

# The Iron Man



## Question Book:

Year 5, pages 12-13

## Author / Source:

Ted Hughes

## Genre:

Fiction — novel extract

## Cross-curricular links:

- Science (properties of materials)
- Maths (nets)

## Introduction

Ted Hughes (1930-1998) is widely regarded as one of the greatest English poets of the twentieth century. He was also a popular children's author, and *The Iron Man* is one of his most successful works for children. Like so much of Hughes's writing, *The Iron Man* is written in a vivid and engaging style, and this extract gives pupils the chance to explore techniques that engage the reader, including figurative and descriptive language, variations in sentence length and the use of questions. As pupils read the extract, focus their attention on the way Hughes uses language to make them want to keep reading.

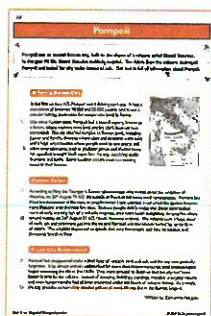
## Answers

1. E.g. edge; tip; verge
2. E.g. They help the reader to imagine what the Iron Man looked like because they compare different parts of him to familiar things like "a dustbin" and "headlamps".
3. Any appropriate answer. E.g. He had never seen the sea before, so maybe he didn't understand what it was and he didn't realise that it would be dangerous to step off the cliff towards the sea.
4. E.g. To show the reader that the Iron Man is bouncing down the cliff, hitting lots of things on the way, and to help the reader imagine the noise he makes as he falls.
5. "the sea, chewing away at the edge of the rocky beach"
6. Any appropriate answer. E.g. Yes, because in this extract, it seems like the Iron Man has been destroyed, so I want to read more of the novel to find out whether he manages to survive falling off the cliff.

## Extra Activities

- Ask pupils to annotate their copy of the extract, underlining words and phrases that engage the reader, and labelling examples of similes, personification, onomatopoeia, repetition, etc. As a class, discuss the words, phrases and literary techniques that pupils have identified, and explore their effect on the reader.
- This extract is taken from the beginning of *The Iron Man*. Ask pupils to write a few paragraphs describing what they think happens next. Encourage them to write in the same style as the extract, using as many of the same techniques as they can.
- In this extract, Hughes captures the reader's attention and sets the scene in just ten lines. Challenge pupils to write their own ten-line opening to a short story about a mysterious creature, which engages the reader and creates an atmospheric setting.
- Ask pupils to find out about the properties of iron and to suggest some advantages and disadvantages of being made of iron. Ask pupils to research the properties of some other materials (e.g. salt, wood, paper, plastic) and explain which they think would be most suitable to make an animate giant from.
- Get pupils to design and build an 'Iron Man' consisting entirely of regular cuboids. They should draw a net of each cuboid on thin cardboard, then cut it out and fold it into shape. Encourage pupils to make careful measurements when drawing their nets.

# Pompeii



**Question Book:**  
Year 5, pages 14-15

**Author / Source:**  
Catherine Heygate

**Genre:**  
Non-fiction — reference text

**Cross-curricular links:**

- History (the Roman Empire)
- Geography (volcanoes)
- Art (mosaics)

## Introduction

In the first century AD, Pompeii was a thriving Roman city. However, the devastating eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD destroyed the city, killing its inhabitants and burying the site under several metres of volcanic ash. In the mid-eighteenth century, archaeologists began excavating Pompeii and found that much of the city had been extraordinarily well preserved by the layers of ash covering it. As a result, Pompeii is now one of our most important sources of information about life in the Roman Empire. Before pupils read the text, make sure they understand what a volcano is.

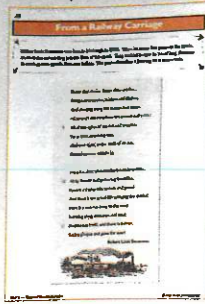
## Answers

1. E.g. To carry water into a city.
2. E.g. People in Roman cities had running water in their homes like many people do today, and they went to the theatre for entertainment like some people do.
3. E.g. Because Pliny the Younger wrote about it.
4. E.g. They weren't worried about them. Earthquakes were common in the area, and they didn't know that they were a sign that the volcano was going to erupt.
5. E.g. Because the city was preserved by the rock and ash from the volcano, so we can find out about life in the Roman Empire by studying all the things that have survived.
6. Any appropriate answer. E.g. Yes, because they break the text up into shorter sections, and they tell you what each section is about, so they make the text easier to read and understand.

## Extra Activities

- The last question in the Question Book asks pupils to comment on the layout of the text. As a class, discuss pupils' answers to this question, and ask them to suggest additional features that would make the text easier to understand (e.g. illustrations, underlining, a glossary).
- Ask pupils to find out more about the aspects of Roman life mentioned in the first section of the text. They should use their research to write an informative text about life in the Roman Empire, using the presentational features identified in the class discussion to ensure that their text is easy to understand.
- Using the information in the text and their own research, ask pupils to write a newspaper article reporting the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD.
- Explain the difference between active, dormant and extinct volcanoes. Assign pupils volcanoes from around the world to research (e.g. Arthur's Seat, Krakatoa, Novarupta). Pupils should use their research to create a fact sheet with key information about their volcano, including a map of its location, whether it is active, dormant or extinct and the date of its most recent eruption (if known).
- Roman buildings were often decorated with mosaics, many examples of which are preserved in Pompeii. Show pupils some pictures of Roman mosaics, and then ask them to design and make their own, using coloured paper or cardboard to make their tiles.

# From a Railway Carriage



## Question Book:

Year 5, pages 16-17

## Author / Source:

Robert Louis Stevenson

## Genre:

Classic poetry

## Cross-curricular links:

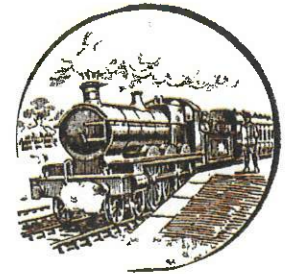
- History (Victorian railways)
- Maths (timetables)

## Introduction

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) was a Scottish writer and poet. This poem, which describes a journey on a steam train, was published in 1885. The first fully steam-powered railway in the world, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, had opened in 1830, and by the 1880s, Britain had several thousand miles of railway lines. The rise of the railways transformed long-distance travel in the UK, and this poem reflects the Victorians' fascination with train travel. Read the poem out loud with the class, focusing on the effect created by its rhythm.

## Answers

1. E.g. Because comparing the speed of the train to these creatures makes the train seem magical too.  
OR E.g. Because fairies and witches can fly and the train is going so fast that it feels like it's flying too.
2. "horses and cattle"
3. b. a simile
4. E.g. The things he can see through the train window.
5. E.g. Because you just see these things quickly through the train window, and then they disappear from sight, so you'll probably never see them again.
6. E.g. The rhythm of the poem is like the rhythm of the train, so it helps the reader to imagine what it's like to travel on the train.
7. Any appropriate answer. E.g. Yes, because it describes lots of different things, one after the other. This helps you imagine the way different views flash past the window when you're on a train.

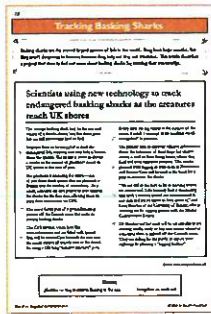


## Extra Activities

- Explore how Stevenson creates the train-like rhythm of the poem. As a class, annotate the poem, underlining the stressed syllables in each line, then read the poem aloud again, with everyone tapping out the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables on their tables.
- Suggest some other modes of transport that have a distinctive rhythm (e.g. marching, horse riding) and discuss the pattern of syllables that would mirror their rhythm. Get pupils to write some rhyming couplets for each mode of transport, focusing on using stressed and unstressed syllables to recreate their rhythms.
- Get pupils to write a poem describing a memorable journey that they have undertaken.
- Ask pupils to find out about how people and goods were transported before the invention of the railways (e.g. canals, horses). What were the disadvantages of these modes of transport? How did the introduction of rail travel change things? Pupils should use their research to create a promotional leaflet for a Victorian railway company, explaining the advantages of rail travel over other forms of transport.
- Get pupils to find train timetables for the station nearest to school. Challenge pupils to use the timetables to plan a journey that will take them as far as possible from the starting station within four hours.



# Tracking Basking Sharks



## Question Book:

Year 5, pages 18-19

## Author / Source:

www.independent.co.uk

## Genre:

Non-fiction — news article

## Cross-curricular links:

- Science (marine organisms)
- Art (drawing activity)

## Introduction

Basking sharks are huge fish — the largest recorded specimen was more than 12 m long. As filter feeders, they use their exceptionally large mouths and specially-adapted gills to filter plankton from seawater. This article describes a project which aims to find out more about basking sharks by tagging them with GPS devices and tracking their movements. Before reading the article with the class, show pupils some pictures of basking sharks and explain how they are adapted to feed on plankton.

## Answers

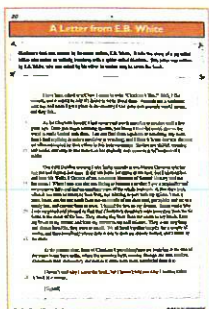
1. E.g. Because basking sharks eat plankton, and the plankton in British waters is attracting them to areas where scientists can study them.
2. E.g. Sharks will be fitted with tracking devices, which will calculate their location every time they come to the surface.
3. E.g. difficult to find
4. E.g. She thinks they're really interesting because they're huge but also very mysterious.
5. "ready to leap into action"
6. E.g. Because scientists wouldn't have had the right technology, like satellites or GPS, 100 years ago.
7. Any appropriate answer. E.g. I think it's a good idea because basking sharks are endangered and tracking them might help scientists to protect them. Also, we don't know much about the sharks, so it's a good idea to find out more about them by tracking them.

## Extra Activities

- Get pupils to briefly summarise the information in the article by writing a few words under each of the following headings: 'who', 'what', 'where' and 'why'.
- As a class, discuss the presentation and language features of news articles and their effect on the reader. Emphasise the use of headlines in news articles to engage the reader's interest. Do pupils find the headline of this article engaging? Can they think of a better one? Show pupils some other news articles without their headlines and ask pupils to suggest headlines for them.
- Emphasise how little we know about the behaviour and life-cycle of basking sharks, and then ask pupils to write a short story from the perspective of a basking shark, imagining its secret life under the sea.
- Assign pupils different marine organisms that can be found around the British coast. Pupils should research their organism, then draw a picture of it and write a short passage describing it. The pupils' work could be used to create a classroom display about British sea life.

hermit crabs, curlews,  
herring gulls, otters,  
grey seals, kelp,  
marram grass

# A Letter from E.B. White



## Question Book:

Year 5, pages 20-21

## Author / Source:

E.B. White

## Genre:

Non-fiction — letter

## Cross-curricular links:

- Science (spiders)

## Introduction

E.B. White's letter to his editor is full of subtle humour and gentle eccentricity. Some students may not have read *Charlotte's Web*, so make sure that all pupils read the introduction before they read the letter. Ensure that pupils are aware that, in the book, Charlotte is a spider and Wilbur is a pig, and both animals can talk. Before pupils read the letter, ask them to think of reasons why authors might write books.

## Answers

1. E.g. A weakness can be used to describe something that can't be resisted. E.B. White says that animals are a weakness with him because he can't resist writing about animals or being fascinated by them.
2. E.g. When a person changes for the worse.
3. E.g. He thinks that adults teach children to dislike spiders.
4. E.g. Because it makes the spiders' webs sound beautiful and shows how skilful and hardworking spiders are.
5. c. metaphor
6. E.g. Kind and funny. He seems like a kind man because he treats the spiders in a gentle and caring way, and he sounds like he has a sense of humour because he says that "A book is a sneeze".
7. Any appropriate answer. E.g. Yes, because he says "A book is a sneeze", which tells you that he wrote the book because he felt like it was something he just had to do, rather than something he decided to do.  
OR E.g. No, I don't think it explains why he wrote the book — it just explains why he likes spiders.

## Extra Activities

- With the whole class, discuss what E.B. White means when he says "A book is a sneeze". How does this explanation compare with the reasons for writing that pupils suggested before reading the letter?
- As a group, discuss the techniques E.B. White uses to describe spiders, and how they affect the reader.
- Ask pupils to imagine that they are E.B. White. They should write a letter to their friend, using figurative language, to describe their favourite animal.
- Get pupils to create a spidergram of all the adjectives, verbs and adverbs they can think of that describe the way spiders look and behave. Pupils should then write a short descriptive passage about a spider, using as many of these words as possible.
- In the letter, E.B. White describes spiders as "skilful, amusing and useful". Ask pupils to research spiders' behaviour to find evidence for and against this view. They can then use the evidence they have gathered to debate positive and negative views of spiders.
- The spider E.B. White describes in his letter is from the species *Araneus cavaticus*. Get pupils to research this species and produce a poster describing its appearance, habitat and behaviour.

