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# Reading *The Country of the Blind*

READING

LEVEL  
Advanced

NUMBER  
C1\_2017R\_EN

LANGUAGE  
English

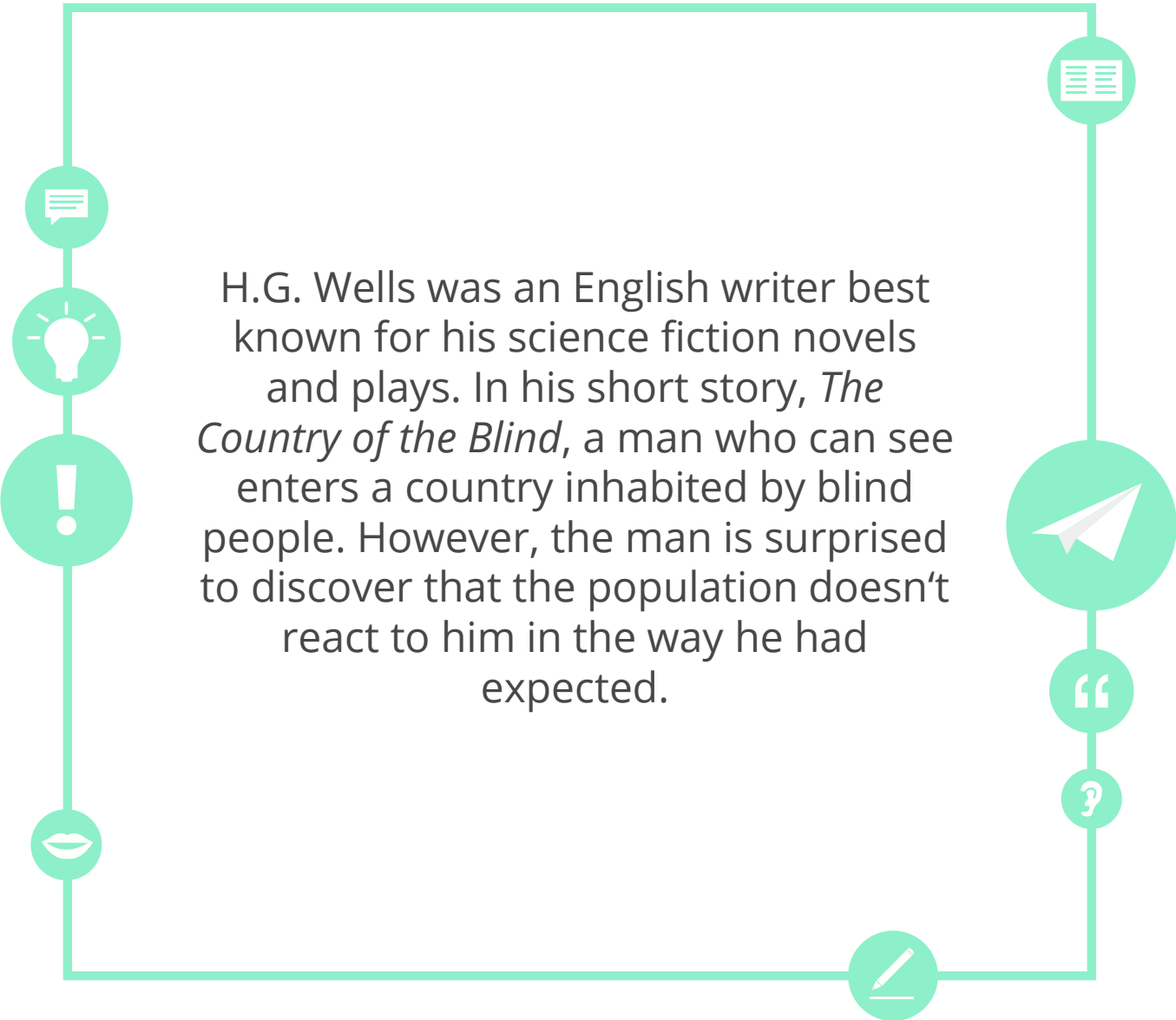




## Goals

- Can read and understand a complex literary excerpt from H.G. Wells' short story 'The Country of the Blind'.
- Can analyse the figurative meaning of the text and present my own views on it.





H.G. Wells was an English writer best known for his science fiction novels and plays. In his short story, *The Country of the Blind*, a man who can see enters a country inhabited by blind people. However, the man is surprised to discover that the population doesn't react to him in the way he had expected.



## The five senses

**Imagine you are a foreigner visiting your home country for the first time. Describe your surroundings and experiences using your five senses.**



taste

sight

touch

smell

hearing



## Super sense

**If you could have a  
super sense, what  
would it be and  
why?**



## The science fiction genre

H.G. Wells is famous for writing science fiction. Explain your understanding of science fiction. How do you feel about this genre? Do you know any other famous science fiction stories?





## The Country of the Blind

The three men stopped, and moved their heads as though they were looking about them. They turned their faces this way and that, and Nunez **gesticulated** with freedom. But they did not appear to see him for all his **gestures**, and after a time, directing themselves towards the mountains far away to the right, they shouted as if in answer. Nunez **bawled** again, and then once more, and as he gestured **ineffectually** the word "blind" came up to the top of his thoughts. "The fools must be blind," he said.



## The Country of the Blind

When at last, after much shouting and **wrath**, Nunez crossed the stream by a little bridge, came through a gate in the wall, and approached them, he was sure that they were blind. He was sure that this was the Country of the Blind of which the legends told.

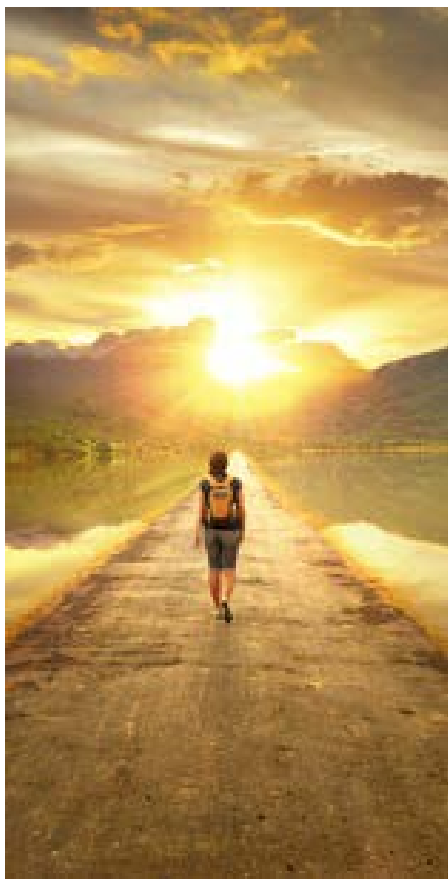
**Conviction** had **sprung upon** him, and a sense of great and rather enviable adventure. The three stood side by side, not looking at him, but with their ears directed towards him, judging him by his unfamiliar steps. They stood close together like men a little afraid, and he could see their eyelids closed and **sunken**, as though the very balls beneath had shrunk away. There was an expression near awe on their faces.

"A man," one said, in hardly recognisable Spanish—"a man it is—a man or a spirit—coming down from the rocks."





## The Country of the Blind



But Nunez advanced with the confident steps of a youth who enters upon life. All the old stories of the lost valley and the Country of the Blind had come back to his mind, and through his thoughts ran this old **proverb**, as if it were a refrain—

"In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King."

"In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King."



## The Country of the Blind

And very civilly he gave them greeting. He talked to them and used his eyes.

"Where does he come from, brother Pedro?" asked one.

"Down out of the rocks."

"Over the mountains I come," said Nunez, "out of the country beyond there—where men can see. From near Bogota, where there are hundred thousands of people, and where the city **passes out of sight.**"

"Sight?" muttered Pedro. "Sight?"

"He comes," said the second blind man, "out of the rocks."



## The Country of the Blind



The cloth of their coats Nunez saw was curiously fashioned, each with a different sort of **stitching**.

They startled him by a simultaneous movement towards him, each with a hand outstretched. He stepped back from the advance of these spread fingers.

"Come **hither**," said the third blind man, following his motion and clutching him neatly.

And they held Nunez and felt him over, saying no word further until they had done so.



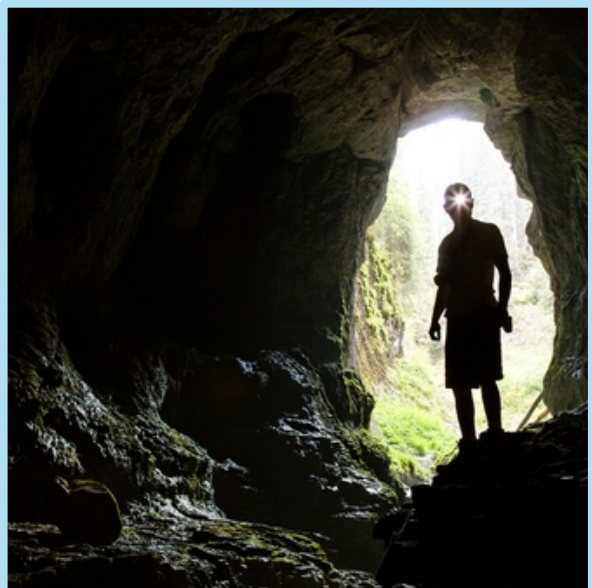
## Vocabulary review

Look at the words and phrases from the text below. Check their meaning with your teacher.





## Expectations and preconceptions



Look over the part of the text you have just read. What expectations and preconceptions do the characters in the text have of one another? Discuss with your teacher.



## Using your senses

**Read the quote from the text below. The blind people use their sense of touch to get to know Nunez. Think of 5 objects in the room you're in, describe them to your teacher as if you were blind and touching them for the first time. See if your teacher can guess the objects.**

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And they held Nunez and felt him over, saying no word further until they had done so.

//



## The Country of the Blind

"Carefully," he cried, with a finger in his eye, and found they thought that organ, with its fluttering lids, a queer thing in him. They went over it again.

"A strange creature, Correa," said the one called Pedro. "Feel the **coarseness** of his hair. Like a llama's hair."

"Rough he is as the rocks that begat him," said Correa, investigating Nunez's unshaven chin with a soft and slightly moist hand. "Perhaps he will grow finer." Nunez struggled a little under their examination, but they gripped him firm.

"Carefully," he said again.



## The Country of the Blind

"He speaks," said the third man. "Certainly he is a man."

"Ugh!" said Pedro, at the roughness of his coat.

"And you have come into the world?" asked Pedro.

"Out of the world. Over mountains and glaciers; right over above there, half-way to the sun. Out of the great big world that goes down, twelve days' journey to the sea."

They scarcely seemed to **heed** him. "Our fathers have told us men may be made by the forces of Nature," said Correa. "It is the warmth of things and moisture, and rottenness—rottenness."





## The Country of the Blind



"Let us lead him to the elders," said Pedro.

"Shout first," said Correa, "lest the children be afraid. This is a marvellous occasion."

So they shouted, and Pedro went first and took Nunez by the hand to lead him to the houses. He drew his hand away. "I can see," he said.

"See?" said Correa.



## The Country of the Blind

"Yes, see," said Nunez, turning towards him, and stumbled against Pedro's pail.

"His senses are still imperfect," said the third blind man. "He stumbles, and talks unmeaning words. Lead him by the hand."

"As you will," said Nunez, and was led along, laughing.

It seemed they knew nothing of sight.

Well, all in good time he would teach them.



## The Country of the Blind

He heard people shouting, and saw a number of figures gathering together in the middle roadway of the village.

He found it **taxed his nerve** and patience more than he had anticipated, that first encounter with the population of the Country of the Blind. The place seemed larger as he drew near to it, and the **smear**ed plasterings queerer, and a crowd of children and men and women (the women and girls, he was pleased to note, had some of them quite sweet faces, for all that their eyes were shut and sunken) came about him, holding on to him, touching him with soft, sensitive hands, smelling at him, and listening at every word he spoke.



## The Country of the Blind

Some of the maidens and children, however, kept **aloof** as if afraid, and indeed his voice seemed coarse and rude beside their softer notes. They **mobbed** him. His three guides kept close to him with an effect of proprietorship, and said again and again, "A wild man out of the rock."



## Vocabulary review

Look at the words and phrases from the text below. Check their meaning with your teacher.





What can you remember?

**Can you retell the  
story so far in  
your own words?**



## Integration

The blind people find Nunez to be very different from themselves: he is not one of them and is marked out for being so. In what ways are immigrants in a foreign culture often isolated for being different? What do you think are key steps for successful integration?



## The Country of the Blind

And they thrust him suddenly through a doorway into a room as black as pitch, save at the end there faintly glowed a fire. The crowd closed in behind him and shut out all but the faintest glimmer of day, and before he could arrest himself he had fallen headlong over the feet of a seated man. His arm, outflung, struck the face of someone else as he went down; he felt the soft impact of features and heard a cry of anger, and for a moment he struggled against a number of hands that clutched him. It was a one-sided fight. An inkling of the situation came to him, and he lay quiet.

"I fell down," he said; "I couldn't see in this pitchy darkness."





## The Country of the Blind

There was a pause as if the unseen persons about him tried to understand his words. Then the voice of Correa said: "He is but newly formed. He stumbles as he walks and **mingles** words that mean nothing with his speech."

Others also said things about him that he heard or understood imperfectly.

"May I sit up?" he asked, in a pause. "I will not struggle against you again."

They consulted and let him rise.



## The Country of the Blind

The voice of an older man began to question him, and Nunez found himself trying to explain the great world out of which he had fallen, and the sky and mountains and sight and such-like marvels, to these elders who sat in darkness in the Country of the Blind. And they would believe and understand nothing whatever he told them, a thing quite outside his expectation. They would not even understand many of his words. For fourteen generations these people had been blind and cut off from all the seeing world; the names for all the things of sight had faded and changed; the story of the outer world was faded and changed to a child's story; and they had ceased to concern themselves with anything beyond the rocky slopes above their circling wall.



## The Country of the Blind

Blind men of genius had arisen among them and questioned the shreds of belief and tradition they had brought with them from their seeing days, and had dismissed all these things as idle fancies, and replaced them with new and saner explanations. Much of their imagination had shrivelled with their eyes, and they had made for themselves new imaginations with their ever more sensitive ears and finger-tips. Slowly Nunez realised this; that his expectation of wonder and reverence at his origin and his gifts was not to be borne out; and after his poor attempt to explain sight to them had been set aside as the confused version of a new-made being describing the marvels of his incoherent sensations, he subsided, a little dashed, into listening to their instruction.



## The Country of the Blind

And the eldest of the blind men explained to him life and philosophy and religion, how that the world (meaning their valley) had been first an empty hollow in the rocks, and then had come, first, **inanimate** things without the gift of touch, and llamas and a few other creatures that had little sense, and then men, and at last angels, whom one could hear singing and making fluttering sounds, but whom no one could touch at all, which puzzled Nunez greatly until he thought of the birds.



## The Country of the Blind

"Has no one told you, 'In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King'?"

"What is blind?" asked the blind man carelessly over his shoulder.

Four days passed, and the fifth found the King of the Blind still incognito, as a clumsy and useless stranger among his subjects.

It was, he found, much more difficult to proclaim himself than he had supposed, and in the meantime, while he meditated his coup d'état, he did what he was told and learnt the manners and customs of the Country of the Blind. He found working and going about at night a particularly **irksome** thing, and he decided that that should be the first thing he would change.



## The Country of the Blind

They led a simple, laborious life, these people, with all the elements of **virtue** and happiness, as these things can be understood by men. They **toiled**, but not oppressively; they had food and clothing sufficient for their needs; they had days and seasons of rest; they made much of music and singing, and there was love among them, and little children.

It was marvellous with what confidence and precision they went about their ordered world. Everything, you see, had been made to fit their needs; each of the radiating paths of the valley area had a constant angle to the others, and was distinguished by a special notch upon its kerbing; all obstacles and irregularities of path or meadow had long since been cleared away; all their methods and procedure arose naturally from their special needs.



## The Country of the Blind

Their senses had become marvellously **acute**; they could hear and judge the slightest gesture of a man a dozen paces away—could hear the very beating of his heart. **Intonation** had long replaced expression with them, and touches gesture, and their work with hoe and spade and fork was as free and confident as garden work can be. Their sense of smell was extraordinarily fine; they could distinguish individual differences as readily as a dog can, and they went about the tending of the llamas, who lived among the rocks above and came to the wall for food and shelter, with ease and confidence. It was only when at last Nunez sought to assert himself that he found how easy and confident their movements could be.



## Vocabulary review

Look at the words and phrases from the text below. Check their meaning with your teacher.







## Check your comprehension



What problems does Nunez encounter in the Country of the Blind? Mention specific examples from the text.



## Time to reflect

Think about your home country?  
What do you know about the history of migration there? Do you have any friends or colleagues living there who come from a different country? What do you imagine are the advantages and disadvantages of moving abroad?



## What do you think?

***The Country of the Blind* can be read as a metaphor for migration. Imagine you go to a meeting in your town about the impact of migration on the community. Look at the different groups on the cards below. What advantages AND disadvantages of immigration might each group bring up at the meeting?**



local business  
owners who  
need more  
employees

teachers at  
overcrowded  
schools

immigrants

the wider  
community

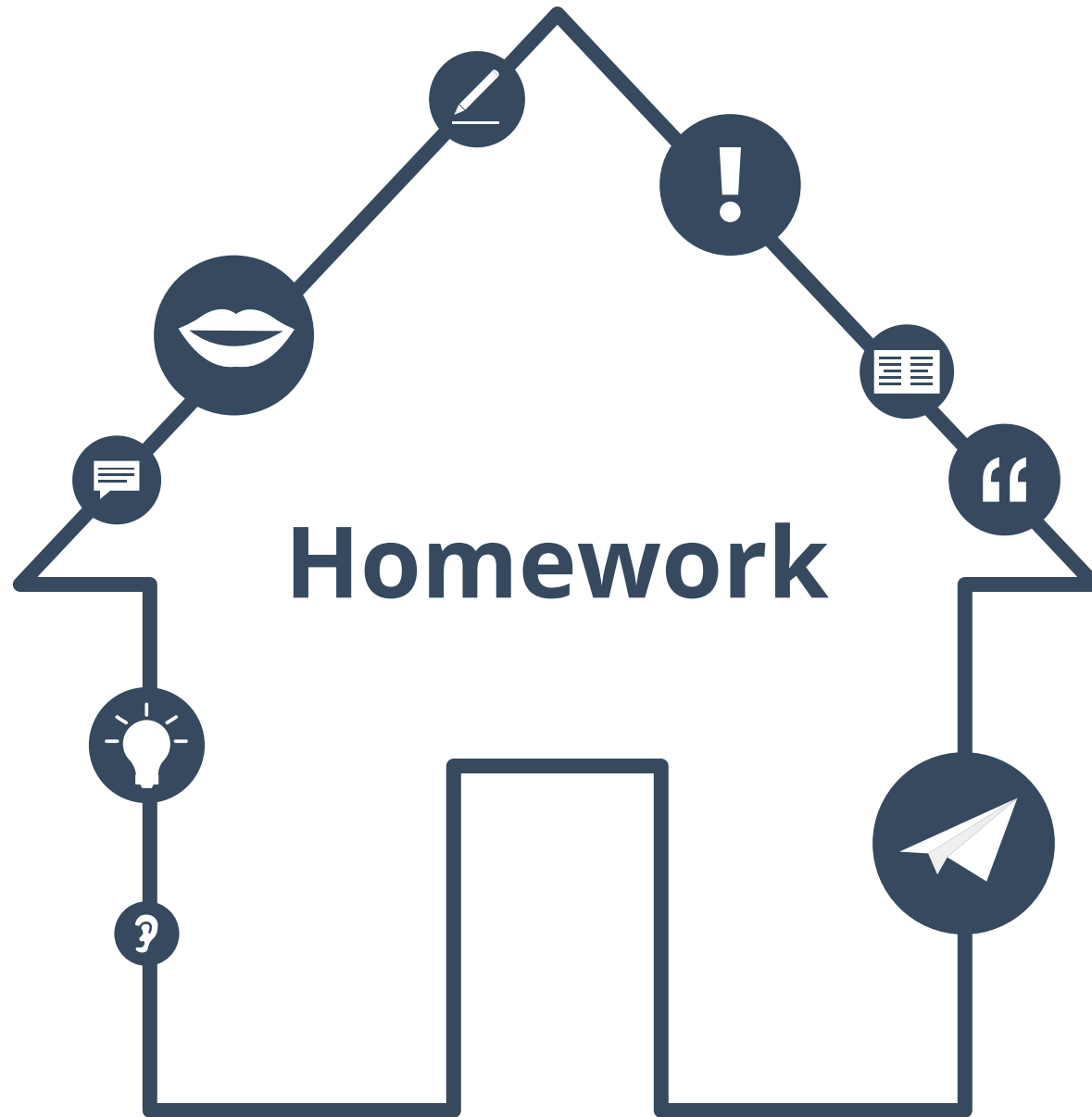


## Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!







## Homework evaluation activity

**How did you find this lesson? Which parts were easiest? Which parts were most challenging? Which parts did you enjoy the most?**

A vertical sheet of white paper with a spiral binding on the left side and horizontal lines for writing, intended for student feedback notes.



## Writing activity

**H.G. Wells 'The Country of the Blind' tells a story of a man who is isolated in a foreign land. Think about a time when you felt isolated, what happened? How did you feel? Write a short text describing your experience.**

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