

# 1 Look



Want a taste of something different? These selections will shock, amuse, and surprise you as they challenge your assumptions and reveal unexpected twists and turns. Prepare yourself for a weird and wonderful adventure... This unit will encourage you to look—and look again—at plot twists, surprises, double takes, and messages of social change.



# At the Bus Stop, One Autumn Morning

M. W. FIELD

It began at the back of my neck.

I was thinking about relaxing  
stony muscles there  
when prehistoric points began emerging.  
They flared  
up the back of my head, down  
my vertabrae, off in a triangle  
studded tail. My spine lost  
its S-curve, so I tucked my thickening  
hind legs underneath and sat down.  
Flicked my powerful green tail twice  
and wrapped it round my feet.  
Arms had lengthened  
my jaw relaxed and expanded: gone  
were the grinding molars. I yawned.  
by the bus shelter:  
a stegosaurus, observing  
the smells and colours of the opening  
sky, shifting  
my weight on my forefeet.

No buses came.

## Focus Your Learning

Reading this poem will help you:

- respond imaginatively
- infer meaning based on clues in the text
- analyse the use of metaphor
- write a transformation poem

## Activities

1. What animal would you choose to transform into, if you had the opportunity? Write a response, explaining why you chose that animal and what it represents to you.
2. In discussion with a partner, build a profile of the character in the poem, based on clues in the text itself. Do you imagine he or she is young or old? Happy or depressed? Satisfied or dissatisfied with life? Share your interpretation with a partner and compare your responses.
3. People have long associated certain emotions or qualities with particular animals. For example, dogs are considered loyal. Brainstorm a list of qualities associated with dinosaurs. Which of these qualities do you think are relevant to the poem? Discuss with a partner.
4. Write a transformation poem based on your experience as an adolescent. Choose an appropriate setting for your transformation, and decide what animal or form your hero will change into (or from). Present your poem as reader's theatre for the class.

# Gore

SARAH ELLIS



Twins have a very special bond. Together from their earliest moments of consciousness, they are true soul-mates. Linked by feelings of deep kinship and love, mutually attuned with an almost magic sensitivity, they often feel like two halves of the same person.

Twins separated at birth who meet as adults often discover amazing coincidences in their lives. They both have wives named Linda and sons called Hamish. At their weddings both of their best men wore kilts. They both have Maine coon cats and use an obscure Finnish brand of aftershave. This proves that the twin relationship is one of the strongest in the world, overriding individual personality and the forces of upbringing and environment.

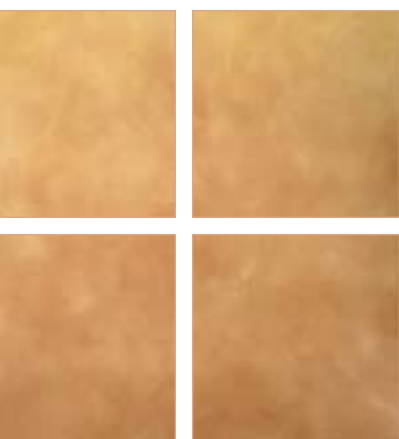
Horse patooties.

Soul-mates? Sometimes I can't believe that Lucas and I are in the same family, much less twins. In fact, there have been times when I've wondered if Lucas and I are even of the same species. I'm pretty much a basic homo

## Focus Your Learning

Reading this story will help you:

- discuss the appeal of horror stories and films
- compare two characters
- assess the use of figurative language
- analyse the pace of the story



sapiens. Lucas is more like an unevolved thugoid. I've heard that there are some photos of twins in the womb that show them hugging. If someone had taken a photo of Lucas and me in there I'll bet dollars to doughnuts it would have shown him bashing me on the head.

Lucas must have grabbed all the good nutrition in there, too, because he's a lot bigger, faster, and stronger than me. I don't stand a chance on the bashing, kicking, running away, immobilizing-your-opponent-in-a-half-nelson front. As the years have passed, my two areas of superior firepower, an extensive vocabulary and a gift for voice impersonation, have sometimes proved inadequate. I have been forced to take up psychological warfare.

Lucas attacks without provocation. The other day, for example, I'm sitting reading. I finally got the new R. L. Tankard out of the library and it is extremely choice. There's this girl and she has a babysitting job in this glam apartment building, on the twenty-sixth floor. When she arrives, the baby is already asleep so she hasn't actually seen it. She's watching TV in a darkened room and she thinks she hears a noise from the baby.

*"She muted the TV for a minute and in the sudden silence she heard the noise again, but louder. It was a heavy wet noise, like the sound of a big piece of raw meat being flung to the floor. She stared at the door to the nursery. It was outlined in a thin band of crepuscular light. She stood up and, with her heart pounding in her ears, she approached the room ..."*

Isn't that excellent? I read it again. Sometimes I like to do that with R. L. Tankard—slow it down by reading the best parts twice before I turn the page. "Crepuscular." I roll the word around in my mouth like a hard candy. Who cares what it means? "... like a big piece of raw meat being flung to the floor." Choice.

Then, WHAP! Lucas leans over the back of the chair, rips the book from my hands, runs into the bathroom, and slams the door. I'm after him in a second but of course by the time I get there he has it locked. I learned years ago that you can click open our bathroom door with a knife. I learned this about two minutes after Lucas learned that you can wedge the bathroom door shut by pulling open the top drawer of the vanity.

I kick the door. "Give me my book back, you grommet-head."

"Make me."

I just hate that, the way Lucas can sound so smug. If possible I would appeal to a higher authority. I have no shame about finking, whining, telling, etc., when it comes to Lucas. I use whatever counter-weapons I have at my disposal. With Lucas as a brother it is sometimes necessary to have referees. I'm not ashamed to stand behind an adult peace-keeping force. Lucas regards this as an act of cowardice and wimpiness. He tries to shame me. "Why don't you run to Mummy?" But I don't care. I figure it is like some small but extremely valuable country calling on the United Nations



when attacked by an aggressor. Unfortunately, in this case, the peace-keeping forces are out at Mega-Foods doing the Saturday shop.

I try to plan a strategy. At least it keeps my mind off what is happening behind the door of that baby's room, in that crepuscular light. The carrot or the stick? Or, to put it another way, the chocolate cheesecake or the Uzi? I could try the chocolate cheesecake of false bribery. Such as, "Lucas, just give me my book and I'll do your poop-scooping in the backyard this week." This technique has lost its effectiveness through overuse, however. Even Lucas, microbrain that he is, doesn't fall for that one any more.

So what about the Uzi. "Lucas, if you don't give me back my book this minute I'm going to tell Dad that you ..." What? I've used up the fact that Lucas was the one who let the rabbit into Mum's office where he ate through her modem cord. I've already gotten my mileage out of the time he tried to photocopy his bum on the photocopier at the public library. I've used up everything I know about Lucas's sins, crimes, misdemeanors and shady dealings.

I collapse on the couch in despair. I am a stealth bomber with no aviation fuel. I am a pioneer with no powder for my musket. I am a merry man (well, OK, merry woman) with an empty quiver. I am weaponless.

Not quite.

"Rats. Lucas, there's someone at the door. I'll get it but I'm warning you, Lucas, if you're not out of there by the time I get back, you're toast."

"Yeah, with peanut butter."

I run to the door. The doorbell gives three loud blats.

"Just a minute. Coming!" I open the door.

There are two, no, three of them. The faces are hooded and I only catch a glimpse but it is enough to make me step back in horror, as though a huge hand has given me a push. This is my first mistake, leaving me a split second too late to push the door shut.

They are inside. They are silent.

"Hey, hold it, you can't do that. Get out of here. Help!"

I pull myself together and try to fool them. "Dad!"

The front door clicks quietly shut behind them. I race around the corner into the hall and fall against the bathroom door. I strain to hear.

Nothing.

"Lucas," I yell-whisper.

Lucas's bored voice makes its way out of the bathroom. "Forget it, Amy, you're not fooling anybody."

"Lucas, I mean it. Let me in. Please. Those faces. They're not ... aagh." A shadow falls into the hallway. I grab the doorknob and screw my eyes shut.

The first thing is the smell. The fetid stench. The noxious reek. It is the smell of something dead, sweet and rotten. It rolls into the hall like a huge



wave, breaking over my head, flowing into my mouth and nose until it becomes a taste. I am drowning. I gasp, dragging the air painfully into my lungs.

"Very dramatic, Lady Macbeth."

I find a voice. "Lucas, can't you smell it?"

Lucas giggles and flushes the toilet. "Now I can't."

Then something ice-cold and soft and damp fixes itself around my wrist like a bracelet and begins to pull my fingers away from the door. I hold on, unable to talk, unable to breathe.

And then the voice. The voice as dry and white as paper. "Come with us, we need you. We need your being."

A cold sweat breaks out over my entire body. I grab at the door one last time as my slippery fingers slide off the knob. I grasp at anything. My fingernails scratch across the shiny surface. The door rattles.

"Lucas!"

Lucas laughs.

The thing moves me to the living room. Not roughly. Like a powerful, persistent and silent wind. I force my eyes open but I can't seem to focus. The room is shimmering like a mirage on a hot road. I am lying on the floor and the ceiling is pulsing slowly. The strong, crepuscular wind pushes me to the floor. I am pinned, paralyzed, frozen with terror. My heartbeat pounds in my ears.

The paper voice is louder. "Eat. Of. Our. Food." Each word is a little island of sound, a pebble dropped into a pool.

The ceiling disappears and a face looms above me. A smooth white mask, skin stretched across sharp bones. Bright yellow eyes that stare unblinking, like a baby or a reptile. Thick shiny brown hair. The echo of the smell of decay. I feel something being held to my lips. I lock my jaw and squeeze my lips shut.

The voice is louder, booming. "Eat. Of. Our. Food."

I see movement in the shiny brown hair. Movement that ceases the moment I look directly at it. I want to close my eyes but my eyelids are stiff and wooden. The movement increases. Shiny, brown, undulating, dancing like a thing alive.

Or many things alive.

Pink rat eyes. A scream consumes me, vomiting up from every part of my body. And into my open mouth falls a greasy, slimy goblet of ooze. I flail my head from side to side and try to spit it out but it turns to a thick, viscous, glutinous, sticky liquid that coats my mouth, rises up the back of my nose and clings to my teeth. I retch. I gag.

The mask floats once more above me. Its smoothness has now exploded into a cobweb of wrinkles, an old crazed china plate. The hair has turned

dead-rat grey. Beads of milky liquid ooze out of the yellow eyes, now dull and bloodshot, and begin to rain down upon my face. They are warm, then cold and solid. The quavery, rusty voice floats down to me, "You. Are. The. New. One. Now."

With a strength I didn't know I had, I force myself up. I beat away the mask face and push aside the shimmering air of the room through which my scream is still echoing. Chairs and side tables fall as I crash past them. Magazines fly through the air and crash against the walls.

"Hey, fink-face! What are you doing out there? Demolition derby?" I have no voice to answer Lucas.

I reach the phone in the hall just outside the bathroom door. I grab the receiver. I dial Emergency. I wait through a century of rings. Finally someone answers.

"Do you wish police, ambulance, or fire?"

My voice is choked with sobs. "Police, oh, police. Please, hurry."

Click. The line goes dead. Cold, gentle fingers touch the back of my neck. I drop the receiver which swings like a pendulum, banging against the wall, a dull, hollow sound.

I fall to the ground like a stone, like a piece of raw meat, and bury my face in my hands. My hands smell like skunk cabbage, no, like swamp water, no, like the bacon that somebody forgot in the back of the fridge. My face is smooth and cold and becoming more solid every second. My hair begins to move on my scalp.

They have me. I am becoming one of them. I feel my brain hardening inside my head.

I hold onto one thought. My dear twin. My brother. My boon companion. Fellow traveller on the road of life. Oh, God, don't let them take Lucas.

I try to picture the bathroom window. Oh, please, let him be skinny enough to get through it. My mouth is becoming rigid. I use up my last human words, "Lucas, break the window. Get out. For pity's sake, don't come out here."

Then silence. The only sound is the telephone receiver thudding against the wall.

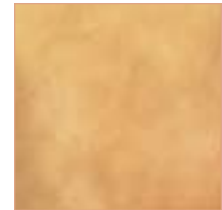
"Amy? You're just kidding, aren't you? That was pretty good. You know if you weren't so funny-looking you could probably become an actress."

Silence.

Lucas's voice shrinks. "Amy? Amy, come on. Quit it."

*Beep, beep, beep.* The telephone's humanoid voice rings out in the silent hall. "Please hang up and try your call again. If you need assistance dial your operator. Please hang up now." *Beep, beep, beep.*

The bathroom door opens slowly. I'm curled up behind it. I hold my breath. Two steps, that's all I need. Two measly steps.



“Amy?”

Two steps it is. I grab the door, swing around it, jump into the bathroom, and turn the lock.

Success! Triumph! Oh, happiness, oh, joy! I shake my own hand.

I slurp some cold water from the tap. My throat hurts a bit from that final scream. But it was worth it. It was one of the better screams of my career. There’s something to be said for really scaring yourself.

R. L. Tankard is sitting on the back of the toilet. I open him up. R. L. Tankard is such a good writer that he can make you forget all about what’s going on around you. He can make you forget, for example, a flipped-out twin brother using inappropriate language on the other side of the bathroom door. Listen. He’s already repeating himself. Really, his repertoire of invective is pathetically inadequate. He should do more reading to increase his word power.

I settle down on the bathmat and find my page. So—what *was* in that baby’s room? ■

## Activities

1. With a partner, discuss the appeal of horror stories or films. Why do so many people enjoy being scared by these kinds of stories? After your discussion, compare your ideas with those of another pair of students.
2. Compare the characteristics of the twins, Lucas and Amy. Use evidence from the story to back up your analysis.
3. This story contains many examples of similes and metaphors. Find as many examples as you can of each. Select two of each type that you feel are particularly effective, and explain the reason for your choices.
4.
  - a) With a partner, take turns reading the story out loud. Listen for places where the narrative slows down or speeds up, and explain what techniques the author uses to convey the change of pace.
  - b) Choose a section of the story that contains a change in pace, and try reading it aloud as a monologue. Use voice, gesture, pauses, and facial expression as well as the tone of your voice to convey the shifts in mood.



# Transformation Mask



Canadian Museum of  
Civilization CMC VII-B-20  
(586-386 closed, 586-387  
open)

## Focus Your Learning

Analysing this visual will help you:

- summarize and record
- compare



## Activities

- Study the use of colour, texture, and pattern on each form of the mask. Explain how they are used.
  - Provide a summary of your observations.
  - How do colour, texture, and pattern add to the meaning of the mask?
- Compare the two forms of the Haida mask using a 3-column chart.

Mask	Similarities	Differences
1		
2		

- What does each form communicate?
- In your opinion, which form is more intriguing? Explain why you think the way you do.

# Lamb to the Slaughter

ROALD DAHL



## Focus Your Learning

Reading this story will help you:

- evaluate a character's actions
- compare interpretations of character
- discuss the significance of the narrator
- analyse the use of irony
- experiment with film techniques

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, whisky. Fresh ice cubes in the Thermos bucket.

Mary Maloney was waiting for her husband to come home from work.

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 the 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 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.

"Hullo, darling," she said.

"Hullo," 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 his hands, rocking it 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 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 the intent, far look in his eyes when they rested on her, the funny shape of the mouth, and especially, the way he remained silent about his tiredness, sitting still with himself until the whisky had taken some of it away.

"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 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.

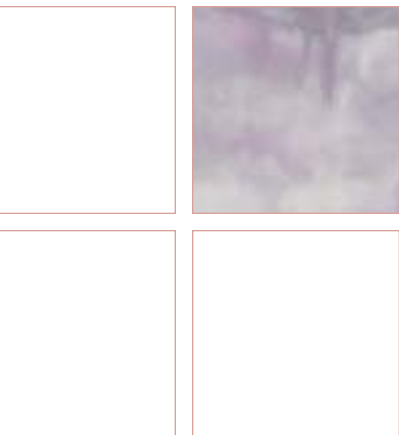
When he came back, she noticed that the new drink was dark amber with the quantity of whisky in it.

"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.

"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 clicking against the side of the glass.

"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."

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* have supper. I can easily do it here. I'd like to do it. We can have lamp chops. Or pork. Anything you want. Everything's in the freezer."

"Forget it," he said.

"But darling, 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.

"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."

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?"

He had 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."

And he told her. It didn't take long, four or five minutes at most, and she sat 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, but 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."

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 sort of woke up again, she might find none of it had every happened.

"I'll get the supper," she managed to whisper, and this time he didn't stop her.

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 stairs 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.

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.

"For God's sake," he said, hearing her, but not turning around. "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.

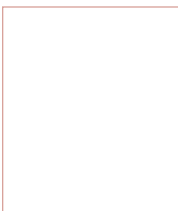
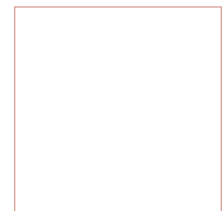
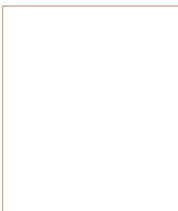
She might just as well have hit him with a steel club.

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 the 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.

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 them 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 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 cheese-cake? 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. Good night."

"Good night, 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.

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?"

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 knew the number of the police station, and when the man at the other end answered, she cried to him, "Quick! Come quick! Patrick's dead!"

"Who's speaking?"

"Mrs. Maloney. Mrs. Patrick Maloney."

"You mean Patrick Maloney's dead?"

"I think so," she sobbed. "He's lying on the floor and I think he's dead."

"Be right over," the man said.

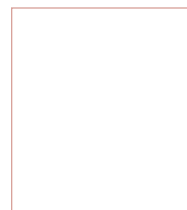
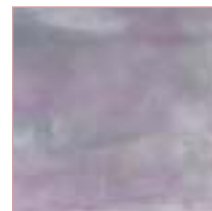
The car came very quickly, and when she opened the front door, two policemen walked in. She knew them both—she knew nearly all the men at that precinct—and she fell right into Jack Noonan's arms, weeping hysterically. He put her gently into a chair, then went over to join the other one, who was called O'Malley, kneeling by the body.

"Is he dead?" she cried.

"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.

Soon, other men began to come into the house. First a doctor, then two detectives, one of whom she knew by name. Later, a police photographer arrived and took pictures, and a man who knew 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 slipped out to the grocer for vegetables, and come back to find him lying on the floor.

"Which grocer?" one of the detectives asked.

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 ..."

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.

No, she said. She didn't feel she could move even a yard at the moment. Would they mind awfully if 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.

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 to 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 him, but on the other hand he may've 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."

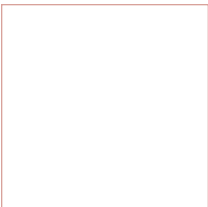
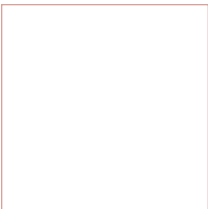
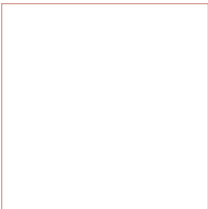
Later, one of the detectives came up and sat beside her. Did she know, he asked, of anything in the house that could've been used as the weapon? Would she mind having a look around to see if anything was missing—a very big spanner, for example, or a heavy metal vase.

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

"Or a big spanner?"

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 the flash of a torch through a chink in the curtains. It began to get late, nearly nine she noticed by the clock on the mantel. The four men searching the rooms seemed to be growing weary, a 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 whisky?"

"Yes, please. But just a small one. It might make me feel better."

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."

One by one the others came in and were persuaded to take a little nip of whisky. 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, came out quickly and said, "Look, Mrs. Maloney. You know that oven of yours is still on, and the meat still inside."

"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 eyes. "Jack Noonan," she said.

"Yes?"

"Would you do me a small favour—you and these others?"

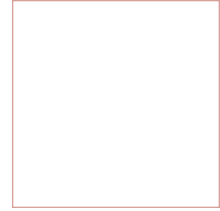
"We can try, Mrs. Maloney."

"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 terribly 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."

"Wouldn't dream of it," Sergeant Noonan said.

"Please," she begged. "Please eat it. Personally I couldn't touch 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."

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 through the open door, and she could hear them speaking among



themselves, their voices thick and sloppy because their mouths were full of meat.

"Have some more, Charlie?"

"No. Better not finish it."

"She *wants* us to finish it. She said so. Be doing her a favour."

"OK then. Give me some more."

"That's the hell of a big club the guy 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.

"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. ■

## Activities

1. Write a response to the story, defending or condemning Mary Maloney's actions. Base your response on details from the story and your own opinion.
2. Make a list of adjectives or phrases that describe the relationship between Mary Maloney and her husband before the murder. Compare your list with that of a partner, and discuss any differences in opinion that they reveal.
3. With a partner, discuss the role of the narrator in the story. Is the narrator omniscient, or is the story told from a particular point of view? Find examples in the text that reveal the narrative point of view, and assess the impact of the narrator's perspective on the effectiveness of the story. Record your thought in a short written analysis.
4. Dramatic irony occurs when the reader of a story has information that other characters do not have. The effect of irony can be humorous or tragic, or a combination of the two. Identify the irony in this story and how it is created, using specific examples from the text. Then evaluate the effect of the irony on the tone of the piece.
5. Work with a partner to write a script for a film version of one scene from the story. Include directions for camera angles, lighting, scenery, dialogue, props, and any music you might use to reinforce the mood and create interest.



# The Execution

ALDEN NOWLAN

On the night of the execution  
a man at the door  
mistook me for the coroner.  
"Press," I said.

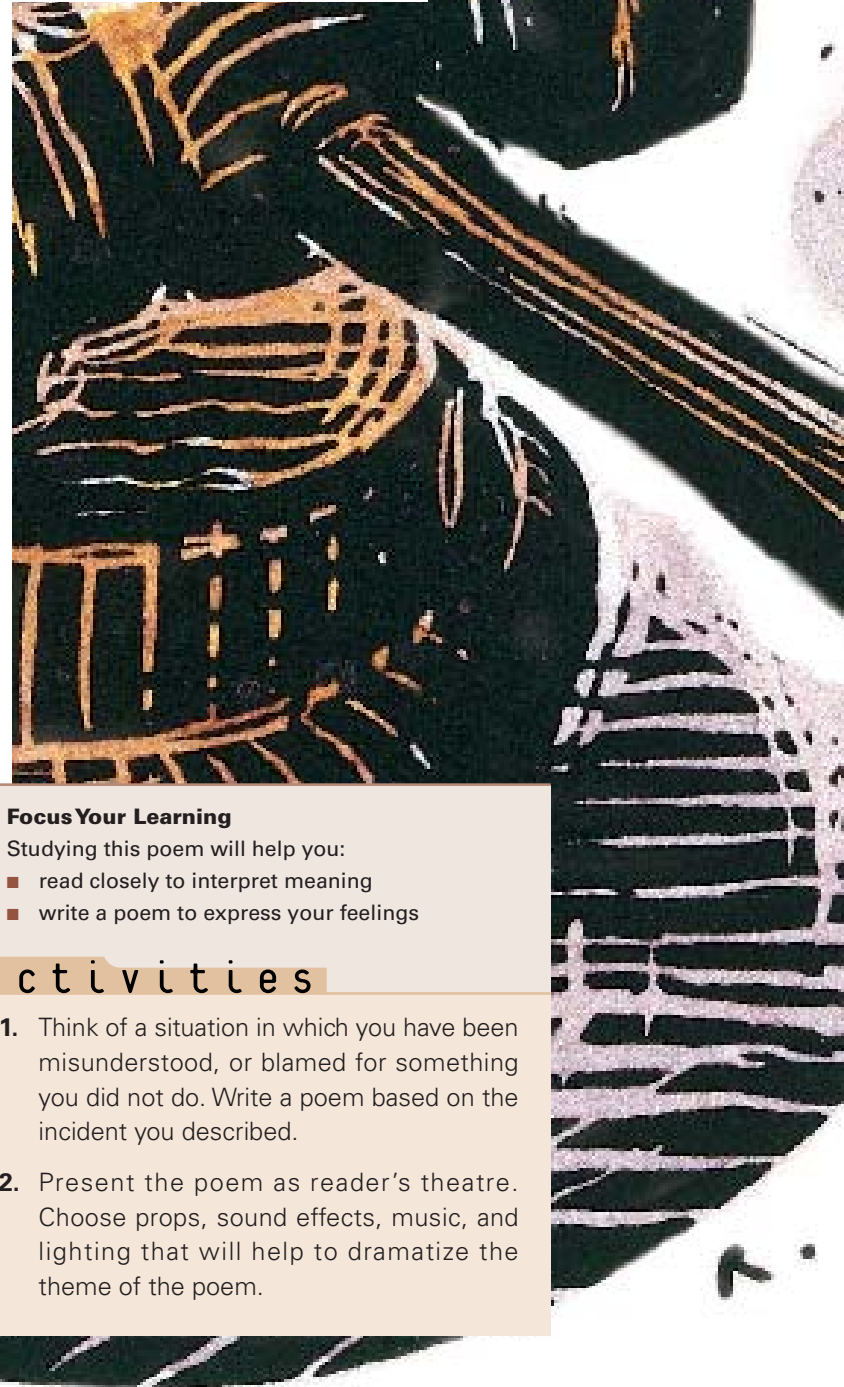
But he didn't understand. He led me  
into the wrong room  
where the sheriff greeted me:  
"You're late, Padre."

"You're wrong," I told him. "I'm Press."  
"Yes, of course, Reverend Press."  
We went down the stairway.

"Ah, Mr. Ellis," said the Deputy.  
"Press!" I shouted. But he shoved me  
through a black curtain.  
The lights were so bright  
I couldn't see the faces  
of the men sitting  
opposite. But, thank God, I thought  
they can see me!

"Look!" I cried. "Look at my face!  
Doesn't anybody know me?"

Then a hood covered my head.  
"Don't make it harder for us," the  
hangman whispered.



## Focus Your Learning

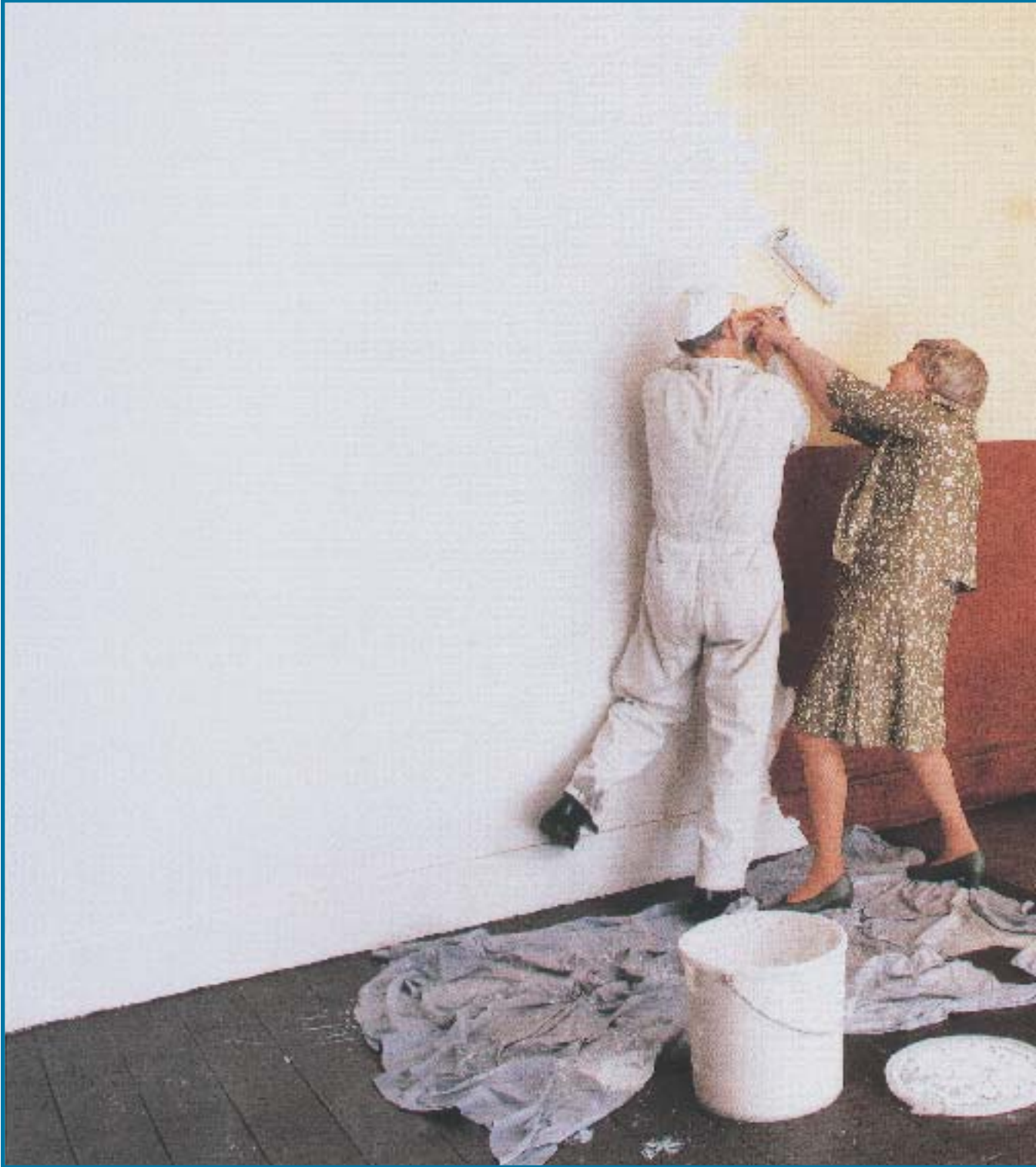
Studying this poem will help you:

- read closely to interpret meaning
- write a poem to express your feelings

## Activities

1. Think of a situation in which you have been misunderstood, or blamed for something you did not do. Write a poem based on the incident you described.
2. Present the poem as reader's theatre. Choose props, sound effects, music, and lighting that will help to dramatize the theme of the poem.

# *The Conservationist*



Courtesy of the artist, Boyd Webb.

## BOYD WEBB



### Focus Your Learning

Viewing this photograph will help you:

- interpret conflicting views
- prepare a personal response

## Activities

1. These two people represent different ideas; in a chart, outline the main points of each person's viewpoint.
2. Put yourself in this picture. Prepare a monologue, in either poetry or prose, in which you express your strong feelings about the issue depicted by the artist.

# The Open Window

HENRY GILFOND



## Focus Your Learning

Reading this play will help you:

- reflect on your own experience
- analyse character
- examine techniques that communicate meaning

## CHARACTERS

MRS. SAPPLETON

MR. SAPPLETON

RONNIE, Mrs. Sappleton's young brother

DONALD, another of Mrs. Sappleton's brothers

VERA, Mrs. Sappleton's niece, about fifteen years old

MR. NUTTEL, a very nervous young man

*The living room of the Sappleton country house, its large French window wide open.*

**VERA:** Won't you please come in.

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Nervous, entering*) Thank you.



**VERA:** My aunt will be right down.

**MR. NUTTEL:** I'll wait.

**VERA:** Won't you sit down?

**VERA:** (*Sitting, nervously*) Thank you.

**VERA:** (*Dropping into another chair*) Meanwhile, you'll have to try to put up with me.

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Nervously looking around, but politely*) I think I'll enjoy that.

**VERA:** Thank you. Do you know many people around here?

**MR. NUTTEL:** I don't know a soul.

**VERA:** (*To be sure*) Nobody?

**MR. NUTTEL:** My sister was here. About four years ago.

**VERA:** Oh?

**MR. NUTTEL:** Yes. She asked me to call on your aunt.

**VERA:** That was very nice of her.

**MR. NUTTEL:** I hope your aunt thinks so.

**VERA:** Oh, she will. But you've never met my aunt?

**MR. NUTTEL:** No, I've never met her.

**VERA:** You know nothing about her?

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Nervously*) Should I?

**VERA:** You've never heard about the tragedy?

**MR. NUTTEL:** Tragedy?

**VERA:** My aunt's tragedy.

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Nervously*) No. I never heard of her tragedy. I'm sorry.

**VERA:** (*Very quietly*) It happened just three years ago. That must have been just after your sister left us.

**MR. NUTTEL:** Yes, Yes, I'm very sorry to hear it. Perhaps I ought to go.

**VERA:** No, no, no! Please stay.

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Not sure at all*) Tragedy, you said?

**VERA:** Very sad. Very sad.

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Most uncomfortable*) Sorry, Sorry.



**VERA:** Have you wondered why we keep the window wide open on an October afternoon?

**MR. NUTTEL:** It's quite warm. It's quite warm for this time of the year.

**VERA:** But the window's always open.

**MR. NUTTEL:** Oh? (*Uneasily questioning*) The tragedy?

**VERA:** The tragedy.

**MR. NUTTEL:** I see. I see.

**VERA:** You can't. Not unless you know.

**MR. NUTTEL:** And I don't know. No, I don't know. Of course.

**VERA:** It was on an October morning that they went out through that window.

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Looks nervously at the window*) They?

**VERA:** My uncle. That's Auntie's husband. And her two brothers.

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Nervously*) Three of them?

**VERA:** (*nodding*) They walked right through that open window. With their guns. And their dog.

**MR. NUTTEL:** Hunting, I suppose?

**VERA:** Hunting.

**MR. NUTTEL:** Oh! October is the time of year for hunting.

**VERA:** It was exactly three years ago today. They walked through that window. (*Pause*) They never came back!

**MR. NUTTEL:** Oh?

**VERA:** They never came back.

**MR. NUTTEL:** Oh! They never came back?

**VERA:** No. (*Dramatically*) They got swallowed up in a swamp.

**MR. NUTTEL:** How dreadful!

**VERA:** It was terribly wet that year, you know. Places that were perfectly safe before suddenly gave way without warning.

**MR. NUTTEL:** Dreadful!

**VERA:** They never found the bodies.

**MR. NUTTEL:** Your poor aunt.



**VERA:** Yes, poor Auntie. That was the most awful part of it. They never found the bodies.

**MR. NUTTTEL:** (*With much feeling*) I'm deeply sorry.

**VERA:** There's more.

**MR. NUTTTEL:** You don't say!

**VERA:** There is.

**MR. NUTTTEL:** Oh?

**VERA:** Poor Auntie. She always thinks they'll come back. "They'll come back some day," she says. Her husband, her two brothers, and their little brown dog.

**MR. NUTTTEL:** Oh, my!

**VERA:** She thinks they'll come back and walk back into the house through that window again, the way they used to when they were alive. That's why the window is kept open. All year round.

**MR. NUTTTEL:** Poor woman.

**VERA:** Yes. Poor Auntie. She has told me so often how they went out, her husband with a white raincoat over his arm, and her brother Ronnie singing. He always sang, just to tease poor Auntie.

**MR. NUTTTEL:** What a pity!

**VERA:** Yes, and do you know (*Almost in a whisper*) sometimes, when it is very, very quiet here, I almost get a creepy feeling that they will come back, that the three of them, my uncle, and the two brothers, and the dog, *will* come back. Right through the window.

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** (*Entering suddenly*) I'm sorry to have kept you waiting. So good of your sister to send you here. I hope Vera has been amusing you.

**MR. NUTTTEL:** (*Carefully*) Vera has been very interesting.

**VERA:** Thank you.

**MR. NUTTTEL:** Thank you.

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** I hope you don't mind the open window.

**MR. NUTTTEL:** (*Quickly*) No, no! Not at all!

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** My husband and my two brothers will be home very soon. They've been hunting and they always come into the house through that open window.

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Anxiously*) So Vera told me.

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** Of course. They've been out in the marshes. But what brings you to this part of the country?

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Nervous*) Nothing at all. Nothing at all, really.

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** No?

**MR. NUTTEL:** Oh, I've been ill and the doctors think I need a rest, a complete rest. That's what they've ordered. I'm not to do any work, or think too much. I'm to keep away from any kind of excitement.

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** Really!

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Very nervous*) No excitement at all.

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** (*Looking out the window, suddenly shouting*) Here they are!

**MR. NUTTEL:** (*Losing control*) Who?

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** My husband! My two brothers! And just in time for tea! Look how muddy those men are! I do hope they keep that dog out of here!

(*MR. NUTTEL, utterly panicked, runs out of the room.*)

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** I say! Mr. Nuttel!

**VERA:** He's gone.

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** (*As Mr. Sappleton and the two brothers enter*) A strange young man. (*To Ronnie, who is singing*) Now stop that foolish noise, or I'll send you to your room.

**MR. SAPPLETON:** (*The white raincoat on his arm*) Who was that young fellow who just flew out of here? Looked like he was trying to catch a train.

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** A very strange young man, indeed. A Mr. Nuttel. You might remember his sister. She was here about four years ago. All he talked about was his illness. Then he ran off without so much as a good-bye, You'd think he had seen a ghost.

**VERA:** (*Quietly*) I think it was the dog.

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** The little brown dog? That dog wouldn't hurt a mouse!

**VERA:** Mr. Nuttel's terribly afraid of dogs.

**MR. SAPPLETON:** Oh?

**VERA:** That's what he told me.

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** Strange young man. Tea?

**VERA:** He was hunted into a cemetery once, he told me—by a pack of wild dogs. He had to spend the whole night in an open grave, with all the dogs snarling at him. That's enough to make anyone afraid of dogs.

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** Now, Vera!

**VERA:** That's what he told me, Auntie!

**MRS. SAPPLETON:** That's one story of yours that I find very hard to believe, Vera.

**VERA:** But, Auntie!


**MRS. SAPPLETON:** But, Vera! ■

## Activities

1. Practical jokes can be funny, but they can also be cruel. Think of a time when you were the victim or perpetrator of a practical joke. Write a description of the incident, comparing it to the trick Vera plays on Mr. Nuttel. Which was more cruel? Which trick worked better? Were either or both of the jokes a bad idea?
2. Describe Vera's character and speculate on why she acts the way she does.
3. This play is written to be performed on stage. With a partner, discuss how you might adapt the story for television. Decide whether you want to highlight the comedic or the suspenseful aspect of the piece. Then consider ways you will do this, including camera angles, directions to actors, music, setting, and special effects. Rewrite the script as a TV screenplay, incorporating your ideas for production.

# The Last saskatchewan Pirate

## THE ARROGANT WORMS



I used to be a farmer and I made a living fine  
I had a little stretch of land along the C.P. line  
But though I tried and tried the money wasn't there  
And bankers came and took my land and told me fair is fair  
I looked for every kind of job the answer always no  
"Hire you now?" they'd always laugh. "We just let twenty go."  
The government they promised me a measly little sum  
But I've got too much pride to end up just another bum  
Then I thought who gives a darn if all the jobs are gone  
I'm gonna be a pirate on the river Saskatchewan

*Chorus:*

*And it's a heave ho, high ho, coming down the plains  
Stealing wheat and barley and all the other grains  
And it's a ho hey, high hey, farmers bar your doors  
When you see the Jolly Roger on Regina's mighty shores*

Well you'd think the local farmers would think that I'm at large  
But just the other day I found an unprotected barge  
I snuck up right behind them and they were none the wiser  
I rammed their ship and sank it and stole their fertilizer  
A bridge outside of Moose Jaw spans a mighty river  
Farmers cross in so much fear their stomachs are a-quiver  
Cuz they know that Tractor Jack is hiding in the bay  
I'll jump the bridge and knock them cold and sail off with their hay

*Chorus*





Well Mountie Bob he chased me he was always at my throat  
He'd follow on the shoreline cuz he didn't own a boat  
But cutbacks were a-coming and the Mountie lost his job  
So now he's sailing with me and we call him Salty Bob  
A swinging sword, a skull and bones and pleasant company  
I never pay my income tax and forget the G.S.T.  
Prince Albert down to Saskatoon, the terror of the sea  
If you want to reach the Co-op, boy, you gotta get by me

#### *Chorus*

Well, pirate life's appealing but you won't just find it here  
I hear that in Alberta there's a band of buccaneers  
They roam the Athabasca from Smith to Fort Mackay  
And you're bound to lose your Stetson if you have to pass  
their way  
Winter is a-coming and a chill is in the breeze  
My pirate days are over once the river starts to freeze  
I'll be back in springtime but now I have to go  
I hear there's lots of plundering down in New Mexico

#### *Chorus*

#### **Focus Your Learning**

Reading these lyrics will help you:

- explore how music can communicate meaning
- define satire
- write lyrics for a protest song

## A c t i v i t i e s

1. How do you think the music for this song would sound? What instruments might be used? What tempo (fast or slow)? If possible, listen to part of the song on tape, and compare your predictions with the actual performance. Which version do you prefer: yours or the Arrogant Worms'?
2. With a partner, define satire, and create a convincing argument for why this piece can be considered a satire.
3. There is a longstanding tradition of using songs for social protest. Some protest songs are humorous, while others are rousing, angry, or solemn. Create your own lyrics for a protest song, on a topic of your choosing. If you wish, copy the metre from "The Last Saskatchewan Pirate" or from another protest song.

# Messages Are Everywhere



- Why do you think motivated someone to write this graffiti? How else might he or she have conveyed this message?



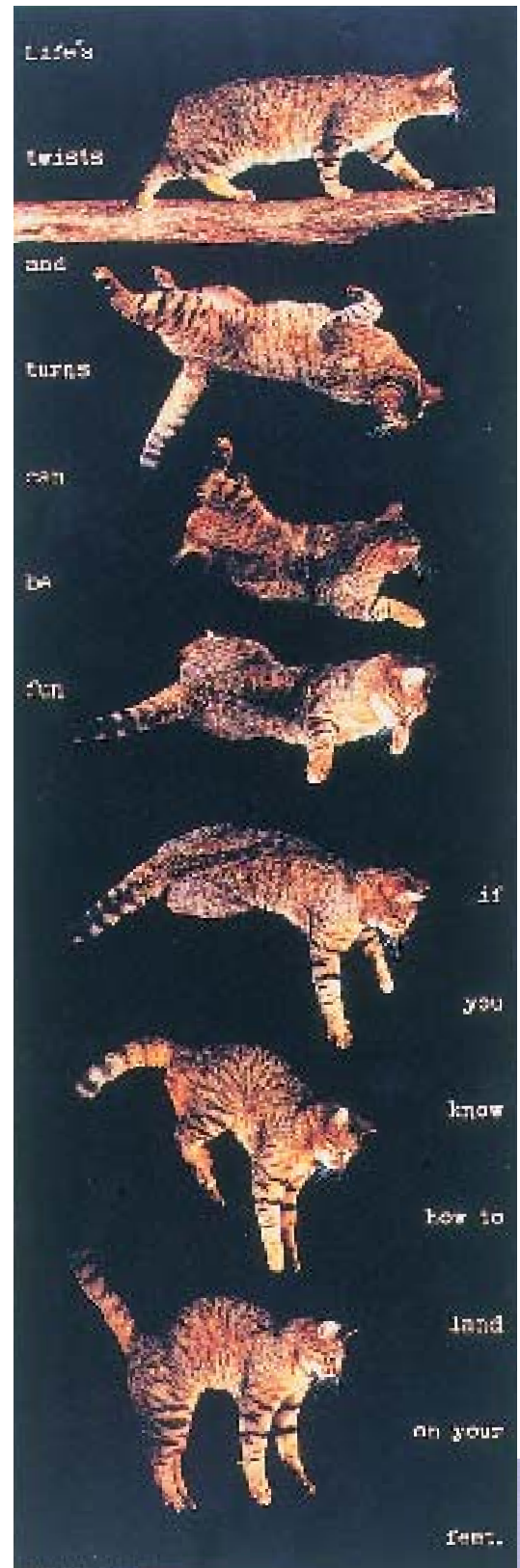
- T-shirts are like travelling billboards: they go everywhere, advertising everything. What is this T-shirt advertising?



- Restate the message of this poster in your own words. Why is the cat an appropriate symbol to convey this message?



- What does a mural such as this add to the community environment?



# Coup de Grâce

A . D . HOPE

Just at the moment the Wolf,  
Shag jaws and slavering grin,  
Steps from the property wood,  
Oh, what a gorge, what a gulf  
Opens to gobble her in,  
Little Red Riding Hood!

O, what a face full of fangs!  
Eyes like saucers at least  
Roll to seduce and beguile.  
Miss, with her dimples and bangs,  
Thinks him a handsome beast;  
Flashes the Riding Hood Smile;

Stands her ground like a queen,  
Velvet red of the rose  
Framing each little milk tooth  
Pink tongue peeping between.  
Then, wider than anyone knows,  
Opens her minikin mouth

Swallows up Wolf in a trice;  
Tail going down gives a flick,  
Caught as she closes her jaws.  
Bows, all sugar and spice.  
O, what a ladylike trick!  
O, what a round of applause!

## Focus Your Learning

Reading this poem will help you:

- reflect on the enduring qualities of fairy tales
- evaluate the significance of the title
- analyse diction
- write a "fractured fairytale."

## Activities

1. In a journal, consider why fairy tales remain so popular through the ages, even though the settings and plots are often outdated. What enduring qualities do they contain?
2. Explain the meaning of the title, and evaluate its significance in relation to the poem.
3. Read the poem aloud. List at least four or five words that you feel are particularly effective, and consider what other word choices the poet could have made. Then describe why you think he made the best choice. Share your ideas with two other students, and discuss your findings.
4. Rewrite another favourite fairy tale with a twist, and from the point of view of one of the other characters. Collect all your revised tales together in a book of "Fractured Fairy Tales."



# The Interlopers

"SAKI" (H. H. MUNRO)



In a forest of mixed growth somewhere on the eastern spurs of the Carpathians, a man stood one winter night watching and listening, as though he waited for some beast of the woods to come within the range of his vision, and, later, of his rifle. But the game for whose presence he kept so keen an outlook was none that figured in the sportsman's calendar as lawful and proper for the chase; Ulrich von Gradwitz patrolled the dark forest in quest of a human enemy.

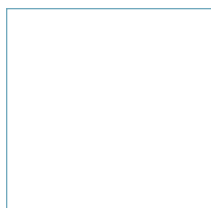
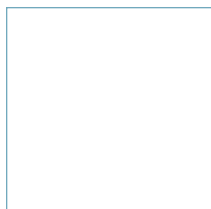
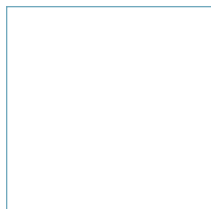
The forest lands of Gradwitz were of wide extent and well stocked with game; the narrow strip of precipitous woodland that lay on its outskirts was not remarkable for the game it harboured or the shooting it afforded, but it was the most jealously guarded of all its owner's territorial possessions. A famous lawsuit, in the days of his grandfather, had wrested it from the illegal possession of a neighbouring family of petty landowners; the dispos-

## Focus Your Learning

Reading this story will help you to:

- consider the effectiveness of the ending
- identify how structure, character, and point of view contribute to the theme of the story
- find examples of foreshadowing
- write an epilogue





sessed party had never acquiesced in the judgment of the courts, and a long series of poaching affrays and similar scandals had embittered the relationships between the families for three generations. The neighbour feud had grown into a personal one since Ulrich had come to be head of his family; if there was a man in the world whom he detested and wished ill to it was Georg Znaeym, the inheritor of the quarrel and the tireless game-snatcher and raider of the disputed border-forest. The feud might, perhaps, have died down or been compromised if the personal ill will of the two men had not stood in the way; as boys they had thirsted for one another's blood, as men each prayed that misfortune might fall on the other, and this wind-scourged winter night Ulrich had banded together his foresters to watch the dark forest, not in quest of four-footed quarry, but to keep a lookout for the prowling thieves whom he suspected of being afoot from across the land boundary. The roebuck, which usually kept in the sheltered hollows during a windstorm, were running like driven things tonight, and there was movement and unrest among the creatures that were wont to sleep through the dark hours. Assuredly there was a disturbing element in the forest, and Ulrich could guess the quarter from whence it came.

He strayed away by himself from the watchers whom he had placed in ambush on the crest of the hill, and wandered far down the steep slopes amid the wild tangle of undergrowth, peering through the tree trunks and listening through the whistling and skirling of the wind and the restless beating of the branches for sight or sound of the marauders. If only on this wild night, in this dark, lone spot, he might come across Georg Znaeym, man to man, with none to witness—that was the wish that was uppermost in his thoughts. And as he stepped around the trunk of a huge beech he came face to face with the man he sought.

The two enemies stood glaring at each other for a long silent moment. Each had a rifle in his hand, each had hate in his heart and murder uppermost in his mind. The chance had come to give full play to the passions of a lifetime. But a man who has been brought up under the code of a restraining civilization cannot easily nerve himself to shoot down his neighbour in cold blood and without word spoken, except for an offence against his hearth and honour. And before the moment of hesitation had given way to action a deed of Nature's own violence overwhelmed them both. A fierce shriek of the storm had been answered by a splitting crash over their heads, and ere they could leap aside a mass of falling beech tree had thundered down on them. Ulrich von Gradwitz found himself stretched on the ground, one arm numb beneath him and the other held almost as helplessly in a tight tangle of forked branches, while both legs were pinned beneath the fallen mass. His heavy shooting-boots had saved his feet from being crushed to pieces, but if his fractures were not as serious as they might

have been, at least it was evident that he could not move from his present position till someone came to release him. The descending twigs had slashed the skin of his face, and he had to wink away some drops of blood from his eyelashes before he could take in a general view of the disaster. At his side, so near that under ordinary circumstances he could almost have touched him, lay Georg Znaeym, alive and struggling, but obviously as helplessly pinioned down as himself. All round them lay a thick-strewn wreckage of splintered branches and broken twigs.

Relief at being alive and exasperation at his captive plight brought a strange medley of pious thank-offerings and sharp curses to Ulrich's lips. Georg, who was nearly blinded with the blood which trickled across his eyes, stopped his struggling for a moment to listen, and then gave a short, snarling laugh.

"So you're not killed, as you ought to be, but you're caught, anyway," he cried; "caught fast. Ho, what a jest, Ulrich von Gradwitz snarled in his stolen forest. There's real justice for you!"

And he laughed again, mockingly and savagely.

"I'm caught in my own forest-land," retorted Ulrich. "When my men come to release us you will wish, perhaps, that you were in a better plight than caught poaching on a neighbour's land, shame on you."

Georg was silent for a moment; then he answered quietly:

"Are you sure that your men will find much to release? I have men, too, in the forest tonight, close behind me, and they will be here first and do the releasing. When they drag me out from under these branches, it won't need much clumsiness on their part to roll this mass of trunk right over on top of you. Your men will find you dead under a fallen beech tree. For form's sake I shall send my condolences to your family."

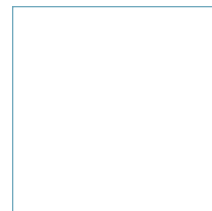
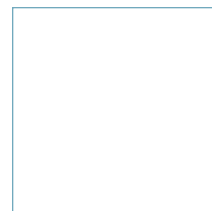
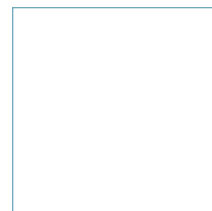
"It is a useful hint," said Ulrich fiercely. "My men had orders to follow in ten minutes' time, seven of which must have gone by already, and when they get me out I will remember the hint. Only, as you will have met your death poaching on my lands, I don't think I can decently send any message of condolence to your family."

"Good," snarled Georg, "good. We fight this quarrel out to death, you and I and our foresters, with no cursed interlopers to come between us. Death and damnation to you, Ulrich von Gradwitz."

"The same to you, Georg Znaeym, forest-thief, game-snatcher."

Both men spoke with the bitterness of possible defeat before them, for each knew that it might be long before his men would seek him out or find him; it was a bare matter of chance which party would arrive first on the scene.

Both had now given up the useless struggle to free themselves from the mass of wood that held them down; Ulrich limited his endeavours to an



effort to bring his one partially free arm near enough to his outer coat-pocket to draw out his wine-flask. Even when he had accomplished that operation it was long before he could manage the unscrewing of the stopper or get any of the liquid down his throat. But what a Heaven-sent draught it seemed! It was an open winter, and little snow had fallen as yet; hence the captives suffered less from the cold than might have been the case at the season of the year; nevertheless, the wine was warming and reviving to the wounded man, and he looked across with something like a throb of pity to where his enemy lay, just keeping the groans of pain and weariness from crossing his lips.

"Could you reach this flask if I threw it over to you?" asked Ulrich suddenly; "there is good wine in it, and one may as well be as comfortable as one can. Let us drink, even if tonight one of us dies."

"No, I can scarcely see anything, there is so much blood caked round my eyes," said Georg, "and in any case I don't drink wine with an enemy."

Ulrich was silent for a few minutes, and lay listening to the weary screeching of the wind. An idea was slowly forming and growing in his brain, an idea that gained strength every time that he looked across at the man who was fighting so grimly against pain and exhaustion. In the pain and languor that Ulrich himself was feeling the old fierce hatred seemed to be dying down.

"Neighbour," he said presently, "do as you please if your men come first. It was a fair compact. But as for me, I've changed my mind. If my men are the first to come you shall be the first to be helped, as though you were my guest. We have quarrelled like devils all our lives over this stupid strip of forest, where the trees can't even stand upright in a breath of wind. Lying here tonight, thinking, I've come to think we've been rather fools; there are better things in life than getting the better of a boundary dispute. Neighbour, if you will help me to bury the old quarrel I—I will ask you to be my friend."

Georg Znaeym was silent for so long that Ulrich thought, perhaps, he had fainted with the pain of his injuries. Then he spoke slowly and in jerks.

"How the whole region would stare and gabble if we rode into the market-square together. No one living can remember seeing a Znaeym and von Gradwitz talking to one another in friendship. And what peace there would be among the forester folk if we ended our feud tonight. And if we choose to make peace among our people there is none other to interfere, no interlopers from outside.... You would come and keep the Sylvester night beneath my roof, and I would come and feast on some high day at your castle.... I would never fire a shot on your land, save when you invited me as a guest; and you would come and shoot with me down in the marshes

where the wildfowl are. In all the countryside there are none that could hinder it if we willed to make peace. I never thought to have wanted to do other than hate you all my life, but I think I have changed my mind about things too, this last half-hour. And you offered me your wine-flask.... Ulrich von Gradwitz, I will be your friend."

For a space both men were silent, turning over in their minds the wonderful changes that this dramatic reconciliation would bring about. In the cold, gloomy forest, with the wind tearing in fitful gusts through the naked branches and whistling round the tree trunks, they lay and waited for the help that would bring release and succour to both parties. And each prayed a private prayer that his men might be the first to arrive, so that he might be the first to show honourable attention to the enemy that had become a friend.

Presently, as the wind dropped for a moment, Ulrich broke silence.

"Let's shout for help," he said; "in this lull our voices may carry a little way."

"They won't carry far through the trees and undergrowth," said Georg, "but we can try. Together, then."

The two raised their voices in a prolonged hunting call.

"Together again," said Ulrich a few minutes later, after listening in vain for an answering halloo.

"I heard something that time, I think," said Ulrich.

"I heard nothing but the pestilential wind," said Georg hoarsely.

There was silence again for some minutes, and then Ulrich gave a joyful cry.

"I can see figures coming through the wood. They are following in the way I came down the hillside."

Both men raised their voices in as loud a shout as they could muster.

"They hear us! They've stopped. Now they see us. They're running down the hill towards us," cried Ulrich.

"How many of them are there?" asked Georg.

"I can't see distinctly," said Ulrich; "nine or ten."

"Then they are yours," said Georg; "I had only seven out with me."

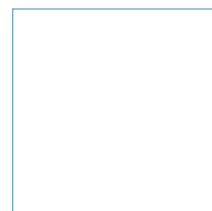
"They are making all the speed they can, brave lads," said Ulrich gladly.

"Are they your men?" asked Georg. "Are they your men?" he repeated impatiently as Ulrich did not answer.

"No," said Ulrich with a laugh, the idiotic chattering laugh of a man unstrung with a hideous fear.

"Who are they?" asked Georg quickly, straining his eyes to see what the other would gladly not have seen.

"Wolves."



## Activities

1. In groups of three, discuss whether you think the ending is satisfying or not. Use evidence from the text and your own ideas to justify your response.
2. Identify the theme of the story. As a class, discuss how the author uses story structure, character, and point of view to develop the theme.
3. Reread the story a second time, looking for words and passages that foreshadow the ending. Make a list, and compare it with that of a partner. Discuss how your knowledge of the ending changed the way you read the text the second time.
4. Write an epilogue to the story, indicating what you think happened next. Compare your writing with that of a partner, and discuss why each is plausible.



# Once Upon a Time

NADINE GORDIMER



In a house, in a suburb, in a city, there were a man and his wife who loved each other very much and were living happily ever after. They had a little boy, and they loved him very much. They had a cat and a dog that the little boy loved very much. They had a car and a caravan trailer for holidays, and a swimming-pool which was fenced so that the little boy and his playmates would not fall in and drown. They had a housemaid who was absolutely trustworthy and an itinerant gardener who was highly recommended by the neighbours. For when they began to live happily ever after they were warned, by that wise old witch, the husband's mother, not to take on anyone off the street. They were inscribed in a medical benefit society, their pet dog was licensed, they were insured against fire, flood damage, and theft, and subscribed to the local Neighbourhood Watch, which supplied them with a plaque for their gates lettered YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED over the silhouette of a would-be intruder. He was masked; it could not be said if

## Focus Your Learning

Reading this short story will help you:

- relate historical information to the text
- discuss issues in relation to the text
- analyse genre
- develop an ad campaign



he was black or white, and therefore proved the property owner was no racist.

It was not possible to insure the house, the swimming pool, or the car against riot damage. There were riots, but these were outside the city, where people of another colour were quartered. These people were not allowed into the suburb except as reliable housemaids and gardeners, so there was nothing to fear, the husband told the wife. Yet she was afraid that some day such people might come up the street and tear off the plaque YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED and open the gates and stream in ....Nonsense, my dear, said the husband, there are police and soldiers and tear-gas and guns to keep them away. But to please her—for he loved her very much and buses were being burned, cars stoned, and schoolchildren shot by the police in those quarters out of sight and hearing of the suburb—he had electronically-controlled gates fitted. Anyone who pulled off the sign YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED and tried to open the gates would have to announce his intentions by pressing a button and speaking into a receiver relayed to the house. The little boy was fascinated by the device and used it as a walkie-talkie in cops-and-robbers play with his small friends.

The riots were suppressed, but there were many burglaries in the suburb and somebody's trusted housemaid was tied up and shut in a cupboard by thieves while she was in charge of her employers' house. The trusted housemaid of the man and wife and little boy was so upset by this misfortune befalling a friend left, as she herself often was, with responsibility for the possessions of the man and his wife and the little boy that she implored her employers to have burglar bars attached to the doors and windows of the house, and an alarm system installed. The wife said, She is right, let us take heed of her advice. So from every window and door in the house where they were living happily ever after they now saw the trees and sky through bars, and when the little boy's pet cat tried to climb in by the fanlight to keep him company in his little bed at night, as it customarily had done, it set the alarm keening through the house.

The alarm was often answered—it seemed—by other burglar alarms, in other houses, that had been triggered by pet cats or nibbling mice. The alarms called to one another across the gardens in shrills and bleats and wails that everyone soon became accustomed to, so that the din roused the inhabitants of the suburb no more than the croak of frogs and musical grating of cicadas' legs. Under cover of the electronic harpies' discourse intruders sawed the iron bars and broke into homes, taking away high-fi equipment, television sets, cassette players, cameras and radios, jewellery and clothing, and sometimes were hungry enough to devour everything in the refrigerator or paused audaciously to drink the whisky in the cabinets or

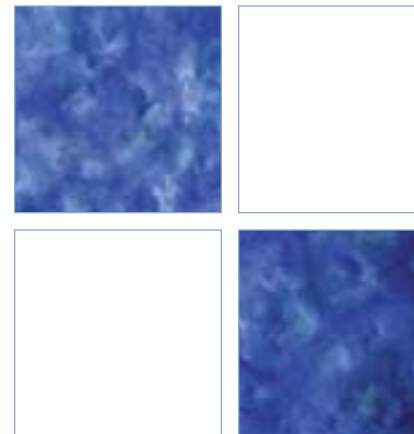
patio bars. Insurance companies paid no compensation for single malt, a loss made keener by the property owner's knowledge that the thieves wouldn't even have been able to appreciate what it was they were drinking.

Then the time came when many of the people who were not trusted housemaids and gardeners hung about the suburb because they were unemployed. Some importuned for a job: weeding or painting a roof; anything, *baas*, madam. But the man and his wife remembered the warning about taking on anyone off the street. Some drank liquor and fouled the street with discarded bottles. Some begged, waiting for the man or his wife to drive the car out of the electronically-operated gates. They sat about with their feet in the gutters, under the jacaranda trees that made a green tunnel of the street—for it was a beautiful suburb, spoilt only by their presence—and sometimes they fell asleep lying right before the gates in the midday sun. The wife could never see anyone go hungry. She sent the trusted housemaid out with bread and tea, but the trusted housemaid said these were loafers and *tsotsis*, who would come and tie her up and shut her in the cupboard. The husband said, She's right. Take heed of her advice. You only encourage them with your bread and tea. They are looking for their chance.... And he brought the little boy's tricycle from the garden into the house every night, because if the house was surely secure, once locked and with the alarm set, someone might still be able to climb over the wall or the electronically-closed gates into the garden.

You are right, said the wife, then the wall should be higher. And the wise old witch, the husband's mother, paid for the extra bricks as her Christmas present to her son and his wife—the little boy got a Space Man outfit and a book of fairy tales.

But every week there were more reports of intrusion: in broad daylight and the dead of night, in the early hours of the morning, and even in the lovely summer twilight—a certain family was at dinner while the bedrooms were being ransacked upstairs. The man and his wife, talking of the latest armed robbery in the suburb, were distracted by the sight of the little boy's pet cat effortlessly arriving over the seven-foot wall, descending first with a rapid bracing of extended forepaws down on the sheer vertical surface, and then a graceful launch, landing with swishing tail within the property. The whitewashed wall was marked with the cat's comings and goings; and on the street side of the wall there were larger red-earth smudges that could have been made by the kind of broken running shoes, seen on the feet of unemployed loiterers, that had no innocent destination.

When the man and wife and little boy took the pet dog for its walk round the neighbourhood streets they no longer paused to admire this show of roses or that perfect lawn; these were hidden behind an array of





different varieties of security fences, walls and devices. The man, wife, little boy, and dog passed a remarkable choice: there was the low-cost option of pieces of broken glass embedded in cement along the top of walls, there were iron grilles ending in lance-points, there were attempts at reconciling the aesthetics of prison architecture with the Spanish Villa style (spikes painted pink) and with the plaster urns of neoclassical façades (twelve-inch pikes finned like zigzags of lightning and painted pure white). Some walls had a small board affixed, giving the name and telephone number of the firm responsible for the installation of the devices. While the little boy and the pet dog raced ahead, the husband and wife found themselves comparing the possible effectiveness of each style against its appearance; and after several weeks when they paused before this barricade or that without needing to speak, both came out with the conclusion that only one was worth considering. It was the ugliest but the most honest in its suggestion of pure concentration-camp style, no frills, all evident efficacy. Placed the length of walls, it consisted of a continuous coil of stiff and shining metal serrated into jagged blades, so that there would be no way of climbing over it and no way through its tunnel without getting entangled in its fangs. There would be no way out, only a struggle getting bloodier and bloodier, a deeper and sharper hooking and tearing of flesh. The wife shuddered to look at it. You're right, said the husband, anyone would think twice.... And they took heed of the advice on a small board fixed to the wall: Consult DRAGON'S TEETH The People For Total Security.

Next day a gang of workmen came and stretched the razor-bladed coils all around the walls of the house where the husband and wife and little boy and pet dog and cat were living happily ever after. The sunlight flashed and slashed off the serrations, the cornice of razor thorns encircled the home, shining. The husband said, Never mind. It will weather. The wife said, You're wrong. They guarantee it's rust-proof. And she waited until the little boy had run off to play before she said, I hope the cat will take heed ...The husband said, Don't worry, my dear, cats always look before they leap. And it was true that from that day on the cat slept in the little boy's bed and kept to the garden, never risking a try at breaching security.

One evening, the mother read the little boy to sleep with a fairy story from the book the wise old witch had given him at Christmas. Next day he pretended to be the Prince who braves the terrible thicket of thorns to enter the palace and kiss the Sleeping Beauty back to life: he dragged the ladder to the wall, the shining coiled tunnel was just wide enough for his little body to creep in, and with the first fixing of its razor-teeth in his knees and hands and head he screamed and struggled deeper into its tangle. The trusted housemaid and the itinerant gardener, whose 'day' it was, came running,

the first to see and to scream with him, and the itinerant gardener tore his hands trying to get at the little boy. Then the man and his wife burst wildly into the garden and for some reason (the cat, probably) the alarm set up wailing against the screams while the bleeding mass of the little boy was hacked out of the security coil with saws, wire-cutters, choppers, and they carried it—the man, the wife, the hysterical trusted housemaid, and the weeping gardener—into the house. ■

## Activities

1. In our desire to protect ourselves and those we love, we can instead create potentially harmful situations. As a class, discuss other examples of this trap that you have witnessed, heard of, or read about.
2. The author wrote this story in South Africa before the end of Apartheid. As a class, brainstorm to gather what you know about Apartheid. Write the information in a list on the chalkboard. Then break into small groups and discuss how this story can be seen as a metaphor for the Apartheid system.
3. What message does the story have for North Americans today? Discuss with a partner. Share your ideas with another pair of students.
4. Brainstorm a list of characteristics of fairy tales. Find examples in the text that show how the writer has modernized the fairytale style. Using these examples, explain why you think Nadine Gordimer chose to use this style for her story.
5. We all want to protect what we have. Imagine you are the owner of a firm that specializes in home security. Develop an ad campaign and slogan that will appeal to our desire for protection.



# Save the Moon for Kerdy Dickus

TIM WYNNE-JONES



## Focus Your Learning

Reading this story will help you:

- consider word choice
- write a tabloid news article
- analyse the use of humour
- write a humorous monologue

This is Ky's story. It happened to her. It happened at her place in the country. I wasn't there when it happened, but I know what her place in the country looks like, and that's important. In this story, the way things look is really important.

There's more than one version of this story. If Ky's younger brothers, Brad or Tony, told you the story, it would come out different. But not as different as the way the Stranger tells it. We know his name now, but we still call him the Stranger. Perhaps you know his version of the story. It was in the newspapers. Well, the *National Enquirer*, anyway.

Ky's father, Tan Mori, built their house in the country. It's a dome. It looks like a glass igloo, but it's actually made of a web of light metal tubing and a special clear plastic. From the outside you can see right into the house, which Ky didn't like one bit at first, because it wasn't very private. But the house is at the end of a long driveway surrounded by woods, so the only things that can look at you are bluejays, raccoons, the occasional deer and, from way up high on a hot day, turkey vultures circling the sky.

It wasn't a hot day when this story happened. It was two days before Christmas and there was a bad freezing rain. But let me tell you more about the house, because you have to be able to see the house in order to understand what happened. You have to imagine it the way the Stranger saw it.

For one thing there's all this high-tech office stuff. Ky's parents are both computer software designers, which means that just about everything they do can be done on a computer. Word processors, video monitors, a modem, a fax machine—they're always popping on and off. Their lights blink in the dark.

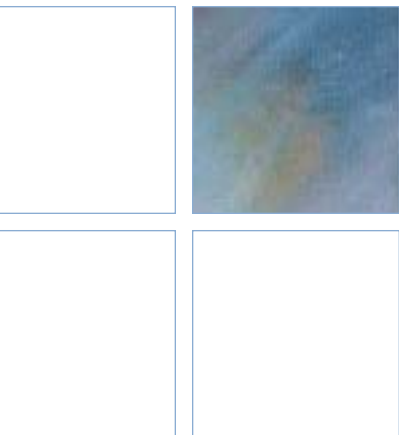
You also have to know something about Ky's family if you want to see what the Stranger saw when he arrived at their door. You especially have to know that they have family traditions. They make them up all the time. For instance, for the past three years it's been a tradition that I go up from the city for Ky's birthday in the summer, and we go horseback riding. I'm not sure if that's what tradition really means, but it's nice.

It's also a tradition with Ky's family to watch the movie *It's a Wonderful Life* every Christmas. And so, two nights before Christmas, that's what they were doing. They were wearing their traditional Christmastime nightclothes. They were all in red: red flannel pyjamas, even red slippers. Ky had her hair tied back in a red scrunchie. That's what the Stranger saw: this family in red.

They had just stopped the movie for a break. They were going to have okonomiyaki, which is kind of like a Japanese pizza and pancake all mixed up together with shredded cabbage and crabmeat and this chewy wheat gluten stuff called seitan. This is a tradition, too. Ky's father, Tan, likes to cook. So they watch *It's a Wonderful Life* and they have this mid-movie snack served with kinpara gobo, which is spicy, and other pickly things that only Tan and Barbara, Ky's mother, bother to eat. But the kids like okonomiyaki.

Tan Mori is Japanese. Here's how he looks. He wears clear rimmed glasses. He's short and trim and has long black hair that he wears pulled tightly back in a ponytail.

Ky doesn't think the Stranger had ever seen a Japanese person up close before. He probably hadn't ever seen someone who looked like Barbara Mori, either. She isn't Japanese. She has silvery blonde hair but it's cut very, very short so that you can see the shape of her head. She's very slim, bony, and she has one of the nicest smiles you could imagine. She has two dark



spots beside her mouth. Ky calls them beauty marks; Barbara laughs and calls them moles.

It was Barbara who first noticed the Stranger while Tan was cooking the okonomiyaki and the boys were getting bowls of shrimp chips and Coke and Ky was boiling water for green tea.

The freezing rain was pouring down on the dome, but inside it was warm, and there were little islands of light. A single light on a post lit up the driveway a bit.

"There's someone out there," said Barbara. "The poor man." She went to the door and called to him. The kids left what they were doing to go and look.

He was big and shadowy where he was standing. He was also stoop-shouldered, trying to hide his head from the icy downpour.

Barbara waved at him. "Come!" she called as loudly as she could. "Come." Her teeth were chattering because she was standing at the open door in her pyjamas and cold wind was pouring in.

The Stranger paused. He seemed uncertain. Then a gust of wind made him lose his balance and he slipped on the ice and fell. When he got up he made his way toward the house slowly, sliding and slipping the whole long way. He was soaked clear through all over. He only had a jean jacket on. No gloves or hat. As he approached the house, Ky could see that, although he was big, he was young, a teenager. Then Barbara sent her to the bathroom for a big towel.

By the time she got back with the towel, the boy was in the house, standing there dripping in the hall. Barbara wrapped the towel around his shoulders. She had to stand on her toes; he was big. He had black hair and he reminded Ky of a bear she had seen at the zoo after it had been swimming. He smelled terrible. His wet clothes smelled of alcohol and cigarette smoke. The kids all stepped away from him. Tony crinkled up his nose, but Barbara didn't seem to care.

"Come in and get warm," she said, leading him towards the kitchen.

I haven't told you about the kitchen yet. Well, there is a kind of island shaped like a kidney with a built-in stove and sink. Since the walls of the dome are curved, all the cupboards and drawers and stuff are built into the island. Lights recessed into the ceiling above bathe the island in a warm glow so that the maple countertop looks like a beach.

Tan was already pouring the Stranger some tea when Barbara brought him over and tried to sit him down near the stove where it was warmest. But he wouldn't sit. Tan handed him a tiny cup of steaming tea. The cup had no handle. The Stranger didn't seem to know what to do, but the warmth alone was enough to make him take it. His hands were huge and strong and rough. The tiny cup looked like it would break if he closed his fist.

He took a sip of the tea. His eyes cleared a bit.

"Dad's in the truck," he said.

"Oh, my God," said Barbara. "Where? We should get him. Tan?"

The Stranger nodded his big bear head in the direction that the truck was but, of course, you couldn't see it from the house. Ky looked down the driveway, but there is a bend in it so she couldn't see the road.

Tan had turned off the gas under the frying pans and was heading towards the closet for his coat.

"I'll bring him back," he said.

"No!" said the Stranger. His voice cracked a little. "He's okay. He's sleepin'. Truck's warm."

Nobody in the Mori family knew what to do. Tony looked about ready to laugh. Ky glared at him. Tan shrugged and looked at Barbara. "It's not too cold as long as he's sheltered." She nodded and Tan turned the stove back on. The okonomiyaki were ready to flip. He flipped them. The Stranger stared at them. Maybe he thought they were the weirdest pancakes he'd ever seen. It's hard to know what he was thinking. Then he looked around.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"The fifth line," said Barbara, filling his cup. The Mori house is on the fifth concession line of Leopold County.

"The fifth?" he asked. He stared around again. He looked as if he didn't believe it. "The fifth?" He stared at Barbara, who nodded. He stared at Tan. Tan nodded, too. The Stranger kept staring at Tan, at his red pyjamas, his long ponytail, his bright dark eyes behind clear rimmed glasses. "Where am I?"

That's when the fax machine started beeping and the Stranger spilled his tea. Brad got him a tea towel but he didn't seem hurt. He stared into the dark where the computer stuff is. There are hardly any walls in the dome.

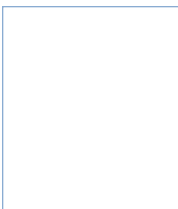
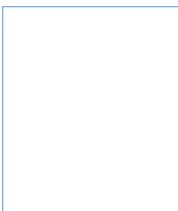
The fax machine beeps when a transmission is coming through. Then it makes a whirring sound and paper starts rolling out with a message on it.

The boy watched the fax machine blinking in the shadows, because the lights were not on in the office part of the dome.

"It's just what my parents do," said little Tony. The machinery was still a mystery to him, too.

The Stranger looked at Tan again—all around at the dome. There's a second floor loft but it's not big, so the Stranger could see clear up to the curving roof and out at the rain pelting down. If there had been stars out he could have seen them. He seemed to get a little dizzy from looking up.

"Sit," said Barbara, and this time she made him sit on a stool next to the kitchen island. He steadied himself. To Ky he looked like someone who had just woken up and had no idea what was going on.



By now the fax machine was spewing out a great long roll of paper which curled to the floor. The Stranger watched it for a minute.

"I think we should get your father," said Barbara in a very gentle voice.

"No," said the boy firmly. "He's asleep, eh. We was at Bernie's. You know Bernie?"

But none of the Moris knew Bernie. "Cards," he said. "Having a few drinks ... Christmas ..." He looked back at the fax. "What is this place?"

Tan laughed. He flipped two okonomiyaki onto a warm plate and handed them to the boy. "Here. You look like you could do with something warm to eat."

"More to read?" asked the boy. He thought Tan had said more to read.

Tan handed him the pancakes. "Try it," he said.

Ky went and got the spicy sauce. She poured a bit on the pancake and sprinkled some nori, toasted seaweed, on top. The Stranger looked at Ky and at the food steaming under his nose. It must have smelled funny to him. He looked around again. He was having trouble putting all this together. These strange sweet salty smells, these people all in red.

"You never heard of Bernie?" he asked.

"No," said Ky.

"Bernie Nystrom?"

"Never heard of him."

"Over on the ..." he was going to say where it was that Bernie Nystrom lived, but he seemed to forget. "Dad's out in the car," he said. "We got lost."

"Not a great night for driving," said Tan, filling the Stranger's cup with more steaming tea.

"Saw your light there," he said, squinting hard as if the light had just shone in his eyes. "Slid right out." He made a sliding gesture with his hand.

"It's pretty, icy," said Tan.

"Never seen such a bright light," said the Stranger.

Ky remembers him saying this. It rankled her. He made it sound as if their light had been responsible for his accident. Her mother winked at her.

Tony looked like he was going to say something. Brad put his hand over his brother's mouth. Tony struggled but the Stranger didn't notice. The fax stopped.

"You sure you ain't never heard of Bernie?" he asked one more time. It seemed to matter a great deal, as if he couldn't imagine someone not knowing good ol' Bernie Nystrom.

"Is there someone we could phone for you?" Barbara asked. "Do you need a tow or something?"

The Stranger was staring at the okonomiyaki. "Anita who?" he asked. At that, both Brad and Tony started giggling until Ky shushed them up.

"A tow truck," said Barbara, very carefully. "To get you out of the ditch."





The boy put the plate down without touching the food. He rubbed his hands on his wet pants. He was shivering. Barbara sent Brad to get a blanket.

"Could I use your phone?" the boy asked. Ky ran to get the cordless phone from the office area. There was a phone closer, but Ky always uses the cordless.

You have to see this phone to imagine the Stranger's surprise. It's clear plastic. You can see the electronic stuff inside it, the speakers and amplifiers and switches and everything.

The Stranger stared at it, held it up closer to his eyes. That was when Ky thought of all the time travel books she'd read and wondered if this guy was from some other century. Then she remembered that he had come by truck. That's what he'd said, anyway. She wondered if he had been telling the truth. He sure didn't want anyone going to look for his father. Maybe he had been planning on robbing them? But looking at him again, she realized that he was in no condition to rob anyone. She showed him how the phone worked.

"What's your number?" she asked.

"Don't got no number," he said. But he took the phone and slowly punched some numbers anyway. He belched, and a sour smell came from his mouth. Ky stepped back quickly, afraid that he was going to throw up.

The phone rang and rang and no one answered it. Ky watched the Stranger's face. He seemed to fall asleep between each ring and wake up again, not knowing where he was.

"Neighbours," he said, hanging up after about thirty rings. He looked suspiciously at the phone, as if to say, How could I reach anyone I know on a phone like that?

Then he looked at Ky and her family. "Where am I *really*?" he asked.

Brad came back with a comforter and Barbara suggested to the Stranger that he could wear it while she put his wet things in the dryer. He didn't like that idea. But as nice as Barbara is, as small as she is, she can be pretty pushy, and she was afraid he was going to catch pneumonia. So the Stranger found himself without his clothes in a very strange house.

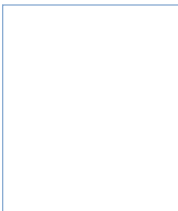
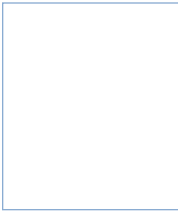
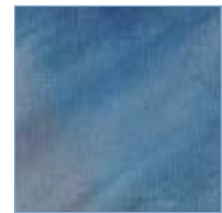
Maybe it was then, to take his mind off wearing only a comforter, that he tried the okonomiyaki. He was very hungry. He wolfed down two helpings, then a third. It was the first time he smiled.

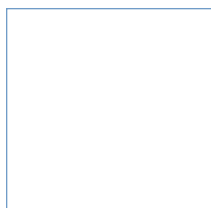
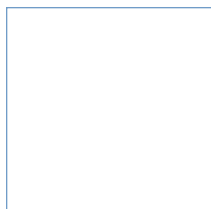
"Hey," said Ky. "It's almost Christmas. You'd better save some room for turkey dinner."

"What?" said the Stranger.

"You'd better save some room for turkey dinner."

The Stranger stopped eating. He stared at the food on his plate. Ky wanted to tell him she was just kidding. She couldn't believe he had taken it so seriously: She was going to say something, but then he asked if he





could phone his neighbour again. He still didn't have any luck. But now he seemed real edgy.

Then the telephone answering machine in the office took a long message. It was a computer expert phoning Tan, and he talked all in computerese, even though it was nighttime and two days before Christmas.

The Stranger must have heard that voice coming from the dark side of the dome where the lights flashed. Maybe that was what threw him. Or maybe it was when the VCR, which had been on Pause, came back on by itself. Suddenly there were voices from up in the loft. Ky can't remember what part of the movie it was when it came back on. Maybe it was when the angel jumped off the top of the bridge to save the life of the hero. Maybe it was a part like that with dramatic music and lots of shouting and splashing. Maybe the Stranger didn't know it was just a movie on TV. Who knows what he thought was going on there? Maybe in his house there was no TV.

He got edgier and edgier. He started pacing. Then, suddenly, he remembered his neighbour, Lloyd Rintoul.

"You know Lloyd," he said.

Nobody did.

"Sure," he said. "Lloyd Rintoul." He pointed first north and then east and then north again as he tried to get his bearings in this round house with its invisible walls.

"You don't know Lloyd?"

The Stranger, despite his size, suddenly looked like a little lost boy. But then he shook his head and jumped to his feet.

"Lloyd, he's got a tractor," he said. "He'll pull the truck out." He started to leave. "I'll just get him, eh." He forgot he didn't have any clothes on. Tan led him back to his stool. Barbara told him she'd check on the wash. Tan said they should maybe phone Lloyd first. But Lloyd didn't have a phone, either. The people Ky knows in the country all have phones and televisions. But there are people around Leopold County who have lived there longer than anyone and lived poor, scraping out a living on the rocky soil just like their forefathers and foremothers did.

Maybe the kids were looking at the Stranger strangely then, because suddenly he got impatient. Ky said that he looked like a wild bear in a downy comforter cornered by a pack of little people in red pyjamas.

"I'm gonna get Lloyd," he said loudly. It sounded like a threat. It scared the Moris a bit. Barbara decided to get him his clothes even though they were still damp.

And so the Stranger prepared to go. They didn't try to stop him but they insisted that he borrow a big yellow poncho because it was still raining hard.

Now that he had his clothes back on and his escape was imminent, the Stranger calmed down a bit.

"I'll bring it back," he said.

"I'm sure you will," said Tan, as he helped him into the poncho.

Ky went and got him a flashlight, too. It was a silver pencil flashlight she had gotten for her birthday. She had to show him how it worked.

"I'll bring this back," he said to her.

"Okay," she said. "Thanks."

And then he was gone. He slid on the driveway and ended up with a thud on his backside.

"He'll have awful bruises in the morning," said Barbara.

She called to him to come back. She told him she would call for help. He turned halfway down the driveway and seemed to listen but his hearing wasn't very good even up close, so who knows what he thought she said. She did mention getting the police. Maybe he heard that. Whatever, he turned and ran away, slipping and sliding all the way. Tan considered driving him, but the ice was too treacherous.

"What are the bets," said Brad, "that we never see the stuff again?"

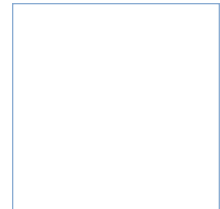
They never did. The Stranger never did return the poncho or the flashlight. In the morning the family all went out to the road. There was no truck there. Somehow, in his drunken haze, the Stranger must have found Lloyd Rintoul or somebody found him or his dad woke up and got the truck out. It was a mystery.

Ky tried to find Bernie Nystrom's name in the phone book. There was no listing. The boy had never said the name of his neighbour and they already knew that Lloyd Rintoul had no phone, so there was no way of tracking him down. The Moris didn't really care much about getting their stuff back, though. It was Christmas, after all.

I saw the story in the *National Enquirer* in January. I was in line at the grocery store with my mother, reading the headlines of the tabloids. I enjoy doing that. There are great stories about tribes in Brazil who look like Elvis Presley, or some seventy-five-year-old woman who gives birth to twin dolphins, or families of eight who live in an abandoned filing cabinet. But this headline jumped off the page at me.

### TEEN ABDUCTED BY MARTIANS!

*Country boy undergoes torturous experiments  
while constrained in an alien flying saucer!  
Experts wonder: Who or what is Kerdy Dickus  
and what does he want with our moon!*



I don't know why I flipped open to page 26 to read the story. I don't know why I paid good money to actually buy the rag. Somehow I knew. And when I showed the picture on page 26 to Ky, she gasped.

It was him. There was the Stranger showing the huge bruises inflicted by the aliens on his arms and ribs and thighs. He told of how he had seen a blinding light and the truck had been pulled right off the road by the saucer's powerful tractor beam. He told of how the aliens had hypnotized him and brought him to their saucer. He told of the drugs they had made him drink; how they had tried to get his father, too, but he had stopped them. He told of the weird food they had made him eat and how it had made him throw up all the next day. His mother could attest to his ill health. "I've never seen him so green," she said. "And he's normally such a healthy lad."

It was his mother who had contacted the *National Enquirer*. She read it all the time and she knew it was a story that would interest them.

His father, too, although he had managed somehow to stay out of the clutches of the aliens' hypnotic powers, could attest to the attack on the car. And then—blackness. There were two hours missing out of his recollection of the night. The aliens had obviously zapped him.

"Something ought to be done about this kind of menace!" said the father.

According to the newspaper, the boy underwent several sessions with a psychiatric investigator after the incident. The investigator specialized in AATT: Alien Abduction Trauma Therapy. He put the boy in a deep trance and interviewed him at length. "Truth drugs" were administered, and all the results concurred: the boy had obviously undergone a close encounter with alien beings. Under the trance the boy revealed some overheard conversation that might, the investigator believed, partially explain the purpose of the aliens' trip to earth.

"This might be a recognizance mission." Other experts in the field agreed. "But their long-term goal has to do with our moon and the saving of it. From what? For what? It is hard to tell."

One line had become imprinted on the boy's mind. The only spoken part he recalled vividly from his close encounter.

"Save the moon for Kerdy Dickus."

"Perhaps," said the psychiatric investigator, "there is some alien purpose for the boy remembering this one line."

The article went on to give a pretty good account of the aliens, what they looked like, what their flying saucer looked like. But you already know all that.

I had heard about the Stranger from Ky. That's how I somehow recognized the story in the *Enquirer*. The next time I saw the Moris, I showed them the



paper. But after they had all laughed themselves silly, we talked about it a lot.

Should they try to find the Stranger, now that they knew his name? Even without a phone, they could easily track him down. Should the paper be contacted, so that the truth could be known? What about the psychiatrist who specialized in AATT? The experts?

"I wouldn't mind getting my flashlight back," Ky admitted, but she wasn't really serious.

And so they have never followed up on the story. Ky always imagines she'll run into the Stranger one day in the nearby town. I hope I'm with her. Maybe I'll be up there for her birthday. Maybe it will be raining. Maybe we'll be coming out of a store and he'll be coming in wearing the big yellow poncho. He'll walk right by us, and Ky and I will turn just as he passes and whisper the magic words.

"Save the moon for Kerdy Dickus."

Then we'll hop in our saucer and slip off back to our own world. ■

## Activities

1. Define the phrase "reconnaissance mission." Why do you think this word is misspelled as "recognizance mission" in this story? Discuss your thoughts with a partner.
2. Write the *National Enquirer* article about the Stranger's experience in your best tabloid journalism style. (You may want to read a couple of articles from this type of paper first, to get an idea of how they are written.)
3. In small groups, discuss how the author brings out the humour of the situation. Consider such elements as tone, structure, and word choice.
4. What aspects of our life today would seem foreign to a visitor from the nineteenth century? Present a monologue in which you are a nineteenth-century time traveller who has just returned from a visit to a modern computer-equipped classroom, home, or another location of your choice. Make your monologue as humorous as possible.





# The Sacred Rac

PATRICIA HUGHES

## Focus Your Learning

Reading this report will help you:

- reflect on culture
- analyse writing style
- organize a class presentation

An Indian anthropologist, Chandra Thapar, made a study of foreign cultures which had customs similar to those of his native land. One culture in particular fascinated him because it reveres one animal as sacred, much as the people in India revere the cow.

The tribe Dr. Thapar studied is called the Asu and is found on the American continent north of the Tarahumara of Mexico. Though it seems to be a highly developed society of its type, it has an overwhelming preoccupation with the care and feeding of the rac—an animal much like a bull in size, strength, and temperament. In the Asu tribe, it is almost a social obligation to own at least one if not more racs. Anyone not possessing at least one is held in low esteem by the community because he is

too poor to maintain one of these beasts properly. Some members of the tribe, to display their wealth and social prestige, even own herds of racs.

Unfortunately the rac breed is not very healthy and usually does not live more than five to seven years, for it has a tendency to throw its shoes often. There are rac specialists in each community, perhaps more than one if the community is particularly wealthy. These specialists, however, due to the long period of ritual training they must undergo and to the difficulty of obtaining the right selection of charms to treat the rac, demand costly offerings whenever a tribesman must treat his ailing rac.

At the age of sixteen in many Asu communities, many youths undergo a puberty rite in

which the rac figures prominently. The youth must petition a high priest in a grand temple. He is then initiated into the ceremonies that surround the care of the rac and is permitted to keep a rac.

Although the rac may be used as a beast of burden, it has many habits which would be considered by other cultures as harmful to the life of the society. In the first place the rac breed is increasing at a very rapid rate and the Asu tribesmen have given no thought to limiting the rac population. As a consequence the Asu must build more and more paths for the rac to travel on since its delicate health and its love of racing other racs at high speeds necessitate that special areas be set aside for its use. The cost of smoothing the earth is too costly for any one individual to undertake; so it has become a community project and each

tribesman must pay an annual tax to build new paths and maintain the old. There are so many paths needed that some people move their homes because the rac paths must be as straight as possible to keep the animal from injuring itself. Dr. Thapar also noted that unlike the cow, which many people in his country hold sacred, the excrement of the rac cannot be used as either fuel or fertilizer. On the contrary, its excrement is exceptionally foul and totally useless.

Worst of all, the rac is prone to stampedes in which it runs down anything in its path, much like stampeding cattle. Estimates are that the rac kills thousands of the Asu in a year.

Despite the high cost of its upkeep, the damage it does to the land, and its habit of destructive stampedes, the Asu still regard it as being essential to the survival of their culture. ■

## Activities

1. With a partner, discuss the effect of this "report" on your perception of your own culture. Why does it seem so strange to see it described in these terms? Write down your thoughts in a brief reflective paper.
2. This selection is written in the style of an anthropologist's report.
  - a) Make a chart with the following headings, and enter a description of the writing style under each heading: Word Use, Sentence Length, Tone, Structure.
  - b) What overall effect does this writing style have on the reader?
3. Prepare a serious presentation for another class based on "The Sacred Rac." Illustrate your presentation as you see fit, without giving away the surprise. How long does it take them to figure it out?



# The Blue Bead

NORAH BURKE



## Focus Your Learning

Reading this short story will help you:

- compare cultural values
- critique story structure
- plan a television news story

From deep water came the crocodile.

Out of black water, curved with whirlpools, and into the frill of gold shallows by the stepping-stones.

He was twice the length of a tall man; and inside him, among the stones which he had swallowed to aid digestion, rolled a silver bracelet.

Timber was being floated down this great Indian river from forests further up, and there were sleepers lying stuck around the stones until someone came to dislodge them and send them on their way, or until floods lifted them and jostled them along. The crocodile had no need to hide himself. He came to rest in the glassy shallows, among logs, and balanced there on tiptoe on the rippled sand, with only his raised eyes out of the water, and raised nostrils breathing the clean sunny air.

Around him broad sparkling water travelled between cliffs and grass and forested hills. A jungle track came out of scrub each side and down to the

sun-whitened stepping-stones on which a little flycatcher was flirting and trilling along. The mugger crocodile, blackish brown above and yellowy white under, lay motionless, able to wait for ever till food came. This antediluvian saurian—this prehistoric juggernaut, ferocious and formidable, a vast force in the water, propelled by the unimaginable and irresistible power of the huge tail, lay lapped by ripples, a throb in his throat. His mouth, running almost the whole length of his head, was closed and fixed in that evil bony smile, and where the yellow underside came up to it, it was tinged with green.

From the day, perhaps a hundred years ago, when the sun had hatched him in a sandbank, and he had broken his shell, and got his head out and looked around, ready to snap at anything before he was even fully hatched—from that day, when he had at once made for the water, ready to fend for himself immediately, he had lived by his brainless craft and ferocity. Escaping the birds of prey and the great carnivorous fishes that eat baby crocodiles, he has prospered, catching all the food he needed, and storing it till putrid in holes in the bank. Tepid water to live in and plenty of rotted food grew him to his great length.

Now nothing could pierce the inch-thick armoured hide. Not even rifle bullets, which would bounce off. Only the eyes and the soft underarms offered a place. He lived well in the river, sunning himself sometimes with other crocodiles—muggers, as well as the long-snouted fish-eating gharials—on warm rocks and sandbanks where the sun dried the clay on them quite white, and where they could plop off into the water in a moment if alarmed.

The big crocodile fed mostly on fish, but also on deer and monkeys come to drink, perhaps a duck or two. But sometimes here at the ford he fed on a pi-dog full of parasites or a skeleton cow. And sometimes he went down to the burning ghats and found the half-burned bodies of Indians cast into the stream.

Beside him in the shoals as he lay waiting glimmered a blue gem.

It was not a gem, though: it was sand-worn glass that had been rolling about in the river for a long time. By chance, it was perforated right through—the neck of a bottle perhaps?—a blue bead.

In the shrill noisy village above the ford, out of a mud house the same colour as the ground came a little girl, a thin starveling child dressed in an earth-coloured rag. She had torn the rag in two to make skirt and sari.

Sibia was eating the last of her meal, chupatti wrapped round a smear of green chili and rancid butter; and she divided this also, to make it seem more, and bit it, showing straight white teeth.

With her ebony hair and great eyes, and her skin of oiled brown cream, she was a happy immature child-woman about twelve years old. Bare foot, of course, and often goosey-cold on a winter morning, and born to toil.



In all her life, she had never owned anything but a rag. She had never owned even one anna—not a pice, not a pi, even, to buy, say, a handful of blown glass beads from that stall in the bazaar where they were piled like stars, or one of the thin glass bangles that the man kept on a stick, and you could choose which colour you'd have.

She knew what finery was, though. She had been with her parents and brothers all through the jungle to the little town at the railhead where there was this bazaar. And she had walked through all the milling people, and the dogs and monkeys full of fleas, the idling gossiping bargaining humanity spitting betel juice, heard the bell of a sacred bull clonking as he lumped along through the dust and hubbub.

She had paused, amazed, before the sweetmeat stall, to gaze at the brilliant honey confections, abuzz with dust and flies. They smelled wonderful, above the smells of drains and humanity and cheap cigarettes. At home she sometimes tasted wild honey, or crunched the syrup out of a stalk of sugar cane. But these sweets were green and magenta.

Then there was the cloth stall, stacked with great rolls of new cotton cloth, stamped at the edge with the maker's sign of a tiger's head; and smelling so wonderful of its dressing, straight from the mills, that Sibia could have stood by it all day.

But there were other wonders to see: satin sewn with real silver thread, tin trays from Birmingham, and a sari which had got chips of looking-glass embroidered into the border. She joined the crowd round a Kashmiri travelling merchant on his way to the bungalows. He was showing dawn-coloured silks that poured like cream, and he'd got a little locked chest with turquoises and opals in it. Best of all, a box which, when you pressed it, a bell tinkled and a yellow woollen chicken jumped out.

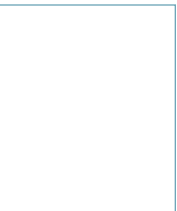
There was no end to the wonders of the world.

But Sibia, in all her life from birth to death, was marked for work. Since she could toddle, she had husked corn, and gathered sticks, and put dung to dry, and cooked and weeded, and carried, and fetched water, and cut grass for fodder.

She was going with her mother and some other women now to get paper grass from the cliffs above the river. When you had enough of it, you could take it down by bullock cart to the railhead and sell it to the agent who would arrange for its dispatch to the paper mills. The women often toiled all day at this work, and the agent sat on silk cushions, smoking a hookah.

Such thoughts did not trouble Sibia, however, as she skipped along with her sickle and homemade hayfork beside her mother. You could skip on the way out, but not on the way back when you ached with tiredness, and there was a great load to carry.

Some of the women were wearing necklaces made out of lal-lal-beeges, the





shiny scarlet seeds, black one end, that grew everywhere in the jungle—it was best to have new necklaces each year, instead of last year’s faded ones—and Sibia was making one too. How nice it was going to be to hear that rattling swish round her neck, as she froushed along with lots of necklaces. But each seed, hard as stone, had to be drilled with a red-hot needle, and the family needle was snapped, so she must wait till they could buy another.

Oh for strings and strings of glass and beads—anklets, earrings, nose-rings, bangles—all the gorgeous dazzle of the bazaar—all her little golden body decorated!

Chattering as they went, the women followed the dusty track toward the river. On their way, they passed a Gujar encampment of grass huts where these nomadic graziers would live for a time until their animals had perhaps finished all the easy grazing within reach, or they were not able to sell enough of their white butter and white milk in the district, or there was no one to buy the young male buffaloes for tiger-bait.

Or perhaps a cattle-killing tiger was making a nuisance of himself. Then they’d move on.

Sibia glanced at the Gujar women as she went past. They wore trousers, tight and wrinkled at the ankles, and in their ears large silver rings made out of melted rupees; and one of them was clinking a stick against the big brass gurrachs in which they fetched water from the river for the camp, to see which ones were empty. The men and boys were out of camp just now with the herd or gone to the bazaar to sell produce, but one or two buffaloes were standing about, creatures of great wet noses and moving jaws and gaunt black bones.

The Gujars were junglis, as Sibia was too, born and bred in the forest. For countless centuries, their forebears had lived like this, getting their living from animals, from grass and trees, as they scratched their food together, and stored their substance in large herds and silver jewelry. They were Man in the wandering Pastoral Age, not Stone Age Hunters, and not yet Cultivators.

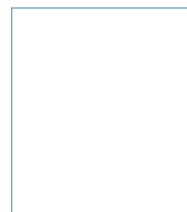
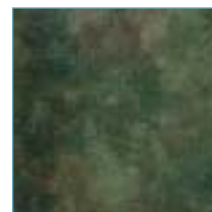
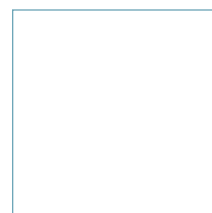
Ah, now there was the river, twinkling between the trees, sunlit beyond dark trunks. They could hear it rushing along.

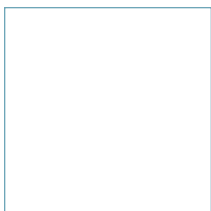
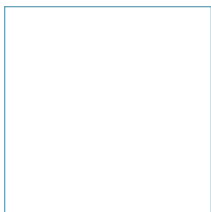
The women came out on the shore, and made for the stepping-stones.

They had plenty to laugh and bicker about, as they approached the river in a noisy crowd. They girded up their skirts, so as to jump from stone to stone, and they clanked their sickles and forks together over their shoulders to have ease of movement. They shouted their quarrels above the gush of the river.

Noise frightens crocodiles. The big mugger did not move, and all the women crossed in safety to the other bank.

Here they had to climb a still hillside to get at the grass, but all fell to





with a will, and sliced away at it wherever there was foothold to be had.

Down below them ran the broad river, pouring powerfully out from its deep narrow pools among the cold cliffs and shadows, spreading into warm shallows, lit by kingfishers. Great turtles lived there, and mahseer weighing more than a hundred pounds. Crocodiles too. Sometimes you could see them lying out on those slabs of clay over there, but there were none to be seen at the moment.

Where Sibia was working, wind coming across hundreds of miles of trees cooled her sweating body, and she could look down over the river as if she were a bird. Although she did not dare stop for a moment under her mother's eye, her imagination took her in swooping flight over the bright water and golden air to the banks where she had played as a child.

In those cavelets above the high-water mark of the highest flood, she had stored some little bowls moulded of clay while they hardened. If there were anything that could be used for colouring, they would look fine, painted with marigolds and elephants.

"Child!"

The sharp word—the glare of her mother's angry sweating face, pulled Sibia back to work, and they toiled on.

But at last it was time to go back to see to their animals and the evening meal. The loaded women set out to cross the river again.

Sibia hung back. She would just dawdle a bit and run and see if the little clay cups were still there in the cave, waiting to be painted and used.

Although the women were now tired and loaded, they still talked. Those in front yelled to those behind. They crossed the river safely and disappeared up the track into the trees on the other side. Even their voices died away.

Silence fell.

Sibia came down alone to the stepping-stones.

The light of evening was striking up the gorge, pink into the ultraviolet shadows. Now that the sun was off it, the water poured almost invisible among the stones, with no reflection to show where it began.

Sibia stepped onto the first stone.

She was heavily weighted, her muscles stretched and aching. The hayfork squeaked in the packed dry grass and dug into her collarbone so close under the skin, in spite of the sari bunched up to make a pad.

When she was halfway over, she put her load down on a big boulder to rest; and leaned, breathing, on the fork.

At the same moment a Gujar woman came down with two gurrachs to the water on the other side. In order to get the good clear water, which would quickly fill both gurrachs to the top without sand, she walked onto the stepping-stones.

She was within a yard of the crocodile when he lunged at her.

Up out of the darkling water heaved the great reptile, water slushing off him, his livid jaws yawning and all his teeth flashing as he slashed at her leg.

The woman screamed, dropped both brass pots with a clatter on the boulder, from whence they bounced to the water, and Sibia saw them bob away in the current. *Oh, the two good vessels gone.*

The Gujar woman recoiled from the crocodile, but his jaws closed on her leg at the same moment as she slipped and fell on the bone-breaking stone, and clutched one of the timber logs to save herself.

The log jammed between two boulders, with the woman clinging to it and screaming, while the crocodile pulled on her leg, threshing his might tail—bang!—bang!—to and fro in great smacking flails as he tried to drag her free and carry her off down into the deeps of the pool. Blood spread everywhere.

Sibia sprang.

From boulder to boulder she came leaping like a rock goat. Sometimes it had seemed difficult to cross these stones, especially the big gap in the middle where the river coursed through like a bulge of glass. But now she came on wings, choosing her footing in midair without even thinking about it, and in one moment she was beside the shrieking woman.

In the boiling bloody water, the face of the crocodile, fastened round her leg, was tugging to and fro, and smiling.

His eyes rolled on to Sibia. One slap of the tail could kill her.

He struck. Up shot the water, twenty feet, and fell like a silver chain.

Again!

The rock jumped under the blow.

But in the daily heroism of the jungle, as common as a thorn tree, Sibia did not hesitate.

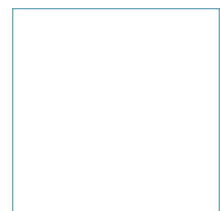
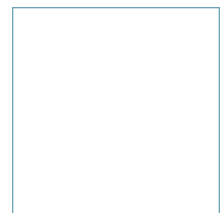
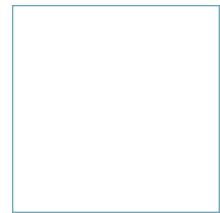
She aimed at the reptile's eyes.

With all the force of her little body, she drove the hayfork at the eyes, and one prong went in—right in—while its pair scratched past on the horny cheek.

The crocodile reared up in convulsion, till half his lizard body was out of the river, the tail and nose nearly meeting over his stony back. Then he crashed back, exploding the water, and in an uproar of bloody foam he disappeared.

He would die. Not yet, but presently, though his death would not be known for days; not till his stomach, blown with gas, floated him. Then perhaps he would be found upside down among the logs at the timber boom, with pus in his eye.

Sibia got her arms round the fainting woman, and somehow dragged her from the water. She stopped her wounds with sand, and bound them with



rag, and helped her home to the Gujar encampment where the men made a litter to carry her to someone for treatment.

Then Sibia went back for her grass and sickle and fork.

The fork was lying in the river, not carried away, luckily, and as she bent to pick it up out of the water, she saw the blue bead. Not blue now, with the sun nearly gone, but a no-colour white-blue, and its shape wobbling in the movement of the stream. She reached her arm down into a yard of the cold silk water to get it. Missing it first of all, because of refraction.

Then there it lay in her wet palm, perfect, even pierced ready for use, with the sunset shuffled about inside it like gold-dust. All her heart went up in flames of joy.

After a bit she twisted it into the top of her skirt against her tummy so she would know if it burst through the poor cloth and fell.

Then she picked up her fork and sickle and the heavy grass and set off home. Ai! Ai! What a day!

Her bare feet smudged out the wriggle-mark of snakes in the dust; there was the thin singing of malaria mosquitoes among the trees now; and this track was much used at night by a morose old makna elephant—the Tuskless One; but Sibia was not thinking of any of them. The stars came out: she did not notice.

On the way back she met her mother, out of breath, come to look for her, and scolding.

“I did not see till I was home, that you were not there. I thought something must have happened to you.”

And Sibia, bursting with her story, cried “Something *did*! I found a blue bead for my necklace, look!” ■

## Activities

1. Think about your own values in relation to Sibia's. Develop a chart to compare the two, using the following categories: Lifestyle, Threats to Safety, Life Goals, Role of Children, Education, Treasure or Wealth, Nature of Work, Sources of Self-Worth.
2. The story begins with a detailed description of the crocodile, before shifting to Sibia's perspective. In small groups, discuss why the author chose to begin her story this way. In your discussion, consider other ways that the story could be structured. Share your ideas with the rest of the class.
3. Working in pairs, present Sibia's story as a news item for a North American television news station. What details will you emphasize? Who will you interview? How will you grab your viewers' attention?

# The Toad

JUAN JOSÉ ARREOLA  
TRANSLATED BY W. S. MERWIN



Every so often he jumps, just to make it clear that he is essentially immobile. The jump is in some way like a heartbeat: careful observation makes it plain that the whole of the toad is a heart.

Clamped in a hunk of cold mud, the toad sinks into the winter like a mournful chrysalis. He wakes in the spring knowing that he has not changed into anything else. Dried to his depths, he is more a toad than ever. He waits in silence for the first rains.

And one fine day he heaves himself out of the pliant earth, heavy with moisture, swollen with spiteful sap, like a heart tossed onto the ground. In his sphinxlike posture there is a secret proposition of exchange, and the toad's ugliness appals us like a mirror. ■

## Focus Your Learning

Reading this description will help you:

- Compare elements of similar texts
- Read closely to form an interpretation

## Activities

- a)** Toads and frogs appear in many folk tales and fairy tales. Make a list of stories you can think of that contain toads or frogs. Summarize the role the animal plays in each story.
- b)** Look over the list. What similarities can you see in the treatment of toads? What

can you conclude about what the toads in these stories symbolize, or represent?

- In groups of three, discuss the meaning of the last line: "the toad's ugliness appals us like a mirror." Compare your understanding of these words with that of another group.



# Think Like a Weightlifter, Think Like a Woman

KATE BRAID

First day on the job and the foreman orders  
in a voice like a chainsaw,  
*Hoist those timbers  
by hand to the second floor.  
Crane's broken down.*

I keep my mouth shut  
with difficulty, knowing  
how much a six-by-six timber  
twelve feet long and fresh  
from the Fraser River, knowing  
how much it weighs.

Lorne, my partner, says nothing,  
addresses the modest mountain of timbers  
towering over our heads, smelling  
sweetly nostalgic for forest.

Weighing in with the wood he faces,  
with a belly like a great swelling bole,  
he shakes off my motion to help and  
bends as if to pick up a penny,  
scoops up the timber and packs it, 50 feet,  
to lean against the damp grey sides  
of the concrete core.



When he doesn't look back,  
it's my turn.

And now, because I need this job, and  
because it's the first day and because  
every eye is watching the Girl,  
I bend my knees as the book says,  
think like a weightlifter, take the beam  
by its middle and order my body  
to lift.

Reluctantly, the great tree, sweating pitch,  
parts with its peers with a sucking sound,  
and the beam and I sway to the designated spot,  
I drop it. Repeat.

Alone, I carry beams to Lorne  
who alone heaves them with the slightest grunt  
to the labourer who bends from the second floor  
with a hurry-up call,  
*Faster! Faster!*

*No. I will never be carpenter, I think, never  
able to work like these men.* Then  
Lorne falters.

Without thinking I reach up my two arms beside him  
and push with all my might.  
The beam flies to the second floor and mindless,  
I turn to fetch him another.

Without a word  
Lorne follows me back to the pile,  
lifts one end and helps me  
carry the next timber to the wall.  
Without a word we both push it up,  
continue this path together  
find a rhythm, a pace  
that feels more like dancing.

Lorne says, *You walk different.* Yes.  
For on this day I am suddenly  
much, much stronger, a woman with the strength  
of two.

### Focus Your Learning

Reading this poem will help you:

- make connections between your own ideas and those in the poem
- read for clues to meaning
- experiment with titles
- hold a class debate

## Activities

1. What qualities besides physical strength might a carpenter need? Write down a list. As you read, look for evidence in the poem to back up your opinion.
2. **a)** Explain Lorne's decision to help her carry the wood. What brings about the change in his attitude?  
**b)** How does the poet indicate that Lorne and the narrator work well together?
3. **a)** Explain the significance of the title.  
**b)** Working with a partner, brainstorm other possible titles. Choose one and explain why you think it is appropriate.
4. More and more women are entering fields that were formerly reserved for men. Present a class debate on whether there are still some jobs that are better suited to one sex or the other. Choose teams of debaters for either side. The rest of the class will evaluate the arguments presented, and give their verdict on which side is most convincing.

# What Happened During the Ice Storm

JIM HEYNEN



## Focus Your Learning

Reading this description will help you:

- discuss characters' motivations
- write a vivid description

One winter there was a freezing rain. How beautiful! people said when things outside started to shine with ice. But the freezing rain kept coming. Tree branches glistened like glass. Then broke like glass. Ice thickened on the windows until everything outside blurred. Farmers moved their livestock into the barns, and most animals were safe. But not the pheasants. Their eyes froze shut.

Some farmers went ice-skating down the gravel roads with clubs to harvest pheasants that sat helplessly in the roadside ditches. The boys went out into the freezing rain to find pheasants too. They saw dark spots along a fence. Pheasants, all right. Five or six of them. The boys slid their feet along slowly, trying not to break the ice that covered the snow. They slid up close to the pheasants. The pheasants pulled their heads down between their wings. They couldn't tell how easy it was to see them huddled there.

The boys stood still in the icy rain. Their breath came out in slow puffs of steam. The pheasants' breath came out in quick little white puffs. Some of them lifted their heads and turned them from side to side, but they were blindfolded with ice and didn't flush. The boys had not brought clubs, or sacks, or anything but themselves. They stood over the pheasants, turning their own heads, looking at each other, each expecting the other to do something. To pounce on a pheasant, or to yell Bang! Things around them were shining and dripping with icy rain. The barbed wire fence. The fence posts. The broken stems of grass. Even the grass seeds. The grass seeds looked like little yolks inside gelatin whites. And the pheasants looked like unborn birds glazed in egg white. Ice was hardening on the boys' caps and coats. Soon they would be covered with ice too.

Then one of the boys said, Shh. He was taking off his coat, the thin layer of ice splintering in flakes as he pulled his arms from the sleeves. But the inside of the coat was dry and warm. He covered two of the crouching pheasants with his coat, rounding the back of it over them like a shell. The other boys did the same. They covered all the helpless pheasants. The small grey hens and the larger brown cocks. Now the boys felt the rain soaking through their shirts and freezing. They ran across the slippery fields, unsure of their footing, the ice clinging to their skin as they made their way toward the warm blurry lights of the house. ■

## Activities

1. Large-scale disasters such as floods or ice storms—even small-scale disruptions such as snowstorms—tend to draw people together and bring out the best in human nature. Write a brief description or a poem about a time when you experienced this phenomenon. Make your writing as vivid as possible through the use of descriptive details.
2. With a partner, discuss what you expected the boys to do to the pheasants. What do you think changed their minds?

## End-of-unit Activities

1. Choose three selections from this unit, and work in small groups to explain and compare the use of irony in each one. Develop your own definition of irony to share with the class.
2. Compare the narrators' points of view in "Gore," "Lamb to the Slaughter," and "Save the Moon for Kerdy Dickus." Explain the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective and identify how each affects the plot of the story.
3. What theme do "The Sacred Rac," "The Blue Bead," and "Save the Moon for Kerdy Dickus" have in common? In groups of three, discuss how each of these selections makes us see ourselves and our culture differently.
4. The Haida mask and the photograph titled "The Conservationist" both express the theme of change or transformation. Choose one piece in this unit that deals with some form of change or metamorphosis, and think of a way to express the theme visually – as a mask, a tableau, a collage, or in some other form.
5. Both "Coup de Grace" and "The Interlopers" present wolves as fierce predators, to be feared by humans. Brainstorm a list of other stories or poems that depict wolves in this way. Then do some research on wolves, and find out how accurate this view of their behaviour is. Use quotations from literature, as well as information from your research, to prepare a visual display entitled *Wolves: Fact and Fiction*.
6. "The Execution" is a very grim poem. Borrowing ideas from the tone, diction, and point of view of "Coup de Grace," rewrite "The Execution" as a humorous poem. Recite your poem to the class.
7. Identify what common theme is expressed in the poem "Think Like a Weightlifter, Think Like a Woman" and the short description, "What Happened During the Ice Storm." Then write your own poem or description on a similar theme.
8. Choose three visuals from this section, and develop a story in narrative, dramatic, or poetic form by linking them together in an interesting order. Present your story orally to the class.
9. Choose one of the stories that you read in this section, and design a poster for a film version of it. Create an attractive visual to catch people's attention. Include the names of the actors and actresses who would play the major roles, a catchy one- or two-line description of the story, and some comments from critics who have previewed the film.