

## The Terror of Blue John Gap by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Part 3

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**Level:** Advanced

**Age:** Young adults / Adults

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

1. remember and retell the story so far;
2. listen to the third instalment and recount the main events;
3. listen in detail to a short extract and explore the relationship between punctuation and intonation;
4. predict the next part of the story.

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

**Summary:** The story is set in the Peak District (an upland area in the county of Derbyshire, England) in 1902. It tells the story of how a man uncovers the truth behind the legend of a mysterious monster. It is told in six parts. In Part 3 of the story, the main character, Hardcastle, finds himself trapped in the dark in an underground cave.

### Activity 1

**Aims:** to recall the details of the previous instalment; to predict the events in Part 3

1. Ask your students to try and recall the situation at the end of Part 2. Write the words *sight*, *smell*, *sounds* and *sensations* on the board. Field the students' suggestions under these four headings.

**Key:** (suggested answers)

*sight: utter blackness; smell: damp; sounds: running water; sensations: cold, wet, anxious*

2. Ask the students to read the sentences on the worksheet and decide if they are true or false. Ask them to write a correct version of the false sentences.

**Key:**

1. F – He took a candle into the cave with him.; 2. T; 3. F – He only saw one enormous footprint in the mud.; 4. T; 5. F – He dropped his candle in the stream.; 6. F – He tried to feel his way back but failed because it was too dark.

### Activity 2

**Aim:** to practise extensive listening

1. Ask the students to work in pairs: A and B. Ask As to read Summary A and Bs to read Summary B on the worksheet. They should then tell each other about the summary they

have read and discuss which they think is most likely to happen next.

2. Ask the students to listen to the story and make notes about:

- what happens to the matches
- the sounds that Hardcastle hears
- Hardcastle's reaction to the sounds
- how he eventually gets out of the cave
- what he decides to do next

Play Track 1 (full audio for Part 3). There is space for students to make notes on the worksheet.

3. Ask the students to compare their answers in pairs and then to go back and look at the two summaries from Activity 2 and underline all the correct information in the two summaries.

**Key:**

Summary A

He decides to wait for the matches to dry.  
He eats some biscuits he has brought with him and goes to sleep. A noise wakes him.  
He hears footsteps and a voice. They're coming towards him. It's a rescue party that have been sent out to look for him. He calls out to them and sees the light of their lamps shining on the walls of the cave. He

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gets to his feet and stumbles across the cave in the direction of their light. As he does, he sees a dark shadow crossing the cave and, looking down, he sees two fresh footprints in the mud at his feet. He doesn't know what to do. Should he follow the monster or call for the rescue party? He stands for a moment, undecided, but remembering he has no light, he calls out again to the rescue party and runs off after them, eager to tell them his story.

### Summary B

There's nothing he can do except wait for his matches to dry. He's hungry and thirsty and he has no food or water. He waits impatiently, unable to get comfortable. Suddenly, he hears a noise. There are footsteps running towards him through the dark. He lies completely still and waits in horror as the footsteps stop just feet away from him. An animal sniffs the air, then turns around and runs away again in the same direction it had come from. Hardcastle feels for his matches. They're dry. He takes them out and lights the candle. He steps carefully across the stream and makes his way out of the cave, listening intently for sounds of the monster. As he passes the patch of mud, he sees two new footprints, as large and as clear as the first. There is no doubt in his mind. There is definitely a monster living in the caves. He rushes out of the cave, intent on telling his story to the first person he sees.

4. Give students the full transcript to check their answers.

### Activity 3

**Aims:** to listen in detail; to raise awareness of the relationship between punctuation and intonation

1. Ask students to listen to the extract on the worksheet and add full stops (.), exclamation

marks (!) and questions marks (?) where necessary. Play Track 2 (short extract).

2. Ask students to compare their answers with the full transcript and discuss these questions:

- How can you tell from the narrator's voice if you need a full stop, an exclamation mark or a question mark?
- How do the exclamation marks affect the way we read the extract?

3. Ask the students to practise reading the extract aloud in pairs.

### Activity 4

**Aims:** to discuss Hardcastle's options at the end of Part 3; to write a short letter explaining what happened in the cave; to write a short reply to the letter

1. At the end of the extract Hardcastle says that he is going to find someone to confide in. Write these questions on the board and ask the students to discuss them:

- Who would you confide in if you were Hardcastle? Why?
- How much of the story would you tell?
- How would you bring up the subject?

Ask the pairs to report back on their discussion to the group.

2. Tell students that in the end Hardcastle decides to write about what happened to him in a short letter to a friend. Ask the students to work in pairs, or small groups, to write the letter, using no more than 100 words, explaining what happened in the cave.

3. Ask the students to exchange letters with another group and change roles, responding to the letter, but first they have to decide what they think. Read out the options and let the students decide which attitude they want to adopt:

- a. Hardcastle is completely mad (after all, he is recovering from a serious illness). You think he's hallucinated the whole thing.
- b. It's a very serious situation and action needs to be taken to capture the beast before it does anyone any harm.
- c. You're a scientist and you're very

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interested in finding out more about this creature, but you don't think anyone else should know about it until it's been investigated further.

You may want to assign different roles to different groups in order to have a variety of different responses. In which case, write the roles on cards or strips of paper and give them to each group individually.

4. After the students have written their responses, they should give them back to the original group and ask for their reactions.

### Follow-up tasks

1. Ask the students to write a dialogue between Hardcastle and Armitage, the farmer who first spoke to Hardcastle about the monster.
2. Ask the students to continue their summary of the story, adding to the summaries they have already written for Parts 1 and 2.

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### Part 3

#### Activity 1

Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the false sentences.

1. Hardcastle took a bicycle lantern into the cave with him.
2. There were a lot of passages leading into, and out of, the main cavern.
3. He saw two enormous footprints in a pool of mud.
4. He lost his footing on a loose rock.
5. He dropped his matches in the stream.
6. He felt his way back to the entrance of the cave.

#### Activity 2

a. Student A read Summary A. Student B read Summary B.

##### Summary A

He decides to wait for the matches to dry. He eats some biscuits he has brought with him and goes to sleep. A noise wakes him. He hears footsteps and a voice. They're coming towards him. It's a rescue party that have been sent out to look for him. He calls out to them and sees the light of their lamps shining on the walls of the cave. He gets to his feet and stumbles across the cave in the direction of their light. As he does, he sees a dark shadow crossing the cave and, looking down, he sees two fresh footprints in the mud at his feet. He doesn't know what to do. Should he follow the monster or call for the rescue party? He stands for a moment, undecided, but remembering he has no light, he calls out again to the rescue party and runs off after them, eager to tell them his story.

##### Summary B

There's nothing he can do except wait for his matches to dry. He's hungry and thirsty and he has no food or water. He waits impatiently, unable to get comfortable. Suddenly, he hears a noise. There are footsteps running towards him through the dark. He lies completely still and waits in horror as the footsteps stop just feet away from him. An animal sniffs the air, then turns around and runs away again in the same direction it had come from. Hardcastle feels for his matches. They're dry. He takes them out and lights the candle. He steps carefully across the stream and makes his way out of the cave, listening intently for sounds of the monster. As he passes the patch of mud, he sees two new footprints, as large and as clear as the first. There is no doubt in his mind. There is definitely a monster living in the caves. He rushes out of the cave, intent on telling his story to the first person he sees.

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### b. Listen to Part 3 and make notes on:

- what happens to the matches
- the sounds that Hardcastle hears
- Hardcastle's reaction to the sounds
- how he eventually gets out of the cave
- what he decides to do next

### Activity 3

Listen to the short extract and mark all the full stops (.), exclamation marks (!) and question marks (?) into the text below.

How long this lasted I cannot say it may have been for an hour, it may have been for several suddenly I sat up on my rock couch, with every nerve thrilling and every sense acutely on the alert beyond all doubt I had heard a sound – some sound very distinct from the gurgling of the waters it had passed, but the reverberation of it still lingered in my ear was it a search party they would most certainly have shouted, and vague as this sound was which had wakened me, it was very distinct from the human voice I sat palpitating and hardly daring to breathe there it was again and again now it had become continuous it was a tread – yes, surely it was the tread of some living creature.

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## Part 3

I sat down upon a boulder and reflected upon my unfortunate plight. I had not told anyone that I proposed to come to the Blue John mine, and it was unlikely that a search party would come after me. Therefore I must trust to my own resources to get clear of the danger. There was only one hope, and that was that the matches might dry. When I fell into the river, only half of me had got thoroughly wet. My left shoulder had remained above the water. I took the box of matches, therefore, and put it into my left armpit. The moist air of the cavern might possibly be counteracted by the heat of my body, but even so, I knew that I could not hope to get a light for many hours. Meanwhile there was nothing for it but to wait.

By good luck I had slipped several biscuits into my pocket before I left the farm-house. These I now devoured, and washed them down with a **draught** from that wretched stream which had been the cause of all my misfortunes. Then I felt about for a comfortable seat among the rocks, and, having discovered a place where I could get a support for my back, I stretched out my legs and settled myself down to wait. I was wretchedly damp and cold, but I tried to cheer myself with the reflection that modern science prescribed open windows and walks in all weather for my disease. Gradually, lulled by the monotonous gurgle of the stream, and by the absolute darkness, I sank into an uneasy **slumber**.

How long this lasted I cannot say. It may have been for an hour, it may have been for several. Suddenly I sat up on my rock couch, with every nerve thrilling and every sense acutely on the alert. Beyond all doubt I had heard a sound – some sound very distinct from the gurgling of the waters. It had passed, but the reverberation of it still lingered in my ear. Was it a search party? They would most certainly have shouted, and vague as this sound was which had wakened me, it was very distinct from the human voice. I sat palpitating and hardly daring to breathe. There it was again! And again! Now it had become continuous. It was a tread – yes, surely it was the tread of some living creature. But what a tread it was! It gave one the impression of enormous weight carried upon sponge-like feet, which gave forth a muffled but ear-filling sound. The darkness was as complete as ever, but the tread was regular and decisive. And it was coming beyond all question in my direction.

My skin grew cold, and my hair stood on end as I listened to that steady and **ponderous** footfall. There was some creature there, and surely by the speed of its advance, it was one which could see in the dark. I crouched low on my rock and tried to blend myself into it. The steps grew nearer still, then stopped, and presently I was aware of a loud lapping and gurgling. The creature was drinking at the stream. Then again there was silence, broken by a succession of long sniffs and snorts of tremendous volume and energy. Had it caught the scent of me? My own nostrils were filled by a low fetid odour, **mephitic** and **abominable**. Then I heard the steps again. They were on my side of the stream now. The stones rattled within a few yards of where I lay. Hardly daring to breathe, I crouched

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### Part 3

upon my rock. Then the steps drew away. I heard the splash as it returned across the river, and the sound died away into the distance in the direction from which it had come.

For a long time I lay upon the rock, too much horrified to move. I thought of the sound which I had heard coming from the depths of the cave, of Armitage's fears, of the strange impression in the mud, and now came this final and absolute proof that there was indeed some inconceivable monster, something utterly unearthly and dreadful, which lurked in the hollow of the mountain. Of its nature or form I could frame no conception, save that it was both light-footed and gigantic. The combat between my reason, which told me that such things could not be, and my senses, which told me that they were, raged within me as I lay. Finally, I was almost ready to persuade myself that this experience had been part of some evil dream, and that my abnormal condition might have conjured up an hallucination. But there remained one final experience which removed the last possibility of doubt from my mind.

I had taken my matches from my armpit and felt them. They seemed perfectly hard and dry. Stooping down into a crevice of the rocks, I tried one of them. To my delight it took fire at once. I lit the candle, and, with a terrified backward glance into the obscure depths of the cavern, I hurried in the direction of the Roman passage. As I did so I passed the patch of mud on which I had seen the huge imprint. Now I stood astonished before it, for there were three similar imprints upon its surface, enormous in size, irregular in outline, of a depth which indicated the ponderous weight which had left them. Then a great terror surged over me. Stooping and shading my candle with my hand, I ran in a frenzy of fear to the rocky archway, hastened up it, and never stopped until, with weary feet and panting lungs, I rushed up the final slope of stones, broke through the tangle of briars, and flung myself exhausted upon the soft grass under the peaceful light of the stars. It was three in the morning when I reached the farmhouse, and today I am all unstrung and quivering after my terrific adventure. As yet I have told no one. I must move warily in the matter. What would the poor lonely women, or the uneducated **yokels** here think of it if I were to tell them my experience? Let me go to someone who can understand and advise.

### Glossary

**draught** (old-fashioned) drink

**slumber** (old-fashioned) sleep

**ponderous** (mainly literary) slow and heavy

**mephitic** (old-fashioned) bad, and possibly poisonous

**abominable** (formal) terrible, hateful

**yokels** (old-fashioned; impolite) simple, uneducated people