

English: An extract from Roald Dah's *Fantastic Mr Fox*

The Race

Now there began a desperate race, the machines against the foxes. In the beginning, the hill looked like this:



After about an hour, as the machines bit away more and more soil from the hilltop, it looked like this:



Sometimes the foxes would gain a little ground and clanking noises would grow fainter and Mr Fox would say, 'We're going to make it! I'm sure we are!' But then a few moments later, the machines would come back at them and the crunch of the mighty shovels would get louder and louder. Once the foxes actually saw the sharp metal edge of one of the shovels as it scraped up the earth just behind them.

'Keep going, my darlings!' panted Mr Fox. 'Don't give up!'

'Keep going!' the fat Boggis shouted to Bunce and Bean. 'We'll get him any moment now!'

'Have you caught sight of him yet?' Bean called back.

'Not yet,' shouted Boggis. 'But I think you're close!'

'I'll pick him up with my bucket!' Shouted Bunce. 'I'll chop him to pieces!'

But by lunchtime the machines were still at it.

And so we're the poor foxes.

The hill now looked like this:



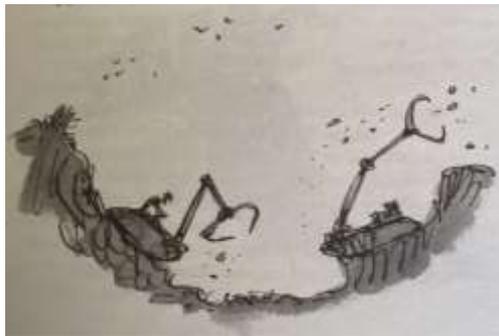
The farmers didn't stop for lunch; they were too keen to finish the job.

'Hey there, Mr Fox!' yelled Bunce, leaning out of his tractor. 'We're coming to get you now!'

'You've had your last chicken!' yelled Boggis. 'You'll never come prowling around *my* farm again!'

A sort of madness had taken hold of the three men. The tall skinny Bean and dwarfish pot-bellied Bunce were driving their machines like maniacs, racing the motors and making the shovels dig at a terrific speed. The fat Boggis was hopping about like a dervish and shouting, 'Faster! Faster!'

By five o'clock in the afternoon this is what had happened to the hill:



The hole the machines had dug was like the crater of a volcano. It was such an extraordinary sight that crowds of people came rushing out from the surrounding villages to have a look. They stood on the edge of the crater and stared down at Boggis and Bunce and Bean.

'Hey there, Boggis! What's going on?'

'We're after a fox!'

'You must be mad!'

The people jeered and laughed.

But this only made the three farmers more furious and more obstinate and more determined than ever not to give up until they had caught the Fox.



Answer these questions about the story. Remember to read back through the text carefully to find key information.

1. Find and copy the word that describes the sound that the ***mighty shovels*** made.
2. How does the word ***mighty*** help you to understand what the shovels were like?
3. What did Mr Fox think when the sound of the shovels got fainter?
4. What is Bunce going to try and pick up Mr Fox with?
5. Why didn't the farmers stop for their lunch?
6. Find and copy the two words that describe Bean.
7. What were Bean and Bunce doing to their motors?
8. What simile is used to describe the hole that the machines had dug?
9. Why did the people from the surrounding villages rush to look?
10. Explain how the jeering and laughing of the people made the three farmers feel.

Match these words from the text with their synonyms:

desperate

pointed

fainter

determined

sharp

taunted

prowling

frantic

jeered

roaming

obstinate

quiet

Write some sentences of your own to describe the diggers. Can you use any similes?



Write a conversation that might have taken place between some of the villagers looking at this scene. Remember to use inverted commas around the words that are spoken.



Create your own storyboard of this chapter. Can you also show what is happening with Mr Fox's family underground?
