

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 8 ENGLISH/HANDOUT 8

Announcement

There will be a spelling and vocabulary test next week (Class 9). You will be asked to spell or explain the following words from *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 ¾*.

Spelling test words

1. Unprejudiced (The school may well want a clear account by an unprejudiced observer of what happened on the way to, during and coming back from our trip to London.)
2. Complimented (Mr Scruton complimented Pandora and I on our leadership qualities.)
3. Unintelligible (Pandora says Camilla is so posh as to be unintelligible.)
4. Besotted (My mother still besotted with creep Lucas.)
5. Portent (Our dog has gone missing. It is a portent of doom.)
6. Alienated (She said she knew my father felt humiliated, alienated and bitter because he was unemployed, but that he was setting a bad example to an impressionable adolescent.)
7. Maladjusted (If my mother doesn't come home soon I will end up deprived and maladjusted.)
8. Debauchery (She is looking old and haggard. All the debauchery is catching up on her.)
9. I am sick of listening to (and watching) drunken nurses and off-duty policemen cavorting around the grounds dressed as witches and wizards.)
10. Acrid (Our street is full of acrid smoke.)
11. Cul-de-sac (charred Now! Magazines are blowing all over our cul-de-sac.)
12. Inundated (Our Poetry Department is inundated with autumnal poems.)
13. Provincial (This is typical of Scruton, he is nothing but a small-minded, provincial, sexually inhibited fascist pig.)
14. Accompanied (Pandora and I saw the New Year in together, we had a dead passionate session accompanied by Andy Stewart and a bagpiper.)
15. Frolicking (Unlike most youths of my age, I dislike frolicking in the snow.)
16. Redundancy (He has only got a few quid's redundancy money left in his sock drawer.)
17. Champagne (My father bought a bottle of champagne to celebrate his first sale.)
18. Tantamount (It was tantamount to treason and that when the culprit was found they would be immediately expelled.)
19. Overtures (I attempted to exchange a few civilities with the lads, but they spurned my overtures.)
20. Consummate (She has refused to consummate our relationship.)

Instructions

For this week's homework, you'll be asked to respond to reading comprehension questions about a short story written by Arthur Conan Doyle. Read the following summary of the short story, "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches."

Note: The text in the boxes are excerpts from the original short story. Pay attention to the words in bold print. Can you infer their meanings based on the context? In addition, try responding to the reading comprehension questions in right column.

Summary (no spoiler)

Web resource: <https://letterpile.com/books/Plot-Summary-of-the-Adventure-of-the-Copper-Beeches>; adapted for educational purposes at Olympiads School

The Adventure of the Copper Beeches commences with Sherlock Holmes in a strange mood, with the detective in the doldrums due to a lack of stimulating cases to deal with.

Holmes both compliments and criticises Watson about his reporting of the detective's cases. Holmes believes that the stories so far recorded by Watson have been mundane, and whilst Holmes is thankful that Watson has steered clear of the sensational. Holmes wishes that the more challenging cases were the ones that had been reported. He also wishes that the reporting were more scientific in their narrative.

A client is due, but even this doesn't relieve Holmes' mood. The prospective client, Miss Violet Hunter, simply wants to consult Holmes about whether she should take up the offered position of governess.

<p>I could see that Holmes was favourably impressed by the manner and speech of his new client. He looked her over in his searching fashion, and then composed himself, with his lids drooping and his finger-tips together, to listen to her story.</p> <p>"I have been a governess for five years," said she, "in the family of Colonel Spence Munro, but two months ago the colonel received an appointment at Halifax, in Nova Scotia, and took his children over to America with him, so that I found myself without a situation. I advertised, and I answered advertisements, but without success. At last the little money which I had saved began to run short, and I was at my wit's end as to what I should do.</p> <p>"There is a well-known agency for governesses in the West End called Westaway's, and there I used to call about once a week in order to see whether anything had turned up which might suit me. Westaway was the name of the founder of the business, but it is really managed by Miss Stoper. She sits in her own little office, and the ladies who are seeking employment wait in an anteroom, and are then shown in one by one, when she consults her ledgers and sees whether she has anything which would suit them.</p> <p>"Well, when I called last week I was shown into the little office as usual, but I found that Miss Stoper was not alone. A prodigiously stout man with a very smiling face and a great heavy chin which rolled down in fold upon fold over his throat sat at her elbow with a pair of glasses on his nose, looking very earnestly at the ladies who entered. As I came in he gave quite a jump in his chair and turned quickly to Miss Stoper.</p>	<p><i>Why was the governess at her wit's end?</i></p>
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<p>“ ‘That will do,’ said he; ‘I could not ask for anything better. Capital! capital!’ He seemed quite enthusiastic and rubbed his hands together in the most genial fashion. He was such a comfortable-looking man that it was quite a pleasure to look at him.</p> <p>“ ‘You are looking for a situation, miss?’ he asked.</p> <p>“ ‘Yes, sir.’</p> <p>“ ‘As governess?’</p> <p>“ ‘Yes, sir.’</p> <p>“ ‘And what salary do you ask?’</p> <p>“ ‘I had £4 a month in my last place with Colonel Spence Munro.’</p> <p>“ ‘Oh, tut, tut! sweating—rank sweating!’ he cried, throwing his fat hands out into the air like a man who is in a boiling passion. ‘How could anyone offer so pitiful a sum to a lady with such attractions and accomplishments?’</p> <p>“ ‘My accomplishments, sir, may be less than you imagine,’ said I. ‘A little French, a little German, music, and drawing—’</p> <p>“ ‘Tut, tut!’ he cried. ‘This is all quite beside the question. The point is, have you or have you not the bearing and deportment of a lady? There it is in a nutshell. If you have not, you are not fitted for the rearing of a child who may some day play a considerable part in the history of the country. But if you have why, then, how could any gentleman ask you to condescend to accept anything under the three figures? Your salary with me, madam, would commence at £100 a year.’</p> <p>“You may imagine, Mr. Holmes, that to me, destitute as I was, such an offer seemed almost too good to be true. The gentleman, however, seeing perhaps the look of incredulity upon my face, opened a pocket-book and took out a note.</p> <p>“ ‘It is also my custom,’ said he, smiling in the most pleasant fashion until his eyes were just two little shining slits amid the white creases of his face, ‘to advance to my young ladies half their salary beforehand, so that they may meet any little expenses of their journey and their wardrobe.’</p>	<p><i>What does the “prodigiously stout man” want to find out from Violet?</i></p>
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Back to the summary...

When she arrives, Violet Hunter tells Holmes of her problem. Violet Hunter is employed, via an agency, to act as a governess for wealthy families. A job offer has been presented to her, one which pays double her current salary, with some of the money upfront. However, there are stipulations that come with the job offer—although she would simply look after a single six-year-old boy, she would have to make alterations to her appearance. Violet Hunter would be required to cut her hair short, as well as dress up in a particular way.

<p>“ ‘And my duties, sir? I should be glad to know what they would be.’</p>	
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<p>“ ‘One child—one dear little romper just six years old. Oh, if you could see him killing cockroaches with a slipper! Smack! smack! smack! Three gone before you could wink!’ He leaned back in his chair and laughed his eyes into his head again.</p> <p>“I was a little startled at the nature of the child’s amusement, but the father’s laughter made me think that perhaps he was joking.</p> <p>“ ‘My sole duties, then,’ I asked, ‘are to take charge of a single child?’</p> <p>“ ‘No, no, not the sole, not the sole, my dear young lady,’ he cried. ‘Your duty would be, as I am sure your good sense would suggest, to obey any little commands my wife might give, provided always that they were such commands as a lady might with propriety obey. You see no difficulty, heh?’</p> <p>“ ‘I should be happy to make myself useful.’</p> <p>“ ‘Quite so. In dress now, for example. We are faddy people, you know—faddy but kind-hearted. If you were asked to wear any dress which we might give you, you would not object to our little whim. Heh?’</p> <p>“ ‘No,’ said I, considerably astonished at his words.</p> <p>“ ‘Or to sit here, or sit there, that would not be offensive to you?’</p> <p>“ ‘Oh, no.’</p> <p>“ ‘Or to cut your hair quite short before you come to us?’</p> <p>“I could hardly believe my ears. As you may observe, Mr. Holmes, my hair is somewhat luxuriant, and of a rather peculiar tint of chestnut. It has been considered artistic. I could not dream of sacrificing it in this offhand fashion.</p> <p>“ ‘I am afraid that that is quite impossible,’ said I. He had been watching me eagerly out of his small eyes, and I could see a shadow pass over his face as I spoke.</p> <p>“ ‘I am afraid that it is quite essential,’ said he. ‘It is a little fancy of my wife’s, and ladies’ fancies, you know, madam, ladies’ fancies must be consulted. And so you won’t cut your hair?’</p> <p>“ ‘No, sir, I really could not,’ I answered firmly.</p> <p>“ ‘Ah, very well; then that quite settles the matter. It is a pity, because in other respects you would really have done very nicely. In that case, Miss Stoper, I had best inspect a few more of your young ladies.</p>	<p><i>What might the word “faddy” mean in this context?</i></p> <p><i>How does the husband explain the importance of the haircut? Does his explanation sounds convincing to you?</i></p>
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Back to the summary...

While the extra money would be welcome, Violet Hunter has been reticent about taking the job, as she loved her hair immensely. She wants Holmes to decide whether to take up the job offer from Jephro Rucastle, as well as travel down to his house, the Copper Beeches, in Hampshire.

Miss Hunter intends to accept the job offer. Therefore, Holmes simply offers his assistance, stating that he would be available day or night, if any trouble arose. Holmes senses some danger ahead.

Two weeks later, a telegram arrives for Holmes late at night.

Holmes and Watson take the early train down to Hampshire the next morning. They meet Violet Hunter at Black Swan inn. The governess starts to relate a strange tale.

Violet Hunter now resides at the Copper Beeches, living alongside Mr Rucastle, Mrs Rucastle (Jephro Rucastle's second wife), their son, the "awful" Edward Rucastle, and two servants, Mr and Mrs Toller. Mr Toller is often drunk, even when he looks after the mastiff guard dog, whilst Mrs Toller is very secretive. It also seems that a daughter of Mr Rucastle once lived at the house, but she had left for America.

The household is a strange one, but so are the requests of her employer. Violet is often asked to wear a specific blue dress, and to sit in a specific chair in the drawing room. On a couple of occasions, Mr Rucastle recites hilarious stories, which has Violet in stitches, but leaves Mrs Rucastle unmoved.

Taken with the strange positioning of the chair, Violet Hunter has a mirror in her handkerchief. While she sits in the chair, she is able to catch glimpses of a man behind her. Subsequently, Mr Rucastle asks Miss Hunter to wave the man away.

<p>"For two days after my arrival at the Copper Beeches my life was very quiet; on the third, Mrs. Rucastle came down just after breakfast and whispered something to her husband.</p> <p>" 'Oh, yes,' said he, turning to me, 'we are very much obliged to you, Miss Hunter, for falling in with our whims so far as to cut your hair. I assure you that it has not detracted in the tiniest iota from your appearance. We shall now see how the electric-blue dress will become you. You will find it laid out upon the bed in your room, and if you would be so good as to put it on we should both be extremely obliged.'</p> <p>"The dress which I found waiting for me was of a peculiar shade of blue. It was of excellent material, a sort of beige, but it bore unmistakable signs of having been worn before. It could not have been a better fit if I had been measured for it. Both Mr. and Mrs. Rucastle expressed a delight at the look of it, which seemed quite exaggerated in its vehemence. They were waiting for me in the drawing-room, which is a very large room, stretching along the entire front of the house, with three long windows reaching down to the floor. A chair had been placed close to the central window, with its back turned towards it. In this I was asked to sit, and then Mr. Rucastle, walking up and down on the other side of the room, began to tell me a series of the funniest stories that I have ever listened to. You cannot imagine how comical he was, and I laughed until I was quite weary. Mrs. Rucastle, however, who has evidently no sense of humour, never so much as smiled, but sat with her hands in her lap, and a sad, anxious look upon her face. After an hour or so, Mr. Rucastle suddenly remarked that it was time to commence the duties of the day, and that I might change my dress and go to little Edward in the nursery.</p> <p>"Two days later this same performance was gone through under exactly similar circumstances. Again I changed my dress, again I sat in the window, and again I</p>	<p><i>What is Mr. Rucastle trying to assure Violet Hunter of?</i></p> <p>← <i>What interesting details (or details) can you find in this paragraph? What do you think Holmes is thinking as he listens to this?</i></p>
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laughed very heartily at the funny stories of which my employer had an immense **répertoire**, and which he told inimitably. Then he handed me a yellow-backed novel, and moving my chair a little sideways, that my own shadow might not fall upon the page, he begged me to read aloud to him. I read for about ten minutes, beginning in the heart of a chapter, and then suddenly, in the middle of a sentence, he ordered me to cease and to change my dress.

"You can easily imagine, Mr. Holmes, how curious I became as to what the meaning of this extraordinary performance could possibly be. They were always very careful, I observed, to turn my face away from the window, so that I became consumed with the desire to see what was going on behind my back. At first it seemed to be impossible, but I soon **devised** a means. My hand-mirror had been broken, so a happy thought seized me, and I concealed a piece of the glass in my handkerchief. On the next occasion, in the midst of my laughter, I put my handkerchief up to my eyes, and was able with a little management to see all that there was behind me. I confess that I was disappointed. There was nothing. At least that was my first impression. At the second glance, however, I perceived that there was a man standing in the Southampton Road, a small bearded man in a grey suit, who seemed to be looking in my direction. The road is an important highway, and there are usually people there. This man, however, was leaning against the railings which bordered our field and was looking earnestly up. I lowered my handkerchief and glanced at Mrs. Rucastle to find her eyes fixed upon me with a most searching gaze. She said nothing, but I am convinced that she had **divined** that I had a mirror in my hand and had seen what was behind me. She rose at once.

" 'Jephro,' said she, 'there is an **impertinent** fellow upon the road there who stares up at Miss Hunter.'

" 'No friend of yours, Miss Hunter?' he asked.

" 'No, I know no one in these parts.'

" 'Dear me! How very impertinent! Kindly turn round and motion to him to go away.'

" 'Surely it would be better to take no notice.'

" 'No, no, we should have him **loitering** here always. Kindly turn round and wave him away like that.'

"I did as I was told, and at the same instant Mrs. Rucastle drew down the blind. That was a week ago, and from that time I have not sat again in the window, nor have I worn the blue dress, nor seen the man in the road."

"Pray continue," said Holmes. "Your narrative promises to be a most interesting one."

What was Violet Hunter's curious about? How did she solve her "problem"? Was she successful?

Back to the summary...

Everything that Miss Hunter has experienced had led her to make an exploration of the Copper Beeches. There, she finds locks of hair identical to her own. She also discovers a locked room. Mr Rucastle explains the locked room as a dark room for his photography, which would explain the dark shutters on the outside, and warns the governess against future exploring. But Violet Hunter is not fooled by the explanation, especially when she finds that the room is occupied by an unknown individual.

"And now I have a very strange experience to tell you. I had, as you know, cut off my hair in London, and I had placed it in a great coil at the bottom of my trunk. One evening, after the child was in bed, I began to amuse myself by examining the furniture of my room and by rearranging my own little things. There was an old chest of drawers in the room, the two upper ones empty and open, the lower one locked. I had filled the first two with my **linen**, and as I had still much to pack away I was naturally annoyed at not having the use of the third drawer. It struck me that it might have been fastened by a mere oversight, so I took out my bunch of keys and tried to open it. The very first key fitted to perfection, and I drew the drawer open. There was only one thing in it, but I am sure that you would never guess what it was. It was my coil of hair.

"I took it up and examined it. It was of the same peculiar tint, and the same thickness. But then the impossibility of the thing obtruded itself upon me. How could my hair have been locked in the drawer? With trembling hands I undid my trunk, turned out the contents, and drew from the bottom my own hair. I laid the two tresses together, and I assure you that they were identical. Was it not extraordinary? Puzzle as I would, I could make nothing at all of what it meant. I returned the strange hair to the drawer, and I said nothing of the matter to the Rucastles as I felt that I had put myself in the wrong by opening a drawer which they had locked.

"I am naturally observant, as you may have remarked, Mr. Holmes, and I soon had a pretty good plan of the whole house in my head. There was one wing, however, which appeared not to be **inhabited** at all. A door which faced that which led into the quarters of the Tollers opened into this suite, but it was **invariably** locked. One day, however, as I ascended the stair, I met Mr. Rucastle coming out through this door, his keys in his hand, and a look on his face which made him a very different person to the round, **jovial** man to whom I was accustomed. His cheeks were red, his brow was all crinkled with anger, and the veins stood out at his temples with passion. He locked the door and hurried past me without a word or a look.

"This aroused my curiosity, so when I went out for a walk in the grounds with my charge, I strolled round to the side from which I could see the windows of this part of the house. There were four of them in a row, three of which were simply dirty, while the fourth was shuttered up. They were evidently all **deserted**. As I strolled up and down, glancing at them occasionally, Mr. Rucastle came out to me, looking as merry and jovial as ever.

" 'Ah!' said he, 'you must not think me rude if I passed you without a word, my dear young lady. I was preoccupied with business matters.'

"I assured him that I was not offended. 'By the way,' said I, 'you seem to have quite a suite of spare rooms up there, and one of them has the shutters up.'

"He looked surprised and, as it seemed to me, a little startled at my remark.

" 'Photography is one of my hobbies,' said he. 'I have made my dark room up there. But, dear me! what an observant young lady we have come upon. Who would have believed it? Who would have ever believed it?' He spoke in a jesting tone, but there was no jest in his eyes as he looked at me. I read suspicion there and annoyance, but no jest.

← What do you think Holmes is thinking at this moment?

Analyze Mr Rucastle's body language and movement. What do you think they suggest?

<p>“Well, Mr. Holmes, from the moment that I understood that there was something about that suite of rooms which I was not to know, I was all on fire to go over them. It was not mere curiosity, though I have my share of that. It was more a feeling of duty—a feeling that some good might come from my penetrating to this place. They talk of woman’s instinct; perhaps it was woman’s instinct which gave me that feeling. At any rate, it was there, and I was keenly on the lookout for any chance to pass the forbidden door.</p>	
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All of this leads Miss Hunter to call Holmes down to Hampshire.

Holmes quickly arranges for himself and Watson night time visit to the Copper Beeches, a time when Mr Toller is drunk, and the Rucastles are absent. Violet is given the task of locking Mrs Toller away in the cellar.

Holme has already figured out that Miss Hunter is substituting for Mr Rucastle’s daughter, obviously the person locked in the room, and that the man is probably the daughter’s fiancé. Mr Rucastle has been trying to convince the man that he is no longer welcome at the Copper Beeches.

That night, Holmes and Watson do gain access to the Copper Beeches, and even make their way into the locked room, but they find it empty. Holmes initially thinks that Mr Rucastle has killed his daughter, as they find a ladder leading up through a skylight. At that time though, Mr Rucastle returns, and the homeowner thinks that Holmes is one the one who has freed his daughter, and so Mr Rucastle goes to get his guard dog.

Shortly afterwards, Holmes and Watson hear a scream, and it is apparent that the mastiff has attacked his owner. Mr Toller drunkenly stumbles on the scene, and the three of them run to aid Mr Rucastle. Watson shoots the dog, and then seeks to aid the injured man.

It is left to Mrs Toller to explain everything...

REFLECTION AND PREDICTION

Remember—Sherlock Holmes is a private detective. Based on your reading so far, what crime do you think is happening at the Copper Beeches?