

## The Terror of Blue John Gap by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Part 4

**Author:** Ceri Jones

**Level:** Advanced

**Age:** Young adults / Adults

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

1. remember and retell the story so far;
2. listen to the fourth instalment and recount the main events;
3. listen in detail to a short extract and explore the relationship between punctuation and intonation;
4. role-play a conversation between Hardcastle and a local policeman.

**Materials:** one copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (full audio for Part 4) 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 4 of the story, the main character, Hardcastle, has had his first encounter with the monster. He wants to tell someone about his experience, but he doesn't know who to confide in.

### Warmer

**Aims:** to recall the details of the previous instalment; to predict the events in Part 4

1. Ask students to work in pairs and retell the story so far. Write these key words on the board to help them: *sleep, sound, footsteps, footprint.*

2. As they are retelling the story write these questions on the board:

- What has Hardcastle learnt about the 'monster'?
- What was the dilemma he faced at the end of Part 3?
- Do you think the monster is real, or do you think Hardcastle was hallucinating? Explain your answers.

3. Ask the students to answer the questions as a whole class. Encourage discussion of both possibilities in the third question.

**Key:** (*suggested answers*)

1. *Hardcastle has learnt that the monster exists, and that it is very big but can move very quickly.; 2. He doesn't know who he can share his experience with.; 3. either could be true*

### Activity 1

**Aim:** to practise extensive listening

1. Ask the students to listen to Part 4 and answer these questions:

- Who is Dr. Mark Johnson?
- What is his reaction to Hardcastle's story?
- Who is Mr Picton?
- Why didn't Hardcastle speak to him?
- What is Hardcastle planning to do next?
- What has happened to Armitage?
- What did Hardcastle say to the police?
- Why did they laugh?

Play Track 1 (full audio for Part 4).

2. Ask the students to compare their answers in pairs. Then ask them to look at question b on the worksheet and answer the questions. They may need some help with the language in the quotations. Give them the copy of the transcript and the accompanying glossary to help them.

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### Activity 2

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

1. Ask students to look at the extract on the worksheet. Ask them to listen to Track 2 (short extract) and mark all the pauses. Play Track 2 and stop after the first pause as an example. Play the rest of Track 2 and ask the students to complete the exercise.
2. Check the answers with the class. Play Track 2 again if you want, asking students to prompt you to stop the recording after each pause. Draw the students' attention to the fact that punctuation often shows us where the pauses are.
3. Ask the students to listen again and make a note of where the narrator's voice goes up in a question intonation. Play Track 2 again.

**Key:** (// = pause; ? = question intonation)

And yet the cry //, the footmark //, the tread in the cavern // – no reasoning can get past these. // I think of the old-world legends of dragons // and of other monsters. // Were they, // perhaps, ? // not such fairy-tales as we have thought? ? // Can it be that there is some fact which underlies them, ? // and am I, ? // of all mortals ? // the one who is chosen to expose it? ? //

4. You may want to play Track 2 again and ask the students to read along with it, following the pauses and intonation patterns that they have noticed. Alternatively, you can ask them to read the extract out loud to each other in pairs.

### Activity 3

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

1. Ask the students to work in pairs and look again at the closing paragraph of the story. Ask them to discuss what exactly they think Hardcastle said to the policeman, and how the policeman reacted to his story.
2. Ask the pairs to act out the conversation between Hardcastle and the policeman. Then ask for volunteers to act out the scene for the whole class.
3. Ask the students to imagine what the policeman said to his family. Ask them to write out the exact words he said. Then ask the students to compare their versions in small groups and choose the funniest version for each group.

### Follow-up tasks

1. Ask the students to write a short news article reporting the story of the missing sheep. Alternatively, they could write a short dialogue between two of the villagers discussing the sudden disappearance of Armitage.
2. Ask the students to continue their summary of the story, adding to the summaries they have already written for Parts 1, 2 and 3.

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### Part 4

#### Activity 1

##### a. Listen to Part 4 of the story and answer these questions.

1. Who is Dr. Mark Johnson?
2. What is his reaction to Hardcastle's story?
3. Who is Mr Picton?
4. Why didn't Hardcastle speak to him?
5. What is Hardcastle planning to do next?
6. What has happened to Armitage?
7. What did Hardcastle say to the police?
8. Why did they laugh?

##### b. Read these quotations from Part 4 and answer the questions.

You can imagine that it was not long before I had shaken the dust of Castleton from my feet and returned to the farm, cursing all unimaginative pedants who cannot conceive that there may be things in creation which have never yet chanced to come across their mole's vision. After all, now that I am cooler, I can afford to admit that I have been no more sympathetic to Armitage than Dr. Johnson has been to me.

1. Why is Hardcastle in such a hurry to get back to the farm?
2. Why does Hardcastle compare himself to Dr. Johnson?

And yet the cry, the footmark, the tread in the cavern – no reasoning can get past these. I think of the old-world legends of dragons and of other monsters. Were they, perhaps, not such fairy-tales as we have thought? Can it be that there is some fact which underlies them, and am I, of all mortals, the one who is chosen to expose it?

3. What is the connection for Hardcastle between legendary dragons and the monster in Blue John Gap?
4. What does he think he has been chosen to do?

... how far am I answerable both for his death and for any other mishap which may occur? Surely with the knowledge I already possess it must be my duty to see that something is done, or if necessary to do it myself.

5. Why does Hardcastle feel responsible for what happened to Armitage?

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### Part 4

#### Activity 2

a. Read and listen to the short extract below. Mark all the pauses '///'.

And yet the cry, the footmark, the tread in the cavern – no reasoning can get past these. I think of the old-world legends of dragons and of other monsters. Were they, perhaps, not such fairy-tales as we have thought? Can it be that there is some fact which underlies them, and am I, of all mortals, the one who is chosen to expose it?

b. Listen again. Look at the pauses you marked. When does the narrator's voice go up in a question at the pause? Mark question intonation on the extract with '?'.

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## Part 4

**April 25.** I was laid up in bed for two days after my incredible adventure in the cavern. I use the adjective with a very definite meaning, for I have had an experience since which has shocked me almost as much as the other. I have said that I was looking round for someone who could advise me. There is a Dr. Mark Johnson who **practises** some few miles away, to whom I had a note of recommendation from Professor Saunderson. To him I drove, when I was strong enough to get about, and I **recounted** to him my whole strange experience. He listened intently, and then carefully examined me, paying special attention to my reflexes and to the pupils of my eyes. When he had finished, he refused to discuss my adventure, saying that it was entirely beyond him, but he gave me the card of a Mr. Picton at Castleton, with the advice that I should instantly go to him and tell him the story exactly as I had done to himself. He was, according to my adviser, the very man who was **pre-eminently** suited to help me. I went on to the station, therefore, and made my way to the little town, which is some ten miles away. Mr. Picton appeared to be a man of importance, as his brass plate was displayed upon the door of a considerable building on the outskirts of the town. I was about to ring his bell, when some misgiving came into my mind, and, crossing to a neighbouring shop, I asked the man behind the counter if he could tell me anything of Mr. Picton. 'Why,' said he, 'he is the best mad doctor in Derbyshire, and yonder is his **asylum**.' You can imagine that it was not long before I had shaken the dust of Castleton from my feet and returned to the farm, cursing all unimaginative **pedants** who cannot conceive that there may be things in creation which have never yet chanced to come across their mole's vision. After all, now that I am cooler, I can afford to admit that I have been no more sympathetic to Armitage than Dr. Johnson has been to me.

**April 27.** When I was a student I had the reputation of being a man of courage and enterprise. I remember that when there was a ghost-hunt at Coltbridge it was I who sat up in the haunted house. Is it advancing years (after all, I am only thirty-five), or is it this physical malady which has caused degeneration? Certainly my heart **quails** when I think of that horrible cavern in the hill, and the certainty that it has some monstrous occupant. What shall I do? There is not an hour in the day that I do not debate the question. If I say nothing, then the mystery remains unsolved. If I do say anything, then I have the alternative of mad alarm over the whole countryside, or of absolute incredulity which may end in consigning me to an asylum. On the whole, I think that my best course is to wait, and to prepare for some expedition which shall be more deliberate and better thought out than the last. As a first step I have been to Castleton and obtained a few essentials – a large acetylene lantern for one thing, and a good double-barrelled sporting rifle for another. The latter I have hired, but I have bought a dozen heavy game cartridges, which would bring down a rhinoceros. Now I am ready for my troglodyte friend. Give me better health and a little spate of energy, and I shall **try conclusions** with him yet. But who and what is he? Ah! There is the question which stands between me and my sleep. How many theories do I form, only to discard each in turn! It is

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### Part 4

all so utterly unthinkable. And yet the cry, the footmark, the tread in the cavern – no reasoning can get past these. I think of the old-world legends of dragons and of other monsters. Were they, perhaps, not such fairy tales as we have thought? Can it be that there is some fact which underlies them, and am I, of all mortals, the one who is chosen to expose it?

**May 3.** For several days I have been laid up by the vagaries of an English spring, and during those days there have been developments, the true and sinister meaning of which no one can appreciate save myself. I may say that we have had cloudy and moonless nights of late, which according to my information were the seasons upon which sheep disappeared. Well, sheep have disappeared. Two of Miss Allerton's, one of old Pearson's of the Cat Walk, and one of Mrs. Moulton's. Four in all during three nights. No trace is left of them at all, and the countryside is buzzing with rumours of gipsies and of sheep-stealers.

But there is something more serious than that. Young Armitage has disappeared also. He left his moorland cottage early on Wednesday night and has never been heard of since. He was an unattached man, so there is less sensation than would otherwise be the case. The popular explanation is that he owes money, and has found a situation in some other part of the country, whence he will presently write for his belongings. But I have grave misgivings. Is it not much more likely that the recent tragedy of those sheep has caused him to take some steps which may have ended in his own destruction? He may, for example, have lain in wait for the creature and been carried off by it into the recesses of the mountains. What an inconceivable fate for a civilized Englishman of the twentieth century! And yet I feel that it is possible and even probable. But in that case, how far am I answerable both for his death and for any other mishap which may occur? Surely with the knowledge I already possess it must be my duty to see that something is done, or if necessary to do it myself. It must be the latter, for this morning I went down to the local police-station and told my story. The inspector entered it all in a large book and bowed me out with commendable gravity, but I heard a burst of laughter before I had got down his garden path. No doubt he was recounting my adventure to his family.

### Glossary

**practise** work as a doctor

**recount** tell a story

**pre-eminently** above all others

**asylum** a psychiatric hospital

**pedant** a person who relies too heavily on scientific facts

**quail** tremble in fear

**try conclusions** confront