The Mystery of the Colour Thief
by Ewa Jozefkowicz

He came out of nowhere, a man in the smoke. He was nothing more than a shadow at first, a smudge of black in the grey. But as he loomed closer, he grew bigger, became more solid. My heart was a drum. He was shouting at me, but the sound bounced off my ears in eerie echoes. His long arms reached out. He was so close that I could smell him - a mix of sweat and burning rubber. He leaned in...

3.05 a.m.



The luminous figures stared back at me in the dark. The glow of a street lamp seeped through the wooden slats of my blinds. It was quiet. The man had gone. A nightmare. Though somewhere in the depths of my mind I knew that it was more than a nightmare.

That morning I was late getting ready because Milo wouldn't come in from the garden. He'd been leaping around like a maniac, chasing a tiny vole that he'd found. Eventually I managed to get him indoors and I waited for my best friend, Lou, while grabbing scraps of breakfast. Dad had gone to work already, leaving me a note on the kitchen table:

Diz, see you after school. Have a good day x.

Lou usually arrived at 8.45 a.m. on the dot, so we didn't have to rush, but it was almost 8.50 a.m., and she wasn't here. She must have been running late herself and decided to go in on her own. I couldn't wait any longer.

I broke into a run as soon as I was outside. My feet hit the pavement in sync with the beating of my heart. The houses on either side of Gulliver Avenue shifted and swayed, and my ears ached inside from the sharp nip in the early autumn air. Clusters of people huddled at the bus stop passed me in a burst of charcoal greys, the white and black of offices and banks and traffic merged into a single, moving stream.

I ran and ran until I reached the finish line of the school gates, my arms propped against the railings, my chest ready to burst. The bell had gone. Even the usual crowds of sixth formers with their slouchy rucksacks and rolled-up blazer sleeves had disappeared inside. I walked into the empty entrance hall.

Retrieval questions

1. What time of year was it?
2. Is Lou a boy or a girl?
3. Who was 'a smudge of black in the grey'?

Inference questions.

1. Who was Milo? – Support your answer with evidence from the text.
2. Was the narrator late for school? – Support your answer with evidence from the text.
3. Is it a cold day? – Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Choice questions

1. Which word in the text means 'radiating light'?
2. Which word in the text means 'to gather in a close group'?
3. What does the phrase 'in sync' mean?
4. What does the author mean in the line 'the finishing line of the school gates'?
5. The author uses a metaphor in paragraph one can you identify it?
6. The author uses short sentences in paragraph two – what effect does this have on the reader?

Challenge question

Write your own description of a mysterious figure. Use paragraph one to help you.

Crafty was listening to the whispering from his brothers' graves.

He sat at the three-legged table, watching the shadows slither slowly towards him and staring at the far wall of the darkening cellar. Leaning against that far wall was a tall, decrepit, narrow cupboard, which without the wall's support would long ago have collapsed. Once it had been well stocked with food. Now the cupboard was bare.

Crafty had checked it every hour or so, but whenever he'd carefully pulled back the wooden doors, groaning in agony upon their rusty hinges, it was empty. He'd left the cupboard doors open now to save himself the trouble of checking, but he was sure it would never fill itself again. The magic controlling it – a porter spell that instantly sent objects over long distances – had finally faded and died. Benign Fey magic never lasted long here within the Shole; here, it was malevolent magic that ruled.

Crafty shuddered just to think of what lay outside the cellar walls, and then hunger made his stomach rumble. At least there was a fire to keep him warm and fend off a little of the cold and damp. All that remained now were glowing embers, the last of the wood from the beds of his dead brothers.

Taking his eyes off the cupboard for a moment, he glanced round at the large wooden bookcase on the other wall. One of the shelves was sagging under the weight of the books that were so precious to him. He'd read them over and over again to keep at bay the tedium of life in the cellar. Although many were gone now, fed to the fire to keep it burning, there were some he couldn't bear to sacrifice. These were the gardening books that had belonged to his mother.

A lump came to his throat as he thought of her. She'd been dead for almost a year now, but the pain of her loss was still there. He missed her badly, and the happy home she'd made for him and his brothers. But now he had to leave everything behind. He had to leave this refuge. He had to leave it or starve.

Crafty didn't want to go. He wanted to stay here, with the memories of his mother and his two dead brothers.

Brock and Ben had been twins, two years older than him. They had been good to him; looked after him – so it didn't scare him when they whispered to him. Sometimes he would kneel on the earthen floor and place his left ear close to their gravestones, listening carefully, trying to hear what they said. Sometimes he heard them calling his name.

'Crafty! Crafty! Crafty!' they whispered.

Aberrations – The Beast Awakens
by Joseph Delaney.

Words in Context

Find and highlight the following words in the text.

- Decrepit
- Benign
- Malevolent

What do you think they mean? What words could you replace them with?

Retrieval questions

1. Where is Crafty?
2. How long had his mother been dead?
3. Did Crafty want to leave the cellar?.

Inference questions

1. Has Crafty been in the cellar a long time? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
2. Find three pieces of evidence which suggests this a fantasy story.
3. Find evidence to suggest the cupboard had previously been magical..
4. What time of day is it? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Choice questions

1. What word in the text mean 'a place of safety'.
2. The author uses personification in the 2nd paragraph – can you identify it? What effect does it have?

Challenge question

What effect does the first line of the extract have on the reader?

William Wenton and the Secret Portal
by Bobby Peers

Pontus Dippel positioned his forehead against the scanner next to the lift. He was on his way to do one last pass before he left for the night. The items downstairs, collected from all corners of the globe, were some of the rarest and most valuable artefacts in the world. Now they were safely stored in the Depository for Impossible Archaeology – a secured room beneath the Institute for Post-Human Research.

A green beam flashed across Pontus' forehead and the lift opened with a *ding*. He entered and two guard-bots wheeled in behind him as the doors closed. When the lift opened again, Pontus proceeded down a long hallway and stopped in front of a steel-clad security door. Neither Pontus nor the guard-bots noticed a dark figure materializing behind them.

Pontus placed his forehead on another scanner.

"Welcome," a computerized voice said.

The door slid open with a quiet *swish*, and light spilled into the dark hallway. He was about to continue into the room when one of the guard-bots behind him said, "HALT!"

Pontus whipped around and spotted a figure coming towards them. A woman slowly stepped into the light. She had black, uncombed hair that draped like tentacles over her face, and rows of yellow teeth that snarled inside her grinning mouth. Something on the woman's left hand glinted in the dim light.

"HALT!" the guard-bot said again.

With one swift movement, the woman raised her metal hand and a beam shot out – vaporizing the two robots.

"No, it—it can't be…" Pontus said, holding up his hands in defence and backing away. "It's not possible. You're supposed to be … dead!"

The woman followed him into the room, closing the door behind them.

Words in Context

Find and highlight the following words in the text.

- Artefacts
- Materializing
- Proceeded

What do you think they mean? What word or phrase could you replace them with?.

Retrieval questions

1. Where is Pontus?
2. Where is the Depository for Impossible Archaeology?
3. How does the author describe the woman's hair?.

Inference questions

1. What do you think Pontus Dippel's job was? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
2. Find three pieces of evidence which suggests this a fantasy story.
3. What do you think the name 'Post-human' suggests about the story?
4. What do you think the guard bots look like? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Choice questions

1. What word in the text mean 'turned quickly'.
2. Why is the word 'swish' in an italic font?

Challenge question

Who do you think the woman is and how do you think Pontus Dippel knows her?

Spirit

By Sally Christie

'I saw a real live fairy,' he said, 'and I took it home in a bag.'

Well, what would *you* think if someone said that? If it was someone you knew – a friend – you might say they were joking. But nobody knew Matt Barker. No one could guess why he'd said what he'd said. Was he attention-seeking? Was he a show-off? He didn't look the type.

They wanted to laugh, but that was against the rules. You had to respect what anyone said. And yet they felt *he* was laughing at *them*. Was he trying to make them look stupid? Taking advantage?

The one thing they knew for certain was he wasn't telling the truth.

And that was the problem. In the Truth Game, you had to. If you chose to open your mouth (and you might well not, but if you did) the rule was that any words that came out of it had to be true. If people broke that, then they'd better not play. As Mr McGann was fond of saying, he could equally well have called it the Trust Game – because truth and trust are so closely connected.

When Mikey Maloney had told them last term he'd done seventy-nine keepy-uppies, round the back of his house, they'd all had to trust that he really had (he had) because no one – not even Dip Jay or Joe Black – had been there. And when Angela Poole had chosen to say that she'd watched her grandpa actually die, she was trusting them to be understanding and ask only sensitive questions. They did, but even so Ange started crying and Mr McGann stopped the game.

He had a right to do that. He could do that now. But he didn't want the new boy to think that that was all there was to it. He could feel the anger around him, and several people had put up their hands.

Joe Black, a nice enough lad, thought Mr McGann, but sparky: what would he ask? Something challenging. Something to show he was nobody's fool. *This fairy, where did you find it, then? How did you catch it?*

Retrieval questions

1. Who was Matt Barker?
2. What had Mikey Maloney told them last term?
3. Who asked the first question?

Inference questions

1. Who do you think Mr McGann is? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
2. Why do you think Mr McGann said that truth and trust were closely connected?
3. How do you know the 'Truth Game' had been played before?
4. Are Mikey Maloney and Joe Black friends? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
5. How old do you think Mikey Maloney is? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Choice questions

1. Mr McGann describes Joe Black as 'sparky' what do you think this means?
2. Why is the word 'he' and 'them' in an italic font?

Challenge question

What do you think will happen next in the story?