

# The Hole



a short story for English  
reading and vocabulary

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# Introduction

Are there any caves near where you live?

Have you been there?

Has anything strange happened in this cave?

# The Hole

“It looks really deep.”

Billy kept his hands on the wall of the cave behind him. Jake peered over the edge of the hole.

It spread from one side of the cave to the other. The opening of the black hole like an inky lake before them.

From where Billy stood, he could not see the bottom of it. The sides of the hole disappeared into the darkness. Vines crept down the sides of the cave and into the hole. Slithering over and between each other like black snakes.

“Kevin Anderson said it’s really deep,” said Billy. “Him and his brother —”

“Kevin Anderson says a lot of things,” said Jake.

And that was the end of that conversation.

The two boys stared into the hole. Billy stayed in his safe vantage point, careful not to get too close.

But Jake stood right near the edge.

The vines glistened with dew and looked slippery.

One wrong foot on one of the vines and Billy imagined Jake tumbling into the deep black abyss.

And what was at the bottom?

Not even Kevin Anderson could answer that question.

Kevin was the first to discover the big hole. Inside a cave, underneath a high ridge in Blake’s Wood.

By lunchtime, the big black hole was the major topic of conversation in the entire school.

Jake got down on his hands and knees and peered over the edge of the hole.

“What’re you doing?” said Billy.

“Just getting a better look,” said Jake.

Billy stared back towards the entrance of the cave. A small triangle of light appeared too far away.

“Maybe we should get going —”

“I think I can see something down there,” said Jake.

Billy turned to see what his friend could see. Jake was now lying on the ground of the long corridor. His head over the edge of the hole, facing down.

“Jake, let’s get out of here,” said Billy.

“In a bit. Look at this.”

Billy clung to the rock of the cave walls. There was a strange feeling about the hole. Like a magnet pulling at his body.

Jake turned his head to face Billy.

“Get down here and take a look. There’s something down there.”

Billy wanted to yell out no. He wanted to just turn and walk away. Run out of the dirty old cave. Out into the warmth of the day and hear birds chirping in the trees.

Some other kids were down by the river. Enjoying the first days of summer and outside in the sun.

Jake’s eyes stayed on Billy.

Billy knew that if he chickened out, if he said no, the word would be all over school by lunchtime on Monday. It was the universal law of the playground. And no one broke it.

He crouched down on all fours and spread his feet back behind him, making sure not to get too close over the edge of the dark space in front of him.

“Look,” said Jake in a whisper.

Billy focused his eyes on the great expanse of blackness that fell below. He couldn’t see anything. Just a great shimmering black surface in front of him.

Then something — he wasn’t sure what. A flicker. Like a tiny fragment of light reflecting off something.

“See it?” gasped Jake. He nudged Billy with his elbow, which made Billy jump.

“No,” said Billy, lying. “I didn’t see anything.”

He glanced at Jake and saw a look in his eyes, a smile of mesmerised glee on his face.

Billy edged slightly away from Jake.

A smell rose up from the hole. An unearthly smell. Something that smelled like it was buried deep underground. Something forgotten years ago. Something that had not seen the light of day for a very long time.

Not an altogether unpleasant smell, but not something Billy wanted in his face for too long.

Jake’s eyes stared unblinking into the dark mass below them. His lips parted slightly and his breath shallow.

He stared into the hole, transfixed by it.

This didn’t seem like just a dare to Jake anymore. It seemed like something much more.

Their initial plan had been simple...

Go down to Blake’s Wood, sneak into the cave underneath the ridge, take a look at the big hole.

Now Jake had a look on his face that said he wanted much more than that.

“Let’s go down and have a look,” he said.

Billy heard every word. Clear like crystal. There were just the two of them there.

But he blinked and stared back at Jake like he had understood nothing he said.

Jake turned to face him. His eyes looked menacing now. Like something had a grip on him.

“Okay?”

Billy shook his head and swallowed away the dryness in his throat.

“No,” he said.

“No?”

Billy shuffled further away from Jake.

“I’m not going down there,” he said. “It’s too dangerous. And no one knows we’re here. If we get trapped down there —”

Jake curled his top lip in disgust and turned away.

“Well, I’m going down there,” he said.

He pushed himself into an upright position and swivelled his legs around. Both his feet hung over the dark hole.

Jake eased himself closer to the edge of the hole and leaned over. He cleared his throat and spat down into the darkness.

“It can’t be that deep,” he said. “Just a few metres.”

“Jake, let’s get out of here,” said Billy. “We can come back another time. With a rope. Or a ladder.”

Jake glanced over at Billy.

“Yeah, why not Billy? We’ll bring your dad’s ladder. And maybe your mum can pack us some sandwiches. We can have a picnic at the bottom.”

He let out a single laugh at Billy.

Billy no longer cared about being ridiculed at school on Monday. It no longer seemed important to follow the rules anymore.

This was stupid. This was dangerous.

“Well, looks like it’s just me,” said Jake.

He pulled himself closer to the very edge of the hole.

Billy reached out a hand. “Jake, stop it. Let’s get out of here. I don’t want you to do this.”

“What you want and what I want are two different things,” said Jake.

And without another sound, he pulled his weight off the edge of the hole and leapt into the blackness.

Billy jerked his hand back. He watched as Jake’s body disappeared from view into the darkness.

Watched as the top of his head, his crop of short blonde hair just cut out of view like he ceased to

exist.

“Jake,” said Billy in a loud whisper. “Jake. Are you okay?”

He couldn’t hear a sound.

“Jake!”

He edged forward and stared down into the hole.

Not a single sound came up from the abyss. Not one fragment of light.

It was like Jake had never existed at all.

# Reading Comprehension Questions

How many people are in the story? Who are they and what are their names?

Where does the story take place?

How do the characters in the story know each other?

What is in the cave?

What can Billy see along the walls of the cave and in the hole?

Who said the hole is very deep?

Where is Billy standing?

Where is Jake standing?

Is there anything in the hole? What can the two boys see in the hole?

Where is the cave located? What is the name of this place?

Who discovered the cave and the hole?

Who says he can see something in the hole?

Who wants to leave the cave?

What strange feeling does Billy have about the cave?

What are the other kids from school doing on that day? Where are they?

What is the Law of the Playground?

What is the smell that comes from the hole? Is it pleasant? Or terrible?

What does Jake want to do?

How have Jake's eyes changed?

Does Billy want to go in the hole? Why/why not?

What does Billy suggest they do?

Does Billy try to stop Jake from entering the hole?

What does Jake do at the end of the story?

What does Billy do next?

# Essential Vocabulary

There may be a lot of new or unfamiliar vocabulary to you in the story. This is the perfect time to get to know these new and strange words and phrases.

Write down all the new words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look up the meaning of the new vocabulary in a dictionary or online and write down the meaning next to the word or phrase.

It should look something like this:

**Deep** – *extending far down from the top or surface.*

**Cave** – a large underground chamber, typically of natural origin, in a hillside or cliff.

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

*Many people swim in the river, but it is very deep.*

*There is a cave in the hills near my hometown.*

If you do this correctly, it will help you learn many new words and phrases. This will build your English vocabulary and writing down all the words and phrases, making sentences of your own, will all help you to remember all of this new vocabulary.

## Discussion Questions

Why did Billy and Jake go into the hole? What made them do it?

What do you think Billy thinks or feels about going into the cave?

Jake seems to change halfway through the story. What happens to him, do you think? Is it the hole or something else?

At the end of the story, Jake jumps into the hole. What happens to him? Does he land at the bottom of the hole?

What do you think is in the hole?

Is the hole a part of nature or something else?

Are there any caves near where you live?

Have you been inside a cave? What did you see?

There is a sport where people go into caves and explore where they go. This is called caving. What do you think of this sport? Would you like to try?

Are there any caves in your country? Where are they located? How did they get there?

What kind of animals live in caves?

Could you live in a cave? Why/why not?

What would you do if you were Billy? Would you stay in the cave? Or leave?

Now that Jake has disappeared into the hole, what do you think Billy will tell his friends? Do you think he will tell his parents or teachers? Why/why not?

How did the cave get there?

How did the hole get there?

Is something in the hole?

What do you think is at the bottom of the hole? Where does it go?

Are the cave and hole connected to another world?

## Role Play

This is a role play activity.

There are two characters in this role play:

- **Billy**
- **Kevin Anderson**

## The Situation

On Monday morning, Billy goes to school as usual. He has not heard from Jake since they went into the cave.

Jake's mother has called Billy's mother to ask if she has seen Jake, but no one has seen him.

Billy lied to Jake's mother and said that they went outside and then Jake went home.

Now Billy is worried.

At school, he tells Kevin Anderson everything.

How does Kevin respond?

What does Billy say to Kevin?

In pairs, prepare your role play.

*When you are ready, show the class!*

# Writing

**Continue the story from the end.**

Many things could happen after the end of the story.

Here are some examples:

Billy eventually confesses to Kevin Anderson and word gets out. Billy's teacher talks to him and soon the police are involved. They set up a search party and they go into the cave.

What do they find?

Billy goes to school, and Jake is there.

He acts quite normal and says that he went to his aunt's for a few days.

But there is something about Jake that is not the same as before.

And Billy saw him disappear into the big black hole.

Two other boys say they are going to see the big hole.

They disappear, and now everyone at school is talking.

Whatever you choose to write for your story, try to make it as exciting as you can.

***When you are finished, read your story out loud in class.***

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