Character Analysis

Name: _____

Date: _____

Fill in the table about the two main characters: summarise their role in the story and their relationship with the other character; choose the descriptions that fit; and give evidence from the story for each one.

Choose from: optimistic · trusting · irritable · cunning · vindictive · friendly (a description may fit more than one character).

Name	Relationship to other characters	Role in the story	Character description(s)	Evidence from the story
JOHN CLAVERHOUSE				
THE NARRATOR				

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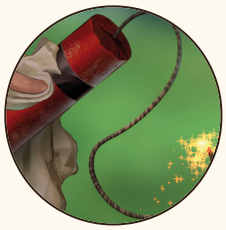
Matching exercise

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Match each phrase from the story with an image. Draw a line to join them.

1	*But I bided my time, and one day, when opportunity was ripe, lured the animal away and settled for him with strychnine and beefsteak.*	A	
2	*And yet, in the face of famine and the rigorous winter, he went out gaily in quest of a mess of trout, forsooth, because he 'doted' on them!*	B	
3	*I followed the crest along for a couple of miles to a natural amphitheatre in the hills, where a little river raced down out of a gorge and stopped for breath in a large and placid rock-bound pool.*	C	
4	*Arrived at the pool, he threw down the dip-net and sack, and drew from his hip-pocket what looked like a large, fat candle.*	D	
5	*I could never have believed that such an ungainly could run so fast.*	E	
6	*No more does his infernal laugh go echoing up the hills, and no more does his fat moon-face rise up to vex me.*	F	

Glossary

Name: _____

Date: _____

Circumference: (n) the outside border of a circle

Cumbered: (adj) hampered or hindered

Elusive: (adj) difficult to catch, find or achieve

Intangible: (adj) lacking physical presence; vague or abstract

Gargantuan: (adj) enormous

Revery: (n) a state of being lost in your thoughts

Plaguey: (adj) troublesome or annoying

Cachinnations: (n) loud laughs

Privily: (adv) secretly

Strychnine: (n) a poisonous pesticide

Dote: (v) to be extremely fond of

Gayly: (adv) cheerfully

A mess of: (n) a large quantity of

Forsooth: (adv) indeed

Bovine: (adj) relating to cattle; sluggish or stupid

Countenance: (n) face

Judas: (n) an Apostle said to have betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver

Shrewd: (adj) sharp, astute

Foreclosure: (n) when a mortgaged property is taken due to failure to meet repayments

Chattels: (n) personal possessions

Tike: (n) a small child

Bungling: (v) to do something clumsily or incompletely

Inveterately: (adv) in a habitual way that is unlikely to change

Paroxysm: (n) a sudden outburst of activity or emotion

Dip-net: (n) a small fishing net with a long handle

Gunnysack: (n) a coarse sack

Amphitheatre: (n) an open, circular building with a central space

Avail: (n) help or benefit

Coroner: (n) an official who investigates violent or suspicious deaths

BEFORE YOU READ

Have you ever been annoyed by someone for no good reason? What makes small things about other people so irritating?

Is it fair to dislike someone because they are always cheerful? Why or why not?

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Quiz

Name: _____

Date: _____

Please choose the best option for each of the following questions.

1. What facial features make John Claverhouse moon-faced? Select all that apply.

- [a] Large, expressive lips
- [b] Wide-apart cheekbones
- [c] Chin and forehead melting into the cheeks
- [d] Sprouting bushy tufts of pale hair
- [e] Broad, pudgy, flat nose
- [f] Big round eyes
- [g] Nose at the centre of the face

2. Why does the narrator hate John Claverhouse?

- (a) He killed his mother
- (b) He stole his wife
- (c) He constantly makes rude remarks
- (d) He can't put into words exactly why

3. What drives the narrator particularly crazy about John Claverhouse?

- (a) His laugh
- (b) The fact that he owns the largest house in town
- (c) His children
- (d) The fact that he has more cattle than the narrator

4. What is the first thing the narrator does to John Claverhouse, privily in the night-time?

- (a) Murders his cat
- (b) Steals his gold
- (c) Lets his cattle out into his fields
- (d) Hides all his favourite belongings

5. How does the narrator kill John Claverhouse's dog?

- (a) He shoots him with a rifle
- (b) He doesn't kill him, merely steals him
- (c) He poisons him
- (d) He chops off his head with an axe

6. What does John Claverhouse do after discovering his barn has been burned down?

- (a) Falls to his knees, weeping in despair
- (b) Loses his temper and shouts at the narrator
- (c) Laughs and runs around in the smouldering remains
- (d) Goes fishing for trout

7. What does the narrator say may have allowed him to forgive Claverhouse for existing?

- (a) If he had given him his barn
- (b) If he had been his brother
- (c) If he had apologised for his actions
- (d) If he had seemed less cheerful in his misfortune

8. How does the narrator arrange for Claverhouse to be forced out of his home?

- (a) He burns his house to the ground
- (b) He releases a plague of insects into his house
- (c) He gets Claverhouse's mortgage transferred to a tight-fisted moneylender
- (d) His previous actions cause Claverhouse such grief that he can't stand to live there anymore

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Quiz

Name: _____

Date: _____

9. What does the narrator decide to do after John Claverhouse tells him the story of his son playing down by the river?

(a) To move away and never return

(b) To try to be more tolerant of his neighbours

(c) To murder John Claverhouse

(d) To buy earplugs to block out Claverhouse's infernal laugh

10. Why doesn't the narrator want to simply shoot, stab or club Claverhouse?

(a) He doesn't have a gun, knife or club

(b) He hates bungling and brutality

(c) He wants him to suffer before dying

(d) He doesn't want to harm him

11. How long does it take the narrator to come up with his murderous plan?

(a) 2 months

(b) Less than a day

(c) 1 week

(d) 10 years

12. Which animal does the narrator buy and train?

(a) A female water spaniel

(b) A large black cat

(c) A male bloodhound

(d) A yellow budgie

13. What does the narrator focus the animal's training on?

(a) Killing large animals

(b) Retrieving sticks from the water without playing with them

(c) Waiting for long periods behind a tree and then running back suddenly

(d) Rolling over on command

14. What day of the week does Claverhouse go out to try and catch a final mess of trout?

(a) Monday

(b) Sunday

(c) Saturday

(d) Thursday

15. What is Claverhouse's trick for catching trout?

(a) He dynamites them

(b) He shoots them

(c) He uses a dip-net and sack

(d) He gets Bellona to catch them and bring them to him

16. What lands at the narrator's feet after the explosion?

(a) A dog's collar

(b) An eyeball

(c) Claverhouse's head

(d) A whole mess of trout

17. How does the narrator kill John Claverhouse?

(a) He trains Bellona so that she trips Claverhouse up into the river, just as he throws a stick of dynamite into it

(b) He trains Bellona so that she chases Claverhouse with a stick of dynamite he throws in the river

(c) He trains Bellona to attack and kill Claverhouse

(d) He poisons a bottle of whiskey which Bellona fetches from the forest and brings to Claverhouse

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Quiz

Name: _____

Date: _____

If you read it in the iClassics app

Answer these extra questions about what you discover as you read:

1. What does John Claverhouse do when you tap him on page 2?

2. What appears on screen after the narrator drops the steak for Mars the dog?

3. What happens when the John Claverhouse Show wheel of fortune lands on the rocket?

4. What can you do by tapping Claverhouse's stick of "giant"?

5. What appears in the Moon at the very end of the story?

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Think like a detective

Name: _____

Date: _____

Answer in full sentences. Support your ideas with evidence from the text.

1. The narrator says he hates Claverhouse mostly because of his cheerfulness. Is this a good reason to hate someone? What does the story suggest about envy and resentment?

2. The whole story is told by the narrator, who thinks his plan is clever and justified. Can we trust him? Find places where his account seems unreliable.

3. London makes Claverhouse cheerful and the narrator cold and calculating. How does this contrast shape our feelings about each of them, and where does the humour come from?

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Writing

Name: _____

Date: _____

For each scenario, explain what you think each of the characters would do and why, based on the descriptions and evidence from your character table.

a. People from the local government come knocking on doors to say that a big new road will require the demolition of their properties.

b. They receive a phone call claiming to be from their bank, asking for their name, address, bank details and top-secret password.

Extension: choose one scenario and write it as a short story with a beginning, a middle and an end, in the first person of one of the characters, imitating London's style.

