

Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad

By M R James

Part 1

Author: Daniel Barber

Level: Advanced

Age: Young adults / Adults

Aims: In this lesson, the students will:

1. make predictions about the main character;
2. listen for specific information about the main character's holiday plans;
3. listen in detail to a short extract and look at sentence stress;
4. listen to a longer extract to answer comprehension questions;
5. discuss what they know about the personality of the main character;
6. role-play a phone call between the main character and a hotel receptionist

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student; one set of cut-up role cards per pair of students; Track 1 (first part), Track 2 (short extract), Track 3 (the rest of Part 1) and Track 4 (full audio) downloaded from onestopenglish; one copy of the full transcript per student

Summary: The story is set in Burnstow, a seaside town on the east coast of England, and tells of how a university professor makes an interesting discovery with disturbing consequences. It is told in seven parts. In Part 1 of the story, Professor Parkins discusses with colleagues his plans to spend a few days in Burnstow.

Activity 1

Aim: to encourage students to think about the main character's personality before listening

1. Tell the students that the main character of the story they are going to listen to is Professor Parkins, a lecturer at a traditional English university at the beginning of the twentieth century. Explain that they are going to predict the kind of person he is by answering some questions. Ask them to read silently the questions in Activity 1 on the worksheet and try to answer as many as they can in two minutes. Tell them to note down their ideas in very short note form on the worksheet.
2. Ask the students to compare their answers with a partner before sharing their answers with the whole class. Encourage students to challenge one another if they don't agree.

Activity 2

Aim: to pre-teach vocabulary used in the text to talk about archaeology: *site*, *preceptory*, *dig*

1. Ask the students to look at Activity 2 on the worksheet. Explain that the three words in bold are key words in the story they are going to listen to. Get the students to match the words to their definitions.

Key: 1. *dig*; 2. *preceptory*; 3. *site*

2. Ask the students if there are any archaeological sites near their home towns, what type of sites they are and whether they have ever participated in a dig. (In Part 2 of the story, there will be more discussion about archaeology, so you may not want to go into great detail here.)

Activity 3

Aims: to practise listening for specific information, namely the activities that the professor will be doing in Burnstow; to familiarize students with the narrator's voice

1. Tell the students to listen to the first part of the story and make notes on why the professor is going to Burnstow. Play Track 1.

Key: *He's going to practise golf. He has also offered to inspect the possible site for an archaeological dig for one of his colleagues.*

2. Ask the class whether the reasons Parkins is going to Burnstow fit with their earlier predictions during Activity 1. Whose ideas were closest?

Activity 4

Aim: to explore the function of word stress in a dialogue

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1. Point out Activity 4 on the worksheet. Tell the students to read the extract and predict which words are stressed. Show them the examples – where the stressed syllable of the first three stressed words have been underlined – and tell them to continue marking the stressed syllables in the same way. Allow students to check their predictions with a partner.

2. Play Track 2 and tell the students to listen and check their predictions.

Key:

“Oh, Parkins,” said his neighbour on the other side, “if you are going to Burnstow, I wish you would look at the site of the Templars’ preceptory, and let me know if you think it would be any good to have a dig there in the summer.”

“Certainly,” said Parkins, the Professor: “if you will describe to me whereabouts the site is, I will do my best to give you an idea of the lie of the land when I get back; or I could write to you about it, if you would tell me where you are likely to be.”

Allow students to check their answers in pairs before checking with the whole class. (The students’ answers may vary slightly from the answers provided above.) Ask the class which words are usually stressed, and why they think this is.

Key: As well as words that carry the lexical meaning of the sentence, such as nouns and verbs, words with emphatic importance tend to be stressed, such as negatives (e.g. don’t), exclamations (e.g. certainly) and some auxiliary verbs (e.g. might). It is useful to identify words that are not normally stressed, too. These include prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions and articles.

3. Play Track 2 again, this time encouraging the students to read along with the narrator.

4. Ask students to work in threes and take turns as the narrator, Professor Parkins and his neighbour to read aloud the dialogue, focusing on sentence stress.

Activity 5

Aim: to practise extensive listening and note-taking

1. Explain to the students that they are going to listen to the rest of the conversation and will be taking notes. Point out the comprehension questions in Activity 5 and ask them to read them beforehand.

2. Play Track 3 and encourage the students to take notes as they listen. There is space for them to write their answers on the worksheet.

3. Ask the students to check their answers with a partner before reporting back to the whole class.

Key: 1. The site is probably close to the beach; three-quarters of a mile from the Globe Inn, at the north end of town.; 2. the Globe Inn; 3. a double-bedded room (In modern English, this would be called a twin room.); 4. He is just making fun of Parkins.; 5. Parkins takes the suggestion seriously and does not want Rogers to accompany him. However, he tries to remain polite and courteous to Rogers and finds excuses as to why it would not be a good idea for him to come.; 6. Parkins is outspoken and states his view that ghosts do not exist. He is annoyed at Rogers’ careless talk on the topic.

Activity 6

Aim: to explore the personality of the main character

1. Ask the students what they think the writer’s main goal is in Part 1 of the story. Answer: to introduce the main character. Explain that they are going to bring together all the information that they have about him. Elicit one or two facts and encourage them to think about how they know these things – that is, whether the writer explicitly states them or whether they have inferred them from the text.

2. Point out Activity 6 on the worksheet. Get the students to copy the table into their notebooks and continue it. This is a suitable activity to do in pairs or small groups.

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3. Give out copies of the transcript and ask the students to look for more information to add to their table.

4. Conclude by getting the students to compare what they know about Parkins now with their initial ideas from Activity 1. How close were they? Ask the class what their reaction to Parkins is. Do they like him? Can they imagine being friends with him? Why? Why not?

Activity 7

Aims: to practise booking a hotel room over the phone; to raise awareness of register

1. Tell the students that they are going to act out a telephone conversation between Professor Parkins and the Globe Inn receptionist.

2. Divide the class into two groups. The students in group A will take the part of Parkins; the students in group B will take the part of the receptionist. Hand out the role cards and give the groups a few minutes to discuss their part in the role-play and make notes if necessary.

3. Ask the students to work in pairs comprising of one student from group A and one student from group B. Have them act out the phone conversation. You may want to ask them to sit back-to-back to simulate a phone call, where you cannot see the other person. Remind the receptionists to start like this: 'Good morning, Globe Inn. How can I help you?'

4. When they have finished the conversation, ask students to offer each other feedback on their performances, especially on how formal and polite they were and how they achieved that level of formality. You may also want to give some feedback on their performance.

5. Finally, explain that this is the beginning of a horror story, so, to conclude the lesson, encourage the students to speculate on what is going to happen. Be careful not to tell them what happens next, though!

Follow-up tasks

1. Ask the students to write a letter from Professor Parkins to the receptionist to confirm the information given over the phone.

2. Ask the students to draw a sketch of the Globe Inn and its surroundings using their imaginations. They should then explain what they have drawn to the class, and why. They can bring their pictures to the next lesson and compare how they imagined the resort to how it is described in Part 2.

3. Explain to the students that Burnstow is a fictitious town based on the real town of Felixstowe on the east coast of England. Ask students to find a photograph of Felixstowe on the internet that would be suitable for a postcard. Now they should imagine they are Parkins in Burnstow and write a postcard to one of their colleagues.

4. Ask students to find photographs of a university professor who looks as they imagine Professor Parkins would look. They can use an image search engine such as Google Images. Suggest key words such as *Oxford*, *Cambridge*, *don*, *professor*, *tutor*, and *college*. Ask them to bring them to the next lesson, so you can discuss their choices together and choose the image that most closely resembles Parkins.

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Activity 1

Think about what Professor Parkins might be like. Answer as many questions as you can.

- How old is he?
- What does he look like?
- Who does he live with, if anyone?
- What does he like doing in his spare time?
- How does he speak?
- Who does he like to spend time with?
- What does he enjoy doing on holiday?
- Would you like to meet him? Why? Why not?

Activity 2

Match the words in bold to their definitions below. You will need to change the form of one of the words.

The **site** ... must be down quite close to the beach now.

... let me know if you think it would be any good to have a **dig** there in the summer

... very few of the English **preceptories** have ever been properly planned

1. _____ = the exploration of a buried building or area in order to find ancient objects
2. _____ = a provincial community or religious house of medieval knights
3. _____ = a place where something happened, especially something interesting or important, or where there is an important building

Activity 3

Listen to the first part of the story. Why is the professor going to Burnstow?

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Activity 4

Read the extract and underline the stressed syllables.

“Oh, Parkins,” said his neighbour on the other side, “if you are going to Burnstow, I wish you would look at the site of the Templars’ preceptory, and let me know if you think it would be any good to have a dig there in the summer.”

“Certainly,” said Parkins, the Professor: “if you will describe to me whereabouts the site is, I will do my best to give you an idea of the lie of the land when I get back; or I could write to you about it, if you would tell me where you are likely to be.”

Activity 5

Listen to the end of Part 1 and answer the questions.

1. Where is the archaeological site that Parkins is going to explore?
2. What is the name of the hotel where he’s going to be staying?
3. What kind of room has he booked?
4. Why does Rogers suggest sharing the room with him?
5. What is Parkins’ reaction to his suggestion?
6. How does he react to Rogers’ mention of ghosts?

Activity 6

Copy this table into your notebook and continue it.

what I know about Parkins	how I know it
He’s very formal.	He speaks very precisely and uses formal words.
He doesn’t like offending people.	He doesn’t want Rogers to come with him to Burnstow, but he says ‘there’s nothing I should like better’.

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Professor Parkins

Before you phone the inn, prepare what to say. Decide on the essential details of the booking, such as how many nights you plan to stay. Next, prepare some questions about the inn, the surroundings, your room, etc. Finally, remember that Parkins is polite and formal, so you must be too! Think about what language you will use to make the booking and ask questions. What will you say, for example, when the receptionist answers the phone?



Receptionist

Before you answer the telephone, prepare what to say. Decide on the essential details of the hotel, such as the price per room and what details you will need from the guest. Also, remember to be polite and friendly on the telephone. What language will you use with the guest? Remember, the only suitable room you have available on the dates that Parkins wants to come is a double-bedded one.

You receive the call, so start like this: 'Good morning, Globe Inn. How can I help you?'

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“I SUPPOSE you will be getting away pretty soon, now. Full term is over, Professor,” said a person not in the story to the Professor of **Ontography**, soon after they had sat down next to each other at a feast in the hospitable hall of St. James’s College. The Professor was young, neat and precise in speech.

“Yes,” he said; “my friends have been making me take up golf this term, and I mean to go to the East Coast – in point of fact to Burnstow – (I dare say you know it) for a week or ten days, to improve my game. I hope to get off tomorrow.”

“Oh, Parkins,” said his neighbour on the other side, “if you are going to Burnstow, I wish you would look at the site of the **Templars’** preceptory, and let me know if you think it would be any good to have a dig there in the summer.”

It was, as you might suppose, a person of antiquarian pursuits who said this, but, since he merely appears in this prologue, there is no need to give his **entitlements**.

“Certainly,” said Parkins, the Professor: “if you will describe to me whereabouts the site is, I will do my best to give you an idea of the lie of the land when I get back; or I could write to you about it, if you would tell me where you are likely to be.”

“Don’t trouble to do that, thanks. It’s only that I’m thinking of taking my family in that direction in **the Long**, and it occurred to me that, as very few of the English preceptories have ever been properly planned, I might have an opportunity of doing something useful on off-days.”

The Professor rather **sniffed at** the idea that planning out a preceptory could be described as useful. His neighbour continued:

“The site – I doubt if there is anything showing above ground – must be down quite close to the beach now. The sea has **encroached** tremendously, as you know, all along that bit of coast. I should think, from the map, that it must be about three-quarters of a mile from the Globe Inn, at the north end of the town. Where are you going to stay?”

“Well, *at* the Globe Inn, as a matter of fact,” said Parkins; “I have **engaged** a room there. I couldn’t get in anywhere else; most of the lodging-houses are shut up in winter, it seems; and, as it is, they tell me that the only room of any size I can have is really a double-bedded one, and that they haven’t a corner in which to store the other bed, and so on. But I must have a fairly large room, for I am taking some books down, and mean to do a bit of work; and though I don’t quite fancy having an empty bed – not to speak of two – in what I may call for the time being my study, I suppose I can manage to **rough it** for the short time I shall be there.”

“Do you call having an extra bed in your room roughing it, Parkins?” said a **bluff** person opposite. “Look here, I shall come down and occupy it for a bit; it’ll be company for you.”

The Professor **quivered**, but managed to laugh in a courteous manner.

“By all means, Rogers; there’s nothing I should like better. But I’m afraid you would find it rather dull; you don’t play golf, do you?”

Track 1

Track 2

Track 3

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“No, thank Heaven!” said rude Mr. Rogers.

“Well, you see, when I’m not writing I shall most likely be out on the **links**, and that, as I say, would be rather dull for you, I’m afraid.”

“Oh, I don’t know! There’s certain to be somebody I know in the place; but, of course, if you don’t want me, speak the word, Parkins; I shan’t be offended. Truth, as you always tell us, is never offensive.”

Parkins was, indeed, scrupulously polite and strictly truthful. It is to be feared that Mr. Rogers sometimes practised upon his knowledge of these characteristics. In Parkins’s breast there was a conflict now raging, which for a moment or two did not allow him to answer. That interval being over, he said:

“Well, if you want the exact truth, Rogers, I was considering whether the room I speak of would really be large enough to accommodate us both comfortably; and also whether (mind, I shouldn’t have said this if you hadn’t pressed me) you would not constitute something in the nature of a **hindrance** to my work.”

Rogers laughed loudly.

“Well done, Parkins!” he said. “It’s all right. I promise not to interrupt your work; don’t you disturb yourself about that. No, I won’t come if you don’t want me; but I thought I should do so nicely to keep the ghosts off.” Here he might have been seen to wink and to nudge his next neighbour. Parkins might also have been seen to become pink. “I beg pardon, Parkins,” Rogers continued; “I oughtn’t to have said that. I forgot you didn’t like **levity** on these topics.”

“Well,” Parkins said, “as you have mentioned the matter, I freely own that I do *not* like careless talk about what you call ghosts. A man in my position,” he went on, raising his voice a little, “cannot, I find, be too careful about appearing to sanction the current beliefs on such subjects. As you know, Rogers, or as you ought to know; for I think I have never concealed my views ...”

“No, you certainly have not, old man,” put in Rogers *sotto voce*.

“... I hold that any semblance, any appearance of concession to the view that such things might exist is equivalent to a renunciation of all that I hold most sacred. But I’m afraid I have not succeeded in securing your attention.”

“Your *undivided* attention, was what Dr. Blimber actually *said*,” Rogers interrupted, with every appearance of an earnest desire for accuracy. “But I beg your pardon, Parkins: I’m stopping you.”

“No, not at all,” said Parkins. “I don’t remember Blimber; perhaps he was before my time. But I needn’t go on. I’m sure you know what I mean.”

“Yes, yes,” said Rogers, rather hastily, “just so. We’ll go into it fully at Burnstow, or somewhere.”

In repeating the above dialogue, I have tried to give the impression which it made on me, that Parkins was something of an old woman – rather henlike, perhaps, in his little ways; totally destitute, **alas!** of the sense of humour, but at the same time dauntless and sincere in his convictions, and a man deserving of the greatest respect. Whether or not the reader has gathered so much, that was the character which Parkins had.

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Glossary

Glossary

ontography a branch of philosophy that deals with the study of existence

Templars the Knights Templar, a Christian military order

entitlements (old-fashioned) qualifications

the Long the 'long holiday', the summer holiday

sniff at to criticize something, or to suggest it is not good enough for you

encroach to cover more land gradually

engage (old-fashioned) to reserve

rough it (informal) to live without the things you usually live with, for example water or electricity

bluff someone who is bluff has a very direct manner that might offend some people, but is friendly and happy and does not intend to upset anyone

quiver to shake with short quick movements

links a golf course by the sea

hindrance something that delays or prevents progress

levity a way of speaking or behaving that shows you do not think something is very serious

sotto voce (Italian) in a very quiet voice

alas (old-fashioned) used for saying you are sad about something and you wish it was not so