

Name:

Date:.....

The Beast Within

Episode One - Something lurking in the mist

6am. Fog swirled over the grounds like a cold veil. Somewhere within this mist rested Hornwood Primary School. Still. Dark. Silent. Unusually quiet: no bird dared sing.

“No birds today?” thought Pete Harrow to himself.

The spritely young superintendent felt the cold lick of a shiver pass over him. Something felt quite wrong this morning. Awake before his usual 5am alarm, Mr Harrow was now trudging along the back pathway, through the science garden and out into the grounds of the school. Gates screamed open, filling the void, the sound jumping around him in the grey murkiness.

**“No birds today?” ...
It did feel quite wrong this morning.**

His ears pricked up. There was movement; something close; close behind him. Too close.

He spun round, peering through the gloom. Branches clicked like breaking bones. A dark, slick shape crushed itself into the thick undergrowth beside the

pond, forcing aside the thick reeds. *Was something nesting there?*

Pete Harrow clicked on his torch. The beam sliced through the dense, colourless haze like a lighthouse beam. Whatever it was had now gone. “Flipping foxes rooting in my bins!” he said, grabbing a calming breath. He noticed two yellow beads of light glittering from the bushes - just street lamps in the distance. He frowned and turned away.

They blinked. The wet points of light followed him hungrily. A car engine masked a deep, angry groan.

Over at the bin yard, Mr Harrow noticed lids opened - but only on the food bins. A few splatters were spread across the ground, making a trail to the science garden. He reminded himself to check the cameras later to see where the fox had been. What a mess!

By 8am, a feeble sun had bothered to rise. Unable to let it go, Mr Harrow made his way over to the science garden to investigate. That was when he saw the footprint: twice the size of his own, long, sharp claws which had torn the soft flesh of the ground to shreds. *A fox? More like a wolf!*

The Beast Within - a murky monstrous mystery

Shadowy goings-on bring a sense of trepidation to a small primary school, when evidence of a wild beast lurking around the school grounds comes to the attention of the superintendent. Is this creature deadly? Why has it come to Hornwood, and what, exactly, does it want?

Name: Date:.....

Episode One: Something lurking in the mist - comprehension questions

Decode and explore language - identify phrases and words you do not know by highlighting them.

Word	Possible meaning	Actual meaning

Retrieval questions:

1. What time does the main character usually get up on a morning?
2. What word in the third paragraph suggests the school grounds are silent and empty?
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3. What does Mr Harrow mistake the eyes watching him for?
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Inference questions:

4. Why does the author mention that Mr Harrow was awoken before his alarm?
Because it suggests that
5. Why does Mr Harrow think: *A fox? More like a wolf!*
6. Why does Mr Harrow want to check the cameras? Tick the best reason:
 - To see if they are working.
 - To see if they can see through the fog.
 - To see if they have caught anything unusual.
 - To send the information to the police.
7. **Author's choice question:** Select one part of the text and explain how the writer has used powerful description. Why do you think they did this?
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The Beast Within

Episode Two - On the trail of the beast

An icy cold shiver swept over Pete's body as he stared at the footprints. What on earth could it be? A giant grizzly bear? Pete thought for a while and then dismissed the idea: it had been a thousand years since bears roamed England - there must be some other rational explanation. He followed the footprints to the playground where they stopped. He looked all around but could not see any further tracks.

A white car - Mr Storm's - approached the school gates. He saw Pete searching the playground and pipped his car horn. Pete turned around startled, as if woken from a dream. Mr Storm wound down his car window

"Is everything okay?"

"Yes, everything's fine" Pete replied in a quietly anxious voice.

The sun was starting to pierce through the mist, revealing the outline of a tree laying at the edge of the grass. Pete went to investigate. The roots were mangled, and the tree looked as if it had been wrenched out of the ground - as if it were only a twig. Only something with immense strength could have done this! Suddenly he heard footsteps approaching behind him; he felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up; an icy sweat formed on his brow. Instinctively, he spun round to face what? Mr Storm was standing there. Smiling.

"Hi?" the teacher said, pondering the superintendent's anxious face.

"You look like you've seen a ghost. What's happened here? The weather forecast

didn't mention anything about gales."

Pete stammered out "N-n-n-no..." starting to remember how he had been awakened early, not by gales, but by the sound of dogs barking and howling - it was a bark like he'd never heard before, a bark signalling fear.

The tree looked as if it had been wrenched out of the ground - as if it were only a twig.

"You'll have to get some help clearing up this mess," said Mr Storm as he turned and walked toward his classroom, absorbed in thinking of his plans for the day.

Pete wondered what force would be needed to break a tree from its roots. He tried to drag the tree to one side, but it wouldn't budge. He gave up and wondered if he should have told Mr Storm about the bins and the footprint. He hadn't wanted to make a fuss when there was probably a simple explanation - but what on earth could it be?

There was a shriek from the kitchen:

"Pete!" He ran over; the cook came out.

"We've had a break in! Look there's a broken window and see what a mess they've made: two dozen eggs over the floor and look at these big scratches on the worktops. There's muck all over the place!"

Pete looked down at the floor and saw that it wasn't just mud - these were footprints... The same footprints he had seen in the science garden!

What beastly events will follow? Find out more in the next chilling episode of ...

The Beast Within

Name: Date:.....

Episode Two: On the trail of the beast - comprehension questions

Decode and explore language - identify phrases and words you do not know by highlighting them.

Word	Possible meaning	Actual meaning

Retrieval questions:

- Who is the first person Pete talks to?
- Which word describes the state of the tree's roots?
- How does Mr Harrow know that only a strong creature could do this to the tree?
.....
.....

Inference questions:

- Why does Mr Storm sound his car horn?
- Why is Mr Harrow worried about what is happening at the school?
- Why does Mr Harrow remember the howling in the night? Tick the best reason:
 It made him tired.
 He realised why he had woken up earlier than usual.
 The animal was scaring him.
 He wanted to tell Mr Storm about it.
- Author's choice question:** Why do you think the writer has not yet revealed the creature to the reader?
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The Beast Within

Episode Three, part one - The beast revealed!

The following morning Mr Harrow was carrying out his usual checks of the school. As he made his way from year 5 into year 6, a chilling draught engulfed him, sending a shiver down his entire body. He hesitantly opened the door into year 6, wondering what awaited him just past this doorway.

A loud thud, thump, groan pierced through the classroom ceiling and paralysed Mr Harrow. He looked up. His heart was in his throat. Beating uncontrollably. The ceiling churned and murmured as Pete dared turn the corner and look up. Two gaping holes in the ceiling created a vortex of air, and Pete struggled to catch his breath.

‘First a tree, now it’s breaking the school... Definitely not a fox... or even a wolf!’ Mr Harrow muttered to himself as he left the classroom to get his ladders. But a movement caught his eye...

The outline of something - something unrecognisable - stirred within the cold abyss of the classroom ceiling vault. A monstrous shadow passed over the gaping holes, and then it was gone. When Mr Harrow looked, there was nothing - nothing at all. Maybe there never had been.

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Mr Harrow arrived at school the next day, wondering what bizarre events would distract him today. He knew something

had to be wrong. He could just sense it. And he still had that ceiling to repair... *Must have been a leak... What else could make holes that? Except, there was no water... No sign of a leak.*

Mrs Rohan looked Mr Harrow straight in the eyes and said ‘not someone... something’.

Over in the car park, Mrs Rohan, the year 6 classroom assistant, was pacing around her car frantically. She began explaining how she had been the last to leave the night before, and as she arrived at her car, she noticed two deep, menacing scratches down the side of her driver’s door. Mr Harrow asked if she had seen someone commit this vandalism. He examined the gashes in the metal. It was here that Mrs Rohan looked Mr Harrow straight in the eyes and said, ‘Not someone... something!’ She described a large shadow fleeing as she approached her damaged car.

Mrs Rohan confirmed the awful suspicions Mr Harrow had crushed in the back of his mind, and he was not prepared to let anyone, or anything put the school he loved and worked at in danger any longer. He began monitoring the closed-circuit cameras to try and capture an image of the creature menacing the school.

Name: Date:.....

Episode three, part one: The beast revealed! - comprehension questions

Decode and explore language - identify phrases and words you do not know by highlighting them.

Word	Possible meaning	Actual meaning

Retrieval questions:

1. Which classrooms did Mr Harrow visit initially?
2. What word in the first paragraph means surrounded?

Inference questions:

3. How do you know that Mr Harrow is unsure of going into the year 6 classroom in paragraph one?
4. Why does Mr Harrow think the creature cannot be a fox or a wolf?
5. Why does Mr Harrow expect more trouble when he arrives at school the next day?
Tick the best reason:
 - Because he clearly saw the creature.
 - Because strange things had been happening over the past few days.
 - He knows he is dealing with a beast.
 - Wild animals always cause trouble for him.
6. **Choice question:** What is your impression of Mr Harrow - how does the author make us admire him? Give evidence from the text.

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The Beast Within

Episode Three, part two

At last, he found a blurry, barely identifiable image. The creature was enormous, like nothing anyone had seen before: it was clearly a danger to anyone it met and had to be captured - quickly. After another week of torment, vandalism and mystery, a letter was received from the Ministry of Wild Animals (M.O.W.A) reporting that a sabre-toothed sloth had escaped from a local zoo. The creature was extremely dangerous. The school's head teacher made some urgent calls to the Ministry.

M.O.W.A arrived at school after hours to try and find evidence that the deadly beast was in the area. The ever-helpful Mrs Hood, one of Hornwood's most valued members of staff, was at school late on this particular evening.

She offered to supervise the Ministry zoologists whilst they searched the school. Hard at work at her desk in Year 6, Mrs Hood felt a cold draught race past her legs and flinched, taking in a quick gasp of air. Her breathing had quickened, as had her heart. After the week's mysterious occurrences, it was safe to say that Mrs Hood was already feeling uneasy.

She tried to focus back on her work, but she could not settle. She cautiously crept out of her seat and tiptoed to the door, checking the doors and windows were closed tight. She let out a little laugh and shook her head; she was just being silly.

It was then she heard it... barely audible, a very low but distinct snarl grew closer, louder. Frozen where she stood, Mrs Hood dared not move. She turned her head to see two glowing orange lights peering at her from the cracks within the damaged ceiling. Although she tried to call out to alert the trained professionals, she was breathless, helpless. Terrified, she wanted to race for the door to try and find somebody, anybody!

She was petrified. Shock held her with steel arms.

Time slowed. The eight-foot beast slid slowly, silently out of the ceiling void, settling before her on muscular hind legs, hypnotising her with its aggressive eyes, saliva dribbling between ferocious feral fangs, raising claws out to grab at her delicate form.

Then it all sped up into a blur. Mrs Hood felt herself being pulled back from the beastly creature. She saw its claw swipe out at her. An intense pain shot down her arm, where two deep cuts now blazed with blood. From nowhere, Mr Harrow and the MOWA officers began scuffling with the terrifying creature, which easily overwhelmed them in size, strength and power.

With a crash, the creature broke through the classroom window and raced towards the playground, desperate to escape. Officers cornered it against the fence, leaving it nowhere to run. They finally over-powered the monstrosity, shooting it with a powerful tranquiliser.

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A month passed. Mrs Hood was never quite the same again, even though the creature had been captured and incarcerated. The sloth was highly adapted; almost invisible in its environment; vicious, clever, toxic. That's what the letter from the ministry said.

Mrs Hood put the document down. She went over to the ceiling, rubbing her arm, looking at where the creature had nested in the roof void. The wounds throbbed. Her skin was oddly transparent there now.

She heard herself growl and felt the aggression rise. Her fingers curled into angry claws. With a leap, she drew herself into the ceiling and slowly, slowly, her transformation began.

Name: Date:.....

Episode three, part two - comprehension questions

Decode and explore language - identify phrases and words you do not know by highlighting them.

Word	Possible meaning	Actual meaning

Retrieval questions:

- Once he had seen the picture of the beast, what did Mr Harrow think should happen next?
- Which word in the first paragraph suggests the head teacher is taking the matter seriously?

Inference questions:

- Why do you think Mrs Hood wants to help the Ministry find the beast?
- Why does Mrs Hood check the doors and windows are closed while working late?
- Why was Mrs Hood described as 'never quite the same' - pick two possible answers:
 - Because she is so tired from working late.
 - Because she has seen the beast face-to-face.
 - Because her car was vandalised, upsetting her.
 - Wild animals scare her.
 - She was injured by the beast.
 - Her injuries were life-threatening.
 - She helped capture the beast.
- Choice question:** Why do you think the author included the last paragraph when it seemed the story was over?

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The Beast Within - Episode One: Something lurking in the mist - answers

Retrieval questions:

1. What time does the main character usually get up on a morning?

5am

2. What word in the third paragraph suggests the school grounds are silent and empty?

void

3. What does Mr Harrow mistake the eyes watching him for?

A fox

Inference questions:

4. Why does the author mention that Mr Harrow was awoken before his alarm?

Because it suggests that **things had been happening earlier / noises had awoken him from the mysterious animal / something disturbed his sleep.**

5. Why does Mr Harrow think: *A fox? More like a wolf!*

Because the footprint was 'twice the size' of a fox / footprint was very big / footprint was bigger than a fox.

6. Why does Mr Harrow want to check the cameras? Tick the best reason:

- To see if they are working.
- To see if they can see through the fog.
- To see if they have caught anything unusual.**
- To send the information to the police.

7. **Author's choice question:** Select one part of the text and explain how the writer has used powerful description. Why do you think they did this?

Any appropriate selection - comment from child on images created / atmosphere / entertains the reader with the details to create an image in their heads.

The Beast Within - Episode Two: On the trail of the beast - answers

Retrieval questions:

1. Who is the first person Pete talks to?

Mr Storm

2. Which word describes the state of the tree's roots?

mangled

3. How does Mr Harrow know that only a strong creature could do this to the tree?

Because it had been 'wrenched out of the ground as if it were a twig' / when he tried to move the tree it was too heavy for him / too heavy for him alone, showing how strong the creature must be.

Inference questions:

4. Why does Mr Storm sound his car horn?

To get Pete's attention / because Pete is in his own world / to say good morning / he wanted to ask him what he was doing.

5. Why is Mr Harrow worried about what is happening at the school?

Because it is unusual / the damage is being done by something strange / because he is worried what might happen next / the damage seems to be vicious / dangerous.

6. Why does Mr Harrow remember the howling in the night? Tick the best reason:

- It made him tired.
- He realised why he had woken up earlier than usual.
- The animal was scaring him.
- He wanted to tell Mr Storm about it.

7. Author's choice question: Why do you think the writer has not yet revealed the creature to the reader?

To build up suspense / to keep the readers guessing / to keep the reader engaged - they want to find out more / to use a cliff-hanger so we will want to read the next part / it can be scarier imagining a monster than actually seeing it.

The Beast Within - Episode Three, part one: The beast revealed! - answers

Retrieval questions:

1. Which classrooms did Mr Harrow visit initially?

Year 5 and year 6

2. What word in the first paragraph means surrounded?

engulfed

Inference questions:

3. How do you know that Mr Harrow is unsure of going into the year 6 classroom in paragraph one?

He hesitates when he feels a chilling draught.

4. Why does Mr Harrow think the creature cannot be a fox or a wolf?

Because the damage is too great for it to be such a small creature. It is a powerful creature, much more powerful than a fox or a wolf.

5. Why does Mr Harrow expect more trouble when he arrives at school the next day?
Tick the best reason:

- Because he clearly saw the creature.
 Because strange things had been happening over the past few days.
 He knows he is dealing with a beast.
 Wild animals always cause trouble for him.

6. **Choice question:** What is your impression of Mr Harrow - how does the author make us admire him? Give evidence from the text.

He is like a detective, looking for clues and constantly trying to work out what is going on / he cares about the school and worries when damage is done / he wants to find out what is going on and does not give up even when he is scared or shocked / each day, he starts early, alone and just faces whatever the next problem is / he was willing to risk himself for the school.

The Beast Within - Episode Three, part two - answers

Retrieval questions:

1. Once he had seen the picture of the beast, what did Mr Harrow think should happen next?

It had to be captured. / He wanted it catching and taking away.

2. Which word in the first paragraph suggests the head teacher is taking the matter seriously?

urgent

Inference questions:

3. Why do you think Mrs Hood wants to help the Ministry find the beast?

She wants to help capture the beast / she wants it all sorted out so she feels safer / she wants the danger to go away or stop.

4. Why does Mrs Hood check the doors and windows are closed while working late?

So that the beast cannot get to her / to make sure the room is safely closed and nothing can get in.

5. Why was Mrs Hood described as 'never quite the same' - pick two possible answers:

- Because she is so tired from working late.
- Because she has seen the beast face-to-face.**
- Because her car was vandalised, upsetting her.
- Wild animals scare her.
- She was injured by the beast.**
- Her injuries were life-threatening.
- She helped capture the beast.

6. **Choice question:** Why do you think the author included the last paragraph when it seemed the story was over?

To give a sense that the beast lives on / to keep the story open-ended... it could continue in another episode or a sequel / it introduces a new cliff-hanger and we want to hear even more / so someone could write a sequel.