meadows totally ignored the chrysanthemum, made no reply to her greeting, but said in a voice of ice.

"Page fourteen, please, and mark the accents well."

50 Staggering moment! Mary blushed until the tears stood in her eyes, but Miss Meadows was gone back to the music stand; her voice rang through the music hall.

"Page fourteen. We will begin with page fourteen. 'A Lament.' Now, girls, you ought to know it by this time. We shall take it all together; not in parts, all together. And without expression. Sing it, though, quite simply, beating time with the left hand."

55 She raised the baton; she tapped the music stand twice. Down came Mary on the opening chord; down came all those left hands, beating the air, and in chimed those young, mournful voices.

"Fast! Ah, too Fast Fade the Ro-o-ses of Pleasure; Soon Autumn yields unto Wi-i-nter Drear. Fleetly! Ah, Fleetly Mu-u-sic's Measure Passes away from the Listening Ear."

60 Good Heavens, what could be more tragic than that lament! Every note was a sigh, a sob, a groan of awful mournfulness. Miss Meadows lifted her arms in the wide gown and began conducting with both hands.

`...I feel more and more strongly that our marriage would be a mistake...' she beat. And the voices cried.

65 "Fleetly! Ah, Fleetly."

What could have possessed him to write such a letter! What could have led up to it! It came out of nothing. His last letter had been all about a fumed-oak bookcase he had bought for `our` books, and a `natty little hall-stand` he had seen, `a very neat affair with a carved owl on a bracket, holding three hat-brushes in its claws.`

70 "From the Listening Ear," sang the voices.

"Once again," said Miss Meadows.

"But this time in parts. Still without expression."

"Fast! Ah, too Fast. Fade the Roses of Pleasure."

75 Last time he had come to see her, Basil had worn a rose in his buttonhole. How handsome he had looked in that bright blue suit, with that dark red rose! And he knew it, too. He couldn't help knowing it. First, he stroked his hair, then his moustache; his teeth gleamed when he smiled.

80 `The headmaster's wife keeps on asking me to dinner. It is a perfect nuisance. I never get an evening to myself in that place. But can't you refuse? Oh, well, it doesn't do for a man in my position to be unpopular. `

"Music's Gay Measure," wailed the voices.

The willow trees, outside the high, narrow windows, waved in the wind. They had lost half their leaves. The tiny ones that clung wriggled like fishes caught on a line.

`...I am not a marrying man...` she thought to herself.

85 The voices were silent; the piano waited.

"Quite good," said Miss Meadows, but still in such a strange, stony tone that the younger girls began to feel positively frightened.

"But now that we know it, we shall take it with expression. As much expression as you can put into it. Think of the words, girls. Use your imaginations."

90 "Fast! Ah, too Fast," cried Miss Meadows.

"That ought to break out--a loud, strong forte--a lament. And then in the second line, 'Winter Drear,' make that 'Drear' sound as if a cold wind were blowing through it. 'Drear!'" said she so awfully that Mary Beazley, on the music stool, wriggled her spine.

95 "The third line should be one crescendo. 'Fleetly! Ah, Fleetly Music's Gay Measure.' Breaking on the first word of the last line, Passes.' And then on the word, 'Away,' you must begin to die...to fade...until 'The Listening Ear' is nothing more than a faint whisper...You can slow down as much as you like almost on the last line. Now, please."

Again, the two light taps; she lifted her arms again.

"Fast! Ah, too Fast."

100 `...and the idea of settling down fills me with nothing but disgust--` she remembered the letter again.

Disgust was what he had written. That was as good as to say their engagement was definitely broken off. Broken off! Their engagement!

105 People had been surprised enough that she had got engaged. The Science Mistress would not believe it at first. But nobody had been as surprised as she. She was thirty. Basil was twenty-five. It had been a miracle, simply a miracle, to hear him say, as they walked home from church that very dark night. `You know, somehow or other, I've got fond of you` he had said.

"Repeat! Repeat!" said Miss Meadows.

110 "More expression, girls! Once more!"

"Fast! Ah, too Fast."

The older girls were crimson; some of the younger ones began to cry. Big spots of rain blew against the windows, and one could hear the willows whispering, `...not that I do not love you...` her mind went back to the letter.

115 `But, my darling, if you love me, ` thought Miss Meadows, `I don't mind how much it is. Love me as little as you like. ` But she knew he didn't love her. Not to have cared enough to scratch out that word `disgust, ` so that she couldn't read it!

"Soon Autumn yields unto Winter Drear."

120 She would have to leave the school, too. She could never face the Science Mistress or the girls after it got known. She would have to disappear somewhere.

"Passes away." The voices began to die, to fade, to whisper...to vanish...

Suddenly the door opened. A little girl in blue walked fussily up the aisle, hanging her head, biting her lips, and twisting the silver bangle on her red little wrist. She came up the steps and stood before Miss Meadows.

125 "Well, Monica, what is it?"

"Oh, if you please, Miss Meadows," said the little girl, gasping, "Miss Wyatt wants to see you in the mistress's room."

"Very well," said Miss Meadows. And she called to the girls, "I shall put you on your honour to talk quietly while I am away."

130 But they were too subdued to do anything else. Most of them were blowing their noses.

The corridors were silent and cold; they echoed to Miss Meadows' steps. The head mistress sat at her desk. For a moment she did not look up. She was as usual disentangling her eyeglasses, which had got caught in her lace tie.

135 "Sit down, Miss Meadows," she said very kindly. And then she picked up a pink envelope from the blotting-pad.

"I sent for you just now because this telegram has come for you."

"A telegram for me, Miss Wyatt?" I hope it's not bad news," she said, so more than kindly. And Miss Meadows tore it open.

140 "Pay no attention to letter, must have been mad, bought hat-stand today-- Basil," she read. She couldn't take her eyes off the telegram.

"I do hope it's nothing very serious," said Miss Wyatt, leaning forward.

"Oh, no, thank you, Miss Wyatt," blushed Miss Meadows. "It's nothing bad at all. It's"--and she gave an apologetic little laugh--"it's from my fiancé saying that...saying that--" There was a pause. "I see," said Miss Wyatt.

145 And another pause. Then--"You've fifteen minutes more of your class, Miss Meadows, haven't you?"

"Yes, Miss Wyatt." She got up. She half ran towards the door.

## Key Vocabulary:

**Line 1:** Despair – the complete loss of hope.

**Line 18:** Grimace – an ugly or twisted expression on a person`s face, normally when they are in pain or upset from looking at something.

**Line 21:** Accompaniments – a musical part with supports a person or instrument.

**Line 30:** Quivered – to tremble or shake.

**Line 42:** Chrysanthemum – a type of flower.

**Line 59:** Lament – an expression of grief or sadness OR a song, music or poem that is showing grief or sadness.

**Line 129:** Subdued – a person who is quiet or even depressed.

**Line 131:** Disentangling – to be free from something that they are knotted or tangled in.

**Line 135:** Telegram – a form of message sent through a telegraph. A telegraph is a system for sending messages which uses a wire and signals.

**Questions:** Write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

- 1. In lines 1 to 7,** how is Miss Meadows described? How do you think she is different to the school children?
- 2. In lines 20 to 25,** how is the noise in the hall described? Try to include details about what kind of noise there is and who is making the noise? Who gives a warning to stop the noise?
- 3. In lines 31 to 40,** what does Miss Meadows say she has received? Include details of its contents and whether the letter is positive or negative.
- 4. In lines 75 to 80,** what happened the last time Miss Meadows saw her fiancé? What does their relationship seem like? Why?
- 5. In lines 115-135,** what does Miss Meadows say about the letter? How does she feel about the letter?
- 6. What did this story make you think about?** What are the main ideas or themes in it? What do you think Katherine Mansfield was saying through this story?

**Follow-up Tasks:** Spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

**1. Go through the Key Vocabulary list** and learn the words and their meanings. Then, write sentences of your own with each word in them.

(e.g. 'The despair she felt only made the awful day even worse.')

**2. Do some research on the internet,** if you have access, and write a paragraph about the why you think stories with cliff-hangers are so interesting to readers.

**3. Write your own story** inspired by reading this one. Write as imaginatively, neatly and accurately as you can. Look up spellings and try to get your punctuation right.

Here's some ideas for your story:

- it could be a real-life story – that is a story set in a place that you know well like a school or your home.
- it could be a story in which someone is treated unfairly by others
- it could be a story where a strange or unusual event happens
- it could be a cliff-hanger where the ending is left open.

# Lamb to the Slaughter by Roald Dahl

Read and enjoy the story below. Try to picture and hear it as you read.

The room was warm and clean, the curtains drawn, the two table lamps alight- hers and the one by the empty chair opposite. On the sideboard behind her, two tall glasses, soda water, whiskey. Fresh ice cubes in the Thermos bucket. Mary Maloney was waiting for her husband to come home from work.

5 Now and again she would glance up at the clock, but without anxiety, merely to please herself with the thought that each minute gone by made it nearer the time when he would come. There was a slow smiling air about her, and about everything she did. The drop of a head as she bent over her sewing was curiously tranquil. Her skin -for this was her sixth month with child-had acquired a wonderful translucent quality, the mouth was soft, and the  
10 eyes, with their new placid look, seemed larger darker than before. When the clock said ten minutes to five, she began to listen, and a few moments later, punctually as always, she heard the tires on the gravel outside, and the car door slamming, the footsteps passing the window, the key turning in the lock. She laid aside her sewing, stood up, and went forward to kiss him as he came in.

15 "Hullo darling," she said.  
"Hullo darling," he answered.

She took his coat and hung it in the closet. Then she walked over and made the drinks, a strongish one for him, a weak one for herself; and soon she was back again in her chair with the sewing, and he in the other, opposite, holding the tall glass with both hands, rocking it  
20 so the ice cubes tinkled against the side.

For her, this was always a blissful time of day. She knew he didn't want to speak much until the first drink was finished, and she, on her side, was content to sit quietly, enjoying his company after the long hours alone in the house. She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel-almost as a sunbather feels the sun-that warm male glow that came  
25 out of him to her when they were alone together. She loved him for the way he sat loosely in a chair, for the way he came in a door, or moved slowly across the room with long strides. She loved intent, far look in his eyes when they rested in her, the funny shape of the mouth, and especially the way he remained silent about his tiredness, sitting still with himself until the whiskey had taken some of it away.

30 "Tired darling?"

"Yes," he said. "I'm tired,"

And as he spoke, he did an unusual thing. He lifted his glass and drained it in one swallow although there was still half of it, at least half of it left... She wasn't really watching him, but she knew what he had done because she heard the ice cubes falling back against the bottom

35 of the empty glass when he lowered his arm. He paused a moment, leaning forward in the chair, then he got up and went slowly over to fetch himself another.

“I’ll get it!” she cried, jumping up.

“Sit down,” he said.

40 When he came back, she noticed that the new drink was dark amber with the quantity of whiskey in it.

“Darling, shall I get your slippers?”

“No.”

She watched him as he began to sip the dark yellow drink, and she could see little oily swirls in the liquid because it was so strong.

45 “I think it’s a shame,” she said, “that when a policeman gets to be as senior as you, they keep him walking about on his feet all day long.”

He didn’t answer, so she bent her head again and went on with her sewing; but each time he lifted the drink to his lips, she heard the ice cubes clinking against the side of the glass.

50 “Darling,” she said. “Would you like me to get you some cheese? I haven’t made any supper because it’s Thursday.”

“No,” he said.

“If you’re too tired to eat out,” she went on, “it’s still not too late. There’s plenty of meat and stuff in the freezer, and you can have it right here and not even move out of the chair.”

55 Her eyes waited on him for an answer, a smile, a little nod, but he made no sign. “Anyway,” she went on, “I’ll get you some cheese and crackers first.”

“I don’t want it,” he said.

She moved uneasily in her chair, the large eyes still watching his face. “But you must eat! I’ll fix it anyway, and then you can have it or not, as you like.” She stood up and placed her sewing on the table by the lamp.

60 “Sit down,” he said. “Just for a minute, sit down.”

It wasn’t till then that she began to get frightened.

“Go on,” he said. “Sit down.”

65 She lowered herself back slowly into the chair, watching him all the time with those large, bewildered eyes. He had finished the second drink and was staring down into the glass, frowning.

“Listen,” he said. “I’ve got something to tell you.”

“What is it, darling? What’s the matter?”

70 He had now become absolutely motionless, and he kept his head down so that the light from the lamp beside him fell across the upper part of his face, leaving the chin and mouth in shadow. She noticed there was a little muscle moving near the corner of his left eye.

“This is going to be a bit of a shock to you, I’m afraid,” he said. “But I’ve thought about it a good deal and I’ve decided the only thing to do is tell you right away. I hope you won’t blame me too much.”

75 And he told her. It didn’t take long, four or five minutes at most, and she say very still through it all, watching him with a kind of dazed horror as he went further and further away from her with each word.

“So, there it is,” he added. “And I know it’s kind of a bad time to be telling you, bet there simply wasn’t any other way. Of course, I’ll give you money and see you’re looked after. But there needn’t really be any fuss. I hope not anyway. It wouldn’t be very good for my job.”

80 Her first instinct was not to believe any of it, to reject it all. It occurred to her that perhaps he hadn’t even spoken, that she herself had imagined the whole thing. Maybe, if she went about her business and acted as though she hadn’t been listening, then later, when she sorts of woke up again, she might find none of it had ever happened.

“I’ll get the supper,” she managed to whisper, and this time he didn’t stop her.

85 When she walked across the room, she couldn’t feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn’t feel anything at all- except a slight nausea and a desire to vomit. Everything was automatic now-down the steps to the cellar, the light switch, the deep freeze, the hand inside the cabinet taking hold of the first object it met. She lifted it out and looked at it. It was wrapped in paper, so she took off the paper and looked at it again.

90 A leg of lamb.

All right then, they would have lamb for supper. She carried it upstairs, holding the thin bone-end of it with both her hands, and as she went through the living-room, she saw him standing over by the window with his back to her, and she stopped.

95 “For God’s sake,” he said, hearing her, but not turning round. “Don’t make supper for me. I’m going out.”

At that point, Mary Maloney simply walked up behind him and without any pause she swung the big frozen leg of lamb high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head.

She might just as well have hit him with a steel club.

100 She stepped back a pace, waiting, and the funny thing was that he remained standing there for at least four or five seconds, gently swaying. Then he crashed to the carpet.

The violence of the crash, the noise, the small table overturning, helped bring her out of her shock. She came out slowly, feeling cold and surprised, and she stood for a while blinking at the body, still holding the ridiculous piece of meat tight with both hands.

105 All right, she told herself. So, I’ve killed him.

It was extraordinary, now, how clear her mind became all of a sudden. She began thinking very fast. As the wife of a detective, she knew quite well what the penalty would be. That was fine. It made no difference to her. In fact, it would be a relief. On the other hand, what about the child? What were the laws about murderers with unborn children? Did they kill then both-mother and child? Or did they wait until the tenth month? What did they do?

Mary Maloney didn't know. And she certainly wasn't prepared to take a chance.

She carried the meat into the kitchen, placed it in a pan, turned the oven on high, and shoved it inside. Then she washed her hands and ran upstairs to the bedroom. She sat down before the mirror, tidied her hair, touched up her lips and face. She tried a smile. It came out rather peculiar. She tried again.

"Hullo Sam," she said brightly, aloud.  
The voice sounded peculiar too.

"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."  
That was better. Both the smile and the voice were coming out better now. She rehearsed it several times more. Then she ran downstairs, took her coat, went out the back door, down the garden, into the street.

It wasn't six o'clock yet and the lights were still on in the grocery shop.  
"Hullo Sam," she said brightly, smiling at the man behind the counter.  
"Why, good evening, Mrs. Maloney. How're you?"  
"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."  
The man turned and reached up behind him on the shelf for the peas.  
"Patrick's decided he's tired and doesn't want to eat out tonight," she told him. "We usually go out Thursdays, you know, and now he's caught me without any vegetables in the house."  
"Then how about meat, Mrs. Maloney?"

"No, I've got meat, thanks. I got a nice leg of lamb from the freezer."  
"Oh."  
"I don't know much like cooking it frozen, Sam, but I'm taking a chance on it this time. You think it'll be all right?"

"Personally," the grocer said, "I don't believe it makes any difference. You want these Idaho potatoes?"

"Oh yes, that'll be fine. Two of those."  
"Anything else?" The grocer cocked his head on one side, looking at her pleasantly. "How about afterwards? What you going to give him for afterwards?" "Well-what would you suggest, Sam?"

The man glanced around his shop. "How about a nice big slice of cheesecake? I know he likes that."  
"Perfect," she said. "He loves it."

And when it was all wrapped and she had paid, she put on her brightest smile and said, "Thank you, Sam. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Mrs. Maloney. And thank you."

And now, she told herself as she hurried back, all she was doing now, she was returning home to her husband and he was waiting for his supper; and she must cook it good, and make it as tasty as possible because the poor man was tired; and if, when she entered the house, she happened to find anything unusual, or tragic, or terrible, then naturally it would be a shock and she'd become frantic with grief and horror. Mind you, she wasn't expecting

to find anything. She was just going home with the vegetables. Mrs. Patrick Maloney going home with the vegetables on Thursday evening to cook supper for her husband.

That's the way, she told herself. Do everything right and natural. Keep things absolutely natural and there'll be no need for any acting at all.

155 Therefore, when she entered the kitchen by the back door, she was humming a little tune to herself and smiling.

"Patrick!" she called. "How are you, darling?"

160 She put the parcel down on the table and went through into the living room; and when she saw him lying there on the floor with his legs doubled up and one arm twisted back underneath his body, it really was rather a shock. All the old love and longing for him welled up inside her, and she ran over to him, knelt down beside him, and began to cry her heart out. It was easy. No acting was necessary.

A few minutes later she got up and went to the phone. She knows the number of the police station, and when the man at the other end answered, she cried to him,

165 "Quick! Come quick! Patrick's dead!"

"Who's speaking?"

"Mrs. Maloney. Mrs. Patrick Maloney."

"You mean Patrick Maloney's dead?"

170 "I think so," she sobbed. "He's lying on the floor and I think he's dead." "Be right over," the man said.

The car came very quickly, and when she opened the front door, two policeman walked in. She knows them both-she know nearly all the man at that precinct-and she fell right into a chair, then went over to join the other one, who was called O'Malley, kneeling by the body.

"Is he dead?" she cried.

175 "I'm afraid he is. What happened?"

Briefly, she told her story about going out to the grocer and coming back to find him on the floor. While she was talking, crying and talking, Noonan discovered a small patch of congealed blood on the dead man's head. He showed it to O'Malley who got up at once and hurried to the phone.

180 Soon, other men began to come into the house. First a doctor, then two detectives, one of whom she knows by name. Later, a police photographer arrived and took pictures, and a man who know about fingerprints. There was a great deal of whispering and muttering beside the corpse, and the detectives kept asking her a lot of questions. But they always treated her kindly. She told her story again, this time right from the beginning, when Patrick had come in, and she was sewing, and he was tired, so tired he hadn't wanted to go out for supper. She told how she'd put the meat in the oven-" it's there now, cooking"- and how she'd slopped out to the grocer for vegetables and come back to find him lying on the floor.

Which grocer?" one of the detectives asked.

190 She told him, and he turned and whispered something to the other detective who immediately went outside into the street.

In fifteen minutes he was back with a page of notes, and there was more whispering, and through her sobbing she heard a few of the whispered phrases—"...acted quite normal...very cheerful...wanted to give him a good supper... peas...cheesecake...impossible that she..."

195 After a while, the photographer and the doctor departed, and two other men came in and took the corpse away on a stretcher. Then the fingerprint man went away. The two detectives remained, and so did the two policemen. They were exceptionally nice to her, and Jack Noonan asked if she wouldn't rather go somewhere else, to her sister's house perhaps, or to his own wife who would take care of her and put her up for the night.

200 No, she said. She didn't feel she could move even a yard at the moment. Would they mind awfully of she stayed just where she was until she felt better. She didn't feel too good at the moment, she really didn't.

Then hadn't she better lie down on the bed? Jack Noonan asked.

No, she said. She'd like to stay right where she was, in this chair. A little later, perhaps, when she felt better, she would move.

205 So, they left her there while they went about their business, searching the house. Occasionally one of the detectives asked her another question. Sometimes Jack Noonan spoke at her gently as he passed by. Her husband, he told her, had been killed by a blow on the back of the head administered with a heavy blunt instrument, almost certainly a large piece of metal. They were looking for the weapon. The murderer may have taken it with  
210 him, but on the other hand he may have thrown it away or hidden it somewhere on the premises.

"It's the old story," he said. "Get the weapon, and you've got the man."

215 Later, one of the detectives came up and sat beside her. Did she know, he asked, of anything in the house that could've been used as the weapon? Would she mind having a look around to see if anything was missing—a very big spanner, for example, or a heavy metal vase.

They didn't have any heavy metal vases, she said.

"Or a big spanner?"

220 She didn't think they had a big spanner. But there might be some things like that in the garage.

The search went on. She knew that there were other policemen in the garden all around the house. She could hear their footsteps on the gravel outside, and sometimes she saw a flash of a torch through a chink in the curtains. It began to get late, nearly nine she noticed by the clock on the mantle. The four men searching the rooms seemed to be growing weary, a  
225 trifle exasperated.

"Jack," she said, the next time Sergeant Noonan went by. "Would you mind giving me a drink?"

“Sure, I’ll give you a drink. You mean this whiskey?”

“Yes please. But just a small one. It might make me feel better.”

230 He handed her the glass.

“Why don’t you have one yourself,” she said. “You must be awfully tired. Please do. You’ve been very good to me.”

“Well,” he answered. “It’s not strictly allowed, but I might take just a drop to keep me going.”

235 One by one the others came in and were persuaded to take a little nip of whiskey. They stood around rather awkwardly with the drinks in their hands, uncomfortable in her presence, trying to say consoling things to her. Sergeant Noonan wandered into the kitchen, come out quickly and said, “Look, Mrs. Maloney. You know that oven of yours is still on, and the meat still inside.”

240 “Oh, dear me!” she cried. “So, it is!”

“I better turn it off for you, hadn’t I?”

“Will you do that, Jack. Thank you so much.”

When the sergeant returned the second time, she looked at him with her large, dark tearful eyes. “Jack Noonan,” she said. “Yes?”

245 “Would you do me a small favour-you and these others?”

“We can try, Mrs. Maloney.”

“Well,” she said. “Here you all are, and good friends of dear Patrick’s too, and helping to catch the man who killed him. You must be terrible hungry by now because it’s long past your suppertime, and I know Patrick would never forgive me, God bless his soul, if I allowed you to remain in his house without offering you decent hospitality. Why don’t you eat up that lamb that’s in the oven? It’ll be cooked just right by now.”

250

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” Sergeant Noonan said.

“Please,” she begged. “Please eat it. Personally, I couldn’t tough a thing, certainly not what’s been in the house when he was here. But it’s all right for you. It’d be a favour to me if you’d eat it up. Then you can go on with your work again afterwards.”

255

There was a good deal of hesitating among the four policemen, but they were clearly hungry, and in the end, they were persuaded to go into the kitchen and help themselves. The woman stayed where she was, listening to them speaking among themselves, their voices thick and sloppy because their mouths were full of meat.

260 “Have some more, Charlie?”

“No. Better not finish it.”

“She wants us to finish it. She said so. Be doing her a favour.” “Okay then. Give me some more.”

265 “That’s the hell of a big club the gut must’ve used to hit poor Patrick,” one of them was saying. “The doc says his skull was smashed all to pieces just like from a sledgehammer.”

“That’s why it ought to be easy to find.”

“Exactly what I say.”

“Whoever done it, they’re not going to be carrying a thing like that around with them longer than they need.” One of them belched.

270 “Personally, I think it’s right here on the premises.”  
“Probably right under our very noses. What you think, Jack?”

And in the other room, Mary Maloney began to giggle.

## Key Vocabulary:

**Tranquil** (line 8) – free from disturbance; calm and quiet

**Translucent** (line 9) – if something is translucent, light can pass through it and you can almost see through it

**Placid** (line 10) – calm; does not often get angry or excited

**Punctually** (line 11) – arriving at the right time and not too late

**Luxuriate** (line 23) – to get great pleasure from something, especially because it provides physical comfort

**Dazed** (line 75) – very confused and unable to think clearly

**Corpse** (line 183) – a dead body, usually of a person

**Exasperated** (line 225) – annoyed, especially when you can do nothing to solve a problem

**Hospitality** (line 250) – the act of being friendly and welcoming to guests and visitors

**Sledgehammer** (line 265) – a large, heavy hammer with a long handle, used for breaking stones or other heavy material etc.

**Belched** (line 269) – to allow air from the stomach to come noisily through the mouth, burping

**Questions:** Write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

1. **In lines 1 to 14**, what is your first impression of Mary Maloney? What sort of person do you think she is? Why?
2. **In lines 21 to 29**, how does Mary Maloney feel about her husband? How do you know?
3. **In lines 66 to 79**, what do you think Mr. Maloney has told his wife?
4. **In lines 85 – 101**, do you empathise (understand the feelings of another person) with Mary Maloney? Do you think she did the right thing?
5. **In lines 122 to 145**, why does Mary Maloney go to the grocery shop? What is she trying to do?
6. **In lines 272**, why does Mary Maloney begin to giggle?
7. **How is this story different to the type of things Roald Dahl is more famous for?** How are the main ideas or themes different? Why do you think Roald Dahl wrote such a different story?

**Follow-up Tasks:** Spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

1. **Go through the Key Vocabulary list** and learn the words and their meanings. Then, write sentences of your own with each word in them.  
(e.g. 'The lake was beautiful and tranquil as we set out on our fishing trip.')

2. **Do some research on the internet**, if you have access, and write a paragraph about the writer of this story, Roald Dahl.

3. **Write a newspaper article reporting on the crime in this story.** Write as imaginatively, neatly and accurately as you can, making sure to give your audience all the details. Look up spellings and try to get your punctuation right.

Remember to:

- Include a headline
- Write in columns
- Include quotes from Mary Maloney and the police officers

# Click-Clack the Rattlebag by Neil Gaiman

Read and enjoy the story below. Try to picture and hear it as you read.

‘Before you take me up to bed, will you tell me a story?’

“Do you actually need me to take you up to bed?” I asked the boy.

He thought for a moment. Then, with intense seriousness, “Yes, actually I think you do. It’s because of, I’ve finished my homework, and so it’s my bedtime, and I am a bit scared. Not  
5 very scared. Just a bit.

“But it is a very big house, and lots of times the lights don’t work and it’s a sort of dark.”  
I reached over and tousled his hair.

“I can understand that,” I said. “It is a very big old house.” He nodded. We were in the  
10 kitchen, where it was light and warm. I put down my magazine on the kitchen table. “What  
kind of story would you like me to tell you?”

“Well,” he said, thoughtfully. “I don’t think it should be too scary, because then when I go  
up to bed, I will just be thinking about monsters the whole time. But if it isn’t just a little bit  
scary then I won’t be interested. And you make up scary stories, don’t you? I know she says  
that’s what you do.”

15 “She exaggerates. I write stories, yes. Nothing that’s been published, yet, though. And I  
write lots of different kinds of stories.”

“But you do write scary stories?”

“Yes.”

The boy looked up at me from the shadows by the door, where he was waiting. “Do you  
20 know any stories about Click-clack the Rattlebag?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Those are the best sorts of stories.”

“Do they tell them at your school?”

He shrugged. “Sometimes.”

25 “What’s a Click-clack the Rattlebag story?”

He was a precocious child and was unimpressed by his sister’s boyfriend’s ignorance. You  
could see it on his face. “Everybody knows them.”

“I don’t,” I said, trying not to smile.

He looked at me as if he was trying to decide whether or not I was pulling his leg. He said, “I  
30 think maybe you should take me up to my bedroom, and then you can tell me a story before  
I go to sleep, but a very not-scary story because I’ll be up in my bedroom then, and it’s  
actually a bit dark up there, too.”

I said, “Shall I leave a note for your sister, telling her where we are?”

“You can. But you’ll hear when they get back. The front door is very slammy.”

35 We walked out of the warm and cosy kitchen into the hallway of the big house, where it was  
chilly and draughty and dark. I flicked the light-switch, but nothing happened.

“The bulb’s gone,” the boy said. “That always happens.”

Our eyes adjusted to the shadows. The moon was almost full, and blue-white moonlight  
shone in through the high windows on the staircase, down into the hall. “We’ll be all right,” I  
40 said.

“Yes,” said the boy, soberly. “I am very glad you’re here.” He seemed less precocious now.  
His hand found mine, and he held on to my fingers comfortably, trustingly, as if he’d known  
me all his life. I felt responsible and adult. I did not know if the feeling I had for his sister,

who was my girlfriend, was love, not yet, but I liked that the child treated me as one of the  
45 family. I felt like his big brother, and I stood taller, and if there was something unsettling  
about the empty house, I would not have admitted it for worlds.  
The stairs creaked beneath the threadbare stair-carpet.  
“Click-clacks,” said the boy, “are the best monsters ever.”  
“Are they from television?”  
50 “I don’t think so. I don’t think any people know where they come from. Mostly they come  
from the dark.”  
“Good place for a monster to come.”  
“Yes.”  
We walked along the upper corridor in the shadows, walking from patch of moonlight to  
55 patch of moonlight. It really was a big house. I wished I had a flashlight.  
“They come from the dark,” said the boy, holding on to my hand. “I think probably they’re  
made of dark. And they come in when you don’t pay attention. That’s when they come in.  
And then they take you back to their... not nests. What’s a word that’s like nests, but not?”  
“House?”  
60 “No. It’s not a house.”  
“Lair?”  
He was silent. Then, “I think that’s the word, yes. Lair.” He squeezed my hand. He stopped  
talking.  
“Right. So, they take the people who don’t pay attention back to their lair. And what do they  
65 do then, your monsters? Do they suck all the blood out of you, like vampires?”  
He snorted. “Vampires don’t suck all the blood out of you. They only drink a little bit. Just to  
keep them going, and, you know, flying around. Click-clacks are much scarier than  
vampires.”  
“I’m not scared of vampires,” I told him.  
70 “Me neither. I’m not scared of vampires either. Do you want to know what Click-clacks do?  
They drink you,” said the boy.  
“Like a Coke?”  
“Coke is very bad for you,” said the boy. “If you put a tooth in Coke, in the morning, it will be  
dissolved into nothing. That’s how bad coke is for you and why you must always clean your  
75 teeth, every night.”  
I’d heard the Coke story as a boy, and had been told, as an adult, that it wasn’t true, but was  
certain that a lie which promoted dental hygiene was a good lie, and I let it pass.  
“Click-clacks drink you,” said the boy. “First they bite you, and then you go all ishy inside,  
and all your meat and all your brains and everything except your bones and your skin turns  
80 into a wet, milk-shakey stuff and then the Click-clack sucks it out through the holes where  
your eyes used to be.”  
“That’s disgusting,” I told him. “Did you make it up?”  
We’d reached the last flight of stairs, all the way into the big house.  
“No.”  
85 “I can’t believe you kids make up stuff like that.”  
“You didn’t ask me about the rattlebag,” he said.  
“Right. What’s the rattlebag?”  
“Well,” he said, sagely, soberly, a small voice from the darkness beside me, “once you’re just  
bones and skin, they hang you up on a hook, and you rattle in the wind.”

90 “So, what do these Click-clacks look like?” Even as I asked him, I wished I could take the question back, and leave it unasked. I thought: Huge spidery creatures. Like the one in the shower that morning. I’m afraid of spiders.  
I was relieved when the boy said, “They look like what you aren’t expecting. What you aren’t paying attention to.”

95 We were climbing wooden steps now. I held on to the railing on my left, held his hand with my right, as he walked beside me. It smelled like dust and old wood, that high in the house. The boy’s tread was certain, though, even though the moonlight was scarce.  
“Do you know what story you’re going to tell me, to put me to bed?” he asked. “It doesn’t actually have to be scary.”

100 “Not really.”  
“Maybe you could tell me about this evening. Tell me what you did?”  
“That won’t make much of a story for you. My girlfriend just moved into a new place on the edge of town. She inherited it from an aunt or someone. It’s very big and very old. I’m going to spend my first night with her, tonight, so I’ve been waiting for an hour or so for her and her housemates to come back with the wine and an Indian takeaway.”

105 “See?” said the boy. There was that precocious amusement again. But all kids can be insufferable sometimes, when they think they know something you don’t. It’s probably good for them. “You know all that. But you don’t think. You just let your brain fill in the gaps.”  
He pushed open the door to the attic room. It was perfectly dark, now, but the opening door disturbed the air, and I heard things rattle gently, like dry bones in thin bags, in the slight wind. Click. Clack. Click. Clack. Like that.

110 I would have pulled away, then, if I could, but small, firm fingers pulled me forward, unrelentingly, into the dark.

## **Key Vocabulary:**

**Intense** (line 5) – very strong.

**Tousled** (line 9) - to make someone's hair untidy, for example by rubbing it.

**Published** (line 17) - to produce or sell a book, magazine or newspaper.

**Precocious** (line 28) - a child behaving much older than they are.

**Ignorance** (line 28) - lack of knowledge or understanding.

**Draughty** (line 38) - a place with cold air blowing through it.

**Soberly** (line 43) – seriously.

**Threadbare** (line 49) – thin material that has been used a lot.

**Lair** (line 63) – a place where wild animals live.

**Sagely** (line 90) – in a wise way.

**Scarce** (line 99) – not easy to find or rare.

**Inherited** (line 105) – received from someone who has died.

**Insufferable** (line 109) – annoying or unpleasant.

**Unrelentingly** (line 115) – without stopping.

**Questions:** Write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

1. The story is most told through a conversation between the boy and his sister's boyfriend. Why do you think the writer chose to use so much speech? Does it make it scarier? More realistic?
2. The story starts downstairs in the kitchen and ends in the attic.
  - a. How is the kitchen described compared to the attic?
  - b. How does this help to create fear as the story progresses?
3. The writer uses lots of similes (comparisons using 'like' or 'as') throughout the story.
  - a. Give an example of a simile used.
  - b. Explain why you think the writer used this simile.
4. Do you think the click-clacks are real?
  - a. Explain your thoughts using ideas from the story.
  - b. How does the boy make the click-clacks sound realistic?
5. Imagine that you are the writer Neil Gaiman. Write the next paragraph that continues the story.

**Follow-up Tasks:** Spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

**1. Go through the Key Vocabulary list** and learn the words and their meanings. Then, write sentences of your own with each word in them.

e.g. The monster lured the animal into its lair.

**2. Do some research on the internet**, if you have access, and write a paragraph about the writer of this story, Neil Gaiman.

**3. Write your own story** inspired by reading this one. Write as imaginatively, neatly and accurately as you can. Look up spellings and try to get your punctuation right.

Here's some ideas for your story:

- it could be a story where a strange or unusual event happens
- it could be a story about a monster or strange creature
- it could be a story told from a child's point of view.

There is a video of the author (Neil Gaiman) reading the story available at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imLja6Emezo>

## Half a Man by Michael Morpurgo

Read and enjoy the story below. Try to picture and hear it as you read.

When I was very little, more than half a century ago now, I used to have nightmares. You don't forget nightmares. This one was always the same. It began with a face, a twisted, tortured face that screamed silently, a face without hair or eyebrows, a skull more than a face, a skull which was covered in puckered, scarred skin stretched over the cheekbones. It was Grandpa's face and he was staring at me out of his scream.

And always the face was on fire, flames licking out of his ears and mouth. I remember I always tried to force myself to wake up, so that I wouldn't have to endure the rest of it. But I knew every time that the rest would follow however hard I tried to escape – that my nightmare would not release me, would not allow me to wake until the whole horrible tale had played itself out. I saw a great ship ablaze on the ocean. There were men on fire jumping overboard as she went down, then swimming in a sea where the water burned and boiled around them. I saw Grandpa swimming towards a lifeboat, but it was packed with sailors and there was no room for Grandpa. He begged them to let him on, but they wouldn't.

Behind him, the ship's bow lifted out of the sea, and the whole ship groaned like a wounded beast in her death throes. Then she went down, slipping slowly under the waves, gasping great gouts of steam in the last of her agony. A silence came over the burning sea. Grandpa was clinging to the lifeboat now, his elbows hooked over the side. That was when I realised that I was in the lifeboat with the other sailors. He saw me looking down at him and reached out his hand for help. It was a hand with no fingers. I would wake up then, shaking in my terror and knowing even now that my nightmare was not over.

For my nightmare would always seem to happen just a day or two before Grandpa came to stay. It was a visit I always dreaded. He didn't come to see us in London very often, every couple of years at most, and usually at Christmas. Thinking about it now, I suppose this was part of the problem. There were perfectly good reasons why we didn't and couldn't see more of him. He lived far away, on the Isles of Scilly, so it was a long way for him to come, and expensive too. Besides which, he hated big cities like London. I'm sure if I'd seen him more often, I'd have got used to him – used to his face and his hands and his silent, uncommunicative ways. I don't blame my mother and father. I can see now why they were so tense before each visit. Being as taciturn and unsmiling as he was, Grandpa can't have been an easy guest.

But, even so, they did make it a lot worse for me than they needed to. Just before Grandpa came there were always endless warnings, from Mother in particular (he was my grandpa on my mother's side), about how I mustn't upset him, how I mustn't leave my toys lying about on the sitting-room floor because he didn't see very well and might trip over them, how I mustn't have the television on too much because Grandpa didn't like noise. But most of all they drummed into me again and again that whatever I did, I must not under any circumstances stare at him – that it was rude, that he hated people staring at him, particularly children. I tried not to; I tried very hard.

When he first arrived, I would always try to force myself to look at something else. Once I remember it was a Christmas decoration, a red paper bell hanging just above his head in the front hall. Sometimes I would make myself look very deliberately at his waistcoat perhaps, or the gold watch chain he always wore. I'd fix my gaze on anything just as long as it was

45 nowhere near the forbidden places, because I knew that once I started looking at his forbidden face or his forbidden hands I wouldn't be able to stop myself.

### **Key Vocabulary:**

**Puckered** (line 6) - small folds in material.

**Endure** (line 9) - to suffer something unpleasant, painful or difficult.

**Ablaze** (line 11) – on fire.

**Bow** (line 16) – the front part of a ship.

**Death throes** (line 17) - movements of someone who is about to die.

**Gouts** (line 17) – drops e.g. of liquid.

**Dreaded** (line 24) – to feel worried or frightened about something.

**Isles of Scilly** (line 27) – a group of islands off the coast of Cornwall.

**Uncommunicative** (line 29) – not willing to talk.

**Taciturn** (line 30) – not speaking much.

**Questions:** Write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

1. **In paragraph 3** (lines 14-20), the writer uses lots of verbs to describe the action in the scene.
  - a. **Give 3 examples** of verbs used.
  - b. Explain why you think the writer used lots of verbs in his description.
2. **In paragraph 4** (lines 21-29), how does the narrator feel about Grandpa coming to visit?
  - a. Use an example from the paragraph to support your ideas.
  - b. Explain why you think the narrator feels this way.
3. **The focus of this story is Grandpa.** In your own words describe:
  - a. Grandpa's appearance.
  - b. Grandpa's personality.
4. **The title of the story is 'Half a Man'.** Why do you think the writer chose this title?
5. **Imagine that you are Grandpa,** just about to arrive at your daughter's house to see your grandchild. Write the next part of the story from Grandpa's point of view. Think about:
  - a. How he feels just before he arrives.
  - b. Building an image of the house.
  - c. How he feels when he sees his grandchild.

**Follow-up Tasks:** Spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

1. **Go through the Key Vocabulary** list and learn the words and their meanings. Then, write sentences of your own with each word in them.

(e.g. I went to the **Isles of Scilly** on holiday with my grandparents.)

2. **Do some research** on the internet (if you have access) and write a paragraph about the writer of this story, Michael Morpurgo.

3. **Write your own story** inspired by reading this one. Write as imaginatively, neatly and accurately as you can. Look up spellings and try to get your punctuation right.

Here are some ideas for your story:

- It could be a story about an interesting relative.
- It could be a story set during a war e.g. World War II.
- It could be a story about someone who is treated differently because of their unusual appearance.

# 'The Necklace' by Guy du Maupassant

Read and enjoy the story below. Try to picture and hear it as you read.

She was one of those pretty and charming girls born, as if by an error of fate, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of becoming known, understood, loved or wedded by a man of wealth and distinction; and so she let herself be married to a minor official at the Ministry of Education.

5 She dressed plainly because she had never been able to afford anything better, but she was as unhappy as if she had once been wealthy. Women don't belong to a caste or class; their beauty, grace, and natural charm take the place of birth and family. Natural delicacy, instinctive elegance and a quick wit determine their place in society and make the daughters of commoners the equals of the very finest ladies.

10 She suffered endlessly, feeling she was entitled to all the delicacies and luxuries of life. She suffered because of the pooriness of her house as she looked at the dirty walls, the worn-out chairs and the ugly curtains. All these things that another woman of her class would not even have noticed, tormented her and made her resentful. The sight of the little Brenton girl who did her housework filled her with terrible regrets and hopeless fantasies.  
15 She dreamed of silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestries, lit from above by torches in bronze holders, while two tall footmen in knee-length breeches napped in huge armchairs, sleepy from the stove's oppressive warmth. She dreamed of vast living rooms furnished in rare old silks, elegant furniture loaded with priceless ornaments, and inviting smaller rooms, perfumed, made for afternoon chats with close friends - famous, sought  
20 after men, who all women envy and desire.

When she sat down to dinner at a round table covered with a three-day-old cloth opposite her husband who, lifting the lid off the soup, shouted excitedly, "Ah! Beef stew! What could be better," she dreamed of fine dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestries which peopled the walls with figures from another time and strange birds in fairy forests;  
25 she dreamed of delicious dishes served on wonderful plates, of whispered gallantries listened to with an inscrutable smile as one ate the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

## 2

30 She had no dresses, no jewels, nothing; and these were the only things she loved. She felt she was made for them alone. She wanted so much to charm, to be envied, to be desired and sought after.

She had a rich friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, whom she no longer wanted to visit because she suffered so much when she came home. For whole days afterwards she would weep with sorrow, regret, despair and misery.

35 \*

One evening her husband came home with an air of triumph, holding a large envelope in his hand.

"Look," he said, "here's something for you."

She tore open the paper and drew out a card, on which was printed the words:

40 "The Minister of Education and MME. Georges Rampouneau request the pleasure of M. and MME. Loisel's company at the Ministry, on the evening of Monday January 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation on the table resentfully, and muttered:

"What do you want me to do with that?"

45 "But, my dear, I thought you would be pleased. You never go out, and it will be such a lovely occasion! I had awful trouble getting it. Everyone wants to go; it is very exclusive, and they're not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole ministry will be there."

She stared at him angrily, and said, impatiently:

"And what do you expect me to wear if I go?"

50 He hadn't thought of that. He stammered:

"Why, the dress you go to the theatre in. It seems very nice to me ..."

He stopped, stunned, distressed to see his wife crying. Two large tears ran slowly from the corners of her eyes towards the corners of her mouth. He stuttered:

### 3

55 "What's the matter? What's the matter?"

With great effort she overcame her grief and replied in a calm voice, as she wiped her wet cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I have no dress and so I can't go to this party. Give your invitation to a friend whose wife has better clothes than I do."

60 He was distraught, but tried again:

"Let's see, Mathilde. How much would a suitable dress cost, one which you could use again on other occasions, something very simple?"

She thought for a moment, computing the cost, and also wondering what amount she could ask for without an immediate refusal and an alarmed exclamation from the thrifty clerk.

65

At last she answered hesitantly:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could do it with four hundred *francs*."

He turned a little pale, because he had been saving that exact amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a hunting trip the following summer, in the country near Nanterre, with a few friends who went lark-shooting there on Sundays.

70

However, he said:

"Very well, I can give you four hundred *francs*. But try and get a really beautiful dress."

\*

The day of the party drew near, and Madame Loisel seemed sad, restless, anxious. Her dress was ready, however. One evening her husband said to her:

75

"What's the matter? You've been acting strange these last three days."

She replied: "I'm upset that I have no jewels, not a single stone to wear. I will look cheap. I would almost rather not go to the party."

80 "You could wear flowers," he said, "They are very fashionable at this time of year. For ten *francs* you could get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

#### 4

"No; there is nothing more humiliating than looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women."

85 "How stupid you are!" her husband cried. "Go and see your friend Madame Forestier and ask her to lend you some jewels. You know her well enough for that."

She uttered a cry of joy.

"Of course. I had not thought of that."

The next day she went to her friend's house and told her of her distress.

90 Madame Forestier went to her mirrored wardrobe, took out a large box, brought it back, opened it, and said to Madame Loisel:

"Choose, my dear."

95 First, she saw some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a gold Venetian cross set with precious stones, of exquisite craftsmanship. She tried on the jewellery in the mirror, hesitated, could not bear to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

"You have nothing else?"

"Why, yes. But I don't know what you like."

100 Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb diamond necklace, and her heart began to beat with uncontrolled desire. Her hands trembled as she took it. She fastened it around her neck, over her high-necked dress, and stood lost in ecstasy as she looked at herself.

Then she asked anxiously, hesitating:

"Would you lend me this, just this?"

"Why, yes, of course."

105 She threw her arms around her friend's neck, embraced her rapturously, then fled with her treasure.

\*

110 The day of the party arrived. Madame Loisel was a success. She was prettier than all the other women, elegant, gracious, smiling, and full of joy. All the men stared at her, asked her name, tried to be introduced. All the cabinet officials wanted to waltz with her. The minister noticed her.

#### 5

115 She danced wildly, with passion, drunk on pleasure, forgetting everything in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness, made up of all this respect, all this admiration, all these awakened desires, of that sense of triumph that is so sweet to a woman's heart.

She left at about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been dozing since midnight in a little deserted anteroom with three other gentlemen whose wives were having a good time.

120 He threw over her shoulders the clothes he had brought for her to go outside in, the modest clothes of an ordinary life, whose poverty contrasted sharply with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this and wanted to run away, so she wouldn't be noticed by the other women who were wrapping themselves in expensive furs.

Loisel held her back.

125 "Wait a moment, you'll catch a cold outside. I'll go and find a cab."

But she would not listen to him and ran down the stairs. When they were finally in the street, they could not find a cab, and began to look for one, shouting at the cabmen they saw passing in the distance.

130 They walked down toward the Seine in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those old night cabs that one sees in Paris only after dark, as if they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day.

They were dropped off at their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly walked up the steps to their apartment. It was all over, for her. And he was remembering that he had to be back at his office at ten o'clock.

135 In front of the mirror, she took off the clothes around her shoulders, taking a final look at herself in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She no longer had the necklace round her neck!

## 6

"What is the matter?" asked her husband, already half undressed.

140 She turned towards him, panic-stricken.

"I have ... I have ... I no longer have Madame Forestier's necklace."

He stood up, distraught.

"What! ... how! ... That's impossible!"

145 They looked in the folds of her dress, in the folds of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere. But they could not find it.

"Are you sure you still had it on when you left the ball?" he asked.

"Yes. I touched it in the hall at the Ministry."

"But if you had lost it in the street, we would have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes. That's probably it. Did you take his number?"

150 "No. And you, didn't you notice it?"

"No."

They stared at each other, stunned. At last Loisel put his clothes on again.

"I'm going back," he said, "over the whole route we walked, see if I can find it."

155 He left. She remained in her ball dress all evening, without the strength to go to bed, sitting on a chair, with no fire, her mind blank.

Her husband returned at about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to the police, to the newspapers to offer a reward, to the cab companies, everywhere the tiniest glimmer of hope led him.

She waited all day, in the same state of blank despair from before this frightful disaster.

160 Loisel returned in the evening, a hollow, pale figure; he had found nothing.

"You must write to your friend," he said, "tell her you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. It will give us time to look some more."

## 7

She wrote as he dictated.

165 \*

At the end of one week they had lost all hope.

And Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

"We must consider how to replace the jewel."

170 The next day they took the box which had held it and went to the jeweller whose name they found inside. He consulted his books.

"It was not I, madame, who sold the necklace; I must simply have supplied the case."

And so, they went from jeweller to jeweller, looking for a necklace like the other one, consulting their memories, both sick with grief and anguish.

175 In a shop at the Palais Royal, they found a string of diamonds which seemed to be exactly what they were looking for. It was worth forty thousand *francs*. They could have it for thirty-six thousand.

So, they begged the jeweller not to sell it for three days. And they made an arrangement that he would take it back for thirty-four thousand *francs* if the other necklace was found before the end of February.

180 Loisel had eighteen thousand *francs* which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

185 And he did borrow, asking for a thousand *francs* from one man, five hundred from another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, made ruinous agreements, dealt with usurers, with every type of moneylender. He compromised the rest of his life, risked signing notes without knowing if he could ever honour them, and, terrified by the anguish still to come, by the black misery about to fall on him, by the prospect of every physical privation and every moral torture he was about to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, and laid down on the jeweller's counter thirty-six thousand *francs*.

When Madame Loisel took the necklace back, Madame Forestier said coldly:

190 "You should have returned it sooner; I might have needed it."

## 8

To the relief of her friend, she did not open the case. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought? What would she have said? Would she have taken her friend for a thief?

195 \*

From then on, Madame Loisel knew the horrible life of the very poor. But she played her part heroically. The dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their maid; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.

200 She came to know the drudgery of housework, the odious labours of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, staining her rosy nails on greasy pots and the bottoms of pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and the dishcloths, which she hung to dry on a line; she carried the garbage down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping at each landing to catch her breath. And, dressed like a commoner, she went to the fruiterer's, the grocer's, the butcher's, her basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, fighting over every  
205 miserable *sou*.

Each month they had to pay some notes, renew others, get more time.

Her husband worked every evening, doing accounts for a tradesman, and often, late into the night, he sat copying a manuscript at five *sous* a page.

And this life lasted ten years.

210 At the end of ten years they had paid off everything, everything, at usurer's rates and with the accumulations of compound interest.

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become strong, hard and rough like all women of impoverished households. With hair half combed, with skirts awry, and reddened hands, she talked loudly as she washed the floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when  
215 her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window and thought of that evening at the ball so long ago, when she had been so beautiful and so admired.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows, who knows? How strange life is, how fickle! How little is needed for one to be ruined or saved!

## 9

220 \*

One Sunday, as she was walking in the Champs Élysées to refresh herself after the week's work, suddenly she saw a woman walking with a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

225 Madame Loisel felt emotional. Should she speak to her? Yes, of course. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not?

She went up to her.

"Good morning, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be addressed so familiarly by this common woman, did not recognize her. She stammered:

230 "But - madame - I don't know. You must have made a mistake."

"No, I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry.

"Oh! ... my poor Mathilde, how you've changed! ..."

235 "Yes, I have had some hard times since I last saw you, and many miseries ... and all because of you! ..."

"Me? How can that be?"

"You remember that diamond necklace that you lent me to wear to the Ministry party?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

240 "What do you mean? You brought it back."

"I brought you back another exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. It wasn't easy for us, we had very little. But at last it is over, and I am very glad."

Madame Forestier was stunned.

"You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

245 "Yes; you didn't notice then? They were very similar."

And she smiled with proud and innocent pleasure.

Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took both her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Mine was an imitation! It was worth five hundred *francs* at most!"

## Key Vocabulary

**Clerks** (line 2) – someone who works in a bank or an office to keep records

**Dowry** (line 2) – an amount of money or property given by a bride's family to her husband on their wedding

**Distinction** (line 3) – excellence that sets someone apart from others

**Caste** (line 6) – any group of people who inherit exclusive privileges

**Instinctive** (line 7) – done without conscious thought

**Elegance** (line 7) – being stylish and graceful in appearance or manner

**Commoners** (line 8) – ordinary people

**Delicacies** (line 10) – fine or expensive things

**Resentful** (line 13) – feeling angry at having been treated unfairly

**Antechambers** (line 15) – a small room leading to the main one

**Tapestries** (line 15) – a piece of thick fabric with pictures or designs weaved in, usually hung on the wall for decoration

**Oppressive** (line 17) – hot, heavy air

**Gallantries** (line 25) – polite attention or respect given by men to women

**Inscrutable** (line 26) – impossible to understand

**Quail** (line 27) – a small bird, like a partridge

**Distraught** (line 60) – very worried and upset

**Thrifty** (line 64) – being very careful with money, not wasteful

**Francs** (line 67) – money used in France, before the euro

**Exquisite** (line 94) – extremely beautiful and delicate

**Ecstasy** (line 100) – an overwhelming feeling of joy

**Rapturously** (line 105) - enthusiastically

**Seine** (line 129) – the river that runs through Paris

**Quay** (line 130) – a harbour

**Ruinous** (line 183) – disastrous – costing far more than can be afforded

**Usurers** (line 184) – a person who lends money at reasonably high rates of interest

**Compromised** (line 184) – accept standards that are lower than desirable

**Anguish** (line 185) - severe suffering

**Privation** (line 187) – a state in which food and other essentials are lacking

**Lodgings** (line 198) – a room or rooms rented out

**Garret** (line 198) – a gloomy top-floor or attic room

**Drudgery** (line 199) – hard, boring work

**Sou** (line 205) – a coin of low value

**Accumulations** (line 211) – the gradual gathering of something

**Compound interest** (line 211) – the addition of interest to the initial sum borrowed

**Questions:** Write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

1. In lines 1 – 27, how is the main character described? What impression does the reader have of her?
2. In lines 39 – 59, why does Mathilde seem to be so upset about the invitation?
3. In lines 89 – 106, why does Mathilde visit her friend Madame Forestier? Why does this visit turn out to be so important in the story?
4. In lines 195 – 218, how is the change in Loisel and Mathilde’s life described? How is it different to before, and how did it affect them both?
5. What do you think happened to the diamond necklace Mathilde borrowed?
6. Following the party and the loss of the necklace, could Mathilde have done anything differently? Would honesty have changed the events that followed? Is Mathilde to blame for the ruin of her and her husband’s life? What do you think the messages in the story might be?

**Follow-up Tasks:** Spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

1. **Go through the Key Vocabulary list** and learn the words and their meanings. Then, write at least ten sentences of your own with each word in them. (e.g. ‘They strolled along the River Seine in the moonlight.’)

2. **Do some research on the internet**, if you have access, and write a paragraph about the writer of this story, Guy du Maupassant.

3. **Write your own story** inspired by reading this one. Write as imaginatively, neatly and accurately as you can. Look up spellings and try to get your punctuation right.

Here’s some ideas for your story:

- it could be a story about a borrowed item that is lost, and how the character tries to return it
- a story about a character who will do anything to get what they want
- Tell the story of the lost necklace – what happened to it? Was it lost? Stolen? Where did it end up?

## 'Don't Ask Jack' by Neil Gaiman

This is a horror story set in the past, about some children and their relationship with a rather unusual toy.

5 Nobody knew where the toy had come from - which great-grandparent or distant aunt had owned it before it was given to the nursery.

It was a box, carved and painted in gold and red. It was undoubtedly attractive and, or so the grown-ups maintained, quite valuable – perhaps even an antique. The latch, unfortunately, was rusted shut, and the key had been lost so the Jack could not be released  
10 from his box. Still, it was a remarkable box, heavy and carved and gilt.

The children did not play with it. It sat at the bottom of the old wooden toy box, which was the same size and age as a pirate's treasure-chest, or so the children thought. The Jack-in-the-box was buried beneath dolls and trains, clowns and paper stars and old conjuring tricks, and crippled marionettes with their strings irrevocably tangled, with dressing up  
15 clothes (here the tatters of a long-ago wedding dress, there a black silk hat, crusted with age and time) and costume jewellery, broken hoops and tops and hobbyhorses. Under them all was the Jack's box.

The children did not play with it. They whispered among themselves, alone in the attic nursery. On grey days when the wind howled about the house and rain rattled the slates and pattered down the eaves, they told each other stories about Jack, although they had  
20 never seen him. One claimed that Jack was an evil wizard, placed in the box as punishment for crimes too awful to describe; another maintained that he had been placed in the box as guardian to prevent the bad things inside it from coming out. They would not even touch the box, if they could help it, although when, as happened from time to time, an adult  
25 would comment on the absence of that sweet old Jack-in-the-box, and retrieve it from the chest, and place it in a position of honour on the mantelpiece, then the children would pluck up their courage and, later, hide it away once more in the darkness.

The children did not play with the Jack-in-the-box. And when they grew up and left the great house, the attic nursery was closed up and almost forgotten.

30 Almost, but not entirely. For each of the children, separately, remembered walking alone in the moon's blue light, on his or her own bare feet, up to the nursery. It was almost like sleepwalking, feet soundless on the wood of the stairs, on the threadbare nursery carpet. Remembered opening the treasure chest, pawing through the dolls and the clothes and pulling out the box.

35 And then the child would touch the catch, and the lid would open, slow as a sunset, and the music would begin to play, and Jack came out. Not with a pop and a bounce: but deliberately, intently, he would rise from the box and motion to the child to come closer, closer, and smile.

40 And there in the moonlight, he told them each thing they could never quite remember, things they were never able entirely to forget.

The oldest boy died in the Great War. The youngest, after their parents died, inherited the house, although it was taken from him when he was found in the cellar one night

with cloths and paraffin and matches, trying to burn the great house to the ground. They took him to the madhouse, and perhaps he is there still.

45 The other children, who had once been girls and now were women, declined, each and every one, to return to the house in which they had grown up; and the windows of the house were boarded up; and the doors were all locked with the huge iron keys.

Years have passed and the girls are old women, and owls and bats have made their homes in the old attic nursery, rats build their nests among the forgotten toys. The creatures gaze  
50 incuriously at the faded prints on the wall and stain the remnants of the carpet with their droppings.

And deep within the box within the box, Jack waits and smiles, holding his secrets. He is waiting for the children. He can wait forever.

## Key Vocabulary

**Gilt** (line 6) - covered thinly with gold leaf or gold paint

**Conjuring** (line 9) - the performance of a trick that appears magical

**Marionettes** (line 10) - a puppet worked by strings

**Irrevocably** (line 10) - in a way that cannot be changed, reversed or recovered

**Tatters** (line 11) - torn pieces of cloth

**Hobbyhorse** (line 12) - a child's toy consisting of a stick with a model of a horse's head at one end.

**Eaves** (line 16) - the part of a roof that meets or overhangs the walls of a building.

**Mantelpiece** (line 22) - a structure of wood, marble, or stone above and around a fireplace.

**Threadbare** (line 29) - thin and tattered with age

**Paraffin** (line 39) - a colourless, flammable liquid

**Declined** (line 41) - politely refuse

**Remnants** (line 46) - the cloth that remain

**Questions:** write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

1. In lines 1 – 6, how is the toy, Jack, presented as both mysterious and valuable?
2. Re-read lines 7 to 25. What do the children think about Jack? How do you know? What rumours do the children tell each other about Jack?
3. In lines 26 – 36, what memory, shared by each of the children, is described. How does this make you feel about Jack?
4. In lines 37 –40, what happened to the youngest boy, who inherited the house? Do you think the writer wants you to connect this to Jack? Why?
5. In lines 48 – 49, what do you think the end of the story suggests about Jack? Why do you think this?

**Follow-up Tasks:** spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

1. **Go through the KEY Vocabulary list** and learn the words and their meanings. Then choose five to include in sentences of your own (e.g. Every year birds nested in the **eaves** of the old house.)
2. ‘Don’t Ask Jack’ is a horror story: **What do you think makes a good horror story?** What elements of a horror story do you think this story contains?
3. **Write your own horror story** inspired by reading this one. Write as imaginatively, neatly and accurately as you can. Look up spellings and try to punctuate correctly. Here are some ideas for your story:
  - It could be set in the past, or in modern times
  - It could include an isolated setting, like an old house, an attic, a cellar, a forest
  - It could include an imaginary character, like a toy, or a supernatural character
  - You could write the story of the youngest child in ‘Don’t Ask Jack’ - what happened to him when he was left alone in the house? Why did he go mad and try to burn the house down?

## And When Did You Last See Your Father?

5 The war never meant much to me; a mere murmur in the dark, a worry line momentarily  
creasing an unguarded face. I was just a boy at the time and my young mind had only room  
for food, frivolity and fun. I was carefree and unburdened. I was innocent, but for how long?

10 They came to the door in the middle of the morning. It was a dark, grey day; rain  
cascaded down, fat droplets plopping onto the roof. Not the sort of weather for playing out,  
too slippery to climb the giant oak tree's broad bows. Sprawled on the extravagant rug, I was  
trying to occupy myself with a disheartening volume mother had produced for me.

15 It was a hard knock, quite unlike the tap of mother's dainty visitors. A loud volley of  
bangs echoed around the house, it was a 'LET ME IN OR ELSE' noise. Mother's face went pale.  
The maids hurriedly fled for the back door. But I didn't notice, I didn't notice much those days,  
I was blissfully ignorant. I had the faintest of notions that something was different when father  
hadn't appeared to wish me goodnight the previous evening. His large, polished, oak chair  
had been unoccupied all morning. But these things escaped my mind and so, when the knock  
came, I remained spread eagled upon the floor.

20 RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT! This time it was louder and longer. Mother started as if woken from  
a trance, she brushed a strand of fair hair out of her eyes and then, her fingers fumbling on  
the ornate, golden door handle, she pulled wide the door...

25 Cromwell's soldiers thronged in, crowding the room, their muddy boots soiling the  
clean swept floors, their long-spiked pikes scratching the polished woodwork. The soldiers  
were not as I knew; they were not the laughing, long haired merry faced Cavaliers, who stayed  
talking to father late into the nights. Not father's leather shod comrades with their lacy ruffs  
and shining buckles. No, these men were different, they wore metal armour that glinted in  
the light, their mouths were sullen slashes, their eyes held a steely glint that caught your gaze  
and held it until you turned away.

30 Mother faltered in the doorway before succumbing to the Roundhead soldier who  
seized her from behind and forcefully propelled her away. Venetia was next, she wept silently,  
her head bowed, her hands clasped. Then they came for me, a tall, broad shouldered man  
taking me by the waist in a vice like grip. They dragged us into father's room, not caring for  
the beautiful tapestries or fine walnut furniture. Another man lounged in father's comfortable  
upholstered chair, his boots resting upon the lacquered desk. The soldier leaned forward,  
trapping me with his cold blue eyes. I didn't dare move for fear I should feel the sharp end of  
35 their weapons. He cleared his throat and, with a harsh, grating voice, asked

"And when did you last see your Father?"

## Vocabulary

**Notion:** An idea

**Extravagant:** Over the top/ very decorated

**Spread-eagled:** This means spread out

**Steely:** Tough/ hard

**Lacquered:** Shiny

**Questions:** write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

1. What language device is used on line 5 when it says, 'for food, frivolity and fun'?
2. On lines 6-9 the weather is described. Why do you think it's effective to portray the weather like that?
3. Why do you think the mother is going on line 27?
4. What happens to the boy at the end?
5. Why do you think they want his father?

**Follow-up Tasks:** spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

1. Using the words listed in the vocabulary section, find two synonyms (different words that mean the same) for them.
2. What year do you think this story is set in? Why?
3. Imagine you are the father in the story. Write a short story from his point of view.

Here are some ideas:

- He could be looking on at the soldiers and the scene at the doorstep from outside
- He could have no idea they are looking for him
- He could be hiding in the house

## Butterflies are Free by Jan Fenimore

Read and enjoy the story below. Try to picture and hear it as you read.

5 “I’m home,” 8-year-old Armida called out, closing the front door. “Mama look at the book I checked out from the library. It’s full of butterflies.”

“We’re in the kitchen, Armida. Come join us at the table,” Mama said. “We have sad news.”

10 Mama dabbed tears away with a handkerchief. Papa looked sad. “Abuelo Jose went to live with the angels today. We will be traveling to Mexico to say goodbye,” Mama said.

Papa said, “We will leave tomorrow on a train to Mexico City. Be sure you take books and small toys, so the train ride won’t seem too long.”

15 Armida decided to take her library book about the butterflies. She wouldn’t show it to her parents now. There would be plenty of time on the train. She looked at her 5-year-old sister, Lupita. She had drawn two pictures; one of a grandfather playing ball with two girls; the other, of angels carrying Abuelo Jose to the heavens. Both girls loved their grandfather. They would miss him.

20 The phone rang. It was Mama’s sister, Marta. Armida couldn’t help hearing their talking. They wanted to bring Abuela Dora home to California now that she was alone. Armida thought of the last time her grandparents had visited. They had been so much fun. Maybe she could live with us, Armida thought.

25 As they boarded the train the next morning, Armida noticed it looked sleek and fast. Everything on the train looked clean and new. Maybe we will get to grandmother’s sooner than Papa said, Armida thought. After taking their seats she asked Mama.

30 “The train ride will take several days. It is a long way to Mexico City,” Mama said.

“Look at this butterfly book I brought to read. It says the Monarch butterflies stay at their winter home in the Magic Circle not far from where grandmother lives. Will our train go through their home?” Armida asked.

35 “I think it might go near there,” Mama said. “We will see.”

40 “The Monarchs are beautiful. I would love to keep them in a cage so I could watch them all the time.” Armida said.

Papa looked over from playing a game with Lupita. “The butterflies need to be free, Nina. They must follow the path nature has made for them.”

45 Armida looked at the picture in her book showing the orange and black colours of the Monarch soaring toward the trees and she knew Papa spoke the truth.

“Papa, did you know the butterflies fly thousands of miles to get away from the cold of winter. When it is cold, they cannot fly. I wonder how they know to go to the Magic Circle

every year.”

50

“It’s a knowing within them. It has been that way forever. They must survive and know how.”

The second day of the journey, Armida and her family changed trains. Worn seats, dirty windows and walls with chipped paint made the train look older. She hoped this train would not make the journey longer.

Armida watched the landscape roll by, pointing out to Lupita the cars bouncing along dirt roads; a man wearing a large sombrero pulling a rope with a stubborn donkey attached to it; and vendors sitting alongside the train tracks at every small village hoping to sell their wares. Everything looked so different from California, Armida felt she had stepped back in time.

The third day of the journey the train followed tracks that turned east, away from the coast. By afternoon the train had developed some noises the passengers had not heard before. After climbing a series of hills, it coughed and billowing smoke rose in the air. Then it slowed and finally came to a dead stop in a mountain valley. Everyone waited for the conductor to come by to tell them what had gone wrong.

The news didn’t sound good. No one knew the problem with the train’s engine. It might take a while to find out. The conductor said everyone could leave the train but must promise not to go too far. They should listen for the train whistle signalling it was ready to go again.

Armida and Lupita held hands, jumping in circles now that they could go outside. It had been a long trip. They longed to get up and run around. As the family stepped off the train, the sky seemed dark. Was it smoke still lingering or rain clouds blanketing the sky? No, the sun shone through in spots. Then Armida noticed the colours. Monarch butterflies, thousands of them, flew above them, the rustle of their wings sounding like the crackle of paper in the wind. The blanket of orange and black spread their colours as far as the eye could see.

“Mama, Papa, Lupita. Look. Butterflies everywhere. They are really here.”

“Beautiful,” said Mama.

85

“Breath-taking,” said Papa.

“Let’s touch them,” suggested Lupita.

The family walked up a hill near the trees and sat on fallen logs. The butterflies brushed their wings against them and tickled them while landing on their arms and legs.

It was all Armida and Lupita could do to keep quiet and not move. Armida’s heart raced. Squeals escaped from Lupita’s lips until she remembered to be still again.

95

Papa reminded Armida. “Isn’t it much better to let the Monarchs be free? If they spent their lives in cages, we would not see them here.”

“Yes, Papa,” Armida said. “They should be free.”

100

In the distance the family heard the train’s whistle calling the passengers. They hated to leave. Armida threw the butterflies a kiss as the family trudged down the hill. She hoped on the train ride home she might be lucky enough to see them again.

105

Within a few hours the train arrived in Mexico City. A man with their name of Aragon on a sign stood waiting for them. He worked for Abuela at their store. He explained the store had closed in honour of Abuelo Jose’s passing. The man took Armida and her family to their grandmother’s home.

110

When she opened the door Abuela Dora’s face lit up with a smile as tears streamed down her cheeks. “My familia, I’m so glad you came.”

Later, after dinner Mama suggested that Abuela Dora return with the family to California.

115

“Let me consider this,” Abuela said. “It is kind of you to ask. I will think on it.”

Many people came to the old adobe church to celebrate Abuelo Jose’s life. The church bells rang again and again. Afterward, at Abuela Dora’s house her friends brought food and loving touches.

120

The next day the family made a trip to the grandparent’s store. Paintings, pottery and handmade jewellery sat everywhere. Tourists and local friends bought lots that day. Armida thought about her grandmother’s life in Mexico City. She seemed happy. Maybe she wouldn’t want to come to California.

125

That evening Mama, Papa, Lupita and Armida sat around the kitchen table in Abuela Dora’s home.

130

“Mama,” Armida’s mother said. “Now that you are older and alone, we want to take care of you. Why not come home to live with us.”

135

“It is wonderful of you to want me and to care that much about me, but I won’t be able to come.” Abuela sipped from her cup of atole. “I have our business here to run, my church that I love and many friends who care about me so I’m not alone. I want to remain here. This is where I belong for now.”

140

Armida, Lupita, Mama and Papa looked at each other. They understood. Armida remembered how she had wanted to keep the butterflies with her so she could watch over them. Mama and Papa wanted the same for Abuela. But sometimes caring means letting your loved one fly free like a butterfly.

## Key Vocabulary:

**Line 29:** Monarch butterflies – a type of butterfly with orange and black colours.

**Line 30:** Magic Circle – a place in Mexico where all five ecosystems are found within close proximity, so the area is known for outstanding natural beauty.

**Line 56:** Sombrero – a broad-brimmed hat, typically worn in Mexico.

**Line 108:** Familia – the word for ‘family’ in Spanish.

**Line 114:** Adobe church – adobe is Spanish for ‘mud brick,’ therefore an adobe church is a church building made out of mud/earth and bricks.

**Line 130:** Atole – a corn meal which can be eaten or drunk.

**Questions:** Write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

- 1. In lines 1 to 7,** how is Armida’s family feeling and why are they feeling this way?
- 2. In lines 29 to 46,** how are the butterflies described and what do we learn about them?
- 3. In lines 51 to 59,** how is the train described on the second day of the journey and what does Armida see outside the train window?
- 4. In lines 61 to 69,** how is the third day of the train journey described?
- 5. In lines 71 to 79,** how is the setting described outside the train?

**Follow-up Tasks:** Spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

**1. Go through the Key Vocabulary list** and learn the words and their meanings. Then, write sentences of your own with each word in them.

(e.g. ‘The Monarch butterflies fluttered outside the window.’)

**2. Do some research on the internet,** if you have access, researching Mexico City (the Capital of Mexico) and write a paragraph providing some key information about the city.

**3. Write your own story** inspired by reading this one. Write as imaginatively, neatly and accurately as you can. Look up spellings and try to get your punctuation right.

Here’s some ideas for your story:

- it could be a real-life story – that is a story set in a place that you know well like a school or your home.
- it could be a story in which someone goes on a journey.
- it could be a story where people are going to visit some family or friends.
- it could be a cliff-hanger where the ending is left open.

# Blood for Chiaka by Chidinma Ogbonna

Read and enjoy the story below. Try to picture and hear it as you read.

5 Clara closed her eyes as she lay on the hospital bed. She couldn't bring herself to think of anything. She tried to sit up, but she could not. She was scared and wondered if she was beginning to die. Tears rolled down her cheeks and she let out a gentle sob. She put out her hand to take a bottle of malt drink on the table beside the bed but gently dropped it again.

10 "Where are all the nurses? Where is doctor Emeka? Where is my Mom? How is it that nobody seems to notice that I am dying?" she wondered.

Suddenly, there was a noise of people talking beside her window but she couldn't call out for help no matter how hard she tried. Her throat was so dry, and she found it difficult to swallow.

15 Then, as if from a long distance, she heard Chiaka's screaming and she was startled.

"What could be happening to Chiaka this time? She already has my blood." she said to herself but couldn't get up to see what was happening to Chiaka.

20 "Oh my God, please let nothing happen to my little sister." she prayed silently. She loved her little sister, Chiaka, so much and has been worried about Chiaka's illness for the past month. Chiaka is just two years old, which is ten years younger than her. This fact made Clara love her little sister so much and always seek to protect her.

25 Their father, Nnamdi died two months after the birth of Chiaka leaving their mother, Nnenna, a widow and the sole bread winner of the family. Nnenna sells fried yam and plantain and from the proceeds of this little business maintains her family. As soon as Clara finished her primary education, she had to learn tailoring as her mother could not afford to send her to secondary school.

30 Chiaka's illness had added another burden to the family that they could hardly eat. For one month, Chiaka has been ill and she got worse every day. Doctor Emeka, the owner of the village clinic, promised that she would be alright, but she kept getting worse. After a time, doctor Emeka said that she lacks blood and needed a transfusion in order to save her life.

35 The clinic lacks a blood bank and so, there had to be a compatible healthy donor, preferably a close relative to donate blood to Chiaka.

40 Unfortunately, Nnenna was no match to her daughter and so the only option left was Clara. "Clara is just twelve", Nnenna complained to doctor Emeka.

"There is nothing else we can do. If she is a match, then she is the saviour", doctor Emeka replied.

45 Clara was tested and found to be a match to Chiaka. She had to donate the blood to Chiaka. Doctor Emeka took time to explain to her why she had to do it so as to save the life of her sister. She paid little attention to what doctor Emeka had to say and urged him to take her

blood for Chiaka.

50 After Clara had donated blood for Chiaka, she remained on the hospital bed. Nnenna had not seen Clara come to the ward where Chiaka was staying but didn't look for her, for she felt she needed to rest after donating blood. And so, she remained by Chiaka's bedside and watched over her closely.

55 Clara was still on the hospital bed when one of the nurses came to check the patients in that ward. She met only Clara, recognized her as Chiaka's sister, and asked what she was doing there.

"Thinking." Clara replied without looking at her.

60 "Of what?" the nurse asked with curiosity.

"My mom, Chiaka and my friends. I will miss them so much." Clara concluded with tears streaming down her cheeks. Then turning to the nurse, she asked coldly, "Will my little sister be alright? Doctor Emeka promised that she will be alright. Tell me, will she be ok?"

65 The nurse was moved. She sat by the bedside and, stroking Clara's hair said gently, "Chiaka will be fine, I promise. You are a brave child and did the right thing today. But tell me; are you going somewhere later? Why are you talking about missing everybody?"

70 "I want to speak to doctor Emeka. He is the only one who will understand what I am talking about and may have some consolation for me." Clara said and with that turned her face to the wall.

75 Doctor Emeka was attending to a patient when the nurse told him of Clara. When he finished with the patient, he hurried down to where Clara was laying and called to her in a very gentle and low voice, "Clara, Clara, what is the problem? Talk to me. By the way, you haven't taken the malt and milk kept for you. They are meant to help you build back your blood."

80 "I don't want to take them. It will happen after all, so there is no need for that. Even though I am scared, I am still happy that I gave my blood to Chiaka. She is younger than me and needs to live." she finished, wiping off her tears.

85 "What are you talking about?" doctor Emeka asked her, shocked.

"It will happen, I know it will", she said with her eyes wide open.

90 Doctor Emeka looked into Clara's eyes and saw that she was really afraid. He took her hand and squeezed it gently, saying, "Clara, what you did today was a brave act for a girl of your age. You know what? You did the right thing. You saved your sister's life and she will remain ever grateful to you. You have nothing to worry about because she will be alright very soon and discharged and all of you will go home happily."

95 "Will I go with them?" Clara asked, sitting up immediately.

"Why not? Or do you want to stay back in the hospital?", doctor Emeka asked her.

"But, but," Clara stammered. "I am supposed to be dead. I had wanted to ask you when that will happen. I mean, when I am going to die?" she concluded in tears.

100

Doctor Emeka couldn't help a little grin. "What are you talking about, Clara? Do you want to die?" he asked.

"No." she said shaking her head at the same time. "Having given Chiaka my blood, am I not supposed to die?" she asked in a very low voice.

105

"If you knew that you would die after giving Chiaka your blood, why did you agree to do that?" doctor Emeka asked her. He was really anxious to know why Clara decided to give her little sister blood when she had such thoughts.

110

"She is my little one. She has to live." she said and withdrew her hand from doctor Emeka's grip.

It touched doctor Emeka that a young girl like Clara would be this selfless. He took back her hand in his and said gently, "Clara my little girl, what you donated to your sister was just a part of your blood. You still have more left in your body. You will not die. You need to drink these bottles of milk and malt drink on the table in order to replace the blood that you gave to Chiaka."

115

Clara couldn't believe what she heard, and she excitedly said, "Are you saying that I am not going to die after all? But why can't I stand up and walk?"

120

"Who said that you cannot stand up? Alright, let me help you." he said. He helped Clara get out of the bed to her utmost surprise and moved a little.

125

"So, what do you say?" doctor Emeka asked her, smiling.

Clara let out a very excited scream and said, "I am fine, and I think I will live. Thank you doctor Emeka!"

## Key Vocabulary:

**Malt drink** (line 4): a drink in which the primary ingredient is the grain or seed of the barley plant.

**Yam** (line 24): a potato-like root from a tropical climbing plant.

**Plantain** (line 25): a tropical fruit similar to a banana, with green skin.

**Tailoring** (line 26): the occupation of making, mending or altering clothes.

**Burden** (line 29): a duty or misfortune that causes worry or distress.

**Transfusion** (line 32): an act of transferring donated blood from one person to another.

**Saviour** (line 39): a person who saves someone or something from danger or difficulty.

**Discharged** (line 90): allow someone to leave hospital as they are judged fit.

**Questions:** Write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

1. In lines 1 to 12, how does Clara feel? Which words convey her emotions?
2. In lines 22 to 27, what do we learn has happened to Clara's father and what does her mother do to support the family?
3. In lines 52 to 62, what is Clara thinking about and how is she feeling?
4. In lines 72 to 80, why has Clara not taken the malt and milk and how is she feeling towards her sister?
5. In lines 94 to 110, What did Clara would think would happen after she had given blood and why did she choose to donate her blood even when she thought this would happen?

**Follow-up Tasks:** Spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

1. **Go through the Key Vocabulary list** and learn the words and their meanings. Then, write sentences of your own with each word in them.  
(e.g. 'She consumed a malt drink to help build her energy.')
2. **Do some research on the internet**, if you have access, and write a paragraph about other stories you have researched which include people helping others.
3. **Write your own story** inspired by reading this one. Write as imaginatively, neatly and accurately as you can. Look up spellings and try to get your punctuation right.

Here's some ideas for your story:

- it could be a story set in this country or another country
- it could be a story in which someone helps someone else
- it could be a story where a strange or unusual event happens
- it could be a sequel that follows on from this story, after the family leave hospital

## A Sound of Thunder by Ray Bradbury

The sign on the wall seemed to quaver under a film of sliding warm water. Eckels felt his eyelids blink over his stare, and the sign burned in this momentary darkness:

TIME SAFARI, INC.

SAFARIS TO ANY YEAR IN THE PAST.

5 YOU NAME THE ANIMAL.

WE TAKE YOU THERE.

YOU SHOOT IT.

Warm phlegm gathered in Eckels' throat; he swallowed and pushed it down. The muscles around his mouth formed a smile as he put his hand slowly out upon the air, and in that  
10 hand waved a check for ten thousand dollars to the man behind the desk.

"Does this safari guarantee I come back alive?"

"We guarantee nothing," said the official, "except the dinosaurs." He turned. "This is Mr. Travis, your Safari Guide in the Past. He'll tell you what and where to shoot. If he says no  
15 shooting, no shooting. If you disobey instructions, there's a stiff penalty of another ten thousand dollars, plus possible government action, on your return."

Eckels glanced across the vast office at a mass and tangle, a snaking and humming of wires and steel boxes, at now an aurora that flickered orange, now silver, now blue. There was a sound like a gigantic bonfire burning all of Time, all the years and all the parchment  
20 calendars, all the hours piled high and set aflame.

A touch of the hand and this burning would, on the instant, beautifully reverse itself. Eckels remembered the wording in the advertisements to the letter. Out of chars and ashes, out of dust and coals, like golden salamanders, the old years, the green years, might leap; roses  
25 sweeten the air, white hair turn Irish-black, wrinkles vanish; all, everything fly back to seed, flee death, rush down to their beginnings, suns rise in western skies and set in glorious easts, moons eat themselves opposite to the custom, all and everything cupping one in another like Chinese boxes, rabbits into hats, all and everything returning to the fresh death, the seed death, the green death, to the time before the beginning. A touch of a hand might  
30 do it, the merest touch of a hand.

"Unbelievable." Eckels breathed, the light of the Machine on his thin face. "A real Time Machine." He shook his head. "Makes you think, If the election had gone badly yesterday, I might be here now running away from the results. Thank God Keith won. He'll make a fine  
35 President of the United States."

"Yes," said the man behind the desk. "We're lucky. If Deutscher had gotten in, we'd have the worst kind of dictatorship. There's an anti-everything man for you, a militarist, anti-Christ, anti-human, anti-intellectual. People called us up, you know, joking but not joking. Said if

40 Deutscher became President they wanted to go live in 1492. Of course, it's not our business to conduct Escapes, but to form Safaris. Anyway, Keith's President now. All you got to worry about is-

"Shooting my dinosaur," Eckels finished it for him.

45 "A Tyrannosaurus Rex. The Tyrant Lizard, the most incredible monster in history. Sign this release. Anything happens to you, we're not responsible. Those dinosaurs are hungry."

Eckels flushed angrily. "Trying to scare me!"

50 "Frankly, yes. We don't want anyone going who'll panic at the first shot. Six Safari leaders were killed last year, and a dozen hunters. We're here to give you the severest thrill a real hunter ever asked for. Traveling you back sixty million years to bag the biggest game in all of Time. Your personal check's still there. Tear it up." Mr. Eckels looked at the check. His  
55 fingers twitched.

"Good luck," said the man behind the desk. "Mr. Travis, he's all yours."

60 They moved silently across the room, taking their guns with them, toward the Machine, toward the silver metal and the roaring light.

First a day and then a night and then a day and then a night, then it was day-night-day-night. A week, a month, a year, a decade! A.D. 2055. A.D. 2019. 1999! 1957! Gone! The Machine roared.

65 They put on their oxygen helmets and tested the intercoms.

Eckels swayed on the padded seat, his face pale, his jaw stiff. He felt the trembling in his arms, and he looked down and found his hands tight on the new rifle. There were four other men in the Machine. Travis, the Safari Leader, his assistant, Lesperance, and two other  
70 hunters, Billings and Kramer. They sat looking at each other, and the years blazed around them.

"Can these guns get a dinosaur cold?" Eckels felt his mouth saying.

75 "If you hit them right," said Travis on the helmet radio. "Some dinosaurs have two brains, one in the head, another far down the spinal column. We stay away from those. That's stretching luck. Put your first two shots into the eyes, if you can, blind them, and go back into the brain."

80 The Machine howled. Time was a film run backward. Suns fled and ten million moons fled after them. "Think," said Eckels. "Every hunter that ever lived would envy us today. This makes Africa seem like Illinois."

The Machine slowed; its scream fell to a murmur. The Machine stopped.

85 The sun stopped in the sky.

The fog that had enveloped the Machine blew away and they were in an old time, a very old time indeed, three hunters and two Safari Heads with their blue metal guns across their knees.

90 "Christ isn't born yet," said Travis, "Moses has not gone to the mountains to talk with God. The Pyramids are still in the earth, waiting to be cut out and put up. Remember that. Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Hitler-none of them exists." The man nodded.

95 "That" - Mr. Travis pointed - "is the jungle of sixty million two thousand and fifty-five years before President Keith."

He indicated a metal path that struck off into green wilderness, over streaming swamp, among giant ferns and palms.

100 "And that," he said, "is the Path, laid by Time Safari for your use, It floats six inches above the earth. Doesn't touch so much as one grass blade, flower, or tree. It's an anti-gravity metal. Its purpose is to keep you from touching this world of the past in any way. Stay on the Path. Don't go off it. I repeat. Don't go off. For any reason! If you fall off, there's a penalty. And don't shoot any animal we don't okay."

105 "Why?" asked Eckels.

They sat in the ancient wilderness. Far birds' cries blew on a wind, and the smell of tar and an old salt sea, moist grasses, and flowers the colour of blood.

110 "We don't want to change the Future. We don't belong here in the Past. The government doesn't like us here. We have to pay big graft to keep our franchise. A Time Machine is finicky business. Not knowing it, we might kill an important animal, a small bird, a roach, a flower even, thus destroying an important link in a growing species."

115 "That's not clear," said Eckels.

"All right," Travis continued, "say we accidentally kill one mouse here. That means all the future families of this one particular mouse are destroyed, right?"

120 "Right"

125 "And all the families of the families of the families of that one mouse! With a stamp of your foot, you annihilate first one, then a dozen, then a thousand, a million, a billion possible mice!"

"So, they're dead," said Eckels. "So what?"

130 "So what?" Travis snorted quietly. "Well, what about the foxes that'll need those mice to survive? For want of ten mice, a fox die. For want of ten foxes a lion starves. For want of a lion, all manner of insects, vultures, infinite billions of life forms are thrown into chaos and destruction. Eventually it all boils down to this: fifty-nine million years later, a caveman, one of a dozen on the entire world, goes hunting wild boar or sabre-toothed tiger for food. But you, friend, have stepped on all the tigers in that region. By stepping on one single mouse.  
135 So, the caveman starves. And the caveman, please note, is not just any expendable man, no!

He is an entire future nation. From his loins would have sprung ten sons. From their loins one hundred sons, and thus onward to a civilization. Destroy this one man, and you destroy a race, a people, an entire history of life. It is comparable to slaying some of Adam's grandchildren. The stomp of your foot, on one mouse, could start an earthquake, the effects of which could shake our earth and destinies down through Time, to their very foundations. With the death of that one caveman, a billion others yet unborn are throttled in the womb. Perhaps Rome never rises on its seven hills. Perhaps Europe is forever a dark forest, and only Asia waxes healthy and teeming. Step on a mouse and you crush the Pyramids. Step on a mouse and you leave your print, like a Grand Canyon, across Eternity. Queen Elizabeth might never be born, Washington might not cross the Delaware, there might never be a United States at all. So be careful. Stay on the Path. Never step off!"

"I see," said Eckels. "Then it wouldn't pay for us even to touch the grass?"

"Correct. Crushing certain plants could add up infinitesimally. A little error here would multiply in sixty million years, all out of proportion. Of course, maybe our theory is wrong. Maybe Time can't be changed by us. Or maybe it can be changed only in little subtle ways. A dead mouse here makes an insect imbalance there, a population disproportion later, a bad harvest further on, a depression, mass starvation, and finally, a change in social temperament in far-flung countries. Something much more subtle, like that. Perhaps only a soft breath, a whisper, a hair, pollen on the air, such a slight, slight change that unless you looked closely you wouldn't see it. Who knows? Who really can say he knows? We don't know. We're guessing. But until we do know for certain whether our messing around in Time can make a big roar or a little rustle in history, we're being careful. This Machine, this Path, your clothing and bodies, were sterilized, as you know, before the journey. We wear these oxygen helmets so we can't introduce our bacteria into an ancient atmosphere."

"How do we know which animals to shoot?"

"They're marked with red paint," said Travis. "Today, before our journey, we sent Lesperance here back with the Machine. He came to this particular era and followed certain animals."

"Studying them?"

"Right," said Lesperance. "I track them through their entire existence, noting which of them lives longest. Very few. How many times they mate? Not often. Life's short. When I find one that's going to die when a tree falls on him, or one that drowns in a tar pit, I note the exact hour, minute, and second. I shoot a paint bomb. It leaves a red patch on his side. We can't miss it. Then I correlate our arrival in the Past so that we meet the Monster not more than two minutes before he would have died anyway. This way, we kill only animals with no future, that are never going to mate again. You see how careful we are?"

"But if you come back this morning in Time," said Eckels eagerly, "you must've bumped into us, our Safari! How did it turn out? Was it successful? Did all of us get through-alive?"

180

Travis and Lesperance gave each other a look.

"That'd be a paradox," said the latter. "Time doesn't permit that sort of mess—a man meeting himself. When such occasions threaten, Time steps aside. Like an airplane hitting an air

185 pocket. You felt the Machine jump just before we stopped? That was us passing ourselves on the way back to the Future. We saw nothing. There's no way of telling if this expedition was a success, if we got our monster, or whether all of us - meaning you, Mr. Eckels - got out alive."

190 Eckels smiled palely.

"Cut that," said Travis sharply. "Everyone on his feet!"

They were ready to leave the Machine.

195

The jungle was high, and the jungle was broad, and the jungle was the entire world forever and forever. Sounds like music and sounds like flying tents filled the sky, and those were pterodactyls soaring with cavernous grey wings, gigantic bats of delirium and night fever. Eckels, balanced on the narrow Path, aimed his rifle playfully.

200

"Stop that!" said Travis. "Don't even aim for fun, blast you! If your guns should go off - - "

Eckels flushed. "Where's our Tyrannosaurus?"

205

Lesperance checked his wristwatch. "Up ahead, we'll bisect his trail in sixty seconds. Look for the red paint! Don't shoot till we give the word. Stay on the Path. Stay on the Path!"

They moved forward in the wind of morning.

210

"Strange," murmured Eckels. "Up ahead, sixty million years, Election Day over. Keith made President. Everyone celebrating. And here we are, a million years lost, and they don't exist. The things we worried about for months, a lifetime, not even born or thought of yet."

215

"Safety catches off, everyone!" ordered Travis. "You, first shot, Eckels. Second, Billings, Third, Kramer."

"I've hunted tiger, wild boar, buffalo, elephant, but now, this is it," said Eckels. "I'm shaking like a kid."

220

"Ah," said Travis.

Everyone stopped.

225

Travis raised his hand. "Ahead," he whispered. "In the mist. There he is. There's His Royal Majesty now."

The jungle was wide and full of twitterings, rustlings, murmurs, and sighs.

Suddenly it all ceased, as if someone had shut a door.

230

Silence.

A sound of thunder.

235 Out of the mist, one hundred yards away, came Tyrannosaurus Rex.  
"It," whispered Eckels. "It....."

"Sh!"

240 It came on great oiled, resilient, striding legs. It towered thirty feet above half of the trees, a  
great evil god, folding its delicate watchmaker's claws close to its oily reptilian chest. Each  
lower leg was a piston, a thousand pounds of white bone, sunk in thick ropes of muscle,  
sheathed over in a gleam of pebbled skin like the mail of a terrible warrior. Each thigh was a  
245 ton of meat, ivory, and steel mesh. And from the great breathing cage of the upper body  
those two delicate arms dangled out front, arms with hands which might pick up and  
examine men like toys, while the snake neck coiled. And the head itself, a ton of sculptured  
stone, lifted easily upon the sky. Its mouth gaped, exposing a fence of teeth like daggers. Its  
eyes rolled, ostrich eggs, empty of all expression save hunger. It closed its mouth in a death  
250 grin. It ran, its pelvic bones crushing aside trees and bushes, its taloned feet clawing damp  
earth, leaving prints six inches deep wherever it settled its weight.

It ran with a gliding ballet step, far too poised and balanced for its ten tons. It moved into a  
sunlit area warily, its beautifully reptilian hands feeling the air.

"Why, why," Eckels twitched his mouth. "It could reach up and grab the moon."

255

"Sh!" Travis jerked angrily. "He hasn't seen us yet."

"It can't be killed," Eckels pronounced this verdict quietly, as if there could be no argument.  
He had weighed the evidence, and this was his considered opinion. The rifle in his hands  
260 seemed a cap gun. "We were fools to come. This is impossible."

"Shut up!" hissed Travis.

"Nightmare."

265

"Turn around," commanded Travis. "Walk quietly to the Machine. We'll remit half your fee."

"I didn't realize it would be this big," said Eckels. "I miscalculated, that's all. And now I want  
out."

270

"It sees us!"

"There's the red paint on its chest!"

275 The Tyrant Lizard raised itself. Its armoured flesh glittered like a thousand green coins. The  
coins, crusted with slime, steamed. In the slime, tiny insects wriggled, so that the entire  
body seemed to twitch and undulate, even while the monster itself did not move. It  
exhaled. The stink of raw flesh blew down the wilderness.

280 "Get me out of here," said Eckels. "It was never like this before. I was always sure I'd come  
through alive. I had good guides, good safaris, and safety. This time, I figured wrong. I've  
met my match and admit it. This is too much for me to get hold of."

285 "Don't run," said Lesperance. "Turn around. Hide in the Machine."  
"Yes." Eckels seemed to be numb. He looked at his feet as if trying to make them move. He gave a grunt of helplessness.

290 "Eckels!"  
He took a few steps, blinking, shuffling.

"Not that way!"

295 The Monster, at the first motion, lunged forward with a terrible scream. It covered one hundred yards in six seconds. The rifles jerked up and blazed fire. A windstorm from the beast's mouth engulfed them in the stench of slime and old blood. The Monster roared, teeth glittering with sun.  
The rifles cracked again, their sound was lost in shriek and lizard thunder. The great level of  
300 the reptile's tail swung up, lashed sideways. Trees exploded in clouds of leaf and branch. The Monster twitched its jeweller's hands down to fondle at the men, to twist them in half, to crush them like berries, to cram them into its teeth and its screaming throat. Its boulderstone eyes levelled with the men. They saw themselves mirrored. They fired at the metallic eyelids and the blazing black iris,  
305 Like a stone idol, like a mountain avalanche, Tyrannosaurus fell.

Thundering, it clutched trees, pulled them with it. It wrenched and tore the metal Path. The men flung themselves back and away. The body hit, ten tons of cold flesh and stone. The  
310 guns fired. The Monster lashed its armoured tail, twitched its snake jaws, and lay still. A fount of blood spurted from its throat. Somewhere inside, a sack of fluids burst. Sickening gushes drenched the hunters. They stood, red and glistening.

The thunder faded.

315 The jungle was silent. After the avalanche, a green peace. After the nightmare, morning. Billings and Kramer sat on the pathway and threw up. Travis and Lesperance stood with smoking rifles, cursing steadily. In the Time Machine, on his face, Eckels lay shivering. He had found his way back to the Path, climbed into the Machine.

320 Travis came walking, glanced at Eckels, took cotton gauze from a metal box, and returned to the others, who were sitting on the Path.

"Clean up."

325 They wiped the blood from their helmets. They began to curse too. The Monster lay, a hill of solid flesh. Within, you could hear the sighs and murmurs as the furthest chambers of it died, the organs malfunctioning, liquids running a final instant from pocket to sac to spleen, everything shutting off, closing up forever. It was like standing by a wrecked locomotive or a  
330 steam shovel at quitting time, all valves being released or levered tight. Bones cracked; the

tonnage of its own flesh, off balance, dead weight, snapped the delicate forearms, caught underneath. The meat settled, quivering.

Another cracking sound. Overhead, a gigantic tree branch broke from its heavy mooring, fell. It crashed upon the dead beast with finality.

335

"There." Lesperance checked his watch. "Right on time. That's the giant tree that was scheduled to fall and kill this animal originally." He glanced at the two hunters. "You want the trophy picture?"

340

"What?"

"We can't take a trophy back to the Future. The body has to stay right here where it would have died originally, so the insects, birds, and bacteria can get at it, as they were intended to. Everything in balance. The body stays. But we can take a picture of you standing near it."

345

The two men tried to think, but gave up, shaking their heads.

They let themselves be led along the metal Path. They sank wearily into the Machine cushions. They gazed back at the ruined Monster, the stagnating mound, where already strange reptilian birds and golden insects were busy at the steaming armour. A sound on the floor of the Time Machine stiffened them. Eckels sat there, shivering.

350

"I'm sorry," he said at last.

"Get up!" cried Travis.

355

Eckels got up.

"Go out on that Path alone," said Travis. He had his rifle pointed, "You're not coming back in the Machine. We're leaving you here!"

360

Lesperance seized Travis's arm. "Wait-"

"Stay out of this!" Travis shook his hand away. "This fool nearly killed us. But it isn't that so much, no. It's his shoes! Look at them! He ran off the Path. That ruins us! We'll forfeit!

365

Thousands of dollars of insurance! We guarantee no one leaves the Path. He left it. Oh, the fool! I'll have to report to the government. They might revoke our license to travel. Who knows what he's done to Time, to History!"

"Take it easy, all he did was kick up some dirt."

370

"How do we know?" cried Travis. "We don't know anything! It's all a mystery! Get out of here, Eckels!"

Eckels fumbled his shirt. "I'll pay anything. A hundred thousand dollars!"

375

Travis glared at Eckels' check book and spat. "Go out there. The Monster's next to the Path. Stick your arms up to your elbows in his mouth. Then you can come back with us."

"That's unreasonable!"

380

"The Monster's dead, you idiot. The bullets! The bullets can't be left behind. They don't belong in the Past; they might change anything. Here's my knife. Dig them out!"

385

The jungle was alive again, full of the old tremorings and bird cries. Eckels turned slowly to regard the primeval garbage dump, that hill of nightmares and terror. After a long time, like a sleepwalker he shuffled out along the Path.

390

He returned, shuddering, five minutes later, his arms soaked and red to the elbows. He held out his hands. Each held a number of steel bullets. Then he fell. He lay where he fell, not moving.

"You didn't have to make him do that," said Lesperance.

395

"Didn't I? It's too early to tell." Travis nudged the still body. "He'll live. Next time he won't go hunting game like this. Okay." He jerked his thumb wearily at Lesperance. "Switch on. Let's go home."

1492. 1776. 1812.

400

They cleaned their hands and faces. They changed their caking shirts and pants. Eckels was up and around again, not speaking. Travis glared at him for a full ten minutes.

"Don't look at me," cried Eckels. "I haven't done anything."

405

"Who can tell?"

"Just ran off the Path, that's all, a little mud on my shoes-what do you want me to do-get down and pray?"

410

"We might need it. I'm warning you, Eckels, I might kill you yet. I've got my gun ready."

"I'm innocent. I've done nothing!"

1999.2000.2055.

415

The Machine stopped.

"Get out," said Travis.

420

The room was there as they had left it. But not the same as they had left it. The same man sat behind the same desk. But the same man did not quite sit behind the same desk. Travis looked around swiftly. "Everything okay here?" he snapped.

"Fine. Welcome home!"

425

Travis did not relax. He seemed to be looking through the one high window.

"Okay, Eckels, get out. Don't ever come back." Eckels could not move.

"You heard me," said Travis. "What're you staring at?"  
430 Eckels stood smelling of the air, and there was a thing to the air, a chemical taint so subtle, so slight, that only a faint cry of his subliminal senses warned him it was there. The colours, white, grey, blue, orange, in the wall, in the furniture, in the sky beyond the window, were . . . were . . . . And there was a feel. His flesh twitched. His hands twitched. He stood drinking the oddness with the pores of his body. Somewhere, someone must have been screaming  
435 one of those whistles that only a dog can hear. His body screamed silence in return. Beyond this room, beyond this wall, beyond this man who was not quite the same man seated at this desk that was not quite the same desk . . . lay an entire world of streets and people. What sort of world it was now, there was no telling? He could feel them moving there, beyond the walls, almost, like so many chess pieces blown in a dry wind ....

440 But the immediate thing was the sign painted on the office wall, the same sign he had read earlier today on first entering. Somehow, the sign had changed:

TYME SEFARI INC.  
445 SEFARIS TU ANY YEER EN THE PAST.  
YU NAIM THE ANIMALL.  
WEE TAEK YU THAIR.  
YU SHOOT ITT.

450 Eckels felt himself fall into a chair. He fumbled crazily at the thick slime on his boots. He held up a clod of dirt, trembling, "No, it can't be. Not a little thing like that. No!"

Embedded in the mud, glistening green and gold and black, was a butterfly, very beautiful and very dead.

455 "Not a little thing like that! Not a butterfly!" cried Eckels.

It fell to the floor, an exquisite thing, a small thing that could upset balances and knock down a line of small dominoes and then big dominoes and then gigantic dominoes, all down the years across Time. Eckels' mind whirled. It couldn't change things. Killing one butterfly couldn't be that important! Could it?

460 His face was cold. His mouth trembled, asking: "Who - who won the presidential election yesterday?"

465 The man behind the desk laughed. "You joking? You know very well. Deutscher, of course! Who else? Not that fool weakling Keith. We got an iron man now, a man with guts!" The official stopped. "What's wrong?"

470 Eckels moaned. He dropped to his knees. He scrabbled at the golden butterfly with shaking fingers. "Can't we," he pleaded to the world, to himself, to the officials, to the Machine, "can't we take it back, can't we make it alive again? Can't we start over? Can't we-"

He did not move. Eyes shut, he waited, shivering. He heard Travis breathe loud in the room; he heard Travis shift his rifle, click the safety catch, and raise the weapon.

475 There was a sound of thunder.

## Vocabulary

**Aurora** – Also known as the northern lights. These are seen in countries in the north such as Norway. They appear as a natural light display in the Earth's sky.

**Paradox:** Something that cannot happen because of something else. The grandfather paradox is an example as to why time travel to the past cannot happen; if you accidentally kill your grandfather in the past, you wouldn't be born and therefore not there to kill him accidentally.

**Pterodactyls** – A type of dinosaur

**Delirium** – Another word for madness

**Bisect** – divide into two parts

**Armoured** (American spelling) – Shielded. In this story the dinosaur's skin is like armour

**Undulate** – Move up and down slowly

**Questions:** Write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

1. How do you think Eckles felt about his journey in the beginning of this short story?
2. In lines 16-18, what is the fine for shooting animals that he shouldn't?
3. From line 90 they talk about the path. Why is it do important?
4. What happens to the dinosaur at the end of the story and why was it ok to kill the dinosaur?
5. What do you think was the moral/ message of this story?

**Follow-up Tasks:** Spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

1. Go through the Key Vocabulary list and test yourself on the spellings but covering them up and writing them out three times each or more if needed.
2. Do some research on the internet, if you have access, about time travel.
3. Write your own ideas about where you would go if you stumbled upon a time machine and explain why you'd choose it.

Here are some ideas:

1. It could be either in the past or future
2. It could be to see someone you love
3. It could be to see someone famous
4. It could be to visit your future self

## The Endless Tale James Baldwin

In the Far East there was a great king who had no work to do. Every day, and all day long, he sat on soft cushions and listened to stories. And no matter what the story was about, he never grew tired of hearing it, even though it was very long. "There is only one fault that I find with your story," he often said: "it is too short."

5 All the storytellers in the world were invited to his palace; and some of them told tales that were very long indeed. But the king was always sad when a story was ended. At last he sent word into every city and town and country place, offering a prize to anyone who should tell him an endless tale.

10 He said,-- "To the man that will tell me a story which shall last forever, I will give my fairest daughter for his wife; and I will make him my heir, and he shall be king after me."

But this was not all. He added a very hard condition. "If any man shall try to tell such a story and then fail, he shall have his head cut off."

15 The king's daughter was very pretty, and there were many young men in that country who were willing to do anything to win her. But none of them wanted to lose their heads, and so only a few tried for the prize.

One young man invented a story that lasted three months; but at the end of that time, he could think of nothing more. His fate was a warning to others, and it was a long time before another storyteller was so rash as to try the king's patience.

But one day a stranger from the South came into the palace.

20 "Great king," he said, "is it true that you offer a prize to the man who can tell a story that has no end?"

"It is true," said the king.

"And shall this man have your fairest daughter for his wife, and shall he be your heir?"

"Yes, if he succeeds," said the king. "But if he fails, he shall lose his head."

25 "Very well, then," said the stranger. "I have a pleasant story about locusts which I would like to relate."

"Tell it," said the king. "I will listen to you."

The storyteller began his tale.

30 "Once upon a time a certain king seized upon all the corn in his country and stored it away in a strong granary. But a swarm of locusts came over the land and saw where the grain had been put. After searching for many days, they found on the east side of the granary a crevice that was just large enough for one locust to pass through at a time.

So, one locust went in and carried away a grain of corn; then another locust went in and carried away a grain of corn; then another locust went in and carried away a grain of corn."

35 Day after day, week after week, the man kept on saying, "Then another locust went in and carried away a grain of corn."

A month passed; a year passed.

At the end of two years, the king said, -- "How much longer will the locusts be going in and carrying away corn?"

40 "O king!" said the story-teller, "they have yet cleared only one cubit; and there are many thousand cubits in the granary."

"Man, man!" cried the king, "you will drive me mad. I can listen to it no longer. Take my daughter; be my heir; rule my kingdom. But do not let me hear another word about those horrible locusts!"

45 And so, the strange storyteller married the king's daughter. And he lived happily in the land for many years. But his father-in-law, the king, did not care to listen to any more stories.

## Vocabulary

**Endless:** On-going, never ending.

**Heir:** A person who will rule after you/the person who will inherit all your belongings.

**Fairest:** The most beautiful.

**Locusts:** A small insect

**Granary:** A place where you store grain.

**Questions:** Write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

1. Look at lines 1-5, what does the king enjoy? Why?
2. On lines 10-15, what will happen if you cannot tell an endless story?
3. Where did the man come from who won the storyteller competition?
4. What was his story about?
5. What do you think was the moral/ message of this story?

**Follow-up Tasks:** Spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

1. Go through the Key Vocabulary list and test yourself on the spellings but covering them up and writing them out three times each or more if needed.

2. Create your own storyteller competition – what would be your rules?

3. Write a plan for a story that you think could last forever.

Here are some ideas:

1. It could be about you or your family.
2. It could include animals or insects like the one above.
3. It could include historical or famous figures.

# The Stone Boy by Gina Berriault

Read the story below. Try to imagine you are Arnold and feel what he might be feeling.

Arnold drew his overalls and raveling grey sweater over his naked body. In the other narrow bed, his brother Eugene went on sleeping, undisturbed by the alarm clock's rusty ring. Arnold, watching his brother sleeping, felt a peculiar dismay; he was nine, six years younger than Eugie and in their waking hours it was he who was subordinate. To dispel emphatically his uneasy advantage over his sleeping brother, he threw himself on the hump of Eugie's body.

"Get up! Get up!" he cried.

Arnold felt his brother twist away and saw the blankets lifted in a great wing, and, all in an instant, he was lying on his back under the covers with only his face showing, like a baby, and Eugie was sprawled on top of him.

"Whassa matter with you?" asked Eugie in sleepy anger, his face hanging close.

"Get up," Arnold repeated. "You said you'd pick peas with me."

Stupidly, Eugie gazed around the room as if to see if morning had come into it yet. Arnold began to laugh deliriously<sup>1</sup> making soft, snorting noises, and was thrown off the bed. He got up from the floor and went down the stairs, the laughter continuing, like hiccups, against his will. But when he opened the staircase door and entered the parlour, he hunched up his shoulders and was quiet because his parents slept in the bedroom downstairs.

Arnold lifted his 22 calibre rifle<sup>2</sup> from the rack on the kitchen wall. It was an old lever-action Winchester that his father had given him because nobody else used it anymore. On their way down to the garden he and Eugie would go by the lake, and if there were any ducks on it, he'd take a shot at them. Standing on the stool before the cupboard, he searched on the top shelf in the confusion of medicines and ointments for man and beast and found a small yellow box of 22 cartridges. Then he sat down on the stool and began to load his gun.

It was cold in the kitchen so early, but later in the day, when his mother canned the peas, the heat from the wood stove would be almost unbearable. Yesterday she had finished preserving the huckleberries that the family had picked along the mountain, and before that she had canned all the cherries his father had brought from the warehouse in Corinth. Sometimes, on these summer days, Arnold would deliberately come out from the shade where he was playing and make himself as uncomfortable as his mother was in the kitchen by standing in the sun until the sweat ran down his body.

Eugie came clomping down the stairs and into the kitchen, his head drooping with sleepiness. From his perch on the stool Arnold watched Eugie slip on his green knit cap. Eugie didn't really need a cap; he hadn't had a haircut in a long time and his brown curls grew thick and matted, close around his ears and down his neck, tapering there to a whorl. Eugie passed his left hand through his hair before he set his cap down with his right. The very way he slipped his cap on was an announcement of his status; almost everything he did was a reminder that he was eldest—first he, then Nora, then Arnold—and called attention to how tall he was (almost as tall as his father), how long his legs were, how small he was in the hips, and what a neat dip above his buttocks his thick-soled logger's boots gave him. Arnold never tired of watching Eugie offer silent praise unto himself. He wondered, as he sat enthralled, if when he got to be Eugie's age he would still be undersized and his hair still straight.

---

<sup>1</sup> Deliriously: acting through uncontrolled excitement or emotion.

<sup>2</sup> .22 calibre rifle: a common hunting gun.

Eugie eyed the gun. "Don't you know this ain't duck season?" he asked gruffly, as if he were the sheriff.

"No, I don't know," Arnold said with a snigger.

90 Eugie picked up the tin washtub for the peas, unbolted the door with his free hand and kicked it open. Then, lifting the tub to his head, he went clomping down the back steps. Arnold followed, closing the door behind him.

The sky was faintly grey, almost white. The mountains behind the farm made the sun climb an long way to show itself. Several miles to the south, where the range opened up, hung an orange mist, but the valley in which the farm lay was still cold and colorless.

95 Eugie opened the gate to the yard and the boys passed between the barn and the row of chicken houses, their feet stirring up the carpet of brown feathers dropped by the moulting chickens. They paused before going down the slope to the lake. A fluky<sup>3</sup> morning wind ran among the stocks of wheat that covered the slope. It sent a shimmer northward across the lake, gently moving the rushes that formed an island in the centre. Killdeer<sup>4</sup>, their white markings flashing, skimmed the water,  
100 crying their shrill, sweet cry. And there at the south end of the lake were four wild ducks, swimming out from the willows into open water.

Arnold followed Eugie down the slope, stealing as his brother did, from one shock of wheat to another. Eugie paused before climbing through the wire fence that divided the wheat field from the marshy pasture around the lake. They were screened from the ducks by the willows along the lake's  
105 edge.

"If you hit your duck, you want me to go in after it?" Eugie said.

"If you want," Arnold said.

Eugie lowered his eyelids, leaving silts of mocking blue. "You'd drown 'fore you got to it, the legs of yours are so puny," he said

110 He shoved the tub under the fence and, pressing down the centre wire, climbed through into the pasture.

Arnold pressed down the bottom wire, thrust a leg through and leaned forward to bring the other leg after. His rifle caught on the wire and he jerked at it. The air was rocked by the sound of the shot. Feeling foolish; he lifted his face, baring it to an expected shower of derision from his brother. But  
115 Eugie did not turn around. Instead, from his crouching position, he fell to his knees and then pitched forward onto his face. The ducks rose up crying from the lake, cleared the mountain background and beat away northward across the pale sky.

Arnold squatted beside his brother. Eugie seemed to be climbing the earth, as if the earth ran up and down, and when he found he couldn't scale it he lay still.  
120

"Eugie?"

Then Arnold saw it, under the tendril of hair at the nape of the neck—a slow rising of bright blood. It had an obnoxious<sup>5</sup> movement, like that of a parasite.

125 "Hey, Eugie," he said again. He was feeling the same discomfort he had felt when he had watched Eugie sleeping; his brother didn't know that he was lying face down in the pasture. Again, he said, "Hey, Eugie," An anxious nudge in his voice. But Eugie was as still as the morning about them.

---

<sup>3</sup> Fluky: lucky/by chance.

<sup>4</sup> Killdeer: a species of bird named after a place in America where deer are killed.

<sup>5</sup> Obnoxious: extremely unpleasant.

Arnold set his rifle on the ground and stood up. He picked up the tub and, dragging it behind him, walked along by the willows to the garden fence and climbed through. He went down on his knees among the tangled vines. The pods were cold with the night, but his hands were strange to him, and not until some time had passed did, he realize that the pods were numbing his fingers. He picked from the top of the vine first, then lifted the vine to look underneath for pods and then moved on to the next.

It was a warmth on his back, like a large hand laid firmly there, that made him raise his head. Way up the slope the grey farmhouse was struck by the sun. While his head had been bent the land had grown bright around him.

When he got up his legs were so stiff that he had to go down on his knees again to ease the pain. Then, walking sideways, he dragged the tub, half full of peas, up the slope.

The kitchen was warm now; a fire was roaring in the stove with a closed-up, rushing sound. His mother was spooning eggs from a pot of boiling water and putting them into a bowl. Her short brown hair was uncombed and fell forward across her eyes as she bent her head. Nora was lifting a frying pan full of trout from the stove, holding the handle with a dish towel. His father had just come in from bringing the cows from the north pasture to the barn, and was sitting on the stool, unbuttoning his red plaid Mackinaw.

"Did you boys fill the tub?" his mother asked.

"They ought of by now," his father said. "They went out of the house an hour ago. Eugie woke me up comin' downstairs. I heard you shootin'--did you get a duck?"

"No," Arnold said. They would want to know why Eugie wasn't coming in for breakfast he thought. "Eugie's dead," he told them.

They stared at him. The pitch cracked in the stove.

"You kids playin' a joke?" his father asked.

"Where's Eugene?" his mother asked scolding. She wanted, Arnold knew, to see his eyes, and when he had glanced at her she put the bowl and spoon down on the stove and walked past him. His father stood up and went out the door after her. Nora followed them with little skipping steps, as if afraid to be left alone.

Arnold went into the barn, down along the foddering passage past the cows waiting to be milked and climbed into the loft. After a few minutes he heard a terrifying sound coming toward the house. His parents and Nora were returning from the willows and sounds sharp as knives were rising from his mother's breast and carrying over the sloping fields. In a short while he heard his father go down the back steps, slam the car door and drive away.

Arnold lay still as a fugitive, listening to the cows eating close by. If his parents never called him, he thought, he would stay up in the loft forever, out of the way. In the night he would sneak down for a drink of water from the faucet over the trough and for whatever food they left for him by the barn.

The rattle of his father's car as it turned down the lane recalled him to the present. He heard voices of his Uncle Andy and Aunt Alice as they and his father went past the barn to the lake. He could feel the morning growing heavier with sun. Someone, probably Nora, had let the chickens out of their coops and they were cackling in the yard.

After a while another car turned down the road off the highway. The car drew to a stop and he heard the voices of strange men. The men also went past the barn and down to the lake. The undertakers, whom his father must have phoned from Uncle Andy's house, had arrived from Corinth. Then he heard everybody come back and heard the car turn around and leave.

"Arnold!" It was his father calling from the yard.

He climbed down the ladder and went out into the sun, picking wisps of hay from his overalls.

175 Corinth, nine miles away, was the county seat. Arnold sat in the front seat of the old Ford between his father, who was driving, and Uncle Andy; no one spoke. Uncle Andy was his mother's brother, and he had been fond of Eugie because Eugie had resembled him. Andy had taken Eugie hunting and had given him a knife and a lot of things, and now Andy, his eyes narrowed, sat tall and stiff beside Arnold.

180 Arnold's father parked the car before the courthouse. It was a two-story brick building with a lamp on each side of the bottom step. They went up the wide stone steps, Arnold and his father going first, and entered the darkly panelled hallway. The shirt-sleeved man in the sheriff's office said that the sheriff was at Carlson's Parlour, examining the Curwing boy.

185 Andy went off to get the sheriff while Arnold and his father waited on a bench in the corridor. Arnold felt his father watching him, and he lifted his eyes with painful casualness to the announcement on the opposite wall, of the Corinth County Annual Rodeo, and then to the clock with its loudly clucking pendulum. After he had come down from the loft his father and Uncle Andy had stood in the yard with him and asked him to tell them everything, and he had explained to them how the gun had caught on the wire. But when they had asked him why he hadn't run back to the house to tell his parents, he had had no answer—all he could say was that he had gone down into the garden to pick the peas. His father had stared at him in a pale, puzzled way, and it was then that he had felt his father and the others set their cold, turbulent silence against him. Arnold shifted on the bench, his only feeling a small one of compunction<sup>6</sup> imposed by his father's eyes.

At a quarter past nine Andy and the sheriff came in. They all went into the sheriff's private office, and Arnold was sent forward to sit in the chair by the sheriff's desk; his father and Andy sat down on the bench against the wall.

195 The sheriff lumped down into his swivel chair and swung toward Arnold. He was an old man with white hair like wheat stubble. His restless green eyes made him seem not to be in his office but to be hurrying and bobbing around somewhere else.

"What did you say your name was?" the sheriff asked.

200 "Arnold," he replied, but he could not remember telling the sheriff his name before. "Curwing?"

"Yes.

"What were you doing with a .22, Arnold?"

"It's mine," he said.

"Okay. What were you going to shoot?"

205 "Some ducks," he replied.

"Out of season?"

He nodded. "Were you and your brother good friends?"

210 What did he mean—good friends? Eugie was his brother. That was different from a friend, Arnold thought. A best friend was your own age, but Eugie was almost a man. Eugie had had a way of looking at him, slyly and mockingly and yet confidentially, that had summed up how they both felt about being brothers. Arnold had wanted to be with Eugie more than with anybody else, but he couldn't say they had been good friends.

"Did they ever quarrel?" the sheriff asked his father.

"Not that I know," his father replied. "It seemed to me that Arnold cared a lot for Eugie."

"Did you?" the sheriff asked Arnold.

215 If it seemed so to his father, then it was so. Arnold nodded.

"Were you mad at him this morning?"

"No."

"How did you happen to shoot him?"

"We were crawlin' through the fence."

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<sup>6</sup> Compunction: a feeling of guilt or remorse following doing something bad.

220 "Yes?"  
"An' the gun got caught on the wire."  
"Seems the hammer must have caught," his father put in.

225 "All right, that's what happened," said the sheriff. "But what I want you to tell me is this. Why didn't you go back to the house and tell your father right away? Why did you go and pick peas for an hour?"

Arnold gazed over his shoulder at his father, expecting his father to have an answer for this also. But his father's eyes, larger and even lighter blue than usual, were fixed upon him curiously. Arnold picked at a callus in his right palm. It seemed odd now that he had not run back to the house and wakened his father, but he could not remember why he had not. They were all waiting for him to answer.

230 "I come down to pick peas," he said.  
"Didn't you think," asked the sheriff, stepping carefully from word to word "that it was more important for you to go tell your parents what had happened?"

235 "The sun was gonna come up," Arnold said.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"It's better to pick peas while they're cool."

The sheriff swung away from him, laid both hands flat on his desk. "Well, all I can say is," he said across to Arnold's father and Uncle Andy, "He's either a moron or he's so reasonable that he's way ahead of us." He gave a challenging snort. "It's come to my notice that the most reasonable guys are mean ones. They don't feel nothing."

240 For a moment the three men sat still. Then the sheriff lifted his hand like a man taking an oath. "Take him home," he said.

Andy uncrossed his legs. "You don't want him?"

245 "Not now," replied the sheriff. "Maybe in a few years."

Arnold's father stood up. He held his hat against his chest. "The gun ain't his no more," he smiled wanly.

250 Arnold went first through the hallway, hearing behind him the heels of his father and Uncle Andy striking the floorboards. He went down the steps ahead of them and climbed into the back seat of the car. Andy paused as he was getting into the front seat and gazed back at Arnold, and Arnold saw that his uncle's eyes had absorbed the knowingness from the sheriff's eyes. Andy and his father and the sheriff had discovered what made him go down into the garden. It was because he was cruel, the sheriff had said, and didn't care about his brother. Was that the reason? Arnold lowered his eyelids meekly<sup>7</sup> against his uncle's stare.

260 The rest of the day he did his tasks around the farm keeping apart from the family. At evening when he saw his father stomp tiredly into the house, Arnold did not put down his hammer and leave the chicken coop he was repairing. He was afraid that they did not want him to eat supper with them. But in a few minutes another fear that they would go to the trouble of calling him and that he would be made conspicuous by his tardiness made him follow his father into the house. As he went through the kitchen, he saw the jars of peas standing in rows on the workbench, a reproach to him.

265 No one spoke at supper, and his mother, who sat next to him, leaned her head in her hand all through the meal, curving her fingers over her eyes so as not to see him. They were finishing their small, silent supper when the visitors began to arrive, knocking hard on the back door. The men were coming from their farms now that it was growing dark and they could not work anymore.

Old Man Matthews, grey and stocky, came first, with his two sons, Orion, the elder, and Clint, who was Eugie's age. As the callers entered the parlour, where the family ate, Arnold sat down in a rocking chair. Even as he had been undecided before supper whether to remain outside or take his place at the table, he now thought that he should go upstairs, and yet he stayed to avoid being

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<sup>7</sup> Meekly: in a quiet, gentle, and submissive manner.

270 conspicuous by his absence. If he stayed, he thought, as he always stayed and listened when visitors came, they would see that he was only Arnold and not the person the sheriff thought he was. He sat with his arms crossed and his hands tucked into his armpits and did not lift his eyes.

The Matthews men had hardly settled down around the table, after Arnold's mother and Nora had cleared away the dishes, when another car rattled down the road and someone else rapped on the back door. This time it was Sullivan, a spare and sandy man, so nimble of gesture and expression that Arnold had never been able to catch more than a few of his meanings. Sullivan, in dusty jeans, sat down in the other rocker, shot out his skinny legs and began to talk in his fast way, recalling everything that Eugene had ever said to him. The other men interrupted to tell of occasions they remembered, and after a time Clint's young voice, hoarse like Eugene's had been, broke in to tell about the time Eugene had beat him in a wrestling match.

Out in the kitchen the voices of Orion's wife and of Mrs. Sullivan mingled with Nora's voice but not, Arnold noticed, his mother's. Then dry little Mr. Cram came, leaving large Mrs. Cram in the kitchen, and there was no chair left for Mr. Cram to sit in. No one asked Arnold to get up and he was unable to rise. He knew that the story had got around to them during the day about how he had gone and picked peas after he had shot his brother, and he knew that although they were talking only about Eugie they were thinking about him and if he got up, if he moved even his foot, they would all be alerted. Then Uncle Andy arrived and leaned his tall, lanky body against the doorjamb (*doorstop*) and there were two men standing.

Presently Arnold was aware that the talk had stopped. He knew without looking up that the men were watching him.

"Not a tear in his eye," said Andy, and Arnold knew that it was his uncle who had gestured the men to attention.

"He don't give a hoot, is that how it goes?" asked Sullivan, trippingly.

"He's a reasonable fellow," Andy explained. "That's what the sheriff said. It's us who ain't reasonable. If we'd of shot our brother, we'd of come runnin' back to the house, like a baby. Well, we'd of been unreasonable. What would of been the use of actin' like that? If your brother is shot dead, he's shot dead. What's the use of gettin' emotional about it? The thing to do is go down to the garden and pick peas. Am I right?"

The men around the room shifted their heavy, satisfying weight of unreasonableness.

Matthews' son Orion said: "If I'd have done what he done; Pa would've hung my pelt by the side of that big coyote in the barn."

Arnold sat in the rocker until the last man had filed out. While his family was out in the kitchen bidding the callers good night and the cars were driving away down the lane to the highway, he picked up one of the kerosene lamps and slipped quickly up the stairs. In his room he undressed by lamplight, although he and Eugie had always undressed in the dark, and not until he was lying in his bed did he blow out the flame. He felt nothing, not any grief. There was only the same immense silence and crawling inside of him; it was the way the house and fields felt under a merciless sun.

He awoke suddenly. He knew that his father was out the yard, closing the doors of the chicken houses so that the chickens could not roam out too early and fall prey to the coyotes that came down from the mountains at daybreak. The sound that had wakened him was the step of his father as he got up from the rocker and went down the back steps. And he knew that his mother was awake in her bed.

Throwing off the covers, he rose swiftly, went down the stairs and across the dark parlour to his parents' room. He rapped on the door.

315 "Mother?"

From the closed room her voice rose to him a seeking and retreating voice. "Yes?"

320 "Mother?" he asked insistently. He had expected her to realize that he wanted to go down on his knees by her bed and tell her that Eugie was dead. She did not know it yet, nobody knew it, and yet she was sitting up in bed, waiting to be told, waiting for him to confirm her dread. He had expected her to tell him to come in, to allow him to dig his head into her blankets and tell her about the terror he had felt when he had knelt beside Eugie. He had come to clasp her in his arms and, in his terror, to pommel her breasts with his head. He put his hand upon the knob.

"Go back to bed, Arnold," she called sharply.

But he waited.

325 "Go back! Is night when you get afraid?"

330 At first, he did not understand. Then, silently, he left the door and for a stricken moment stood by the rocker. Outside everything was still. The fences, the shocks of wheat seen through the window before him were so still it was as if they moved and breathed in the daytime and had fallen silent with the lateness of the hour. It was a silence that seemed to observe his father, a figure moving alone around the yard, his lantern casting a circle of light by his feet. In a few minutes his father would enter the dark house, the lantern still lighting his way.

335 Arnold was suddenly aware that he was naked. He had thrown off his blankets and come down the stairs to tell his mother how he felt about Eugie, but she had refused to listen to him, and his nakedness had become unpardonable. At once he went back up the stairs, fleeing from his father's lantern.

At breakfast he kept his eyelids lowered as if to deny the humiliating night. Nora, sitting at his left, did not pass the pitcher of milk to him and he did not ask for it. He would never again, he vowed, ask them for anything, and he ate his fried eggs and potatoes only because everybody ate meals--the cattle ate, and the cats; it was customary for everybody to eat

340 "Nora, you gonna keep that pitcher for yourself?" his father asked. Nora lowered her head unsurely.

"Pass it on to Arnold," his father said.

Nora put her hands in her lap.

His father picked up the metal pitcher and set it down at Arnold's plate.

345 Arnold, pretending to be deaf to the discord, did not glance up but relief rained over his shoulders at the thought that his parents recognized him again. They must have lain awake after his father had come in from the yard: had they realized together why he had come down the stairs and knocked at their door?

350 "Bessie's missin' this morning," his father called out to his mother, who had gone into the kitchen. "She went up the mountain last night and had her calf, most likely. Somebody's got to go up and find her 'fore the coyotes get the calf."

That had been Eugie's job, Arnold thought. Eugie would climb the cattle trails in search of a new born calf and come down the mountain carrying the calf across his back, with the cow running down along behind him, mooing in alarm

355 Arnold ate the few more forkfuls of his breakfast, put hands on the edge of the table and pushed back his chair. If he went for the calf, he'd be away from the farm all morning. He could switch the cow down the mountain and the calf would run along at its mother's side.

When he passed through the kitchen his mother was setting a kettle of water on the stove. "Where you going?" she asked awkwardly.

"Up to get the calf," he replied, averting his face.

360 "Arnold?"

At the door he paused reluctantly, his back to her knowing that she was seeking him out, as his father was doing, and he called upon his pride to protect him from them. "Was you knocking at my door last night?"

He looked over his shoulder at her, his eyes narrow and dry.

365 "What'd you want?" she asked humbly.

"I didn't want nothing," he said flatly.

Then he went out the door and down the back steps, his legs trembling from the fright his answer gave him.

370

## Key Vocabulary:

**compounded** (line 9): (a) combined or mixed together, or (b) made worse – the writer is using both of these meanings at the same time.

**concussion** (line 10): temporary damage to the brain caused by a fall or hit on the head or by violent shaking – the writer uses this word in a metaphorical way to suggest the impact of the constant rain.

**closet** (lines 86, 90, 154, 166): a cupboard or a small room with a door, used for storing things – a word used in America more than Britain.

**repercussions** (line 102): the effects that an action, event, or decision have on something, especially bad effects – the writer is using the word here to describe a storm or volcano, because it also reminds us of the word ‘percussion’ which is a drumming or beating sound.

**tumultuously** (line 120): noisy and constantly moving with chaos and confusion.

**mattress** (line 124): the part of a bed that you lie on, made of a strong cloth cover filled with firm but comfortable material – the writer is using this word metaphorically to describe the floor of the jungle covered with plants to make it soft but firm.

**resilient** (line 125): not damaged or harmed easily, and able to improve quickly after being ill, injured or hurt.

**savoured** (line 130): to enjoy food or another experience slowly, in order to get as much pleasure from it as much as possible – the writer is using this word which often associated with enjoying food to show how much the children were enjoying playing in the sunshine – it’s spelt the American way here, because the writer is American; in Britain we spell it ‘savoured’.

**Note on American spellings:** The word ‘colour’ is used several times in this story – we’ve left it spelt the American way, as Ray Bradbury is an American writer; in Britain, we spell it ‘colour’. Also, in line 130 ‘savoured’ is used (British spelling: ‘savoured’) and line 137 the word ‘centre’ is used (British spelling: ‘centre’).

You can listen to this story being read aloud by an American storyteller.

Make sure you follow and keep track the story as you are listening:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMoO8c9blsl>

**Questions:** Write **thoughtful** and **detailed** answers to the questions below.

**1. In lines 23 to 29,** why do you think the writer describes what his mother has been doing recently? What does it show about Arnold that he tries to feel how his mother feels in the kitchen?

**2. In lines 136 to 145,** how are the characters acting towards each other? What different emotions might they be feeling after the accident and why?

**3. In lines 280 to 289,** why do you think Arnold's mother sent him away? How would things have been different if he went in and spoke to her?

**4. In lines 220 to 243,** what is significant about any of the visitors? What does each visitor represent or show about Arnold and Eugie?

**5. Who is "The Stone Boy"?** What different characters could it be? What does it mean?

**6. How did this story make you feel?** What are the main ideas or themes in it? What do you think Gina Berriault wanted the reader to think about during and after reading?

**Follow-up Tasks:** Spend some time and take care over the tasks below.

**1. Go through the Key Vocabulary (at the bottom of the pages)** and learn the words and their meanings. Then, write sentences of your own with each word in them.

(e.g. 'His father was full of such compunction their relationship would never be the same.')

**2. Do some research on the internet,** if you have access, and write a paragraph about the writer of this story, Gina Berriault.

**3. Write a story** inspired by reading this one. Write as imaginatively, neatly and accurately as you can. Look up spellings and try to get your punctuation right.

Here's some ideas for your story:

- it could be a series of diary entries following Arnold after the event.
- it could be a story set in the future when Arnold has grown old.
- it could be a story set in the past describing the brother's relationship.
- it could be a story about two sisters where a similar incident takes place.