

Reading homework 2 – *Blue Beard* by Charles Perrault

Blue Beard (French: *Barbe bleue*) is a French folktale, the most famous surviving version was written by Charles Perrault in Paris in 1697. This is the first half of the story. Read the text and answer the questions set by your teacher on Google Classroom. **You will find some vocabulary help at the bottom of the text to help you if you need it.**



Bluebeard

ONCE upon a time there was a man who owned **splendid** town and country houses, gold and silver plates, tapestries and coaches **gilt** all over. But the poor fellow had a blue beard, and this made him so ugly and frightful that there was not a woman or girl who did not run away at sight of him.

Amongst his neighbours was a lady of high degree who had two surpassingly beautiful daughters. He asked for the hand of one of these in marriage, leaving it to their mother to choose which should be **bestowed upon him**. Both girls, however, raised objections, and his offer was **banded** from one to the other, neither being able to bring herself to accept a man with a blue beard. Another reason for their **distaste** was the fact that he had already married several wives, and no one knew what had become of them.

In order that they might become better acquainted, Blue Beard invited the two girls, with their mother and three or four of their best friends, to meet a party of young men from the neighbourhood at one of his country houses. Here they spent eight whole days, and throughout their stay there was a constant round of picnics, hunting and fishing expeditions, dances, dinners, and luncheons; and they never slept at all, through spending all the night in playing merry pranks upon each other. In short, everything went so **gaily** that the younger daughter began to think the master of the house had not so

very blue a beard after all, and that he was an exceedingly agreeable man. As soon as the party returned to town their marriage took place.

At the end of a month Blue Beard informed his wife that important business obliged him to make a journey into a distant part of the country, which would occupy at least six weeks. He begged her to amuse herself well during his absence, and suggested that she should invite some of her friends and take them, if she liked, to the country. He was particularly anxious that she should enjoy herself thoroughly.

'Here,' he said, 'are the keys of the two large storerooms, and here is the one that locks up the gold and silver plates which are not in everyday use. This key belongs to the strong-boxes where my gold and silver is kept, this to the caskets containing my jewels; while here you have the master-key which gives admittance to all the apartments. As regards this little key, it is the key of the small room at the end of the long passage on the lower floor. You may open everything, you may go everywhere, but I forbid you to enter this little room. And I forbid you so seriously that if you were indeed to open the door, I should be so angry that I might do anything.' She promised to follow out these instructions exactly, and after embracing her, Blue Beard steps into his coach and is off upon his journey.

Her neighbours and friends did not wait to be invited before coming to call upon the young bride, so great was their eagerness to see the splendours of her house. They had not dared to venture while her husband was there, for his blue beard frightened them. But in less than no time there they were, running in and out of the rooms, the closets, and the wardrobes, each of which was finer than the last. **Presently** they went upstairs to the storerooms, and there they could not admire enough the **profusion** and magnificence of the tapestries, beds, sofas, cabinets, tables, and stands. There were mirrors in which they could view themselves from top to toe, some with frames of plate glass, others with frames of silver and gilt lacquer, that were the most superb and beautiful things that had ever been seen. They were loud and persistent in their envy of their friend's good fortune. She, on the other hand, derived little amusement from the sight of all these riches, the reason being that she was impatient to go and inspect the little room on the lower floor.

So overcome with curiosity was she that, without reflecting upon the **discourtesy** of leaving her guests, she ran down a private staircase, so precipitately that twice or thrice she nearly broke her neck, and so reached the door of the little room. There she paused for a while, thinking of the prohibition which her husband had made, and reflecting that harm might come to her as a result of disobedience. But the temptation was so great that she could not conquer it. Taking the little key, with a trembling hand she opened the door of the room.

At first she saw nothing, for the windows were closed, but after a few moments she perceived **dimly** that the floor was entirely covered with clotted blood, and that in this were reflected the dead bodies of several women that hung along the walls. These were all the wives of Blue Beard, whose throats he had cut, one after another. She thought to die of terror, and the key of the room, which she had just withdrawn from the lock, fell from her hand.

When she had somewhat regained her senses, she picked up the key, closed the door, and went up to her chamber to compose herself a little. But this she could not do, for her nerves were too shaken. Noticing that the key of the little room was stained with blood, she wiped it two or three times. But the blood did not go. She washed it well, and even rubbed it with sand and grit. Always the blood remained. For the key was **bewitched**, and there was no means of cleaning it completely. When the blood was removed from one side, it reappeared on the other.

What will happen to the young bride when Blue Beard returns? You will find out in your next reading homework!

Vocabulary help

Splendid: magnificent; very impressive.

Gilt: covered thinly with gold leaf or gold paint.

Bestow upon him: to present as a gift.

Bandy: pass on or discuss (an idea or rumour) in a casual or uninformed way.

Distaste: mild dislike or aversion.

Gaily: in a cheerful or light-hearted way.

Presently: at the present time; now.

Profusion: an abundance or large quantity of something.

Discourtesy: rude and inconsiderate behaviour.

Dimly: with a faint light; not brightly.

Bewitched: cursed.

Link to Google forms quiz-

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1IMQjCyBJfOuzHCDeVsJQ5gbpvn8_uS-AZn2sIS1EZA4/edit#