

## Read and Respond

### *Knights of the Borrowed Dark*

by Dave Rudden

Please note: This support might be useful for exploring aspects of the novel with students. It is part of a series of supports available on [www.jct.ie/english](http://www.jct.ie/english)

#### Background to the novel:

A fantasy adventure, *Knights of the Borrowed Dark*, was published in 2016. It is the first novel in a trilogy about a thirteen-year-old orphan boy named Denizen Harwick. One day, he meets a mysterious aunt he never knew he had. He is quickly drawn into a fantastical world where his aunt leads a secret organisation dedicated to fighting magical creatures of darkness.

#### Identify the Learning:

#### Learning Outcomes in Focus:

Oral Language 13	Develop their spoken language proficiency by experimenting with word choice, being creative with syntax, being precise, stimulating appropriate responses relative to context and purpose
Reading 8	Read their texts to understand and appreciate language enrichment by examining an author’s choice of words, the use and effect of simple figurative language, vocabulary and language patterns, and images, as appropriate to the text ○★
Writing 6	Use editing skills continuously during the writing process to enhance meaning and impact: select vocabulary, reorder words, phrases and clauses, correct punctuation and spelling, reorder paragraphs, remodel, manage content ○★

#### Possible links to L2LP:

Communication and Literacy:	1.13 Use simple rules and text conventions that support meaning, e.g. pause at a full stop.
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**Read the following extract from Chapter 8 of the novel:**

The woman in white was eating light bulbs.

Simon couldn't take his eyes off her. It was horrible. She had found a cupboard on the third-floor corridor six metres from the closet in which Simon was hiding - and had begun rifling through its insides.

Linens had been experimentally sniffed then idly tossed aside, forming lonely snowdrifts on the floor. A first-aid kit had been emptied out, its content separated with a toe and methodically stamped apart. Now she was opening boxes of light bulbs, shaking the spheres out into her palm and peering into them before closing her teeth around their fragile domes.

*Crunch.*

It was dawning on Simon that she hadn't been searching the cupboard; she was just destroying whatever she found. There was no urgency in her movements and a strange look of amusement creased her skin. Unfortunately, that meant Simon had no idea how long she might stay there, blocking the corridor – his only access to the classroom wing.

It was pure luck she hadn't seen him. An unexplainable feeling of dread had made him seek refuge in a broom closet, cracking the door open a hair just in time to see her appear at the top of the stairs.

Maybe he heard her without realizing it. Maybe he'd felt her presence or the air her movements displaced. Maybe the animal part of his brain was taking over – all the prehistoric instincts you didn't use in the modern world.

Simon didn't know or care. All that mattered was that he hadn't been caught.

Suddenly, the woman's head jerked to one side, as if she smelled his relief. She spat out a dry clot of glass and carefully closed the cupboard door, head cocked like a hound's.

Simon froze, taking his hand off the door so it settled back against the jamb, hiding her from view. His heart pounded, louder and louder – *Stop, stop, she'll hear it!* – and the floor creaked as she took a step towards him.

*Don't panic.*

With the door closed, she was more of a collection of sounds than a physical presence, sounds that Simon had to assemble in his head – a process that wasn't doing anything for his heart rate.

Periodic creaks. *Steps. She doesn't care about being quiet – why would she?* A drawling rasp – breathing, roughened by glass. A cascade of stiff, mechanical pops that Simon realized in horror were her fingers clenching and unclenching. Had he not seen her with his own two eyes, he wouldn't have believed it was a person out there at all – just a machine, gaunt and terrible, bearing down upon him.

More terrifying than that, though, were the silences. Silence meant that he had no idea where the woman was.

*Creak.*

*Hsss.*

*Silence.*

*Creak.*

*Hsss.*

*Silence.*



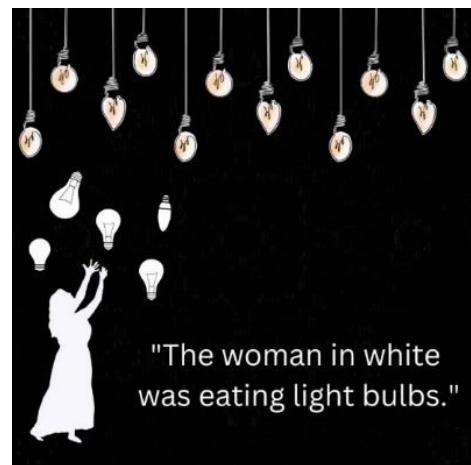
Simon closed his eyes and opened them and cursed the sound of both. Everything was magnified. His heartbeat was thunder, his breathing a storm. The moment stretched maddeningly and Simon became convinced that he could hear the *bzzt* of his nervous system, the *hoosh* of his sweating skin and, finally, beneath it all, the *tink* of the future becoming the present one second at a time.

*Silence.*

The following activities may be completed in oral and/or written format.

### Introductory Activity:

1. Re-read the opening sentence of the extract.  
What stands out about this sentence? You might consider colour, word choice, unusual nouns and verbs for example.
2. Using the opening sentence as a model, create your own atmospheric opening to a story in 10 words or less.
3. Create a physical or digital image to accompany your opening sentence.



### Possible Pairwork/Groupwork:

4. With the help of a thesaurus (such as [www.wordhippo.com](http://www.wordhippo.com)), can you find synonyms for the following words from the above extract?

A *synonym* is a word that means the same thing as another word. If you replace a word in a sentence with its synonym, the overall meaning of the sentence remains in place ([www.vocabulary.com](http://www.vocabulary.com)).



Word	Synonym(s)
Gaunt	
Refuge	
Unfortunately	
Periodic	
Methodically	
Creaked	

5. The author’s sentences contain several examples of interesting word choices and sentence structures. Look at the four examples below. In your opinion which is the most interesting sentence from the extract? Give reasons for your answer.

*closing her teeth around their fragile domes*

*cracking the door open a hair*

*Crunch.*

**Possible Extended Writing Tasks:**

1. Re-read the extract. Write a description of the ‘woman in white’. Include as many adjectives as you can.
2. Having read this extract, what do you think happens next? Write the next two paragraphs. Consider verbs, adverbs, adjectives, metaphors, sound and colour in your writing. Carefully construct your sentence structure to help build tension and suspense for the reader.

**Further Supports:**

- <https://www.daverudden.com/docs/kotbd-teaching-resources-secondary.pdf>