

The Shadow and the Flash

By Jack London

Part 4

Author: Daniel Barber

Level: Advanced

Age: Young adults / Adults

Aims: In this lesson the students will:

1. recall the story so far;
2. discuss the possible effects of invisibility;
3. listen for gist;
4. improve their awareness of the relationship between punctuation and pronunciation;
5. role play an interview with the main characters in the story.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (the first part of Part 4), Track 2 (an extract), Track 3 (the end of Part 4), Track 4 (short extract), Track 5 (full audio) downloaded from onestopenglish; one copy of the full transcript per student

Summary: The story is about two competitive scientists who take different routes to achieving invisibility, with tragic results. It is told in five parts. In Part 4, we are told how the two scientists finally succeed in creating invisibility.

Activity 1

Aims: to recall the story so far; to predict what happens next in the story

1. Ask the students to work in pairs and recall the story so far. Then give them a copy of the worksheet and ask them to complete the sentences in Activity 1. (Note: The students need to supply their own ideas for question 9.)
2. Check the answers with the whole class and field the students' suggestions for question 9 (who is going to achieve invisibility first), asking the students to justify their answers.

Key: 1. Lloyd; 2. Paul; 3. Lloyd; 4. Paul; 5. Lloyd; 6. Paul; 7. Paul; 8. Lloyd; 9. students' own answers

Whole-class task

Aim: to discuss the effects of invisibility on the people who perceive it

1. Ask the students to consider the following question. You may want to write it on the board to focus their attention.

If an object, animal or person were invisible, what clues would you have of its presence?

Field answers from the class. Use prompts if necessary.

Suggested answers: *You might hear sounds; you might feel it or touch it; you might feel vibrations as it moves.*

2. Explain that you are going to try out two experiments involving the senses of hearing and touch. In the first experiment, ask all of the students to close their eyes for a minute and listen carefully for every single sound. When the minute is over ask them to write a list of the sounds they heard, trying to remember as many as possible, and then they should compare their list with a partner. Field answers from the class to explore what we can we can learn about our surroundings from the sounds we hear.

In the second experiment, collect a number of random objects and place them inside a bag (to make this harder, make sure there are similar objects in the bag, e.g. a credit card and an ID card; a tube of toothpaste and a tube of handcream). Ask the students to identify the objects one by one using only the sense of touch. Ask them to explain what helped them to understand what the object was.

3. Refer the students back to the question in stage 1 and ask them to consider the following questions as well (again, you may want to write the questions on the board).

What do you think it would feel like to be confronted by an invisible animal or person? How do you think you would react?

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Activity 2

Aim: to listen for gist; to predict the end of the story

Instalment 1

1. Explain to the students that they are going to listen to Part 4 in three instalments. Tell them that in the first instalment they are going to hear about how Paul has succeeded in making an animal transparent. Ask them to listen and answer the questions for instalment 1 (Activity 2 on the worksheet). Play Track 1. The students can note their answers on the worksheet.

2. Ask the students to compare their answers and then field the answers from the whole class, allowing the students to help each other with any problems. Do not give them the transcript at this stage, but be prepared to help with technical vocabulary such as *sundogs*, *raindogs*, *halos* and *parhelia*, which are all similar phenomena caused by light being refracted by water or ice, as in the case of a rainbow.

Key: 1. a hunting dog; 2. The narrator hears the sounds the dog makes, and the sound the grass makes as the dog runs through it; he feels the dog brush up against his leg; he sees flashes of coloured light.; 3. The narrator is worried that he is ill and that something strange is happening to his senses.; 4. the flashes of coloured light; 5. No, he can't; or at least he doesn't think he can.

Instalment 2

3. Tell the students that they are going to listen to the next instalment where the experiment goes wrong and something terrible happens to the dog. Ask them to listen and then tell you what happened to the dog and why.

4. Ask the students to compare their answers in pairs and then feed back to the class. If necessary, let the class hear the instalment a second time.

Key: The dog died. It was killed by the huntsman who thought it was a ferocious

and gigantic beast. After it was killed, its body decomposed rapidly.

Instalment 3

5. Explain to the students that they are now going to hear what Lloyd has been busy with. He has also succeeded in creating invisibility, but he has made an object invisible, not an animal. Ask them to listen to the instalment and answer the questions on the worksheet for instalment 3.

6. Ask the students to compare answers and predict what they think is going to happen in the next and last part of the story. Give the students a clue: it doesn't have a happy ending!

Key: 1. his shed where he conducts his experiments; 2. He walked into it.; 3. He painted it with a special paint.; 4. students' own answers

7. Field answers from the class. Keep a list of their ideas to refer back to when you listen to the last part.

Activity 3

Aims: to raise awareness of the relationship between punctuation and pronunciation; to practise shadow reading a short passage, imitating the pauses used by the narrator

1. Ask the students to look at the short extract from the end of Part 4 on the worksheet (Activity 3). Explain that all the punctuation has been removed, including the capital letters. Ask them to work in pairs or small groups to read the extract and punctuate it. They may want to add line breaks as well.

2. Ask the students to listen to the extract (Track 4) and notice whether or not they have punctuated all the pauses.

3. Ask them to check again with their partner(s). Then give them the transcript and ask them to compare their punctuation with the punctuation in the transcript. Field any queries and discuss any doubts.

Key: "What do you think of it, eh?" Lloyd asked, wringing my hand. "I slapped a couple of coats of absolute black on the outside yesterday afternoon to see how it

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worked. How's your head? You bumped it pretty solidly, I imagine."

"Never mind that," he interrupted my congratulations. "I've something better for you to do."

4. Ask the students to listen again and read the extract aloud in time with the audio.

Activity 4

Aim: to role play an interview with the main characters in the story

1. Explain to the class that they are going to act out interviews with the two main characters in the story. Divide them into two groups. The students in group A will be Paul and those in group B will be Lloyd. Ask them to look at the questions on the worksheet (Activity 4) and prepare their answers. Remind them that this is an interview with a journalist who will make the answers public, so they need to think about what information they are prepared to make public.
2. Tell the groups they are also going to be playing the journalists in the role play and that they can think of a few more questions to ask if desired. Allow them time to add their questions to the worksheet.
3. Arrange the class into pairs, with one student from group A and one student from group B. Ask student A to interview student B (Lloyd). Allow plenty of time for the interview and remind student A to take notes of Lloyd's answers, as they are going to be writing about the interview later on.
4. Repeat the role play, but this time student B is going to interview student A (Paul). Again, allow plenty of time and remind student B to take notes.
5. Put the students back into their original groups A and B as in stage 1. Ask them to compare their notes and write a short summary of the information from the interview for a short news item in a science magazine. Monitor and help with style, register and language as they write their summaries.

6. Ask the groups to exchange summaries and comment on any information that they think is missing or misrepresents what they said.

Follow-up tasks

1. Imagine you are a journalist who has interviewed the two main characters. Write an article about their discoveries.
2. Find out more about rainbows and sundogs and other phenomena of light.
3. Look back through the transcripts of the story so far and write a short summary of the story.

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Activity 1

Write *Paul* or *Lloyd* to complete the sentences below.

1. _____ has dark hair.
2. _____ has blonde hair.
3. _____ believes he can create the perfect black.
4. _____ believes he can create transparency.
5. _____ is trying to create a new colour.
6. _____ is trying to produce a molecular change.
7. _____ has experimented with different kinds of glass.
8. _____ cannot escape from his shadow.
9. _____ is going to be the first to achieve invisibility.

Activity 2

Instalment 1

Listen to the audio and answer the questions.

1. What kind of animal is it?
2. What clues does the narrator have of the presence of an invisible animal?
3. How does he react?
4. What is the one problem that Paul had not predicted?
5. Can he overcome the problem?

Instalment 3

Listen to the audio and answer the questions.

1. What object did Lloyd choose?
2. How did the narrator find out about it?
3. How did Lloyd make it invisible?
4. What do you think Lloyd is going to do next?

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Activity 3

Punctuate the extract.

what do you think of it eh lloyd asked wringing my hand i slapped a couple of coats of absolute black on the outside yesterday afternoon to see how it worked hows your head you bumped it pretty solidly i imagine never mind that he interrupted my congratulations ive something better for you to do

Activity 4

Interview questions

How did you first become interested in invisibility?

How do you propose to create invisibility?

What uses will you put it to?

Do you think your discovery could be dangerous if it fell into the wrong hands? Why?

_____?

_____?

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Track 1

Transcript and glossary

A few weeks later I went hunting with Paul. He had been promising me for some time that I should have the pleasure of shooting over a wonderful dog – the most wonderful dog, in fact, that ever man shot over, so he **averred**, and continued to aver till my curiosity was aroused. But on the morning in question I was disappointed, for there was no dog in evidence.

“Don’t see him about,” Paul remarked unconcernedly, and we set off across the fields.

I could not imagine, at the time, what was **ailing** me, but I had a feeling of some impending and deadly illness. My nerves were all **awry**, and, from the astounding tricks they played me, my senses seemed to have run riot. Strange sounds disturbed me. At times I heard the swish-swish of grass being shoved aside, and once the patter of feet across a patch of stony ground.

“Did you hear anything, Paul?” I asked once.

But he shook his head, and thrust his feet steadily forward.

While climbing a fence, I heard the low, eager whine of a dog, apparently from within a couple of feet of me; but on looking about me I saw nothing.

I dropped to the ground, limp and trembling.

“Paul,” I said, “we had better return to the house. I am afraid I am going to be sick.”

“Nonsense, old man,” he answered. “The sunshine has gone to your head like wine. You’ll be all right. It’s **famous** weather.”

But, passing along a narrow path through a clump of **cottonwoods**, some object brushed against my legs and I stumbled and nearly fell. I looked with sudden anxiety at Paul.

“What’s the matter?” he asked. “Tripping over your own feet?”

I kept my tongue between my teeth and plodded on, though **sore perplexed** and thoroughly satisfied that some acute and mysterious **malady** had attacked my nerves. So far my eyes had escaped; but, when we got to the open fields again, even my vision went back on me. Strange flashes of **vari-colored**, rainbow light began to appear and disappear on the path before me. Still, I managed to keep myself in hand, till the vari-colored lights persisted for a space of fully twenty seconds, dancing and flashing in continuous play. Then I sat down, weak and shaky.

“It’s all up with me,” I gasped, covering my eyes with my hands. “It has attacked my eyes. Paul, take me home.”

But Paul laughed long and loud. “What did I tell you? – the most wonderful dog, eh? Well, what do you think?”

He turned partly from me and began to whistle. I heard the patter of feet, the panting of a heated animal, and the unmistakable yelp of a dog. Then Paul stooped down and apparently fondled the empty air.

“Here! Give me your fist.”

And he rubbed my hand over the cold nose and **jowls** of a dog. A dog it certainly was, with the shape and the smooth, short coat of a **pointer**.

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Suffice to say, I speedily recovered my spirits and control. Paul put a collar about the animal's neck and tied his handkerchief to its tail. And then was **vouchsafed** us the remarkable sight of an empty collar and a waving handkerchief **cavorting** over the fields. It was something to see that collar and handkerchief **pin a bevy of quail** in a clump of locusts and remain rigid and immovable till we had **flushed** the birds.

Now and again the dog emitted the vari-colored light-flashes I have mentioned. The one thing, Paul explained, which he had not anticipated and which he doubted could be overcome.

"They're a large family," he said, "these sun dogs, wind dogs, rainbows, halos, and parhelia. They are produced by refraction of light from mineral and ice crystals, from mist, rain, spray, and no end of things; and I am afraid they are the penalty I must pay for transparency. I escaped Lloyd's shadow only to fetch up against the rainbow flash."

A couple of days later, before the entrance to Paul's laboratory, I encountered a terrible **stench**. So overpowering was it that it was easy to discover the source – a mass of **putrescent** matter on the doorstep which in general outlines resembled a dog.

Paul was startled when he investigated my find. It was his invisible dog, or rather, what had been his invisible dog, for it was now plainly visible. It had been playing about but a few minutes before in all health and strength. Closer examination revealed that the skull had been crushed by some heavy blow. While it was strange that the animal should have been killed, the inexplicable thing was that it should so quickly decay.

"The reagents I injected into its system were harmless," Paul explained. "Yet they were powerful, and it appears that when death comes they force practically instantaneous disintegration. Remarkable! Most remarkable! Well, the only thing is not to die. They do not harm so long as one lives. But I do wonder who smashed in that dog's head."

Light, however, was thrown upon this when a frightened housemaid brought the news that Gaffer Bedshaw had that very morning, not more than an hour back, gone violently insane, and was strapped down at home, in the huntsman's lodge, where he raved of a battle with a ferocious and gigantic beast that he had encountered in the Tichlorne pasture. He claimed that the thing, whatever it was, was invisible, that with his own eyes he had seen that it was invisible; wherefore his tearful wife and daughters shook their heads, and wherefore he but **waxed** the more violent, and the gardener and the coachman tightened the straps by another hole.

Nor, while Paul Tichlorne was thus successfully mastering the problem of invisibility, was Lloyd Inwood a whit behind. I went over in answer to a message of his to come and see how he was getting on. Now his laboratory occupied an isolated situation in the midst of his vast grounds. It was built in a pleasant little glade, surrounded on all sides by a dense forest growth, and was to be gained by way of a winding and erratic path. But I have travelled that path so often as to know every foot of it, and conceive my surprise when I came upon the glade and found no laboratory. The quaint shed structure with its red sandstone chimney was not. Nor did it look as if it ever had been. There were no signs of ruin, no debris, nothing.

Track 2

Track 3

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I started to walk across what had once been its site. "This," I said to myself, "should be where the step went up to the door." Barely were the words out of my mouth when I stubbed my toe on some obstacle, pitched forward, and butted my head into something that FELT very much like a door. I reached out my hand. It WAS a door. I found the knob and turned it. And at once, as the door swung inward on its hinges, the whole interior of the laboratory impinged upon my vision. Greeting Lloyd, I closed the door and backed up the path a few paces. I could see nothing of the building. Returning and opening the door, at once all the furniture and every detail of the interior were visible. It was indeed startling, the sudden transition from void to light and form and color.

"What do you think of it, eh?" Lloyd asked, wringing my hand. "I slapped a couple of coats of absolute black on the outside yesterday afternoon to see how it worked. How's your head? You bumped it pretty solidly, I imagine."

"Never mind that," he interrupted my congratulations. "I've something better for you to do."

Track 4

Glossary

aver (formal) to insist that something is true

ail (old-fashioned) to make someone feel ill

awry not functioning correctly

famous (old-fashioned) very good

cottonwoods a North-American tree that has seeds covered in fibres that look like cotton wool (cotton wool: soft cotton, usually white, used for cleaning a cut or removing make-up)

sore perplexed (old-fashioned) extremely worried and confused

malady (old-fashioned) illness

vari-colored of many colours (notice the American-English spelling of *colour*)

jowls the loose skin on an animal's cheeks and around its mouth

pointer a breed of hunting dog

vouchsafed (old-fashioned) offered

cavorting playing

pin a bevy of quail (hunting term) to find and indicate the location of a bird, in this case a group of quail (quail: small birds that people shoot and eat)

flush (hunting term) make the bird come out of the bush

stench very strong and unpleasant smell

putrescent (formal) decaying and smelling unpleasant

wax (mainly literary) to talk a lot in a way that expresses emotion