

The Shadow and the Flash

By Jack London

Part 5

Author: Daniel Barber

Level: Advanced

Age: Young adults / Adults

Aims: In this lesson the students will:

1. look back over the story so far;
2. practise listening for gist;
3. listen for detail;
4. discuss the tragic end of the story;
5. study the effect of long vowels on atmosphere;
6. decide on the opening and closing scenes of a film adaptation.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (long extract), Track 2 (short extract), Track 3 (the rest of Part 5) and Track 4 (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 this last part of the story, Paul and Lloyd finally confront each other.

Warmer

Aims: to look back over the story so far; to predict what will happen next

1. Put the students into small groups. Ask them to look at the title of the story and think about its relevance to a. the discoveries, b. the relationship between Lloyd and Paul, and c. anything else in the story.

Field comments from the groups and use the comments to recap on the story so far.

2. Write the last sentence from Part 4 on the board:

"I've something better for you to do."

Elicit answers from the whole class to the following questions:

1. Who is speaking?
2. Who is he speaking to?
3. Where are they?
4. What do you think "something better" refers to?

Key: 1. Lloyd; 2. the narrator; 3. at Lloyd's shed in the wood; 4. students' own answers to be confirmed as they listen to the first instalment

Listening for gist

Aim: to practise listening for gist

1. Tell students they are going to listen to the first instalment of the last part of the story.

Play Track 1 and ask students to check their answers to the last question in stage 2 of the Warmer: *What do you think "something better" refers to?* Ask them to make notes of any sensations the narrator describes as he helps Lloyd with his final experiment.

2. Ask the students to compare their notes in pairs or small groups and ask them to consider this question: In what way are the narrator's reactions a. similar to, and b. different from his reaction to Paul's invisible dog?

Field answers from the group.

Key: a. *His eyes and his eyesight are affected.*; b. *There's a strange atmosphere.*

Activity 1

Aim: to listen for detail; to raise awareness of the quality of long vowels; to consider how the long vowel sounds add to the atmosphere of the story

1. Write these adjectives on the board: *gloomy, deep* and *dark*. Check that the students know the meaning of *gloomy* (*dark in a way that makes you feel sad or afraid*). Ask them to sound the words out loud and ask them what is similar about the vowel sounds in the words (**Answer:** They are all long vowel sounds).

2. Tell the students that they are going to listen to a short extract from the story and that they should make a note of the nouns

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that go with the adjectives. Play Track 2.

3. Ask the students what the extract is describing (**Answer:** the effect that Lloyd's invisibility has on the narrator). Ask them what the overall atmosphere is.

4. Give them the worksheet. Ask them to look at the extract and identify any other words that echo the long vowel sounds in *deep*, *dark* and *gloomy*.

Key: *deep* /i:/ – *me*, *feelings*, *feel*; *dark* /ɑ:/ – *are*; *gloomy* /u:/ – *loom*

Ask the students to guess the meaning of *loom* from the context (*the feeling that something is nearby, even though you can't see it*).

5. Ask them to work in pairs and practise reading the extract out loud, adding as much 'gloomy' atmosphere as they can.

Activity 2

Aims: to predict the end of the story; to listen for gist; to discuss the tragic end

1. Ask the students to turn over the worksheet (they must not see the questions in Activity 2 yet). Then ask them to look back at their predictions from the last lesson. Tell them that they are about to listen to the end of the story. Which prediction do they think is most likely to be accurate? Why?

2. Write the three phrases below on the board.

- *a final duel to the death*
- *one rival triumphs over the other*
- *an unexpected tragic accident*

Check that the students understand what each scenario means by eliciting explanations and examples from the whole class. Ask the students which best describes their prediction. Then ask them to listen to the story and decide which one best summarizes the end. Play Track 3.

3. Ask the students to work in small groups to retell what happened, as they understand it. Refer them to Activity 2 on the worksheet. Ask them to use the questions to help them remember. Clarify any misunderstandings or doubts by eliciting explanations and clarifications from the class. Then give the students the transcript and let them check their answers.

Key: 1. *on a tennis court at Paul's house*; 2. *Paul and the narrator*; 3. *Lloyd hits back the tennis ball and then the narrator notices his shadow.*; 4. *They fight to the death.*; 5. *All traces are destroyed by the men's families.*

4. When the students have finished checking their answers, write these two questions on the board:

- *Do you think the narrator could have done anything to stop the two men?*
- *What would you have done in his situation?*

Ask the students to consider the questions in their groups and think of as many possibilities as they can. Field answers from the groups and ask them who or what they think was ultimately responsible for the death of the two men.

Activity 3

Aims: to review the whole story; to discuss the opening and closing scenes of a film version of the story.

1. Ask the students to think back to the beginning of the story. What scenes in particular do they remember? Make a list of the scenes on the board.

2. Tell the class that they are going to make a 'film' of the story. Put them into small groups and refer them to Activity 3 on the worksheet. Read through the instructions together, and then monitor and help as the groups make their decisions and write their scripts.

3. Ask each group to present their work to the whole class. Vote on the best ideas.

Follow-up tasks

1. Suggest that the students go back over the transcripts and re-read the whole story. Ask them to decide who they would cast in the roles of the three main characters if they were making a film adaptation. Ask them to write a short text explaining their choices.

2. Ask the students to imagine a one-minute trailer for the film, *The Shadow and the Flash*. Ask them to write the 'copy', or text, for the trailer. Suggest that they might first like to look at some other trailers online to get a feel for style.

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Activity 1

Long vowel sounds

“When you are near me I have feelings similar to those produced by dank warehouses, gloomy crypts, and deep mines. And as sailors feel the loom of the land on dark nights, so I think I feel the loom of your body. But it is all very vague and intangible.”

Activity 2

Use the questions to help you remember what happened in the last part of the story.

1. Where does the final scene take place?
2. Who arrives first?
3. How do we know that a third person has arrived?
4. What happens between the two rivals?
5. What happens to their discoveries?

Activity 3

Imagine that you are preparing a film adaptation of the story.

1. Discuss the following points.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| The opening scene | What scene would you choose? Why? What exactly would you show? |
| The closing scene | What would you choose as the closing shots of the film? Why? |
| Voice-over | Would you let the actions speak for themselves or would you add the voice of the narrator? Why? |

2. Imagine that you have decided to include a voice-over. Answer the questions and write the script.

What would the narrator say ...

- a. ... at the beginning of the film?

- b. ... at the end of the film?

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Track 1

While he talked he began to strip, and when he stood naked before me he thrust a pot and brush into my hand and said, "Here, give me a coat of this."

It was an oily, **shellac**-like stuff, which spread quickly and easily over the skin and dried immediately.

"Merely preliminary and precautionary," he explained when I had finished; "but now for the real stuff."

I picked up another pot he indicated, and glanced inside, but could see nothing.

"It's empty," I said.

"Stick your finger in it."

I obeyed, and was aware of a sensation of cool moistness. On withdrawing my hand I glanced at the forefinger, the one I had immersed, but it had disappeared. I moved and knew from the alternate tension and relaxation of the muscles that I moved it, but it defied my sense of sight. To all appearances I had been **shorn** of a finger; nor could I get any visual impression of it till I extended it under the skylight and saw its shadow plainly blotted on the floor.

Lloyd chuckled. "Now spread it on, and keep your eyes open."

I dipped the brush into the seemingly empty pot, and gave him a long stroke across his chest. With the passage of the brush the living flesh disappeared from beneath. I covered his right leg, and he was a one-legged man defying all laws of gravitation. And so, stroke by stroke, member by member, I painted Lloyd Inwood into nothingness. It was a creepy experience, and I was glad when **naught** remained in sight but his burning black eyes, poised apparently unsupported in mid-air.

"I have a refined and harmless solution for them," he said. "A fine spray with an air-brush, and **presto!** I am not."

This deftly accomplished, he said, "Now I shall move about, and do you tell me what sensations you experience."

"In the first place, I cannot see you," I said, and I could hear his gleeful laugh from the midst of the emptiness. "Of course," I continued, "you cannot escape your shadow, but that was to be expected. When you pass between my eye and an object, the object disappears, but so unusual and incomprehensible is its disappearance that it seems to me as though my eyes had blurred. When you move rapidly, I experience a bewildering succession of blurs. The blurring sensation makes my eyes ache and my brain tired."

"Have you any other warnings of my presence?" he asked.

"No, and yes," I answered. "When you are near me I have feelings similar to those produced by dank warehouses, gloomy crypts, and deep mines. And as sailors feel the loom of the land on dark nights, so I think I feel the loom of your body. But it is all very vague and intangible."

Track 2

Long we talked that last morning in his laboratory; and when I turned to go, he put his unseen hand in mine with nervous grip, and said, "Now I shall conquer the world!" And I could not dare to tell him of Paul Tichlorne's equal success.

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Track 3

At home I found a note from Paul, asking me to come up immediately, and it was high noon when I came spinning up the driveway **on my wheel**. Paul called me from the tennis court, and I dismounted and went over. But the court was empty. As I stood there, gaping open-mouthed, a tennis ball struck me on the arm, and as I turned about, another whizzed past my ear. For **ought** I could see of my assailant, they came whirling at me from out of space, and right well was I peppered with them. But when the balls already flung at me began to come back for a second whack, I realized the situation. Seizing a racquet and keeping my eyes open, I quickly saw a rainbow flash appearing and disappearing and darting over the ground. I took out after it, and when I laid the racquet upon it for a half-dozen stout blows, Paul's voice rang out:

"Enough! Enough! Oh! Ouch! Stop! You're landing on my naked skin, you know! Ow! O-w-w! I'll be good! I'll be good! I only wanted you to see my metamorphosis," he said ruefully, and I imagined he was rubbing his hurts.

A few minutes later we were playing tennis--a handicap on my part, for I could have no knowledge of his position save when all the angles between himself, the sun, and me, were in proper conjunction. Then he flashed, and only then. But the flashes were more brilliant than the rainbow--purest blue, most delicate violet, brightest yellow, and all the intermediary shades, with the **scintillant** brilliancy of the diamond, dazzling, blinding, **iridescent**.

But in the midst of our play I felt a sudden cold chill, reminding me of deep mines and gloomy crypts, such a chill as I had experienced that very morning. The next moment, close to the net, I saw a ball rebound in mid-air and empty space, and at the same instant, a score of feet away, Paul Tichlorne emitted a rainbow flash. It could not be he from whom the ball had rebounded, and with sickening dread I realized that Lloyd Inwood had come upon the scene. To make sure, I looked for his shadow, and there it was, a shapeless blotch the girth of his body, (the sun was overhead), moving along the ground. I remembered his threat, and felt sure that all the long years of rivalry were about to culminate in uncanny battle.

I cried a warning to Paul, and heard a snarl as of a wild beast, and an answering snarl. I saw the dark blotch move swiftly across the court, and a brilliant burst of vari-colored light moving with equal swiftness to meet it; and then shadow and flash came together and there was the sound of unseen blows. The net went down before my frightened eyes. I sprang toward the fighters, crying:

"For God's sake!"

But their locked bodies **smote** against my knees, and I was overthrown.

"You keep out of this, old man!" I heard the voice of Lloyd Inwood from out of the emptiness. And then Paul's voice crying, "Yes, we've had enough of peacemaking!"

From the sound of their voices I knew they had separated. I could not locate Paul, and so approached the shadow that represented Lloyd. But from the other side came a stunning blow on the point of my jaw, and I heard Paul scream angrily, "Now will you keep away?"

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Then they came together again, the impact of their blows, their groans and gasps, and the swift flashings and shadow-movings telling plainly of the deadliness of the struggle.

I shouted for help, and Gaffer Bedshaw came running into the court. I could see, as he approached, that he was looking at me strangely, but he collided with the combatants and was hurled headlong to the ground. With despairing shriek and a cry of "O Lord, I've got 'em!" he sprang to his feet and tore madly out of the court.

I could do nothing, so I sat up, fascinated and powerless, and watched the struggle. The noonday sun beat down with dazzling brightness on the naked tennis court. And it was naked. All I could see was the blotch of shadow and the rainbow flashes, the dust rising from the invisible feet, the earth tearing up from beneath the straining foot-grips, and the wire screen bulge once or twice as their bodies hurled against it. That was all, and after a time even that ceased. There were no more flashes, and the shadow had become long and stationary; and I remembered their set boyish faces when they clung to the roots in the deep coolness of the pool.

They found me an hour afterward. Some **inkling** of what had happened got to the servants and they quitted the Tichlorne service in a body. Gaffer Bedshaw never recovered from the second shock he received, and is confined in a madhouse, hopelessly incurable. The secrets of their marvellous discoveries died with Paul and Lloyd, both laboratories being destroyed by grief-stricken relatives. As for myself, I no longer care for chemical research, and science is a tabooed topic in my household. I have returned to my roses. Nature's colors are good enough for me.

Glossary

shellac a type of varnish

shorn (infinitive: *shear*) to remove part of something by cutting or breaking it

naught (old-fashioned) nothing

presto used for emphasizing how suddenly something happens or changes

dank unpleasant because it is cold and has walls and floors that are slightly wet

on my wheel (old-fashioned) on my bicycle

ought (old-fashioned) all

scintillant flashing

iridescent showing changing colours in different kinds of light

smote (old-fashioned; forms: *smite*, *smote*, *smitten*) to hit someone or something very hard

inkling a slight idea or small piece of information that tells you that something might exist or be happening