



2

The Wind on Haunted Hill

Prose

Warm Up



1. Find the hidden words in the pictures. One has been done for you.



1. CAT _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

2. Solve these riddles.

S. No	Question (Who am I?)	Answer
1	I have a face but no eyes, hands but no arms.	
2	I sit in a corner while travelling around the world.	
3	I go up when rain comes down.	
4	I have a head and a tail but no body.	



Section I

READING



Listen to the teacher read this section.

As you listen,

a. Underline the words or phrases that tell you what the wind does to the village.

b. Write the names of the characters in this story.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

WHO - Whoo, Whooo, cried the wind as it swept down from the Himalayan snows. It hurried over the hills and passes, and hummed and **moaned** in the tall pines and deodars.

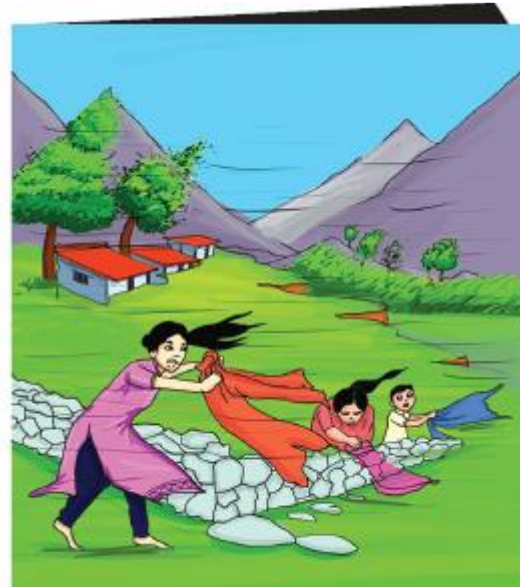
On **Haunted** Hill there was little to stop the wind—only a few stunted trees and bushes, and the **ruins** of what had once been a small settlement.

On the slopes of the next hill there was a small village. People kept large stones on their tin roofs to prevent them from blowing away. There was nearly always a wind in these parts. Even on sunny days, doors and windows rattled, chimneys choked, clothes blew away.

Three children stood beside a low stone wall, spreading clothes out to dry. On each garment they placed a rock. Even then the clothes fluttered like flags and pennants.

Usha, dark haired and rose cheeked, struggled with her grandfather's long loose shirt. She was eleven or twelve. Her younger brother, Suresh, was doing his best to hold down a bed-sheet while Binya, a slightly older girl, Usha's friend and neighbour, was handing them the clothes, one at a time.

Once they were sure everything was on the wall, firmly held down by rocks, they climbed up on the flat stones and sat there for a while, in the wind and the sun, staring across the fields at the ruins on Haunted Hill.



'I must go to the bazaar today,' said Usha.

'I wish I could come too,' said Binya. 'But I have to help with the cows and the housework. Mother isn't well.'

'I can come!' said Suresh. He was always ready to visit the bazaar, which was three miles away, on the other side of Haunted Hill.



'No, you can't,' said Usha. 'You must help Grandfather chop wood.'

Their father was in the army, posted in a distant part of the country, and Suresh and his grandfather were the only men in the house. Suresh was eight, chubby and almond-eyed.

'Won't you be afraid to come back alone?' he asked.

'Why should I be afraid?'

'There are ghosts on the hill.'

'I know, but I will be back before it gets dark. Ghosts don't appear during the day.'

'Are there many ghosts in the ruins?' asked Binya.

'Grandfather says so. He says that many years ago – over a hundred years ago – English people lived on the hill. But it was a bad spot, always getting struck by lightning, and they had to move to the next range and build another place.'

'But if they went away, why should there be any ghosts?'

'Because – Grandfather says – during a **terrible** storm one of the houses was hit by lightning and everyone in it was killed. Everyone, including the children.'

'Were there many children?'

'There were two of them. A brother and sister. Grandfather says he has seen them many times, when he has passed through the ruins late at night. He has seen them playing in the moonlight.'

'Wasn't he frightened?'

'No. Old people don't mind seeing ghosts.'

Usha set out on her walk to the bazaar at two in the afternoon. It was about an hour's walk. She went through the fields, now turning yellow with flowering mustard, then along the **saddle** of the hill, and up to the ruins.

The path went straight through the ruins. Usha knew it well; she had often taken it while going to the bazaar to do the weekly shopping, or to see her aunt who lived in the town.

Wild flowers grew in the **crumbling** walls. A wild plum tree grew straight out of the floor of what had once been a large hall. Its soft white blossoms had begun to fall. Lizards **scuttled** over the stones, while a **whistling-thrush**, its deep purple plumage glistening in the soft sunshine, sat in an empty window and sang its heart out.



Usha sang to herself, as she tripped lightly along the path. Soon she had left the ruins behind. The path dipped steeply down to the valley and the little town with its **straggling** bazaar.

Usha took her time in the bazaar. She bought soap and matches, spices and sugar (none of these things could be had in the village, where there was no shop), and a new pipe stem for her grandfather's hookah, and an exercise book for Suresh to do his sums in. As an afterthought, she bought him some marbles. Then she went to a mochi's shop to have her



mother's slippers repaired. The mochi was busy, so she left the slippers with him and said she'd be back in half an hour.

She had two rupees of her own saved up, and she used the money to buy herself a necklace of amber-coloured beads from an old Tibetan lady who sold charms and trinkets from a tiny shop at the end of the bazaar.

Usha met her Aunt Lakshmi, who took her home for tea.

Usha spent an hour in Aunt Lakshmi's little flat above the shops, listening to her aunt talk about the ache in her left shoulder and the stiffness in her joints. She drank two cups of sweet hot tea, and when she looked out of the window she saw that dark clouds had gathered over the mountains.

Usha ran to the cobbler's and collected her mother's slippers. The shopping bag was full. She slung it over her shoulder and set out for the village.

Work in pairs. Read the story above and find the answers to these questions.

1. What were the children doing beside the stone wall?
2. What did Suresh ask Usha? Why?
3. Who told the children the story about the ghosts on Haunted Hill?
4. What did Usha see while walking to the bazaar?

GLOSSARY



moaned	- make a long, low sound
haunted	- possessed
ruins	- decayed, collapsed building or place
terrible	- fearful
saddle	- low point on a ridge between two summits
crumbling	- breaking apart into small pieces
scuttled	- ran with short quick steps
whistling - thrush	- a small singing bird
straggling	- spreading out in different directions



Section II

Take turns and read this section aloud.

Strangely, the wind had dropped. The trees were still, not a leaf moved. The crickets were silent in the grass. The crows flew round in a circle, then settled down for the night in an oak tree.

'I must get home before dark,' said Usha to herself, as she hurried along the path. But already the sky was darkening. The clouds, black and threatening, looked over Haunted Hill. This was March, the month for storms.

A deep rumble echoed over the hills, and Usha felt the first heavy drop of rain hit her cheek.





She had no umbrella with her; the weather had seemed so fine just a few hours ago. Now all she could do was tie an old scarf over her head, and pull her shawl tight across her shoulders. Holding the shopping bag close to her body, she quickened her pace. She was almost running. But the raindrops were coming down faster now. Big, heavy pellets of rain.

A sudden flash of lightning lit up the hill. The ruins stood out in clear outline. Then all was dark again. Night had fallen.

'I won't get home before the storm breaks,' thought Usha. 'I'll have to shelter in the ruins.' She could only see a few feet ahead, but she knew the path well and she began to run.

Suddenly, the wind sprang up again and brought the rain with a rush against her face. It was cold, stinging rain. She could hardly keep her eyes open.

The wind grew in force. It hummed and whistled. Usha did not have to fight against it. It was behind her now, and helped her along, up the steep path and on to the brow of the hill.

There was another flash of lightning, followed by a peal of thunder. The ruins looked up before her, grim and **forbidding**.

She knew there was a corner where a piece of old roof remained. It would give some shelter. It would be better than trying to go on. In the dark, in the howling wind, she had only to stay off the path to go over a rocky cliff edge.

Who – whoo – whooo, howled the wind. She saw the wild plum tree swaying, bent double, its **foliage thrashing** against the ground. The broken walls did little to stop the wind.

Usha found her way into the ruined building, helped by her memory of the place and the constant **flicker** of lightning. She began moving along the wall, hoping to reach the sheltered corner. She placed her hands flat against the stones and moved sideways. Her hand touched something soft and furry. She gave a **startled** cry and took her hand away. Her cry was answered by another cry – half snarl, half screech – and something leapt away in the darkness.

It was only a wild cat. Usha realized this when she heard it. The cat lived in the ruins, and she had often seen it. But for a moment she had been very frightened. Now, she moved quickly along the wall until she heard the rain drumming on the **remnant** of the tin roof.



Once under it, **crouching** in the corner, she found some shelter from the wind and the rain. Above her, the tin sheets **groaned** and **clattered**, as if they would sail away at any moment. But they were held down by the solid branch of a straggling old oak tree.

Usha remembered that across this empty room stood an old fireplace and that there might be some shelter under the blocked-up chimney. Perhaps it would be drier than it was in her corner; but she would not attempt to find it just now. She might lose her way altogether.

Her clothes were soaked and the water streamed down from her long black hair to form a **puddle** at her feet. She stamped her feet to keep them warm. She thought she heard a faint cry - was it the cat again, or an owl? – but the sound of the storm **blotted out** all other sounds.

There had been no time to think of ghosts, but now that she was in one place, without any plans for venturing out again, she remembered Grandfather's story about the lightning - blasted ruins. She hoped and prayed that lightning would not strike her as she sheltered there.

Thunder boomed over the hills, and the lightning came quicker now, only a few seconds between each burst of lightning.

Then there was a bigger flash than most, and for a second or two the entire ruin was lit up. A **streak** of blue **sizzled** along the floor of the building, in at one end and out at the other. Usha was staring straight ahead. As the opposite wall was lit up, she saw, crouching in the disused fireplace, two small figures – they could only have been children!

The ghostly figures looked up, staring back at Usha. And then everything was dark again.

Two scary events from this section are listed here. Write the events that take place in between in the correct order.

The black clouds were threatening.				The ghostly figures were staring back.
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Section III

Read this section carefully.

Usha's heart was in her mouth. She had seen, without a shadow of a doubt, two ghostly creatures at the other side of the room, and she wasn't going to remain in that ruined building a minute longer.

She ran out of her corner, ran towards the big gap in the wall through which she had entered. She was halfway across the open space when something – someone – fell against her. She **stumbled**, got up and again bumped into something. She gave a frightened scream. Someone else screamed. And then there was a shout, a boy's shout, and Usha instantly recognized the voice.



'Suresh!'

'Usha!'

'Binya!'

'It's me!'

'It's us!'

They fell into each other's arms, so surprised and relieved that all they could do was laugh and **giggle** and repeat each other's names.

Then Usha said, 'I thought you were ghosts.'

'We thought you were a ghost!' said Suresh.

'Come back under the roof,' said Usha.

They **huddled** together in the corner chattering **excitedly**.

'When it grew dark, we came looking for you,' said Binya. 'And then the storm broke.'

'Shall we run back together?' asked Usha. 'I don't want to stay here any longer.'

'We'll have to wait,' said Binya. 'The path has fallen away at one place. It won't be safe in the dark, in all this rain.'



'Then we may have to wait till morning,' said Suresh. 'And I'm feeling hungry!'

The wind and rain continued, and so did the thunder and lightning, but they were not afraid now. They gave each other warmth and confidence. Even the ruins did not seem so forbidding.

After an hour the rain stopped, and although the wind continued to blow, it was now taking the clouds away, so that the thunder grew more distant. Then the wind too moved on, and all was silent. Towards dawn the whistling-thrush began to sing. Its sweet broken notes flooded the rain washed ruins with music.

'Let's go,' said Usha.

'Come on,' said Suresh. 'I'm hungry.'



As it grew lighter, they saw that the plum tree stood upright again, although it had lost all its blossoms. They stood outside the ruins, on the brow of the hill, watching the sky grow pink. A light breeze had sprung up.

When they were some distance from the ruins, Usha looked back and said, 'Can you see something there, behind the wall? It's like a hand waving.'

'I can't see anything,' said Suresh.

'It's just the top of the plum tree,' said Binya.

They were on the path leading across the saddle of the hill.

'Goodbye, goodbye...'

Voices on the wind.

'Who said goodbye?' asked Usha.

'Not I,' said Suresh.

'Not I,' said Binya.

'I heard someone calling.'

'It's only the wind.'

Usha looked back at the ruins. The sun had come up and was touching the top of the walls. The leaves of the plum tree shone. The thrush sat there, singing.

'Come on,' said Suresh. 'I'm hungry.'

'Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye....'

Usha heard them calling. Or was it just the wind?

Discuss with your partner and complete the table.

S.No.	Question	Who asked this?	Who answered?	What was the answer?
1.	Shall we run back together?			
2.	Can you see something behind the wall?			
3.	Who said good bye?			
4.	Was it just the wind?			



GLOSSARY



stumbled	-	lost one's balance
giggle	-	laugh lightly
huddled	-	crowded together
excitedly	-	feeling great eagerness

Read and Understand

A. Choose the most appropriate option.



1. The wind hurried and passed through the _____.
 - a) apples and mangoes.
 - b) pines and deodars.
 - c) berries and cherries.
2. The market was _____ away from the village.
 - a) 3 miles
 - b) 7 miles
 - c) 11 miles
3. Usha went to visit her _____ house after shopping in the market.
 - a) Grand father's
 - b) aunt's
 - c) cousin's
4. Usha took shelter in the _____.
 - a) ruins.
 - b) caves.
 - c) dens.
5. At dawn, the _____ began to sing.
 - a) cuckoo
 - b) linnet
 - c) thrush



B. Think and answer

1. Why was it a struggle for the children to dry their clothes?
2. What story did grandfather tell them about the haunted hill?
3. What did Usha buy in the market? List them.
4. What scared Usha during the dark rainy night?
5. How did the children react when they met each other at the ruins?

C. Discuss in class.

"Was it just the wind?" – What do you think Usha thought it was? Why?

VOCABULARY



D. Unscramble the sound – describing words from the text. One has been done for you.

E.g.: ige glg – giggle

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1 noam - _____ | 4 mobo - _____ |
| 2 murebl - _____ | 5 cohe - _____ |
| 3 lowh - _____ | 6 nogra - _____ |

E. The Detective's Dictionary!

Choose the correct word from the box and fill in the blanks.

evidence	clue	detective	suspect	victim
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1. A _____ is someone who investigates a crime.
2. A _____ is someone who suffers the effect of a crime.
3. Someone who might have committed a crime is a _____.
4. A _____ is an idea or fact that helps us solve a mystery.
5. An _____ is an information we have that proves us that something is true.