

Class 10th English (Supp. Reader)

CH. 5 - FOOTPRINTS WITHOUT FEET

By H.G. Wells

About the Author

H.G. Wells, in full **Herbert George Wells**, (born September 21, 1866, Bromley, Kent, England—died August 13, 1946, London), English novelist, journalist, sociologist, and historian best known for such science fiction novels as *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds* and such comic novels as *Tono-Bungay* and *The History of Mr. Polly*.

Wells's first published book was a *Textbook of Biology* (1893). With his first novel, *The Time Machine* (1895), which was immediately successful, he began a series of science fiction novels that revealed him as a writer of marked originality and an immense fecundity of ideas.

As a creative writer his reputation rests on the early science fiction books and on the comic novels. In his science fiction, he took the ideas and fears that haunted the mind of his age and gave them symbolic expression as brilliantly conceived fantasy made credible by the quiet realism of its setting. In the comic novels, though his psychology lacks subtlety and the construction of his plots is often awkward, he shows a fund of humour and a deep sympathy for ordinary people. Wells's prose style is always careless and lacks grace, yet he has his own gift of phrase and a true ear for vernacular speech, especially that of the lower middle class of London and southeastern England. His best work has a vigour, vitality, and exuberance unsurpassed, in its way, by that of any other British writer of the early 20th century.

Introduction to the story

Can a man become invisible? This is a story of a scientist who discovers how to make himself invisible. Does he use, or misuse, his discovery?

The story is about a scientist named Griffin. He discovers the rare chemicals which can make a man invisible but at the same time, the man can be touched and felt physically. Let's read and find out how he uses or misuses his powers for his own.

This is an interesting story about a scientist named Griffin and his rare formula of invisibility. He developed a drug which made his body invisible, but he can be only felt physically. Then, he misuses his power to steal money, clothes, and food. He found it difficult to stay in London with such power so decides to move to a small village Iping. In the village, people were sceptical about him and look at him strangely. A series of incidences happened in the inn where he stayed. As his money exhausted he again started stealing it from people and hit the owners of the inn when they suspected him. But lastly, he has to reveal his identity to the people, but nobody catches him as he becomes invisible.

Footprints without Feet – Summary - 1

The story is about a scientist named Griffin. He had been discovering ways which could make a man invisible and finally swallowed certain rare drugs that made him invisible. He was first noticed by two boys in staircase of a house where they could just see his footsteps and started following it. They follow it until the footsteps are fainter and cannot be seen. First, as he is feeling cold he enters a mall for some warmth. After the stores shut down, he decides to wear some warm clothes and eat something.

He first unboxes a few clothes and wears them. Then from the kitchen of a restaurant, he eats cold meat and some coffee. Later he goes to a grocery store and eats sweets and drinks wine. He then falls asleep on a pile of quilts. He then wakes up in the morning when some of the store assistants had seen him and started chasing him. He quickly threw away all the clothes he was wearing and became invisible again. Then he started roaming around again without any clothes in the cold winters of London.

He then decides to steal clothes from a theatre company as he knew he would get something there to cover his face as well. He then steals bandages for his face, dark glasses, false nose and a hat for covering himself.

He then hits the shopkeeper and steals all his money. Soon he realizes that London is too crowded to live like this and decides that he would go to a remote village. He books two rooms at an inn at the Iping village.

He reaches there and it is strange for the people of Iping that a stranger with such a weird appearance has come to stay at an inn during the winter season. Once his money is over, he steals from people and also hits the landlord and his wife when they try to check his room in his absence. Then the village constable is asked for help but before that Mrs. Hall, the wife of the landlord asks him questions regarding who he is and what he did to her furniture.

This makes him really furious and he decides to show her who he really is. The people then see a headless man and Mr. Jaffers, the constable also finds out that he would have to arrest a man who does not have a head. They are unable to catch Griffin as he removes all his clothes and becomes invisible. He even knocks out Jaffers as he tries to catch him.

Footprints without Feet - Summary - 2

This is quite an interesting story about a scientist named Griffin. He had been finding ways that could make a man invisible. He got success in his experiment and developed a formula with which he can become invisible, but can be touched and felt physically. Griffin gulped the drug and became invisible. He accidentally stepped in mud and was first seen by two young men who followed his footprints till it becomes faint. He was walking on roads and was feeling cold, so he enters a shopping centre to feel warm. After the stores shut down, he chooses to wear some comfortable garments and eat something.

He initially unpacks a couple of garments and wears them. At that point from the kitchen of a café, he eats cold meat and some espresso. Later he decided to sleep on a heap of quilts in a store. The next morning before he wakes up some store associates had seen started following him. He removed all the clothes instantly and became invisible once again. Now he is wandering without clothes in chilly winters of London. He then decides to take clothes from a theatre company as he was sure he will get something there to cover his face too. He has stolen dull glasses, bogus nose, and a hat and some bandages for covering his face. Then, he goes to a shopkeeper's place and stole all his money. Soon he realizes London is quite a busy place to live like this, so he thought of moving to the Iping village.

He booked two rooms in a hotel in the village and reached there. It is quite unusual for the villagers that an outsider with such a peculiar appearance has come to stay at a hotel throughout winter. After some time his money exhausted, and he started stealing from people. Furthermore, he hit the owner and his wife when they attempt to check his room in his absence. As they cannot see anyone the owners thought there were spirits in the inn and that unusual guest is responsible for it. At that point, the town constable is requested to inquire in regard to what his identity is and what he did to her furnishings. This made him annoy and decides to show his identity as a headless man. They cannot catch hold of Griffin as he takes off all his garments and become invisible.

The story tells us the human nature of misusing their own discoveries.

Footprints without Feet - Story and explanation

THE two boys started in surprise at the fresh muddy imprints of a pair of bare feet. What was a barefooted man doing on the steps of a house, in the middle of London? And where was the man? As they gazed, a remarkable sight met their eyes. A fresh footmark appeared from nowhere! Further footprints followed one after another, descending the steps and progressing down the street. The boys followed, fascinated, until the muddy impressions became fainter and fainter, and at last disappeared altogether.

The explanation of the mystery was really simple enough. The bewildered boys had been following a scientist who had just discovered how to make the human body transparent. Griffin, the scientist, had carried out an experiment after experiment to prove that the human body could become invisible.



Finally, he swallowed certain rare drugs and his body became as transparent as a sheet of glass — through it also remained as solid as glass. Brilliant scientist though he was, Griffin was rather a lawless person. His landlord disliked him and tried to eject him. In revenge, Griffin set fire to the house. To get away without being seen he had to remove his clothes. Thus it was that he became a homeless wanderer, without clothes, without money, and quite invisible — until he happened to step in some mud, and left footprints as he walked!

Muddy- covered in or full of mud.

Imprints- impress or stamp (a mark or outline) on a surface.

Bare- not clothed or covered.

Gazed- looked at steadily and intently, especially in admiration, surprise, or thought.

Remarkable- worthy of attention; striking.

Sight- the faculty or power of seeing

Progressing- move forward or onward in space or time.

Fascinated- strongly attracted and interested.

Fainter- barely perceptible.

Bewildered- perplexed and confused; very puzzled.

Eject- compel (someone) to leave a place.

Two boys suddenly noticed a few muddy imprints of bare feet. They started wondering that what was a barefoot man doing on the steps of a house in the middle of London. They also started thinking that where was the man as he was nowhere to be seen. They suddenly saw another footmark. The man was still not visible. They started following the footprints. They followed them until the footprints became invisible. They had been following a scientist who had discovered how to make the human body transparent or invisible.

It was Griffin, the scientist who had been working for a long time to see how to make the human body invisible. Suddenly, one day, he consumed certain drugs which made his body invisible, though it could be felt. Griffin was a lawless person as he had once burned down the house of his landlord who was trying to throw him out of the house and then, as he wanted to be invisible, he had to remove his clothes and then roam around without clothes and without money. His presence was felt after he stepped in some mud and his footprints could be seen as he walked.

He escaped easily enough from the boys who followed his footprints in London. But his adventures were by no means over. He had chosen a bad time of the year to wander about London without clothes. It was mid-winter. The air was bitterly cold and he could not do without clothes.

Instead of walking about the streets he decided to slip into a big London store for warmth. Closing time arrived, and as soon as the doors were shut Griffin was able to give himself the pleasure of clothing and feeding himself without regard to expense. He broke open boxes and wrappers and fitted himself out with warm clothes. Soon, with shoes, an overcoat and a wide-brimmed hat, he became a fully dressed and visible person. In the kitchen of the restaurant



he found cold meat and coffee, and he followed up the meal with sweets and wine taken from the grocery store. Finally, he settled down to sleep on a pile of quilts. If only Griffin had managed to wake up in good time all might have been well. As it was, he did not wake up until the assistants were already arriving next morning. When he saw a couple of them approaching, he panicked and began to run.

They naturally gave chase. In the end he was able to escape only by quickly taking off his newly found clothes. So once more he found himself invisible but naked in the chill January air.

Wander- walk or move in a leisurely or aimless way.

Bitterly- in an angry, hurt, or resentful way.

Expense- the cost incurred in or required for something.

Panicked- feel or cause to feel panic.

He easily escaped the boys who had followed him but he had many more adventures coming up. He had chosen a bad time to wander in London as it was winter season going on and the air was bitterly cold. He decided to stay inside a store for warmth. As he went inside the store and closing time arrived, the doors of the store were shut and nobody was there inside. He got food to eat and wore new clothes without paying for. He became visible again as he wore shoes, overcoat and a hat. He then found cold meat and coffee in the kitchen and ate them. After that he also had sweets and wine from the grocery store. Then he slept on the pile of quilts kept nearby and could not wake up on time.

Next morning, when the assistants came and started approaching him, he became nervous and started running away. Then the assistants started chasing him as well. He escaped only because he quickly removed his new clothes. Again he was invisible and naked, without any money in the chill air of January.

This time he decided to try the stock of a theatrical company in the hope of finding not only clothes but also something that would hide the empty space above his shoulders. Shivering with cold he hurried to Drury Lane, the centre of the theatre world. He soon found a suitable shop. He made his way, invisible, upstairs and came out a little later wearing bandages around his forehead, dark glasses, false nose, big bushy side-whiskers, and a large hat.

To escape without being seen, he callously attacked the shopkeeper from behind, after which he robbed him of all the money he could find. Eager to get away from crowded London he took a train to the village of Iping, where he booked two rooms at the local inn. The arrival of a stranger at an inn in winter was in any case an unusual event. A stranger of such uncommon appearance set all tongues wagging.

Mrs. Hall, the landlord's wife, made every effort to be friendly. But Griffin had no desire to talk, and told her, "My reason for coming to Iping is a desire for solitude. I do not wish to be

disturbed in my work. Besides, an accident has affected my face.” Satisfied that her guest was an eccentric scientist, and in view of the fact that he had paid her in advance, Mrs. Hall was prepared to excuse his strange habits and irritable temper. But the stolen money did not last long, and presently Griffin had to admit that he had no more ready cash. He pretended, however, that he was expecting a cheque to arrive at any moment.

Shortly afterwards a curious episode occurred. Very early in the morning a clergyman and his wife were awakened by noises in the study. Creeping downstairs, they heard the chink of money being taken from the clergyman’s desk. Without making any noise and with a poker grasped firmly in his hand, the clergyman flung open the door. “Surrender!”

Theatrical- relating to acting, actors, or the theatre.

Shivering- shaking slightly and uncontrollably as a result of being cold, frightened, or excited.

Whiskers- a long projecting hair or bristle growing from the face or snout of many mammals.

Callously- in a way that shows an insensitive and cruel disregard for others.

Inn- a pub, typically one in the country, in some cases providing accommodation.

Wagging- move or cause to move rapidly to and fro.

Solitude- the state or situation of being alone.

Eccentric- unconventional and slightly strange.

Curious- strange; unusual.

Clergyman- a male priest, minister, or religious leader, especially a Christian one.

Poker- a metal rod with a handle, used for prodding and stirring an open fire.

Grasped- seize and hold firmly.

This time, he decided to try the clothing of the theatrical world as he knew that he would surely find something there to cover his face with. He quickly reached Drury Lane, the centre of the theatrical world as he was shivering with cold. He found a shop according to his needs and entered it. He came out wearing bandages around his forehead, false nose, side whiskers and a hat.

Then as he did not have any money, he attacked a shopkeeper and robbed him of all his money. Then he felt that London was too crowded and decided to go to a small village nearby, Iping. He took a train and booked two rooms in the local Inn. The event of a stranger coming and staying at the inn in the winter night was not a normal thing to happen in Iping and everybody started talking about it also because Griffin looked very strange.

The landlord of the inn where Griffin stayed, Mrs. Hall made a lot of efforts to be friendly with Griffin but he did not want to talk. He clearly told her that his reason for coming to Iping was for peace and quietness and he did not wish to be disturbed in his work. Also, he told her that an accident had affected his face due to which he had to cover it.

The landlord’s wife, Mrs. Hall accepted that her new guest was a strange scientist and was ready to excuse his temper and habits as he had paid her in advance. Then the time came when his money was over and he had no ready cash available for further payment at the Inn. He had

to pretend that he was waiting for a cheque which could arrive at any moment. Then something really strange happened.

The clergyman and his wife were awakened by some noises in their study room.

*When they were coming downstairs, they could hear the sound of money being taken from the **clergy man's desk**. The clergyman held a metal rod in his hand and flung the door open and as soon as he opened the door, he said "surrender" as he thought he had caught the thief.*

Then to his amazement, he realized that the room appeared to be empty. He and his wife looked under the desk, and behind the curtains, and even up the chimney. There wasn't a sign of anybody. Yet the desk had been opened and the housekeeping money was missing. "Extraordinary affair!" the clergyman kept saying for the rest of the day. But it was not as extraordinary as the behavior of Mrs Hall's furniture a little later that morning.

The landlord and his wife were up very early, and were surprised to see the scientist's door wide open. Usually it was shut and locked, and he was furious if anyone entered his room. The opportunity seemed too good to be missed. They peeped round the door, saw nobody, and decided to investigate. The bedclothes were cold, showing that the scientist must have been up for some time; and stranger still, the clothes and bandages that he always wore were lying about



the room. All of a sudden Mrs Hall heard a sniff close to her ear. A moment later the hat on the bedpost leapt up and dashed itself into her face.

Then the bedroom chair became alive. Springing into the air it charged straight at her, legs foremost. As she and her husband turned away in terror, the extraordinary chair pushed them both out of the room and then appeared to slam and lock the door after them. Mrs. Hall almost fell down the stairs in hysterics. She was convinced that the room was haunted by spirits and that the stranger had somehow caused these to enter into her furniture. "My poor mother used to sit in that chair," she moaned. **"To think it should rise up against me now!"** The feeling among the neighbours was that the trouble was caused by witchcraft.

But witchcraft or not, when news of the burglary at the clergyman's home became known, the strange scientist was strongly suspected of having had a hand in it. Suspicion grew even stronger when he suddenly produced some ready cash, though he had admitted not long before that he had no money. The village constable was secretly sent for.

Instead of waiting for the constable, Mrs. Hall went to the scientist, who had somehow mysteriously appeared from his empty bedroom. **"I want to know what you have been doing**

to my chair upstairs,” she demanded. “And I want to know how it is you came out of an empty room and how you entered a locked room.”

Affair- an event or sequence of events of a specified kind or that has previously been referred to.

Furious- extremely angry.

Peeped- look quickly and furtively at something, especially through a narrow opening.

Sniff- draw up air audibly through the nose to detect a smell, to stop it running, or to express contempt.

Leapt- jump or spring a long way, to a great height, or with great force.

Terror- extreme fear.

Slam- shut (a door, window, or lid) forcefully and loudly.

Hysterics- a wildly emotional and exaggerated reaction

Moaned- make a long, low sound expressing physical or mental suffering

Witchcraft- the practice of magic, especially black magic; the use of spells.

To their surprise, they couldn't see anyone. They looked under the desk, behind the curtains and also up the chimney but the person was nowhere to be seen. Yet the desk had been opened and the housekeeping money was gone. Then the clergyman kept on saying “Extraordinary affair” the whole day because he was shocked by the incident. But the things that happened with Mrs. Hall’s furniture were much more fascinating. Mrs. Hall and her husband woke up very early and were surprised as the door to the guest room was open.

Usually, his room’s door remained closed and locked. He used to get very angry if anyone tried entering his room. It was an opportunity and Mrs. Hall did not want to miss it. They decided to investigate when they saw that nobody was inside the room. His bedsheets were cold which showed that he must have been up for a while and also, all the bandages that he used to tie around his face were lying around the room. Suddenly, Mrs. Hall heard a sniff close to her ear and Griffin’s hat that was lying on the bedpost flung towards Mrs. Hall and hit her on her face.

Then the chair in the room dashed itself, hitting Mrs. Hall in her legs. As they got scared, Mrs. Hall and her husband were going out of the room when the chair closed the door and suddenly, a sound of slamming the door and locking were heard. This terrorized Mrs. Hall and she was about to fall down from the stairs. She was convinced of the thought that there were spirits in her inn’s room and that the stranger had caused this to happen.

She moaned that her mother used to sit in the chair which hit her legs and thought that how could it rise up against her. The neighbours of Mrs. Hall thought that it was witchcraft which had caused such a thing to happen.

When the news of the burglary at the clergyman’s house reached other people in the town, everyone started suspecting the strange scientist. Suspicion grew stronger on him when he produced ready cash for his payment at the inn even though he had told sometime back that he

did not have money and was waiting for a cheque to arrive. The village constable was called for and Mrs. Hall did not want to wait for him. She went straight to Griffin as he had appeared from the empty bedroom at the inn. She asked him what had he been doing upstairs to her chairs and furniture. She also asked him how did he come out of the empty bedroom or enter the locked bedroom.

The scientist was always quick-tempered; now he became furious. “You don’t understand who or what I am!” he shouted. “Very well — I’ll show you.” Suddenly he threw off bandages, whiskers, spectacles, and even nose. It took him only a minute to do this. The horrified people in the bar found themselves staring at a headless man! Mr Jaffers, the constable, now arrived, and was quite surprised to find that he had to arrest a man without a head.

But Jaffers was not easily prevented from doing his duty. If a magistrate’s warrant ordered a person’s arrest, then that person had to be arrested, with or without his head. There followed a remarkable scene as the policeman tried to get hold of a man who was becoming more and more invisible as he threw off one garment after another. Finally a shirt



flew into the air, and the constable found himself struggling with someone he could not see at all. Some people tried to help him, but found themselves hit by blows that seemed to come from nowhere.

In the end Jaffers was knocked unconscious as he made a last attempt to hold on to the unseen scientist. There were nervous, excited cries of “Hold him!” But this was easier said than done. Griffin had shaken himself free, and no one knew where to lay hands on him.

Horried- filled with terror; extremely shocked.

Prevented- keep (something) from happening.

Magistrate- a civil officer who administers the law, especially one who conducts a court that deals with minor offences and holds preliminary hearings for more serious ones.

Knocked- collide with (someone or something), giving them a hard blow.

The scientist became really angry and started shouting that they don't understand who or what he was and decided to show them the truth. He removed his bandages, whiskers, spectacles and also his nose. It took him just a minute to do all this and the people in the bar were horrified as they looked at the headless man. Mr. Jaffers, the constable of the village was surprised as he saw that he had to arrest a man without any head.

But Jaffers still wanted to do his duty as he knew that the magistrate wanted him to arrest the person and it did not matter that he had a head or not. As he threw away more and more of his clothes, he became more and more invisible and finally, after Griffin removed his shirt, he was

nowhere to be seen and Jaffers was struggling to arrest a man who had become completely invisible.

People who tried helping Jaffers were also struggling as they were hit by blows from nowhere. As Jaffers made his last attempt to catch hold of the invisible man, he was knocked unconscious by the invisible man. Everybody was shouting "hold him" repeatedly but Griffin had set himself free from them and nobody could understand how to catch him.

Question and Answers

Q1) How did the invisible man first become visible?

Ans) The invisible man first became visible when he accidentally stepped into some mud and his footprints started becoming visible to two boys who followed him until his footprints faded and became invisible again. He got rid of them and spent a night at a large London store where he wore some clothes and slept on a pile of quilts. The next morning, when he was still sleeping, the store assistants started coming in and saw him which was actually the first time he was seen.

Q2) Why was he wandering the streets?

Ans) Griffin had burned down the house of his landlord who had tried to throw him out of the house. He was a lawless person and to save himself from being caught he removed all his clothes so that he could not be seen and thus, became a homeless wanderer. He did not have any money or clothing left with him.

Q3) Why does Mrs. Hall find the scientist eccentric?

Ans) Griffin arrived at an inn in Iping village during winter season which itself was an uncommon thing to happen. He also had a weird appearance. Mrs. Hall tried to be friendly with him but he was rude to her and told her that he didn't want to be disturbed and the reason for his visit to the village of Iping was solitude. These were some of the reasons due to which Mrs. Hall considered him to be an eccentric scientist.

Q4) What curious episode occurs in the study?

Ans) The clergyman and his wife were awakened early one morning by noises in their study room. When the clergyman went to the study with a metal rod and looked around he could not

find anyone. He even looked under the desk, behind the curtain and up the chimney but no one was seen. The strangest part was that even though nobody was there the desk was opened and money was missing from the drawer.

Q5) What other extraordinary things happen at the inn?

Ans) The landlord of the inn and his wife were surprised to see the doors of Griffin's room open. They looked inside and found that nobody was inside the room and decided to investigate. They found it strange that his room's door was open as he never liked anyone even trying to enter his room. All of a sudden, while investigating, Mrs. Hall heard a sniff next to her ear and was hit by Griffin's hat on the face. Then the chair in the room charged towards Mrs. Hall and hit her in her legs.

As they both turned in terror, the chair pushed both of them out of the room and the door was slammed and suddenly a locking sound was heard. Mrs. Hall was scared and felt that the furniture was haunted by spirits and it was the stranger's work. The nearby people started talking that the work was that of a witchcraft.
