He-y, Come On Ou-t!
Shinichi Hoshi (translated by Stanleigh Jones)

About this Text
Shinichi Hoshi, one of the pioneers of Japanese science fiction, is best known for writing more than 1000 “short-short” stories like this one. In “He-y, Come on Ou-t!”, the residents of a Japanese village discover a mysterious hole. As you read, pause to answer the questions beside the text.

Skill Focus
In this lesson, you’ll look at how the structure of the story and the order of events in a story creates mood and/or tension. [RL.5]

Vocabulary
Let’s pronounce these words together as a class:
Accumulate (uh-kyoo-myuh-leyt)
Contaminate (kuhn-tam-uh-neyt)
Dispose (dih-spozh)

How do we determine mood in a story?
Mood is the emotional atmosphere of a piece of literature. Authors may create a tense mood by making readers anxious and uncertain about what will come next, or a mysterious mood by holding information back from the reader. To determine mood, we pay attention to setting, character thoughts and actions, and ordering of events and analyze the effect they have on us as readers.

WHOLE-CLASS READING

[1] The typhoon had passed and the sky was a gorgeous blue. Even a certain village not far from the city had suffered damage. A little distance from the village and near the mountains, a small shrine\(^1\) had been swept away by a landslide.

[2] "I wonder how long that shrine’s been here."

[3] "Well, in any case, it must have been here since an awfully long time ago."

[4] "We’ve got to rebuild it right away."

[5] While the villagers exchanged views, several more of their number came over.

[6] "It sure was wrecked."

[7] "I think it used to be right here."

[8] "No, looks like it was a little more over there."

[9] Just then one of them raised his voice. "Hey what in the world is this hole?" Where they had all gathered there was a hole about a meter in diameter. They peered in, but it was so dark nothing could be seen. However, it gave one the feeling that it was so deep it went clear through to the center of the earth.

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\(^1\) a place or building that is considered holy; a church or chapel
There was even one person who said, "I wonder if it’s a fox’s hole."

"He—y, come on ou—t!" shouted a young man into the hole. There was no echo from the bottom. Next he picked up a pebble and was about to throw it in.

"You might bring down a curse on us. Lay off," warned an old man, but the younger one energetically threw the pebble in. As before, however, there was no answering response from the bottom. The villagers cut down some trees, tied them with rope and made a fence which they put around the hole. Then they repaired to the village.

"What do you suppose we ought to do?"

"Shouldn’t we build the shrine up just as it was over the hole?"

A day passed with no agreement. The news traveled fast, and a car from the newspaper company rushed over. In no time a scientist came out, and with an all-knowing expression on his face he went over to the hole. Next, a bunch of gawking curiosity seekers showed up; one could also pick out here and there men of shifty glances who appeared to be concessionaires. Concerned that someone might fall into the hole, a policeman from the local substation kept a careful watch.

One newspaper reporter tied a weight to the end of a long cord and lowered it into the hole. A long way down it went. The cord ran out, however, and he tried to pull it out, but it would not come back up. Two or three people helped out, but when they all pulled too hard, the cord parted at the edge of the hole.

Another reporter, a camera in hand, who had been watching all of this, quietly untied a stout rope that had been wound around his waist.

The scientist contacted people at his laboratory and had them bring out a high-powered bull horn, with which he was going to check out the echo from the hole’s bottom. He tried switching through various sounds, but there was no echo. The scientist was puzzled, but he could not very well give up with everyone watching him so intently. He put the bull horn right up to the hole, turned it to its highest volume, and let it sound continuously for a long time. It was a noise that would have carried several dozen kilometers above ground. But the hole just calmly swallowed up the sound.

In his own mind the scientist was at a loss, but with a look of apparent composure he cut off the sound and, in a manner suggesting that the whole thing had a perfectly plausible explanation, said simply, "Fill it in."

Safer to get rid of something one didn’t understand.

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2 a business person; a person who manages an area of land and the businesses that operate there
3 Plausible (adjective): believable or reasonable
The onlookers, disappointed that this was all that was going to happen, prepared to disperse. Just then one of the concessionaires, having broken through the throng and come forward, made a proposal.

"Let me have that hole. I'll fill it in for you."

"We'd be grateful to you for filling it in," replied the mayor of the village, "but we can't very well give you the hole. We have to build a shrine there."

"If it's a shrine you want, I'll build you a fine one later. Shall I make it with an attached meeting hall?"

Before the mayor could answer, the people of the village all shouted out.

"Really? Well, in that case, we ought to have it closer to the village."

"It's just an old hole. We'll give it to you!"

So it was settled. And the mayor, of course, had no objection.

[30] The concessionaire was true to his promise. It was small, but closer to the village he did build for them a shrine with an attached meeting hall.

About the time the autumn festival was held at the new shrine, the hole-filling company established by the concessionaire hung out its small shingle at a shack near the hole.

[31] The concessionaire had his cohorts mount a loud campaign in the city. "We've got a fabulously deep hole! Scientists say it's at least five thousand meters deep! Perfect for the disposal of such things as waste from nuclear reactors."

Government authorities granted permission. Nuclear power plants fought for contracts. The people of the village were a bit worried about this, but they consented when it was explained that there would be absolutely no above-ground contamination for several thousand years and that they would share in the profits. Into the bargain, very shortly a magnificent road was built from the city to the village.

Trucks rolled in over the road, transporting lead boxes. Above the hole the lids were opened, and the wastes from nuclear reactors tumbled away into the hole.

[35] From the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Agency boxes of unnecessary classified documents were brought for disposal. Officials who came to supervise the disposal held discussions on golf. The lesser functionaries, as they threw in the papers, chatted about pinball.

[36] The hole showed no signs of filling up. It was awfully deep, thought some; or else it might be very spacious at the bottom. Little by little the hole-filling company expanded its business.

[37] Bodies of animals used in contagious disease experiments at the universities were brought out, and to these were added the unclaimed corpses of vagrants. Better than dumping all of its garbage in the ocean, went the thinking in the city, and plans were made for a long pipe to carry it to the hole.

**Disperse** (verb): to leave; to go in different directions

**Consent** (verb): to agree to something

**Contamination**:

a small sign, especially one found outside a business

**Disposal**:

a public official

**Pinball**:

a person who is homeless or who wanders from place to place
[38] The hole gave peace of mind to the dwellers of the city. They concentrated solely on producing one thing after another. Everyone disliked thinking about the eventual consequences. People wanted only to work for production companies and sales corporations; they had no interest in becoming junk dealers. But, it was thought, these problems too would gradually be resolved by the hole.

[39] Young girls whose betrothals had been arranged discarded old diaries in the hole. There were also those who were inaugurating new love affairs and threw into the hole old photographs of themselves taken with former sweethearts. The police felt comforted as they used the hole to get rid of accumulations of expertly done counterfeit bills. Criminals breathed easier after throwing material evidence into the hole.

[40] Whatever one wished to discard, the hole accepted it all. The hole cleansed the city of its filth; the sea and sky seemed to have become a bit clearer than before.

[41] Aiming at the heavens, new buildings went on being constructed one after the other.

[42] One day, atop the high steel frame of a new building under construction, a workman was taking a break. Above his head he heard a voice shout:

"He—y, come on ou—t!"

[44] But, in the sky to which he lifted his gaze there was nothing at all. A clear blue sky merely spread over all. He thought it must be his imagination. Then, as he resumed his former position, from the direction where the voice had come, a small pebble skimmed by him and fell past.

[45] The man, however, was gazing in idle reverie at the city’s skyline growing ever more beautiful, and he failed to notice.

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9 engagement to be married
10 Counterfeit (adjective): fake or imitation
11 a saying that means to look lazily at something without thinking deeply
FURTHER ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Directions: Complete the questions below independently or with a partner. Be prepared to discuss your answers with your class.

1. **Paragraphs 31-37:** List four toxic things that people dispose of in the hole.
   - “waste from nuclear reactors“ (32)
   - “Bodies of animals used in contagious disease experiments“ (37)
   - “the unclaimed corpses of vagrants“ (37)
   - “all of [the city’s] garbage“ (37)

2. **Paragraphs 38-40:** Why does disposing of waste in the hole give the city dwellers peace of mind?
   - They can focus more on production.
   - They believe all their problems can be solved by the hole.
   - They can hide evidence of past sins and crimes in the hole.
   - They feel it makes the city cleaner.

3. Remember this story is an allegory, which means that the events that take place in the story are symbolic of real life events. Consider your answer above. What real life actions does throwing the items in the hole symbolize?
   - The city dwellers carelessly throwing trash and dangerous materials into the hole is symbolic of humans carelessly polluting the environment.
   - The city dwellers ignoring the consequences to focus only on the positives of disposing of their trash is symbolic of humans selfishly polluting the environment for financial gain or short-term convenience.

4. Consider the pebble that falls from the sky at the end of the story. What does this event symbolize in the real world?
   - Humans’ failure to consider the long-term consequences of their actions to the environment they depend on.
   - The eventual consequences that humans will face after destroying their own environment.
EXIT TICKET for “He-y Come on O-ut!”

Step 1
Directions: Answer the multiple choice questions below.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. How do paragraphs 34-37 affect the mood of the story? *[RL.5]*
   A. They build tension because the readers know that the items going into the hole are potentially lethal.
   B. They build mystery because the readers are curious about how the villagers are not getting caught.
   C. They build surprise because it is shocking that the village has so much waste to dispose of.
   D. They build suspense because the readers want to know where the waste comes from.

2. How do paragraphs 32-34 contribute to the development of the theme? *[RL.2]*
   A. They illustrate the selfish way people act without caring what the consequences will be.
   B. They illustrate the collaborative way people can work with the government to solve problems.
   C. They illustrate the generous way people in power can act when they care about a community.
   D. They illustrate the strange way people behave when they know they are doing something wrong.

3. How do the details of the construction worker’s response in paragraph 45 develop the story’s theme? *[RL.3]*
   A. They demonstrate the future harm that will come to the people because of their actions.
   B. They show the lack of awareness people have about the environment around them.
   C. They illustrate the strength of the bond between humans and their environment.
   D. They reveal the importance of valuing production over waste.

4. How does the ending of the story (paragraphs 41-45) help create surprise? *[RL.5]*
   A. It makes the reader notice the damage the pebble caused.
   B. It makes the reader realize the destination of the people’s trash.
   C. It makes the reader see the impact of the city’s constant production.
   D. It makes the reader understand why the people were disposing of trash in the hole.
Step 2
Directions: Respond to the Short Response prompt below.

PROMPT: You have just read “He-y, Come On Ou-t!” by Shinichi Hoshi. How do paragraphs 13-20 contribute to the story’s mystery? [RL.5]

CHECKLIST FOR VARYING SENTENCE LENGTH FOR EFFECT:

- Underline the short sentence you used for effect. Does this sentence convey an important piece of information that you want readers to remember?
  a. Yes
  b. No, I will write a different short sentence.
EXTENSION ACTIVITY: 5 MINUTE PARTNER DISCUSSION

DIRECTIONS: Discuss the questions below with a partner. Record notes on both of your answers. Push yourselves to use formal language and evidence from the text. Use the discussion resources in the box below.

DISCUSSION RESOURCES

Summarizing
- My point is this: …
- Overall, I’d argue that…
- The evidence for this is strong when you consider that…

Asking peers to refer to textual evidence
- Do you see different or conflicting ideas in the text? If so, where?
- What evidence do you have that supports that idea?
- What’s an example of that?

1. CROSS TEXTUAL: Both “Lee Sherman and the Toxic Louisiana Bayou” and “Hey-y, Come on Ou-tl!” show people disposing of their waste in irresponsible ways. Why do you think people fail to make the connection between disposing of harmful waste and the negative impact it has on their own environment. Do they actually know the dangers but choose to ignore them, or are they simply uninformed?

2. Many people make their livelihood in the waste removal industry helping people dispose of their garbage and recyclables. To what degree are these workers and companies responsible for polluting the environment? Is safe disposal the responsibility of the waste removal companies and their workers or of those who produce the waste?

3. Paragraph 20 reads, “Safer to get rid of something one didn’t understand.” What are some real life examples of people acting on this mindset? What are the dangers and drawbacks of this mindset?