

LO: Shared reading.

The Iron man by Ted Hughes 2

The Return of the Iron Man.

One evening a farmer's son, a boy called Hogarth, was fishing in a stream that ran down to the sea. It was growing too dark to fish, his hook kept getting caught in weeds and bushes. So he stopped fishing and came up from the stream and stood listening to the owls in the wood further up the valley, and to the sea behind him.

Hush, said the sea. And again, hush. Hush. Hush.

Suddenly he felt a strange feeling. He felt he was being watched. He felt afraid. He turned and looked up the steep field to the top of the high cliff. Behind that skyline was the sheer rocky cliff and the sea. And on that skyline, just above the edge of it, in the dusk, were two green lights. What were two green lights doing at the top of the cliff?

Then, as Hogarth watched, a huge dark figure climbed up over the cliff-top.

The two lights rose into the sky. They were the giant figure's eyes. A giant black figure, taller than a house, black and towering in the twilight, with green headlamp eyes. The Iron Man!

There he stood on the cliff-top, looking inland. Hogarth began to run. He ran and ran. Home. Home. The Iron Man had come back. So he got home at last and gasping for breath he told his dad.

An Iron Man! An Iron Man! A giant!

His father frowned. His mother grew pale. His little sister began to cry.

His father took down his double-barrelled gun. He believed his son. He went out. He locked the door. He got in his car. He drove to the next farm. But the farmer laughed. He was a fat, red man, with a fat, red-mouthed laugh.

When he stopped laughing, his eyes were red too.

An Iron Man? Nonsense, he said.

So Hogarth's father got back in his car. Now it was dark and it began to rain.

He drove to the next farm.

That farmer frowned. He believed. Tomorrow, he said, we must see what he is, this iron man. His feet will have left tracks in the earth. So Hogarth's father again got back into his car. But as he turned the car in the yard, he saw a strange thing in the headlamps. Half a tractor lay there, just half, chopped clean off, the other half missing. He got out of his car and the other farmer came to look too. The tractor had been bitten off – there were big teeth-marks in the steel.

No explanation! The two men looked at each other. They were puzzled and afraid. What could have bitten the tractor in two? There, in the yard, in the rain, in the night, while they had been talking inside the house.

The farmer ran in and bolted the door.

Hogarth's father jumped into his car and drove off into the night and the rain as fast as he could, homeward.

Questions:

Retrieval

- a. Why did Hogarth decide to stop fishing? Give 2 reasons.
- b. What was the strange thing that Hogarth's father saw in his headlamps?

Words in context

- c. What is a 'figure'? Why does Ted Hughes describe the Iron Man as a 'huge, dark figure'?
- d. What are headlamps and where might you see them?

Inference

- e. Who do you think bit the tractor in two and why?
- f. The farmer ran inside and bolted his door and Hogarth's father drove home as fast as he could. What do you think they had just realised to make them act this way?

figure



A bodily shape (of a person).