



# Follow

Clarify  
gnarled  
Fair Isle  
tam-o'-shanter  
by your leave  
auld

Gryph waited until Aneesa's rank led the procession, hoping against hope that somehow they'd just stop. They didn't. Aneesa and the chef vanished like the others.

"That settles it," muttered Gryph, and they dropped into formation behind the last pair. She couldn't believe she was following. She wanted to run away but didn't dare. A step before the vanishing point, Jake gave her a shaky thumbs up.

Gryph grabbed his arm and, with a single step, the world changed.

## Question

Why do you think Gryph didn't dare leave the procession when they reached the vanishing point?

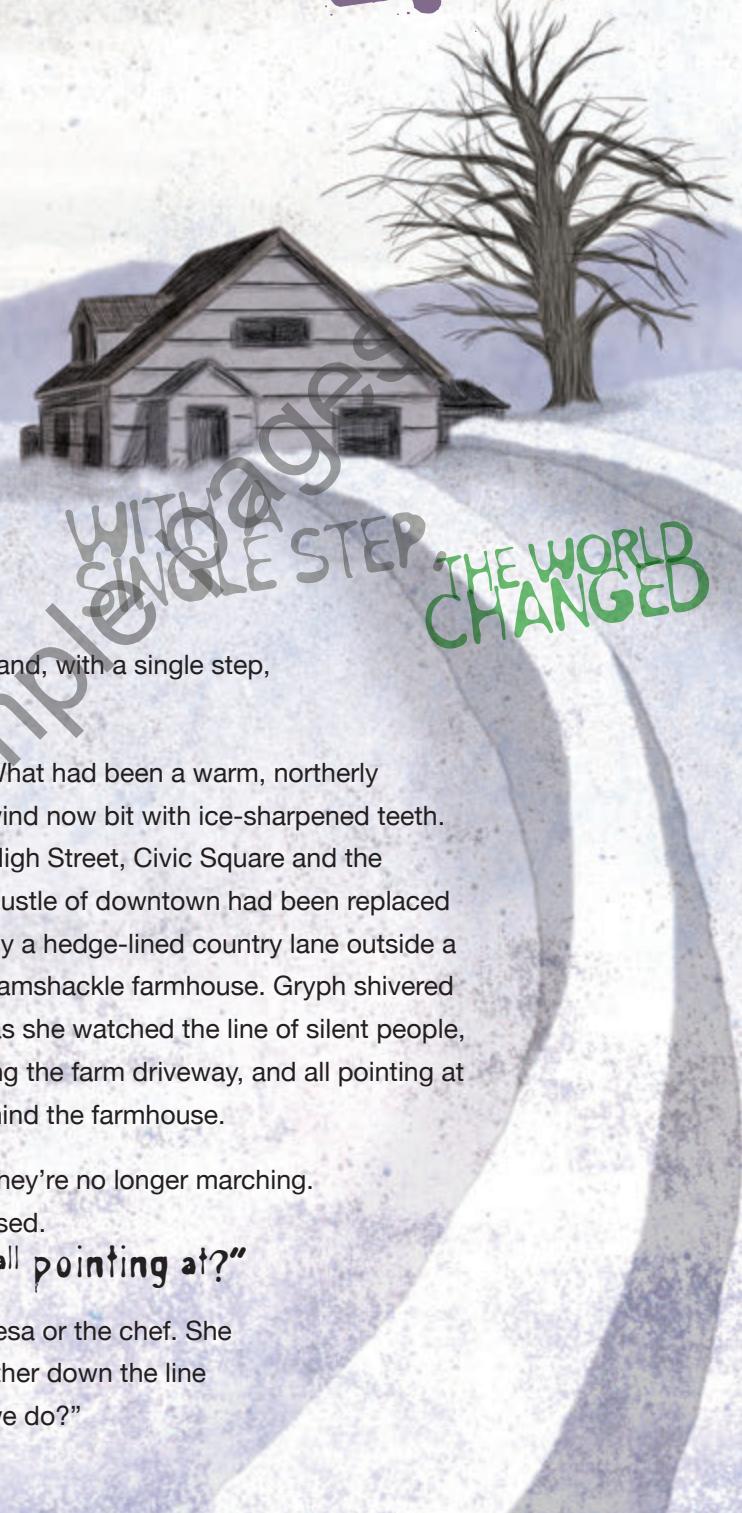
What had been a warm, northerly wind now bit with ice-sharpened teeth. High Street, Civic Square and the bustle of downtown had been replaced by a hedge-lined country lane outside a ramshackle farmhouse. Gryph shivered as she watched the line of silent people,

now packed single-file along the farm driveway, and all pointing at something out of sight behind the farmhouse.

"Too weird," said Jake. "They're no longer marching. The fissure must have closed.

**And what are they all pointing at?"**

Gryph couldn't spot Aneesa or the chef. She just hoped they were further down the line somewhere. "What do we do?"



"We try to find out what's happening here," said Jake grimly. He swung open the gate.

"But this must be somebody's house. Apart from anything else, it's private property—"

"Yeah, so we knock at the door and ask permission. Maybe the people who live here have some idea of what's going on."

**Opinion**  
Do you think  
the author  
stereotypes Jake  
and Gryph?  
Why/why not?

Jake's sharp rap on the door was answered by a gnarled old man wearing a bulky Fair Isle jersey, woollen trousers and a faded tartan tam-o'-shanter.

"You've come about the dig?" The old man dragged on a pair of gumboots, frowning at Gryph's shoes. "This way. Not that you're dressed for it, but your work's in the Incident Room. That's what you're here for, isn't it?" he added, suddenly doubtful.

"Pretty much," said Jake, nodding at Gryph. "I'm Jake and this is my sister Gryph."

"Frank. In the old days it would have been Mr Peden to you, but now Frank will do. Come along then. After you."

Gryph sidled down the driveway, keeping Jake between her and the silent observers. **She felt their eyes tracking her like target-finders.** As if unaware of their audience, Frank shambled alongside.

**Language Feature**  
**Simile/Metaphor/Personification**  
What literary device has the author used here? How did it help develop the mood in the world beyond the vanishing point?

Before Gryph could warn him, he brushed up against two of the spectators. He shuddered as he passed straight through them, muttering, "Bitter, that north wind. Hope you're not expecting a reception party. The archaeologists left yesterday without so much as a thank you or a by your leave." He chuckled. "My auld dame would have sworn the curse had got 'em."

**Inference**  
"My auld dame would have sworn the curse had got 'em."  
What inference can you make about the "curse"?



"Curse?" Gryph asked.

Frank turned to look at Gryph with some interest. "So you can speak, can you?" he said. "Thought the Curse of the Silent might have got you. Strike you dumb for life, it would."

Clarify  
waxen pallor  
pompous

Around them, the mute audience nodded in unison. Gryph shot a look at Jake. His waxen pallor suggested he'd seen it, too.

As they rounded the corner of the house, the Silent vanished, then reformed in a semi-circle around a rectangular trench in the adjacent field.

"That's the dig," said Frank, pointing to it. "Useless bit of soil. Nothing ever grew there. Don't enter the trench until the pompous professor returns. The caravan's your Incident Room. Key's in the door. Power's on." He gave a crooked smile.

Language Feature  
Alliteration  
Can you find any examples?

THOUGHT THE CURSE OF THE SILENT  
STRIKE YOU DUMB FOR LIFE, IT WOULD

#### Plot

Why has the author revealed the information about the curse now? What effect does this have on the plot?

### Beyond the Text

Why do you think Gryph said, “**We’re not imagining them [the Silent]?**”

Why do you think the line between reality and fantasy is blurred? What are tricks of the mind?

“Don’t look so **scared, girly.**

Curses are like luck – imaginary.”

He doffed his hat. “Leave you to it then. Use the stile. Don’t open any gates.”

Gryph waited until she heard the thud of the farmhouse door shutting behind him. “We’re not imagining them, are we?”

“I wish we were,” said Jake. “I preferred it when they were ignoring us.”

Me, too, thought Gryph. She spied Aneesa and waved. As one, the Silent pointed into the trench.

“What now, Jake?”

“We check out the trench and then the caravan, making sure we don’t touch any of the Silent.”

### Question

“**Curses are like luck – imaginary.**”

What do you think is meant by this?