

The Terror of Blue John Gap by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Part 5

Author: Ceri Jones

Level: Advanced

Age: Young adults / Adults

Aims: In this lesson the students will:

1. remember and retell the story so far;
2. listen to the fifth instalment and recount the main events;
3. listen in detail to a short extract and explore the relationship between stress and dramatic effect;
4. role play a conversation between one of the rescuers and a local policeman.

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (first paragraph), Track 2 (full audio for Part 5) and Track 3 (short extract) downloaded from onestopenglish; one copy of full transcript per student

Summary: The story is set in the Peak District (an upland area in the county of Derbyshire, England) in 1902. It tells the story of how a man uncovers the truth behind the legend of a mysterious monster. It is told in six parts. In Part 5 of the story, Armitage, a local farm worker has disappeared and Hardcastle is convinced that the monster is responsible and must be stopped. The police laughed at him when he told them his story so he has decided to confront the monster himself.

Activity 1

Aims: to recall the details of the previous instalment; to predict the events in Part 5

1. Write these questions on the board and ask the students to discuss them in pairs.
 - How many people did Hardcastle talk to about his discovery in the Blue John Gap?
 - What was their reaction?
 - Why did Hardcastle decide to go back into the Gap one more time?
 - What preparations did he make?
2. Ask them to check their answers in the summary they wrote of Part 4.
3. In this instalment, Hardcastle finally comes face-to-face with the monster. Here are some words the students will need to know to understand the description: *bulk, fleece, inchoate shape, mass, oakum, shaggy*.

Give the students the worksheet and ask them to read Activity 1 and answer the questions.

Key: a. *bristling, fleece, oakum, shaggy*;
b. *bulk, inchoate shape, mass*

Activity 2

Aim: to practise extensive listening

1. Ask the students to listen to the first paragraph of Part 5 and answer these questions:
 - How many weeks have passed since the last journal entry?
 - Where is Hardcastle?
 - What does he claim has happened?

Play Track 1 (first paragraph). There is space on the worksheet for the students to write their answers.

2. Ask the students to compare their answers and discuss what they think Hardcastle has done to stop the Terror of Blue John Gap.

Key a: 1. *six weeks*; 2. *He is in bed.*; 3. *He has stopped the Terror of Blue John Gap.*

3. Ask the students to listen to the rest of the instalment and answer these questions:

- Where did Hardcastle wait for the monster?
- When the monster appeared, did he chase after it?
- What did the monster do?
- What happened in the end?

The Terror of Blue John Gap by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Part 5

Play Track 2 (full audio for Part 5). There is space on the worksheet for the students to write their answers.

4. Ask the students to work in pairs or small groups and compare their answers.

Key b: 1. close to the mouth of the Roman shaft; 2. No, he was paralyzed with fear.; 3. The creature whisked past him, then returned and went back into the cave. 4. Hardcastle came face to face with the creature.

Then ask them to complete the short summary on the worksheet. You may want to give them the transcript to help them as they work or to check their answers at the end.

Key c: dark and cloudy; three; the tunnel; past him/off; shot; into its burrow; down the Roman shaft; turned

5. Ask the students to discuss what they think happened next.

Activity 3

Aim: to listen in detail; to raise awareness of the relationship between stress and dramatic effect

1. Ask the students to listen again to five sentences from Part 5. The transcript is given on the worksheet. As they listen, they should underline all the words that are stressed particularly strongly. Play Track 3 (short extract). You might like to listen to the first sentence together as an example.

Key:

But now I nerved myself for its return. No sound came from the sleeping countryside to tell of the horror which was loose. In no way could I judge how far off it was, what it was doing, or when it might be back. But not a second time should my nerve fail me, not a second time should it pass unchallenged. I swore it between my clenched teeth as I laid my cocked rifle across the rock.

2. After listening, ask the students to compare their answers. Ask the students to think about why these words in particular were stressed and how they add to the

overall effect of the description.

Key: *The stressed words are those that carry the most meaning. They are mostly very dramatic words (e.g. 'horror', 'fail', 'clenched') and so add to the feeling of tension and suspense.*

3. Ask the students to read the passage out loud, imitating the dramatic tone of the narrator.

Activity 4

Aim: to show understanding of the story by re-enacting one of the situations

1. Ask the students to work in pairs and imagine that they are members of the rescue party who come looking for Hardcastle when he doesn't get back to the farm that night. Write these questions on the board and ask the students to discuss them:

- Who called you to join the rescue party?
- What time was it?
- How many of you were there?
- What did you take with you?
- What did you see in the Gap?
- Where did you find Hardcastle?
- What kind of condition was he in?
- Did he speak about his adventure?

2. When they have decided on their stories, ask them to act out a scene between one of the rescue workers and his wife when he comes home after finding Hardcastle. Student A should play the part of the rescue worker and student B should play the part of the wife.

3. Ask the students to discuss this question:

- What do you think the villagers decided to do after they heard Hardcastle's story?

Encourage as many versions as possible and use questions and prompts to get the students to explore how exactly each possible scenario might have taken place.

Follow-up tasks

1. Ask the students to write a simple, factual description of the monster, including as many details as they can from the recording, but using vocabulary and structures that are more appropriate to modern usage.

2. Ask the students to continue their summary of the story, adding to the summaries they have already written for Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The Terror of Blue John Gap

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Part 5

Activity 1

Look at some of the words that are used to describe the monster and their definitions and then answer the questions.

Which words refer to:

- the monster's coat?
- the monster's size?

What idea do they give you of the monster?

bristling stiff and stands up on end
bulk a large shape or body
fleece the wool from a sheep
inchoate shape (archaic and poetic) a shape which you can't really understand
mass a large shape
oakum fibre from old oaks
shaggy with thick, long hair

Activity 2

a. Listen to the opening paragraph and answer these questions:

- How many weeks have passed since the last journal entry?
- Where is Hardcastle?
- What does he claim has happened?

b. Listen to the rest of the story and answer these questions:

- Where did Hardcastle wait for the monster?
- When the monster appeared, did he chase after it?
- What did the monster do?
- What happened in the end?

c. Complete the summary below.

The weather was _____. Hardcastle waited outside the Gap for _____ hours. Finally the monster came from _____ and ran _____. Hardcastle waited for the monster to come back and when it did he _____ at it. The monster ran _____ and Hardcastle followed it. He followed the monster into a large central cave where the monster _____ to face him.

The Terror of Blue John Gap

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Part 5

Activity 3

Listen and underline all the words that are stressed.

But now I nerved myself for its return. No sound came from the sleeping countryside to tell of the horror which was loose. In no way could I judge how far off it was, what it was doing, or when it might be back. But not a second time should my nerve fail me, not a second time should it pass unchallenged. I swore it between my clenched teeth as I laid my cocked rifle across the rock.

The Terror of Blue John Gap

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Part 5

June 10. I am writing this, propped up in bed, six weeks after my last entry in this journal. I have gone through a terrible shock both to mind and body, arising from such an experience as has seldom befallen a human being before. But I have attained my end. The danger from the Terror which dwells in the Blue John Gap has passed never to return. Thus much at least I, a broken invalid, have done for the common good. Let me now **recount** what occurred as clearly as I may.

Track 1

The night of Friday, May 3rd, was dark and cloudy – the very night for the monster to walk. About eleven o'clock I went from the farm-house with my lantern and my rifle, having first left a note upon the table of my bedroom in which I said that, if I were missing, search should be made for me in the direction of the Gap. I made my way to the mouth of the Roman shaft, and, having perched myself among the rocks close to the opening, I shut off my lantern and waited patiently with my loaded rifle ready to my hand.

It was a melancholy vigil. All down the winding valley I could see the scattered lights of the farm-houses, and the church clock of Chapel-le-Dale tolling the hours came faintly to my ears. These tokens of my fellow-men served only to make my own position seem the more lonely, and to call for a greater effort to overcome the terror which tempted me continually to get back to the farm, and abandon for ever this dangerous quest. And yet there lies deep in every man a rooted self-respect which makes it hard for him to turn back from that which he has once undertaken. This feeling of personal pride was my salvation now, and it was that alone which held me fast when every instinct of my nature was dragging me away. I am glad now that I had the strength. In spite of all that it has cost me, my manhood is at least above reproach.

Twelve o'clock struck in the distant church, then one, then two. It was the darkest hour of the night. The clouds were drifting low, and there was not a star in the sky. An owl was hooting somewhere among the rocks, but no other sound, save the gentle sigh of the wind, came to my ears. And then suddenly I heard it! From far away down the tunnel came those muffled steps, so soft and yet so ponderous. I heard also the rattle of stones as they gave way under that giant tread. They drew nearer. They were close upon me. I heard the crashing of the bushes round the entrance, and then dimly through the darkness I was conscious of the loom of some enormous shape, some monstrous inchoate creature, passing swiftly and very silently out from the tunnel. I was paralysed with fear and amazement. Long as I had waited, now that it had actually come I was unprepared for the shock. I lay motionless and breathless, whilst the great dark mass whisked by me and was swallowed up in the night.

But now I **nerved myself** for its return. No sound came from the sleeping countryside to tell of the horror which was loose. In no way could I judge how far off it was, what it was doing, or when it might be back. But not a second time should my nerve fail me, not a second time should it pass unchallenged. I swore it between my clenched teeth as I laid my cocked rifle across the rock.

Track 3

And yet it nearly happened. There was no warning of approach now as the

The Terror of Blue John Gap

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Part 5

creature passed over the grass. Suddenly, like a dark, drifting shadow, the huge bulk loomed up once more before me, making for the entrance of the cave. Again came that paralysis of volition which held my crooked forefinger impotent upon the trigger. But with a desperate effort I shook it off. Even as the brushwood rustled, and the monstrous beast blended with the shadow of the Gap, I fired at the retreating form. In the blaze of the gun I caught a glimpse of a great shaggy mass, something with rough and bristling hair of a withered grey colour, fading away to white in its lower parts, the huge body supported upon short, thick, curving legs. I had just that glance, and then I heard the rattle of the stones as the creature tore down into its burrow. In an instant, with a triumphant revulsion of feeling, I had cast my fears to the wind, and uncovering my powerful lantern, with my rifle in my hand, I sprang down from my rock and rushed after the monster down the old Roman shaft.

My splendid lamp cast a brilliant flood of vivid light in front of me, very different from the yellow glimmer which had aided me down the same passage only twelve days before. As I ran, I saw the great beast lurching along before me, its huge bulk filling up the whole space from wall to wall. Its hair looked like coarse faded oakum, and hung down in long, dense masses which swayed as it moved. It was like an enormous unclipped sheep in its fleece, but in size it was far larger than the largest elephant, and its breadth seemed to be nearly as great as its height. It fills me with amazement now to think that I should have dared to follow such a horror into the bowels of the earth, but when one's blood is up, and when one's quarry seems to be flying, the old primeval hunting-spirit awakes and prudence is cast to the wind. Rifle in hand, I ran at the top of my speed upon the trail of the monster.

I had seen that the creature was swift. Now I was to find out to my cost that it was also very cunning. I had imagined that it was in panic flight, and that I had only to pursue it. The idea that it might turn upon me never entered my excited brain. I have already explained that the passage down which I was racing opened into a great central cave. Into this I rushed, fearful lest I should lose all trace of the beast. But he had turned upon his own traces, and in a moment we were face to face.

Glossary

recount tell a story

nerve yourself prepare yourself to be brave

lest (formal) in case