

## Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad

By M R James

### Part 4

**Author:** Daniel Barber

**Level:** Advanced

**Age:** Young adults / Adults

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

1. recap the story so far and predict what happens after Parkins blows the whistle;
2. listen for gist;
3. talk about their sleep patterns and habits;
4. listen for detail in order to correct an erroneous text;
5. explore the use of onomatopoeic words in the text;
6. describe and interpret dreams.

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (first part of Part 4), Track 2 (the rest of Part 4), Track 3 (various extracts) and Track 4 (full audio) downloaded from onestopenglish; one copy of the full transcript per student

**Summary:** The story is set in Burnstow, a seaside town on the east coast of England. It tells the story of how a university professor makes an interesting discovery with disturbing consequences. It is told in seven parts. In Part 4, Parkins's curiosity gets the better of him and he spends a wakeful night disturbed by distressing visions and morbid thoughts.

### Warmer

**Aims:** to recall the story so far; to predict some of the events in Part 4

1. Get your students into pairs or small groups to retell the story so far.
2. When they have had time to recall what they can, get the whole class together to retell the story in as much detail as possible. Prompt for details by asking questions.
3. Write on the board the end of the previous instalment:

"Who is this who is coming?' Well, the best way to find out is evidently to whistle for him."

Ask the students what is going to happen next (*Parkins is going to blow on the whistle*) and what they think the effect of blowing on it may be. If they wrote the journal entry at the end of the last lesson (Part 3), you could ask them to recap those ideas.

### Listening for gist

**Aim:** to listen for gist and to check predictions

1. Explain that the students are going to listen to the first part of Part 4 and answer this question:  
What is the effect of blowing on the whistle?  
Play Track 1.

**Key:** *It creates a mysterious sound; it forms an image in Parkins's mind; a very strong wind starts outside, which pushes open the window and blows out the candles; the noise wakes up at least one person in the inn; the wind continues to blow for a long time.*

2. Get the students' answers and ask whose predictions were closest.

### Activity 1

**Aim:** to engage the students in the themes of insomnia and nightmares in preparation for the next listening

1. Explain that, in the extract they are going to listen to next, Parkins goes to bed. Ask the students to describe the kind of night they think he will have. Now, get the class into small groups of between two and four students. Hand out the worksheet and direct their attention to the questions in Activity 1. Give them a few minutes to ask each other the questions. You might need to check the meaning of *insomnia*, *nightmare* and *remedy* with them before they start.
2. In whole-class feedback, after they have discussed all their answers, try to identify any common elements in their nightmares, such as falling or being chased.

## Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad

By M R James

### Part 4

#### Activity 2

**Aim:** to listen for detail

1. Point to Activity 2 on the worksheet. Explain that this is a summary of what they are about to listen to but that it contains errors – one per sentence. The first sentence has been corrected as an example and, to illustrate the activity clearly, you may want to elicit what the error might be in the second sentence while you have the attention of the whole class. Put them in pairs and ask them to predict what the other errors might be. Explain that they are not looking for grammatical or linguistic errors but errors in the facts of the story.

2. When the students have familiarized themselves with the text, allow them to listen to the story and confirm the corrections. Play Track 2.

3. Go through the text sentence by sentence, eliciting the students' ideas. Don't tell them whether they are correct just yet.

4. Give the students a copy of the transcript to check their answers.

You may wish to compare Parkins's experience with any the students have had, to round off the activity.

**Key:** *It's very [It isn't] clear to Parkins why he can't get to sleep. He starts to worry about his work [health / heart and other organs]. He feels lonely because he thinks that he is the only person in the whole hotel who is awake. [He feels slightly better because he can hear someone else is awake.] When he tries to sleep again, he is disturbed by unpleasant images in his mind, which don't stop, even [except] when he opens his eyes.*

*He sees a beach scene that looks a little [exactly] like the beach he walked along that day. It is sunny [dark / windy / raining]. He can see a man walking [running] along the beach and climbing over the groyne. The man's face looks very tired [frightened]. Each groyne is more difficult to climb over than the last, until finally he stops and crouches ~~on~~ [under] one.*

Now, Parkins notices the reason the man is

*running; someone or something is running after him, slowly but regularly [fast and irregularly], getting closer and closer. Parkins can't see it in any detail, despite his best efforts. [He doesn't want to see it because it is too frightening.] When the figure finally reaches the man, it attacks him [Parkins opens his eyes because he is too frightened].*

*Parkins gives up trying to sleep and instead decides to smoke a cigarette [light a candle] and read a book. When he tries to light a candle, he sees a rat running away [he hears something like a rat]. Eventually, he feels relaxed enough to sleep again, so he puts the candle out and falls asleep [and he falls asleep without putting out the candle].*

#### Activity 3

**Aims:** to raise awareness of onomatopoeic words; to guess meaning from the sound of a word

1. Elicit from the class some of the sounds that are mentioned in the story they have just listened to, Tracks 1 and 2 (*the whistle; the wind; the window closing; a neighbour moving in his room; the sound of the match on the box; the 'creatures of the night'*).

2. Explain that the students are going to listen to some short extracts from the story that mention sounds. Ask them to look at Activity 3a on the worksheet, listen to the extracts and tick the verbs that they hear. Play Track 3, then get the students' answers. Some of the verbs sound very similar, so make the answers clear by writing them on the board.

**Key:** *stump; growl; moan; rustle; flutter; scrape; scurry*

3. Tell the class that they are going to match the words they heard to their definitions. First, encourage them to think about how the words sound and how that may relate to their meaning. A good example to illustrate this with the class beforehand is *scratch* (this is not one of the words they heard). The final '-tch' sound in *scratch* echoes the noise it describes. Students complete Activity 3b.

**Key:** 1. *flutter*; 2. *stump*; 3. *growl*; 4. *moan*; 5. *rustle*; 6. *scrape*; 7. *scurry*

## Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad

By M R James

### Part 4

**Teacher's note:** This area of the language system is more complex than just onomatopoeia; several theories exist that try to describe how vocal sounds such as *scr-* and *-mp* have a meaning of their own. They may explain why there are similar-sounding words with similar meanings, such as *glint*, *gleam* and *glow*. For reference, this area of linguistics is known as sound symbolism or phonosemantics.

### Role-play

**Aim:** to describe a common nightmare or bad night and discuss its meaning

1. Ask the students to imagine that they have a recurring dream that is bothering them so much that they decide to visit a dream analyst. Explain that they are going to take turns in pairs to analyse each other's dreams. You could discuss whether they think dream analysis is a genuine profession, to what extent it is psychology or clairvoyance and so on, to help get them into their roles.
2. Give the students a few minutes to make notes about the dream they are going to describe. This could be a genuine dream they have had, an amalgam of several dreams or a totally invented one.
3. Pair the students up, preferably with classmates that they didn't work with in Activity 1. They carry out the 'consultations'. Monitor and make notes of any interesting use of language.
4. When they have finished interpreting each other's dreams, have them share what they learned about their dreams. Ask whether they think their analyst gave a convincing response, who had the most interesting dream etc. Give any feedback that you have about their language use.

You might want to explore dream interpretation further. For example, there are many websites that provide interpretations of common themes in nightmares; if you have online access in class, you could ask the students to investigate the meaning of their dreams. Alternatively, you could ask them to do this in their own time (see follow-up tasks 1 and 2).

### Follow-up tasks

1. Ask the students to keep a dream journal in English for a few days. In it, they should keep a record of their dreams (good and bad) and comment on what they might mean, if anything.
2. Ask the students to research the meaning of common dream elements. In the following lesson, compare what they've found and discuss whether there is any truth in dream symbolism.
3. Ask the students to look up the words from Activity 3 that were *not* in the story and compare their meanings with the similar-sounding words that *were* in the story. They may also want to look for other words describing sounds in the transcript for Part 4.

## Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad

By M R James

### Part 4

#### Activity 1

Ask your classmates the questions below.

- Do you remember your dreams?
- Do you often have nightmares?
- Do you ever have recurring dreams?
- Do you sometimes suffer from insomnia? Why can't you sleep?
- What do you do when you can't get to sleep?
- Do you have any remedies for sleepless nights?

#### Activity 2

Read a summary of the next part of the story. In each sentence of the summary, there is a piece of information that is not correct according to the story. Decide what the errors could be.

#### It isn't

It's very clear to Parkins why he can't get to sleep. He starts to worry about his work. He feels lonely because he thinks that he is the only person in the whole hotel who is awake. When he tries to sleep again, he is disturbed by unpleasant images in his mind, which don't stop, even when he opens his eyes.

He sees a beach scene that looks a little like the beach he walked along that day. It is sunny. He can clearly see a man walking along the beach and climbing over the groyne. The man's face looks very tired. Each groyne is more difficult to climb over than the last, until finally he stops and crouches on one.

Now, Parkins notices the reason the man is running; someone or something is running after him, slowly but regularly, getting closer and closer. Parkins can't see it in any detail, despite his best efforts. When the figure finally reaches the man, it attacks him.

Parkins gives up trying to sleep and instead decides to smoke a cigarette and read a book. When he tries to light a candle, he sees a rat running away. Eventually, he feels relaxed enough to sleep again, so he puts the candle out and falls asleep.

## Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad

By M R James

### Part 4

#### Activity 3

a. All these verbs describe sounds or movements that make sounds. Listen to the extracts and tick the verbs that you hear.

- |                                |                                  |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> stump | <input type="checkbox"/> shuffle | <input type="checkbox"/> scrape  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> stamp | <input type="checkbox"/> rustle  | <input type="checkbox"/> scratch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> growl | <input type="checkbox"/> flutter | <input type="checkbox"/> scurry  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> groan | <input type="checkbox"/> flitter | <input type="checkbox"/> hurry   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> moan  |                                  |                                  |

b. Match the words you heard to their definitions.

- to move up and down or from side to side with short, quick, light movements, or to make something move in this way. Small birds' wings and leaves often do this \_\_\_\_\_
- to walk heavily or clumsily \_\_\_\_\_
- to make a frightening or unfriendly low noise, like an animal  
\_\_\_\_\_
- to make a long low sound because of pain, sadness or pleasure  
\_\_\_\_\_
- to make a sound like the one that leaves or sheets of paper make when they move \_\_\_\_\_
- to rub a sharp edge or tool against a surface \_\_\_\_\_
- to move fast with small quick steps \_\_\_\_\_

## Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad

By M R James

### Part 4

Track 1

He blew tentatively and stopped suddenly, startled and yet pleased at the note he had elicited. It had a quality of infinite distance in it, and, soft as it was, he somehow felt it must be audible for miles round. It was a sound, too, that seemed to have the power (which many scents possess) of forming pictures in the brain. He saw quite clearly for a moment a vision of a wide, dark expanse at night, with a fresh wind blowing, and **in the midst** a lonely figure – how employed, he could not tell. Perhaps he would have seen more had not the picture been broken by the sudden surge of a gust of wind against his casement, so sudden that it made him look up, just in time to see the white **glint** of a sea-bird's wing somewhere outside the dark **panes**. The sound of the whistle had so fascinated him that he could not help trying it once more, this time more boldly. The note was little, if at all, louder than before, and repetition broke the illusion – no picture followed, as he had half hoped it might. "But what is this? Goodness! what force the wind can get up in a few minutes! What a tremendous gust! There! I knew that window-fastening was no use! Ah! I thought so – both candles out. It's enough to tear the room to pieces."

The first thing was to get the window shut. While you might count twenty Parkins was struggling with the small casement, and felt almost as if he were pushing back a sturdy burglar, so strong was the pressure. It **slackened** all at once and the window banged to and latched itself. Now to relight the candles and see what damage, if any, had been done. No, nothing seemed amiss; no glass even was broken in the casement. But the noise had evidently **roused** at least one member of the household: the Colonel was to be heard stumping in his stockinged feet on the floor above, and growling.

Track 3

Quickly as it had risen, the wind did not fall at once. On it went, moaning and rushing past the house, at times rising to a cry so desolate that, as Parkins disinterestedly said, it might have made fanciful people feel quite uncomfortable; even the unimaginative, he thought after a quarter of an hour, might be happier without it.

Track 2

Whether it was the wind, or the excitement of golf, or of the researches in the preceptory that kept Parkins awake, he was not sure. Awake he remained, in any case, long enough to fancy (as I am afraid I often do myself under such conditions) that he was the victim of all manner of fatal disorders: he would lie counting the beats of his heart, convinced that it was going to stop work every moment, and would entertain grave suspicions of his lungs, brain, liver, etc – suspicions which he was sure would be **dispelled** by the return of daylight, but which until then refused to be put aside. He found a little **vicarious** comfort in the idea that someone else was in the same boat. A near neighbour (in the darkness it was not easy to tell his direction) was **tossing** and rustling in his bed, too.

The next stage was that Parkins shut his eyes and determined to give sleep every chance. Here again over-excitement asserted itself in another form – that of making pictures. **Experto crede**, pictures do come to the closed eyes of one trying to sleep, and are often so little to his taste that he must open his eyes and disperse them.

Parkins's experience on this occasion was a very distressing one. He found that the picture which presented itself to him was continuous. When he opened his eyes, of course, it went; but when he shut them once more it framed itself afresh, and acted itself

## Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad

By M R James

## Part 4

out again, neither quicker nor slower than before. What he saw was this:

A long stretch of shore – shingle edged by sand, and intersected at short intervals with black groynes running down to the water – a scene, in fact, so like that of his afternoon's walk that, in the absence of any landmark, it could not be distinguished therefrom. The light was obscure, conveying an impression of gathering storm, late winter evening, and slight cold rain. On this bleak stage at first no actor was visible. When, in the distance, a **bobbing** black object appeared; a moment more, and it was a man running, jumping, clambering over the groynes, and every few seconds looking eagerly back. The nearer he came the more obvious it was that he was not only anxious, but even terribly frightened, though his face was not to be distinguished. He was, moreover, almost at the end of his strength. On he came; each successive obstacle seemed to cause him more difficulty than the last. "Will he get over this next one?" thought Parkins; "it seems a little higher than the others." Yes; half climbing, half throwing himself, he did get over, and fell all in a heap on the other side (the side nearest to the spectator). There, as if really unable to get up again, he remained **crouching** under the groyne, looking up in an attitude of painful anxiety.

So far no cause whatever for the fear of the runner had been shown; but now there began to be seen, far up the shore, a little **flicker** of something light-coloured moving **to and fro** with great swiftness and irregularity. Rapidly growing larger, it, too, declared itself as a figure in pale, fluttering **draperies**, ill-defined. There was something about its motion which made Parkins very unwilling to see it at close quarters. It would stop, raise arms, bow itself toward the sand, then run **stooping** across the beach to the water-edge and back again; and then, rising upright, once more continue its course forward at a speed that was startling and terrifying. The moment came when the pursuer was hovering about from left to right only a few yards beyond the groyne where the runner lay in hiding. After two or three ineffectual castings **hither and thither** it came to a stop, stood upright, with arms raised high, and then **darted** straight forward towards the groyne.

It was at this point that Parkins always failed in his resolution to keep his eyes shut. With many misgivings as to **incipient** failure of eyesight, overworked brain, excessive smoking, and so on, he finally resigned himself to light his candle, get out a book, and pass the night waking, rather than be tormented by this persistent panorama, which he saw clearly enough could only be a morbid reflection of his walk and his thoughts on that very day.

The scraping of match on box and the glare of light must have startled some creatures of the night – rats or what not – which he heard scurry across the floor from the side of his bed with much rustling. Dear, dear! the match is out! Fool that it is! But the second one burnt better, and a candle and book were duly **procured**, over which Parkins **pored** till sleep of a wholesome kind came upon him, and that in no long space. For about the first time in his orderly and prudent life he forgot to blow out the candle, and when he was called next morning at eight there was still a flicker in the socket and a sad mess of **guttered grease** on the top of the little table.

## Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad

By M R James

### Part 4

#### Glossary

**in the midst** (formal) in the scene

**glint** to shine with quick flashes of light

**pane** a flat piece of glass in a window or door

**slacken** to become looser

**rouse** (formal) to wake someone up

**dispel** to get rid of unpleasant feelings or false beliefs

**vicarious** experienced through the actions of other people

**toss** (normally in the phrase *toss and turn*) to be restless in bed and unable to sleep, or to sleep badly, especially because something is worrying you

**experto crede** (Latin) 'believe someone who has had experience in the matter'

**bob** to move up and down with short regular movements, especially on water that is rising and falling

**crouch** to move your body close to the ground by bending your knees and leaning forwards slightly

**flicker** a sudden small movement

**to and fro** in one direction and then back again

**draperies** cloth, and things made from cloth

**stoop** to bend the top half of your body downwards

**hither and thither** (literary) in many different directions

**dart** to make a sudden quick movement somewhere

**incipient** (formal) just beginning to appear or develop

**procure** (formal) to obtain something, especially with effort or difficulty

**pore over** to study or read something carefully and in a lot of detail

**guttered grease** the wax that has melted from a candle as it burns