Year 11

Wider Reading



Booklet 2

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Week 1: Excerpt from ‘Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence’

**In this section, two young Aboriginal girls are forcibly removed from their family and home.**

Molly and Gracie finished their breakfast and decided to take all their dirty clothes and wash them in the soak further down the river. They returned to camp looking clean and refreshed and joined the rest of the family in the shade for lunch of tinned corned beef, damper and tea. The family had just finished eating when all the camp dogs began barking, making a terrible din.

“Shut up,” yelled the owners, throwing stones at them. The dogs whinged and skulked away.

Then all eyes turned to the cause of the commotion. A tall, rugged white man stood on the bank above them. He could easily have been mistaken for a pastoralist or a grazier with his tanned complexion except that he was wearing khaki clothing. Fear and anxiety swept over them when they realised that the fateful day they had been dreading had come at last. They always knew that it would only be a matter of time before the government would track them down. When Constable Riggs, Protector of Aborigines, finally spoke his voice was full of authority and purpose. They knew without a doubt that he was the one who took their children in broad daylight – not like the evil spirits who came into their camps in the night.

“I’ve come to take Molly, Gracie and Daisy, the three half-caste girls, with me to go to school at the Moore River Native Settlement,” he informed the family.

The old man nodded to show that he understood what Riggs was saying. The rest of the family just hung their heads refusing to face the man who was taking their daughters away from them. Silent tears welled in their eyes and trickled down their cheeks.

“Come on, you girls,” he ordered. “Don’t worry about taking anything. We’ll pick up what you need later.”

When the two girls stood up, he noticed that the third girl was missing. “Where’s the other one, Daisy?” he asked anxiously.

“She’s with her mummy and daddy at Murra Munda station,” the old man informed him.

“She’s not at Murra Munda or at Jimbalbar goldfields. I called into those places before I came here,” said the Constable. “Hurry up then, I want to get started. We’ve got a long way to go yet. You girls can ride this horse back to the depot,” he said, handing the reins over to Molly. Riggs was annoyed that he had to go miles out of his way to find these girls.

Molly and Gracie sat silently on the horse, tears streaming down their cheeks as Constable Riggs turned the big bay stallion and led the way back to the depot. A high pitched wail broke out. The cries of agonised mothers and the women, and the deep sobs of grandfathers, uncles and cousins filled the air. Molly and Gracie looked back just once before they disappeared through the river gums. Behind them, those remaining in the camp found strong sharp objects and gashed themselves and inflicted wounds to their heads and bodies as an expression of their sorrow.

The two frightened and miserable girls began to cry uncontrollably; their grief made worse by the lamentations of their loved ones and the visions of them sitting on the ground in their camp letting their tears mix with the red blood that flowed from the cuts on their heads. This reaction to their children’s abduction showed that the family were now in mourning. They were grieving for their abducted children and their relief would come only when the tears ceased to fall, and that would be a long time yet.

Questions

**The following extracts from the text use emotive language to convey the pain and suffering of Molly, Gracie and their families when they are forcibly removed from their home.**

**Complete the following grid. The bold text draws attention to one or two specific language techniques for you to explore.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Quotation** | **Technique** | **Effect** |
| ‘the rest of the family just **hung their heads’** | alliteration |  |
| ‘Silent tears **welled** in their eyes and **trickled** down their cheeks.’ | verbs |  |
| ‘tears **streaming** down their cheeks ...’ | present participle verb |  |
| ‘A **high pitched wail** …**’** | adjective and noun |  |
| ‘Cries of **agonised** mothers …’ | adjective |  |
| ‘the **deep sobs** of **grandfathers, uncles and cousins** filled the air.’ | adjectivesthree part list |  |
| ‘**gashed** themselves and **inflicted** wounds … as an expression of their sorrow’ | verbs |  |
| ‘The two **frightened and miserable** girls began to **cry uncontrollably …’** | adjectiveadverb |  |
| ‘the family were now **in mourning.’** | metaphor |  |

Week 2: War of the Worlds by H.G. Wells

**This extract is from The War of the Worlds, written by H. G. Wells and first published in 1897. The novel is about our world being invaded by aliens from Mars. In this chapter, two ‘cylinders’ have already landed bringing hostile invaders and a third arrives during the narrator’s journey. The narrator has moved his wife to safety using a borrowed horse and cart from a nearby pub and sets out to return it. The army has been called in to destroy the alien invaders, who have already killed several people and, as the chapter begins, the narrator thinks the defeat of the aliens is inevitable as they seem to be too heavy and cumbersome to escape from the crater created by their landing.**

At first I regarded little but the road before me, and then abruptly my attention was arrested by something that was moving rapidly down the opposite slope of Maybury Hill. At first I took it for the wet roof of a house, but one flash following another showed it to be in swift rolling movement. It was an elusive vision--a moment of bewildering darkness, and then, in a flash like daylight, the red masses of the Orphanage near the crest of the hill, the green tops of the pine trees, and this problematical object came out clear and sharp and bright.

And this Thing I saw! How can I describe it? A monstrous tripod, higher than many houses, striding over the young pine trees, and smashing them aside in its career; a walking engine of glittering metal, striding now across the heather; articulate ropes of steel dangling from it, and the clattering tumult of its passage mingling with the riot of the thunder. A flash, and it came out vividly, heeling over one way with two feet in the air, to vanish and reappear almost instantly as it seemed, with the next flash, a hundred yards nearer. Can you imagine a milking stool tilted and bowled violently along the ground? That was the impression those instant flashes gave. But instead of a milking stool imagine it a great body of machinery on a tripod stand.

Then suddenly the trees in the pine wood ahead of me were parted, as brittle reeds are parted by a man thrusting through them; they were snapped off and driven headlong, and a second huge tripod appeared, rushing, as it seemed, headlong towards me. And I was galloping hard to meet it! At the sight of the second monster my nerve went altogether. Not stopping to look again, I wrenched the horse’s head hard round to the right and in another moment the dog cart had heeled over upon the horse; the shafts smashed noisily, and I was flung sideways and fell heavily into a shallow pool of water.

I crawled out almost immediately, and crouched, my feet still in the water, under a clump of furze. The horse lay motionless (his neck was broken, poor brute!) and by the lightning flashes I saw the black bulk of the overturned dog cart and the silhouette of the wheel still spinning slowly. In another moment the colossal mechanism went striding by me, and passed uphill towards Pyrford.

Seen nearer, the Thing was incredibly strange, for it was no mere insensate machine driving on its way. Machine it was, with a ringing metallic pace, and long, flexible, glittering tentacles (one of which gripped a young pine tree) swinging and rattling about its strange body. It picked its road as it went striding along, and the brazen hood that surmounted it moved to and fro with the inevitable suggestion of a head looking about. Behind the main body was a huge mass of white metal like a gigantic fisherman’s basket, and puffs of green smoke squirted out from the joints of the limbs as the monster swept by me. And in an instant it was gone.

So much I saw then, all vaguely for the flickering of the lightning, in blinding highlights and dense black shadows.

As it passed it set up an exultant deafening howl that drowned the thunder—‘Aloo! Aloo!’--and in another minute it was with its companion, half a mile away, stooping over something in the field. I have no doubt this Thing in the field was the third of the ten cylinders they had fired at us from Mars.

For some minutes I lay there in the rain and darkness watching, by the intermittent light, these monstrous beings of metal moving about in the distance over the hedge tops. A thin hail was now beginning, and as it came and went their figures grew misty and then flashed into clearness again. Now and then came a gap in the lightning, and the night swallowed them up.

I was soaked with hail above and puddle water below. It was some time before my blank astonishment would let me struggle up the bank to a drier position, or think at all of my imminent peril.

Not far from me was a little one-roomed squatter’s hut of wood, surrounded by a patch of potato garden. I struggled to my feet at last, and, crouching and making use of every chance of cover, I made a run for this. I hammered at the door, but I could not make the people hear (if there were any people inside), and after a time I desisted, and, availing myself of a ditch for the greater part of the way, succeeded in crawling, unobserved by these monstrous machines, into the pine woods towards Maybury.

Under cover of this I pushed on, wet and shivering now, towards my own house. I walked among the trees trying to find the footpath. It was very dark indeed in the wood, for the lightning was now becoming infrequent, and the hail, which was pouring down in a torrent, fell in columns through the gaps in the heavy foliage.

If I had fully realised the meaning of all the things I had seen I should have immediately worked my way round through Byfleet to Street Cobham, and so gone back to rejoin my wife at Leatherhead. But that night the strangeness of things about me, and my physical wretchedness, prevented me, for I was bruised, weary, wet to the skin, deafened and blinded by the storm.

I had a vague idea of going on to my own house, and that was as much motive as I had. I staggered through the trees, fell into a ditch and bruised my knees against a plank, and finally splashed out into the lane that ran down from the College Arms. I say splashed, for the storm water was sweeping the sand down the hill in a muddy torrent. There in the darkness a man blundered into me and sent me reeling back.

He gave a cry of terror, sprang sideways, and rushed on before I could gather my wits sufficiently to speak to him. So heavy was the stress of the storm just at this place that I had the hardest task to win my way up the hill. I went close up to the fence on the left and worked my way along its palings.

Near the top I stumbled upon something soft, and, by a flash of lightning, saw between my feet a heap of black broadcloth and a pair of boots. Before I could distinguish clearly how the man lay, the flicker of light had passed. I stood over him waiting for the next flash. When it came, I saw that he was a sturdy man, cheaply but not shabbily dressed; his head was bent under his body, and he lay crumpled up close to the fence, as though he had been flung violently against it.

Overcoming the repugnance natural to one who had never before touched a dead body, I stooped and turned him over to feel for his heart. He was quite dead. Apparently his neck had been broken. The lightning flashed for a third time, and his face leaped upon me. I sprang to my feet. It was the landlord of the Spotted Dog, whose conveyance I had taken.

I stepped over him gingerly and pushed on up the hill. I made my way by the police station and the College Arms towards my own house. Nothing was burning on the hillside, though from the common there still came a red glare and a rolling tumult of ruddy smoke beating up against the drenching hail. So far as I could see by the flashes, the houses about me were mostly uninjured. By the College Arms a dark heap lay in the road.

Down the road towards Maybury Bridge there were voices and the sound of feet, but I had not the courage to shout or to go to them. I let myself in with my latchkey, closed, locked and bolted the door, staggered to the foot of the staircase, and sat down. My imagination was full of those striding metallic monsters, and of the dead body smashed against the fence.

I crouched at the foot of the staircase with my back to the wall, shivering violently.

Questions

1. How is the tripod described?
2. What happened to the horse?
3. Where is the narrator trying to go?
4. What did the narrator stumble over?
5. Where does the narrator end up at the end of the extract?

**Your Interpretations: How is tension created in the extract?**

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Week 3: ‘All about the Telephone and Phonograph’

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| This text is an extract from a book published in 1878, the year in which Thomas Edison patented his ‘phonograph’. Alexander Graham Bell had invented the telephone in 1876. |

|  |
| --- |
| HE telephone, an instrument by which sound can be conveyed to, it would appear, an unlimited distance—by which conversation can be carried on betweenTpersons separated by many miles of sea and land—is unquestionably one of the most marvellous of modern adaptations of scientific knowledge to practical use. The discovery and successful working of the electric telegraph has familiarised us with achievements of science which fifty years ago would have been considered miraculous, and a bare intimation of the possibility of which might, two or three centuries previously, have led the unfortunately ingenious speculator to the stake as a wizard. We can, and daily do, transmit messages to and fro between almost every part of the habitable globe —messages which are not only read off by skilled operators as easily as the pages of a printed book, but are printed by the telegraph itself; and to that really amazing command of the forces of nature we now add the power of transmitting, by the Telephone, the tones of the human voice, distinct articulations, perfectly pronounced words, and musical sounds, to any distance to which the necessary wires may be extended; and, by the most recent adaptation of the instrument, the Phonograph, a *message of any length can be spoken on to a plate of metal, that plate sent by post to any part of the world, and the message absolutely re-spoken in the very voice of the sender.*So marvel follows marvel! Voice by Telegraph is followed by voice by Post-card, and the New Year heralds the Future with a new wonder. |

Questions:

**What do you think and feel about the writer’s views of these inventions? You should comment on - what is said - how it is said.**

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**In the text *All About the Telephone and Phonograph*, the writer is excited about the possibilities raised by the new inventions. Reread the text and copy down quotations from the text that prove each point. One example has been given to get you started.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The writer says … | Quotation |
| We can have a conversation on the phone with another person anywhere in the world. | ‘conversation can be carried on between persons separated by many miles of sea and land’ |
| The telephone allows us to speak to others directly (and don’t need to rely on an operator to help us communicate). |  |
| The speakers can hear each other’s voices clearly.  |  |
| A message (or music) can be recorded onto a disc, too. |  |
| The disc is robust enough to be sent anywhere through the post. |  |
| When replayed, the recording will sound just the same as when it was originally made. |  |
| Technology is always moving forward and creating something new – and marvellous. |  |
| We no longer need wires to speak to each other far away – we can use the post, and the future is even more exciting. |  |

Week 4: My Antonia by Willa Cather

**The extract below is from a novel called My Ántonia by Willa Cather, published in 1918. Jim, the narrator, has lost both of his parents and is living with a family of Bohemian immigrants. The story is set in 19th-century America when pioneering families were making new homes in vast, wild, unsettled parts of the country.**

 I was walking backward, in a crouching position, when I heard Ántonia scream. She was standing opposite me, pointing behind me and shouting something in Bohemian. I whirled round, and there, on one of those dry gravel beds, was the biggest snake I had ever seen. He was sunning himself, after the cold night, and he must have been asleep when Ántonia screamed. When I turned, he was lying in long loose waves, like a letter ‘W’. He twitched and began to coil slowly. He was not merely a big snake, I thought—he was a circus monstrosity. His abominable muscularity, his loathsome, fluid motion, somehow made me sick. He was as thick as my leg, and looked as if millstones couldn’t crush the disgusting vitality out of him. He lifted his hideous little head, and rattled. I didn’t run because I didn’t think of it—if my back had been against a stone wall I couldn’t have felt more cornered. I saw his coils tighten—now he would spring, spring his length, I remembered. I ran up and drove at his head with my spade, struck him fairly across the neck, and in a minute he was all about my feet in wavy loops. I struck now from hate. Ántonia, barefooted as she was, ran up behind me. Even after I had pounded his ugly head flat, his body kept on coiling and winding, doubling and falling back on itself. I walked away and turned my back. I felt seasick.

Ántonia came after me, crying, ‘O Jimmy, he not bite you? You sure? Why you not run when I say?’

‘What did you jabber Bohunk for? You might have told me there was a snake behind me!’ I said petulantly.

‘I know I am just awful, Jim, I was so scared.’ She took my handkerchief from my pocket and tried to wipe my face with it, but I snatched it away from her. I suppose I looked as sick as I felt.

‘I never know you was so brave, Jim,’ she went on comfortingly. ‘You is just like big mans; you wait for him lift his head and then you go for him. Ain’t you feel scared a bit? Now we take that snake home and show everybody. Nobody ain’t seen in this kawntree so big snake like you kill.’

She went on in this strain until I began to think that I had longed for this opportunity, and had hailed it with joy. Cautiously we went back to the snake; he was still groping with his tail, turning up his ugly belly in the light. A faint, fetid smell came from him, and a thread of green liquid oozed from his crushed head.

‘Look, Tony, that’s his poison,’ I said.

I took a long piece of string from my pocket, and she lifted his head with the spade while I tied a noose around it. We pulled him out straight and measured him by my riding-quirt; he was about five and a half feet long. He had twelve rattles, but they were broken off before they began to taper, so I insisted that he must once have had twenty-four. I explained to Ántonia how this meant that he was twenty-four years old, that he must have been there when white men first came, left on from buffalo and Indian times. As I turned him over, I began to feel proud of him, to have a kind of respect for his age and size. He seemed like the ancient, eldest Evil. Certainly his kind have left horrible unconscious memories in all warm-blooded life. When we dragged him down into the draw, Dude sprang off to the end of his tether and shivered all over—wouldn’t let us come near him.

We decided that Ántonia should ride Dude home, and I would walk. As she rode along slowly, her bare legs swinging against the pony’s sides, she kept shouting back to me about how astonished everybody would be. I followed with the spade over my shoulder, dragging my snake. Her exultation was contagious. The great land had never looked to me so big and free. If the red grass were full of rattlers, I was equal to them all. Nevertheless, I stole furtive glances behind me now and then to see that no avenging mate, older and bigger than my quarry, was racing up from the rear.

**Bohemian:** a Czech language (‘Bohunk’- the narrator’s slang for Bohemian)

**Abominable:** terrible

**Loathsome:** disgusting

**Riding-quirt:** a riding whip

Questions

**Summarise the text in 5 bullet points. The first and last have been done for you.**

* + The girl alerts the boy to the rattlesnake behind him.
	+ …
	+ …
	+ …
	+ Ántonia and Jim go home: Ántonia on the pony and Jim walking, dragging his snake.

**Extended Response:**

**How does the writer use language to make the snake sound threatening?**

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Week 5: ‘Tim Peake can be a catalyst for more UK space missions’

**This is an article from The Engineer online newspaper.**

If everything goes according to plan, by this time tomorrow Major Tim Peake will be back on terra firma following his six-month mission on board the ISS. His return home in the Soyuz capsule will see him travelling at 25 times the speed of sound, surrounded by superheated atmospheric plasma at temperatures touching 2,500°C.

With the capsule already decelerating, parachutes will open about 11km above the Earth’s surface to further slow the descent, and landing engines will fire to cushion the Soyuz as it crashes into the Kazakh Steppe. Such is the force of the collision that greenhorn astronauts are warned by their Russian mentors to stop talking before impact so that they don’t bite their tongues off.

As the first ever Briton to visit the ISS (and the first ever ESA astronaut from these isles), Major Peake’s space adventure has been a huge boon for both UK aerospace and for wider science and technology awareness across the country. His time on board the station has seen him ‘virtually’ run the London Marathon, remotely control a Mars rover prototype on Earth, and chased by Scott Kelly in a gorilla suit as part of the US astronaut’s birthday celebrations. Peake has also carried out more than 250 experiments during his six-month tenure.

In January, just a month after arriving on the ISS, Peake became the UK’s first astronaut to conduct a spacewalk. During the historic mission, Kelly commented how great it was to see the Union Jack flag on Peake’s arm as he moved through the blackness around the station’s exterior. Peake himself commented that it was a ‘privilege’ and a ‘proud moment’ to be the bearer of the flag on its first spacewalk.

The exterior work on the ISS was cut short due to a helmet malfunction for US astronaut Tim Kopra, but those images of Peake in space will last forever, and their power to inspire should not be underestimated. Media coverage of his mission has been extensive, and Peake’s affable nature and wide-eyed enthusiasm have made for welcome relief at a time when news cycles have been particularly bleak. It’s easy to see why the former helicopter pilot was selected from 8,000 applicants to become an ESA astronaut. It now seems important that steps are taken to make sure he is not the UK’s last.

Speaking recently to David Parker, ESA’s Director of Human Spaceflight and Robotic Exploration, I asked him about the possibility of UK involvement in future ISS missions. For the short term at least, it seems a return to space by Peake is the best prospect of seeing the Union Jack back in orbit.

‘The opportunities are there for future missions for this group of astronauts,’ said Parker, referring to Peake and his colleagues that were part of the 2009 ESA intake. ‘We probably wouldn’t start a new selection, but that’s not definite. It would be more about taking the maximum experience out of the astronaut group that we have now, who have all proved to be excellent.’

While Peake may be the most likely UK candidate for future ISS missions, the station will not be around forever, and plans are of course afoot for exploration beyond its low-earth orbit. NASA’s Orion programme, which ESA has a major hand in via development of the vehicle’s service module, will take astronauts on new lunar missions. ESA is also talking to its member states about involvement with the Deep Space Habitat, a station beyond Earth’s orbit that would lay the ground for the next stages of space exploration.

‘Think of a mini space station, but with an electric propulsion system that would go towards the Moon,’ Parker explained. ‘We’d use the Orion vehicle to take the astronauts there. You’d assemble a habitation module and a propulsion module in Earth orbit, then start to fly out on voyages of exploration into deep space for the first time.’

UK participation in such adventures would be largely dependent on funding, but the prospect of astronauts from these shores being involved is exciting. Tim Peake’s mission has given space exploration and science a massive shot in the arm. Let’s hope his success can be the catalyst for further investment in UK aerospace, and that someday we might even see the Union Jack in deep space. We wish Major Peake and his fellow astronauts a safe journey back to Earth, and advise him to heed the landing advice of those Russian mentors. He’s going to have a lot of talking to do over the coming weeks.

Questions

Here’s an example from the text of how facts and opinions can be presented together:

**As the first ever Briton to visit the ISS (and the first ever ESA astronaut from these isles)** Major Peake’s space adventure has been a boon for both UK aerospace and for wider science and technology awareness across the country.

Now find six more **facts** (not statistics)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Now find six more opinions

1.

2.

3.

4.

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**Extended Response:**

**What do the writer’s opinions tell us about his attitude to space travel?**

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Week 6: Mort by Terry Pratchett

**The extract below is from a novel called Mort, the fourth novel in the Discworld series by Terry Pratchett, published in 1987. In French, ‘mort’ means ‘death’ and in the novel, Mort is the name of the main character. In this extract, the reader is introduced to the main character for the first time.**

 It was also acutely embarrassing to Mort’s family that the youngest son was not at all serious and had about the same talent for horticulture that you would find in a dead starfish. It wasn’t that he was unhelpful, but he had the kind of vague, cheerful helpfulness that serious men soon learn to dread. There was something infectious, possibly even fatal, about it. He was tall, red-haired and freckled, with the sort of body that seems to be only marginally under its owner’s control; it appeared to have been built out of knees.

On this particular day it was hurtling across the high fields, waving its hands and yelling.

Mort’s father and uncle watched it disconsolately from the stone wall.

‘What I don’t understand,’ said father Lezek, ‘is that the birds don’t even fly away. I’d fly away, if I saw it coming towards me.’

‘Ah. The human body’s a wonderful thing. I mean, his legs go all over the place but there’s a fair turn of speed there.’

Mort reached the end of a furrow. An overfull woodpigeon lurched slowly out of his way.

‘His heart’s in the right place, mind,’ said Lezek, carefully.

‘Ah. ’Course, ’tis the rest of him that isn’t.’

‘He’s clean about the house. Doesn’t eat much,’ said Lezek.

‘No, I can see that.’

Lezek looked sideways at his brother, who was staring fixedly at the sky.

‘I did hear you’d got a place going up at your farm, Hamesh,’ he said.

‘Ah. Got an apprentice in, didn’t I?’

‘Ah,’ said Lezek gloomily, ‘when was that, then?’

‘Yesterday,’ said his brother, lying with rattlesnake speed. ‘All signed and sealed. Sorry. Look, I got nothing against young Mort, see, he’s as nice a boy as you could wish to meet, it’s just that —’

‘I know, I know,’ said Lezek. ‘He couldn’t find his arse with both hands.’

They stared at the distant figure. It had fallen over. Some pigeons had waddled over to inspect it. ‘He’s not stupid, mind,’ said Hamesh. ‘Not what you’d call stupid.’

‘There’s a brain there all right,’ Lezek conceded. ‘Sometimes he starts thinking so hard you has to hit him round the head to get his attention. His granny taught him to read, see. I reckon it overheated his mind.’

Mort had got up and tripped over his robe.

‘You ought to set him to a trade,’ said Hamesh, reflectively. ‘The priesthood, maybe. Or wizardry. They do a lot of reading, wizards.’

They looked at each other. Into both their minds stole an inkling of what Mort might be capable of if he got his well-meaning hands on a book of magic.

‘All right,’ said Hamesh hurriedly. ‘Something else, then. There must be lots of things he could turn his hand to.’

‘He starts thinking too much, that’s the trouble,’ said Lezek. ‘Look at him now. You don’t think about how to scare birds, you just does it. A normal boy, I mean.’

Hamesh scratched his chin thoughtfully.

‘It could be someone else’s problem,’ he said.

Lezek’s expression did not alter, but there was a subtle change around his eyes.

‘How do you mean?’ he said.

‘There’s the hiring fair at Sheepridge next week. You set him as a prentice, see, and his new master’ll have the job of knocking him into shape. ’Tis the law. Get him indentured, and ’tis binding.’

Lezek looked across the field at his son, who was examining a rock.

‘I wouldn’t want anything to happen to him, mind,’ he said doubtfully. ‘We’re quite fond of him, his mother and me. You get used to people.’

‘It’d be for his own good, you’ll see. Make a man of him.’

‘Ah. Well. There’s certainly plenty of raw material,’ sighed Lezek.

Mort was getting interested in the rock. It had curly shells in it, relics of the early days of the world when the Creator had made creatures out of stone, no-one knew why.

Mort was interested in lots of things. Why people’s teeth fitted together so neatly, for example. He’d given that one a lot of thought. Then there was the puzzle of why the sun came out during the day, instead of at night when the light would come in useful. He knew the standard explanation, which somehow didn’t seem satisfying.

In short, Mort was one of those people who are more dangerous than a bag full of rattlesnakes. He was determined to discover the underlying logic behind the universe.

Which was going to be hard, because there wasn’t one. The Creator had a lot of remarkably good ideas when he put the world together, but making it understandable hadn’t been one of them.

Questions

1. Who does the writer focus on in the opening paragraph and what do we learn about the character?
2. Look at the opening sentence. How do we know Mort would make a terrible farmer? What language feature is used here?
3. Who has the conversation about Mort? What is the effect of using dialogue after opening using third-person narrative?
4. What three positive things does Lezek say about his son? What impression do you get of the relationship between father and son?
5. Read from, ‘Mort was getting interested in the rock’ to the end of the extract. Although the focus is still on Mort, this is a complete shift from the start where Mort was ‘hurtling’ and ‘yelling’; he has fallen and stayed still. The writer uses limited third-person. Whose thoughts is the reader experiencing here? Do we gain any new impressions of Mort at this point?

Week 7: ‘A visit to the cholera districts of Bermondsey’ from The Morning Chronicle

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| This is an extract from an early piece of social investigative journalism, providing shocking details of a visit Henry Mayhew made to the London district of Bermondsey. He describes how the poorest people in the area live in unsanitary conditions which promote the spread of cholera. Cholera killed many thousands of people in London alone that year. |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| As we passed along the reeking banks of the sewer the sun shone upon a narrow slip of the water. In the bright light it appeared the colour of strong green tea, and positively looked as solid as black marble in the shadow - indeed it was more like watery mud than muddy water; and yet we were assured this was the only water the wretched inhabitants had to drink. As we gazed in horror at it, we saw drains and sewers emptying their filthy contents into it; we saw a whole tier of doorless privies in the open road, common to men and women, built over it; we heard bucket after bucket of filth splash into it, and the limbs of the vagrant boys bathing in it seemed, by pure force of contrast, white as Parian marble. And yet, as we stood doubting the fearful statement, we saw a little child, from one of the galleries opposite, lower a tin can with a rope to fill a large bucket that stood beside her. In each of the balconies that hung over the stream the self-same tub was to be seen in which the inhabitants put the mucky liquid to stand, so that they may, after it has rested for a day or two, skim the fluid from the solid particles of filth, pollution, and disease. As the little thing dangled her tin cup as gently as possible | into the stream, a bucket of night-soil was poured down from the next gallery.    In this wretched place we were taken to a house where an infant lay dead of the cholera. We asked if they *really did*drink the water? The answer was, ‘They were obliged to drink the ditch, without they could beg a pailfull or thieve a pailfull of water. But have you spoken to your landlord about having it laid on for you? ‘Yes, sir; and he says he'll do it, and do it, but we know him better than to believe him.’ ‘Why, sir,’ cried another woman, who had shot out from an adjoining room, ‘he won't even give us a little whitewash, though we tell him we'll willingly do the work ourselves: and look here, sir,’ she added, ‘all the tiles have fallen off, and the rain pours in wholesale.’    We had scarcely left the house when a bill caught our eye, announcing that ‘this valuable estate’ was to be sold!    From this spot we crossed the little shaky bridge into Providence-buildings - a narrow neck of land set in sewers. Here, in front of the houses, were small gardens that a table-cloth would have covered. Still the one dahlia that here raised its round red head made it a happier and brighter place. Never was | colour so grateful to the eye. All we had looked at had been so black and dingy, and had smelt so much of churchyard clay, that this little patch of beauty was brighter and greener than ever was oasis in the desert. Here a herd of children came out, and stared at us like sheep. One child our guide singled out from the rest. She had the complexion of tawed leather, and her bright, glassy eyes were sunk so far back in her head, that they looked more like lights shining through the hollow sockets of a skull than a living head, and her bones seemed ready to start through the thin layer of skin. We were told she had had the cholera twice. Her father was dead of it. ‘But she, sir,’ said a woman addressing us, ‘won't die. Ah! if she'd had plenty of victuals and been brought up less hardy she would have been dead and buried long ago, like many more. And here's another,’ she added, pushing forward a long thin woman in rusty black. ‘Why I’ve know’d her eat as much as a quartern loaf at a meal and you can't fatten her no how.’ Upon this there was a laugh, but in the woman's bloodless cheeks and blue lips we saw that she like the rest was wasting away from the influence of the charnel-like atmosphere around her. |

Questions

**Life was very hard for the poorest people in nineteenth-century Victorian London. Find a quotation from the text which proves each of the following statements about life there at that time.**

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| --- | --- |
| Toilets without doors and in public view were shared by everyone. |  |
| People tried to remove the worst of the dirt before they drank the water. |  |
| The people were forced to drink unclean water unless they could get something better another way. |  |
| The people wanted to improve their homes but received no help from the landlord. |  |
| The roofs leaked badly when it rained. |  |
| Some of the houses had tiny front gardens.  |  |
| One person had tried to brighten up their garden with flowers. |  |
| The children weren’t used to seeing strangers in their area. |  |
| Some children were able to survive on very little food as that’s all they’d ever had. |  |
| The place felt like somewhere everyone was waiting to die. |  |

**What impression is created of Bermondsey?**

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