



# Reading a dialect

Read this **extract** aloud.



I'm Bell Teesdale. I'm a lad. I'm eight ...

All down Mallerstang there's becks running down off the fell. It's bonny. Down off the sharp scales, dry in summer till one single drop of rain sends them running and rushing and tumbling down the fell-side like threads of silk. Like cobwebs. And when the wind blows across the dale these becks gasp, and they rise up on theirselves like the wild horses in Wateryat Bottom. They rise up on their hind legs. Or like smoke blowing, like ever so many bonfires, not water at all, all smoking in the wind between Castledale and the Moorcock toward Wensleydale. It's bonny.



And townsfolk come looking at all this now where once they only went to the Lake District over the west. Renting and leasing they come. Talking south. "Why'd they come?" I ask our grandad who's leased the farm house he used to live in (my gran died). "There's not owt for 'em here. What's use of a farm to them? Just for sitting in. Never a thing going on."

"Resting," says my grandad. "They take 'em for resting in after London."

From *The Hollow Land* by Jane Gardam



What is a **dialect**? How does it differ from standard English?

.....  
.....

Unless you live in the part of England where this text is set, you probably found this difficult to read aloud. Why?

.....  
.....

Can you give the standard English words for these words: beck, fell, bonny, scales, theirselves?

.....  
.....

What do you think the following local expressions mean?

It's bonny .....  
.....

There's not owt for 'em here .....  
.....

# Reading and understanding



Read this **extract** aloud.



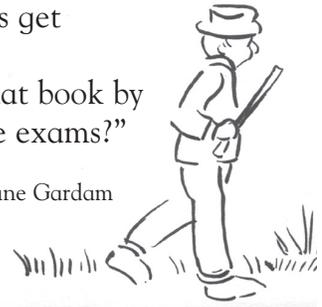
James sat on another slope beneath a crag with a book open on his knees and in turn watched a figure below him – old Grandfather Hewitson who was parading along the dry bed of a beck, slashing thistles.

The four figures were the only signs of life for miles. It was a hot, still day. Light Trees was the only building in sight. No smoke rose from its chimney. Far away the Lake District mountains swam with heat.

“However long is it going to be?” said Harry. “He could sit there all day. And when he does get hungry and go in, there’s still your grandad.”

“You’d think he’d know every word of that book by now,” said Bell. “Does he do owt else but take exams?”

From *The Hollow Land* by Jane Gardam



Is Bell the **narrator** in this **extract**? How can you tell?

.....  
.....

In which season of the year is this story **set**? How can you tell?

.....  
.....

Are there any particularly **local words** in this **extract**? Are any of them the same as in the passage in the previous exercise?

.....  
.....

What type of writing do you think these **extracts** come from? Choose from these: **historical adventure, fantasy, adventure, anecdote, biography, science fiction.**

.....  
.....

Now choose a landscape (town or country) that you know well, and write a **description** of it to form the **setting** for a story.

.....  
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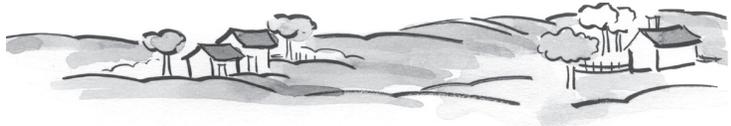
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"Resting," says my grandad. "They take 'em for resting in after London."

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What is a **dialect**? How does it differ from standard English?

A dialect is a form of language spoken in a specific region. Some words and phrases have different meanings from standard English. Words are often pronounced differently.

Unless you live in the part of England where this text is set, you probably found this difficult to read aloud. Why?

It is difficult to pronounce some of the unfamiliar words and phrases.

Can you give the standard English words for these words: beck, fell, bonny, scales, theirselves?

The standard English words are stream, mountain, pretty, steep slopes, themselves.

What do you think the following local expressions mean?

It's bonny *It's pretty.*

There's not owt for 'em here *There is nothing to interest them here.*

Here the task is for your child to read and answer questions about a passage of text written in a local dialect. Your child may find some, but not all, of the dialect words in a dictionary. Encourage him or her to guess a word's meaning from its context.

# Reading and understanding



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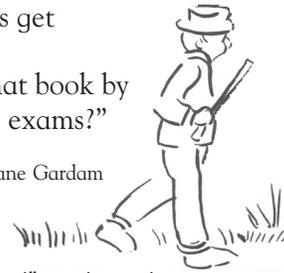
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“He could sit there all day. And when he does get hungry and go in, there’s still your grandad.”

“You’d think he’d know every word of that book by now,” said Bell. “Does he do owt else but take exams?”

From *The Hollow Land* by Jane Gardam



Is Bell the **narrator** in this **extract**? How can you tell?

I can tell that Bell is not the narrator because it would say “I said” rather than “said Bell” if Bell was telling the story.

In which season of the year is this story **set**? How can you tell?

The story is set in the summer. I can tell it’s summer from the words “It was a hot, still day” and “swam with heat”.

Are there any particularly **local words** in this **extract**? Are any of them the same as in the passage in the previous exercise?

The word “owt” is a local word that appears in both passages.

What type of writing do you think these **extracts** come from? Choose from these: **historical adventure, fantasy, adventure, anecdote, biography, science fiction.**

anecdote

Now choose a landscape (town or country) that you know well, and write a **description** of it to form the **setting** for a story.

Answers may vary

This page helps your child to appreciate the difference between a dialect and standard English and to recognize the style of an individual writer. Check that your child writes his or her answers in complete sentences.