

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

By M R James

### Part 6

**Author:** Ceri Jones

**Level:** Advanced

**Age:** Young adults / Adults

**Aims:** In this lesson, the students will:

1. recall the story so far;
2. listen for gist;
3. retell the main events;
4. listen for detail;
5. re-enact a conversation between the Colonel and a boy;
6. discuss the significance of key events from the story so far;
7. predict what will happen in the final instalment;
8. retell the story from the perspective of the Colonel.

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (full audio) and Track 2 (a short extract) 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. It tells the story of how a university professor makes an interesting discovery with disturbing consequences. It is told in seven parts. In Part 6, Parkins and the Colonel return from playing golf and talk to a frightened boy who has seen something strange at the hotel.

### Warmer

**Aim:** to recall the context of the previous instalment

1. Ask the students to work in pairs to recall the main events from the previous instalment (Part 5) and to choose the three key events. Get feedback from the class and make a note of the key events on the board.

**Key:** (suggested answers) *The maid asks Parkins if he wants an extra blanket and comments on the state of the second bed.; Parkins and the Colonel spend all day on the golf course.; They discuss the whistle and superstitions.*

2. Ask the students as a whole class to suggest very briefly what they think the two men do after they finish their game of golf.

### Activity 1

**Aims:** to listen for gist; to retell the main events of Part 6

1. Hand out the worksheet and ask students to read through the questions in Activity 1. Play Track 1 and ask the students to make a note of their answers on the worksheet.

2. Ask the students to compare their answers in pairs or small groups. Ask them to

concentrate in particular on their answers to questions 2, 4 and 8. Ask each group to feed back on their answers in turn and ask the class why questions 2, 4 and 8 are particularly significant.

**Key:** *1. a boy; 2. that he saw a strange figure at the window of Parkins's hotel room; 3. to see if someone has broken in; 4. The second bed has been disturbed.; 5. to find out if she had been in the room; 6. that she made both beds earlier that day and that no-one has entered the room since; 7. the whistle; 8. throw it away; 9. He rigs up a screen to block out the light of the moon and reads a book to help him go to sleep. Questions 2, 4 and 8 are significant because they give clues as to the mystery of the whistle.*

### Activity 2

**Aims:** to listen for detail; to re-enact the conversation between the Colonel and the frightened boy

1. Ask the students to look at the extracts from the boy's story in Activity 2 on the worksheet. Explain that there are some differences between some of the words that are written and the words the boy uses, or is indirectly quoted as having used. Tell them

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that they should listen again to the part where the boy's story is told and underline any words that are different. Play Track 2.

2. Allow the students a few minutes to compare their answers in pairs. Then give them copies of the transcript and direct them towards the passage marked *Track 2*. Ask them to compare the words in the transcript with the words on the worksheet. Ask them to notice where there are differences in a. pronunciation, b. grammar, and c. vocabulary.

**Key:** 1. *I seen (grammar) it wive (pronunciation) at me out of the winder (pronunciation).*; 2. *He happened to look up at the front winder (pronunciation) and see it a-wiving (grammar and pronunciation) at him.*; 3. *It wived (pronunciation) at him, and it warn't (grammar) a right thing (vocabulary).*; 4. *the big winder (pronunciation) what got (grammar/vocabulary) two little uns (pronunciation) at the sides*

3. Ask the students to listen again and notice how the narrator's voice changes as he reports the boy's words. Play Track 2 again. Ask the class what the boy's words tell us about the boy

**Key:** *that he is local (the accent suggests rural East Anglia and sounds very archaic nowadays), uneducated and of a lower class than the Colonel and Parkins*

4. Ask the students to read through the description of the conversation again and then work in pairs to act out the conversation between the Colonel and the boy. The students can decide if they want to use their own words or the words and pronunciation that the two characters use in the story. The latter is more difficult, but possibly more fun.

### Activity 3

**Aims:** to recall significant details from this and previous instalments; to predict what will happen in the final instalment

1. Ask the students to work in small groups and look at the list of key events in Activity 3 on the worksheet. Ask them to number the

events in the order they happened.

2. Check the order with the whole class.

**Key:** 1. *h*; 2. *b*; 3. *a*; 4. *g*; 5. *f*; 6. *c*; 7. *e*; 8. *d*

3. Ask the groups to look again at the list of events and to discuss the significance of each one. They should then predict what they think will happen next, in the last instalment of the story (Part 7). Ask them to think in particular of the roles of the whistle, the Colonel and Parkins.

4. Ask each group to write a short paragraph explaining how the story will end. Circulate, monitoring and prompting where necessary.

5. Ask each group to read out their paragraph. Make a note of any similarities on the board. If you have an interactive whiteboard, save the notes for the next instalment. If not, you could either ask the students to make a note of them or take a photo of the board to use at the beginning of the lesson when you listen to the end of the story.

### Collaborative, creative task

**Aims:** to reflect on the role of the Colonel; to retell the story so far from his perspective

1. Ask the students to brainstorm all the information they have about the Colonel. Field their suggestions to the board. Then ask them to work in pairs to write at least five adjectives that describe his character. Field answers from the whole group. Discuss any differences or disagreements.

2. Still in pairs, ask them to think about the Colonel's role in the story so far: what he knows, what he has experienced, how he feels about the whistle. Then ask them to imagine that the Colonel keeps a journal and that he is writing his journal entry at the end of this instalment. Ask them to write the entry, collaboratively, in the first person as the Colonel.

3. Ask pairs to swap their journal entries with another pair. Ask them to read the entry and put a tick where the entry includes the same or similar information to their own, and a smile or asterisk where they read something they particularly like. Also, ask them to add an overall comment at the end before handing the journal entries back to the original writers.

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#### Follow-up tasks

1. Ask the students to think of, or research, any ghost or horror stories they know that involve a strange object and prepare to tell it in the next class.
2. Ask the students to read back through all the transcripts so far and choose their favourite scene. Ask them to write a paragraph explaining why they chose that scene. Students could compare their choices in the next lesson.

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#### Activity 1

Listen to Part 6 and answer the questions.

1. Who do the two men meet when they get back to the hotel?
2. What does he tell them?
3. Why does Parkins invite the Colonel to come up to his room?
4. What do they see in his room?
5. Why do they call the maid?
6. What does she tell them?
7. What does Parkins show the Colonel at dinner?
8. What does the Colonel advise him to do?
9. What does Parkins do before he goes to sleep? Why?

#### Activity 2

Listen to the conversation between the Colonel and the boy. Underline any words or expressions that are different from the version in the audio.

1. I saw it wave at me out of the window.
2. He happened to look up at the front window and see it waving at him.
3. It waved at him and it looked strange.
4. the big window with two little ones at the sides

#### Activity 3

Put the events below in the order they happen in the story.

- a. Parkins blows on the whistle for the first time.
- b. Parkins walks home along the beach and is followed by an unknown person
- c. The maid notices that both beds have been slept in.
- d. Parkins and the Colonel notice that the sheets on the second bed have been disordered.
- e. A boy sees a strange white figure in the window of Parkins's room at the hotel.
- f. Parkins hears strange rustling noises, like that of a rat.
- g. A strong wind brings strange visions and dreams.
- h. Parkins finds the whistle.

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As they turned the corner of the house, the Colonel was almost knocked down by a boy who rushed into him at the very top of his speed, and then, instead of running away, remained hanging on to him and panting. The first words of the warrior were naturally those of **reproof** and **objurgation**, but he quickly discerned that the boy was almost speechless with fright. Inquiries were useless at first. When the boy got his breath he began to howl, and still clung to the Colonel's legs. He was at last detached, but continued to howl.

"What in the world *is* the matter with you? What have you been up to? What have you seen?" said the two men.

"Ow, I seen it wive at me out of the winder," wailed the boy, "and I don't like it."

"What window?" said the irritated Colonel. "Come, pull yourself together, my boy."

"The front winder it was, at the 'otel," said the boy.

At this point Parkins was in favour of sending the boy home, but the Colonel refused; he wanted to get to the bottom of it, he said; it was most dangerous to give a boy such a fright as this one had had, and if it turned out that people had been playing jokes, they should suffer for it in some way. And by a series of questions he made out this story: The boy had been playing about on the grass in front of the Globe with some others; then they had gone home to their teas, and he was just going, when he happened to look up at the front winder and see it a-wiving at him. *It* seemed to be a figure of some sort, in white as far as he knew – couldn't see its face; but it wived at him, and it warn't a right thing – not to say not a right person. Was there a light in the room? No, he didn't think to look if there was a light. Which was the window? Was it the top one or the second one? The seckind one it was – the big winder what got two little uns at the sides.

"Very well, my boy," said the Colonel, after a few more questions. "You run away home now. I expect it was some person trying to give you a start. Another time, like a brave English boy, you just throw a stone – well, no, not that exactly, but you go and speak to the waiter, or to Mr. Simpson, the landlord, and – yes – and say that I advised you to do so."

The boy's face expressed some of the doubt he felt as to the likelihood of Mr. Simpson's lending a favourable ear to his complaint, but the Colonel did not appear to perceive this, and went on:

"And here's a sixpence – no, I see it's a shilling – and you be off home, and don't think any more about it."

The youth hurried off with agitated thanks, and the Colonel and Parkins went round to the front of the Globe and **reconnoitred**. There was only one window answering to the description they had been hearing.

"Well, that's curious," said Parkins; "it's evidently my window the lad was talking about. Will you come up for a moment, Colonel Wilson? We ought to be able to see if anyone has been **taking liberties** in my room."

They were soon in the passage, and Parkins made as if to open the door. Then he stopped and felt in his pockets.

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“This is more serious than I thought,” was his next remark. “I remember now that before I started this morning I locked the door. It is locked now, and, what is more, here is the key.” And he held it up. “Now,” he went on, “if the servants are in the habit of going into one’s room during the day when one is away, I can only say that – well, that I don’t approve of it at all.” Conscious of a somewhat weak climax, he busied himself in opening the door (which was indeed locked) and in lighting candles. “No,” he said, “nothing seems disturbed.”

“Except your bed,” put in the Colonel.

“Excuse me, that isn’t my bed,” said Parkins. “I don’t use that one. But it does look as if someone had been playing tricks with it.”

It certainly did: the clothes were **bundled up** and twisted together in a most **tortuous** confusion. Parkins **pondered**.

“That must be it,” he said at last: “I disordered the clothes last night in unpacking, and they haven’t made it since. Perhaps they came in to make it, and that boy saw them through the window; and then they were called away and locked the door after them. Yes, I think that must be it.”

“Well, ring and ask,” said the Colonel, and this appealed to Parkins as practical.

The maid appeared, and, to make a long story short, **deposed** that she had made the bed in the morning when the gentleman was in the room, and hadn’t been there since. No, she hadn’t no other key. Mr. Simpson he kep’ the keys; he’d be able to tell the gentleman if anyone had been up.

This was a puzzle. Investigation showed that nothing of value had been taken, and Parkins remembered the **disposition** of the small objects on tables and so forth well enough to be pretty sure that no pranks had been played with them. Mr. and Mrs. Simpson furthermore agreed that neither of them had given the duplicate key of the room to any person whatever during the day. Nor could Parkins, fair-minded man as he was, detect anything in the demeanour of master, mistress, or maid that indicated guilt. He was much more inclined to think that the boy had been imposing on the Colonel.

The latter was **unwontedly** silent and pensive at dinner and throughout the evening. When he bade good night to Parkins, he murmured in a **gruff** undertone:

“You know where I am if you want me during the night.”

“Why, yes, thank you, Colonel Wilson, I think I do; but there isn’t much prospect of my disturbing you, I hope. By the way,” he added, “did I show you that old whistle I spoke of? I think not. Well, here it is.”

The Colonel turned it over **gingerly** in the light of the candle.

“Can you make anything of the inscription?” asked Parkins, as he took it back.

“No, not in this light. What do you mean to do with it?”

“Oh, well, when I get back to Cambridge I shall submit it to some of the archaeologists there, and see what they think of it; and very likely, if they consider it worth having, I may present it to one of the museums.”

“M!” said the Colonel. “Well, you may be right. All I know is that, if it were mine, I should chuck it straight into the sea. It’s no use talking, I’m well aware, but I

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Transcript and Glossary

expect that with you it's a case of live and learn. I hope so, I'm sure, and I wish you a good night."

He turned away, leaving Parkins **in act to speak** at the bottom of the stair, and soon each was in his own bedroom.

By some unfortunate accident, there were neither blinds nor curtains to the windows of the Professor's room. The previous night he had thought little of this, but tonight there seemed every prospect of a bright moon rising to shine directly on his bed, and probably wake him later on. When he noticed this he was a good deal annoyed, but, with an ingenuity which I can only envy, he succeeded in rigging up, with the help of a railway-rug, some safety-pins, and a stick and umbrella, a screen which, if it only held together, would completely keep the moonlight off his bed. And shortly afterwards he was comfortably in that bed. When he had read a somewhat solid work long enough to produce a decided wish for sleep, he cast a drowsy glance round the room, blew out the candle, and fell back upon the pillow.

### Glossary

**reproof** (formal) criticism or blame

**objurgation** (old-fashioned, formal) telling someone that they have behaved badly

**reconnoitre** (military) to investigate a location

**take liberties** to do something without asking for permission

**bundle up** to wrap things up together

**tortuous** full of twists and turns

**ponder** to think carefully about something for a long time before reaching a decision

**depose** (legal) to give information about something in a court of law

**disposition** the order or arrangement of something

**unwontedly** (formal) unusually and unexpectedly

**gruff** rude and unfriendly

**gingerly** (mainly literary) in a very slow and careful way

**in act to speak** (old-fashioned) about to speak