

The Beast

Aim

- To stimulate students to read the book.

1 Tell students to read Extract 1, which is written in the voice of the Beast. Ask them to list what they learn about the creature and then to share their lists with a partner.

Possible answers: The beast can hear and smell well; it knows when another living thing is near; it is bad and wants to hurt people.

2 Ask students to say what kind of beast or animal the creature is. Then read them this extract from the Blurb on the back of the book: 'On holiday in Wales, Susie meets the "undead". Is it a man or an animal?' Tell students that *The Beast* is a horror story and ask them if they have read any other horror stories or seen any horror films (e.g. *Dracula*). Write any names of stories, films or characters they tell you up on the board.

3 Ask students to think of an animal but not tell anyone which animal they are thinking about. Now ask them to write about 100 words as if they are this animal. They should not say the name of the animal they are in their writing. When they have finished, divide them into small groups and ask them to take turns to read out what they have written. The other students in the group should try to guess what animal they are. If they guess, ask them to say how they knew which animal it was. If they do not guess the animal, ask them to give the student ideas to change the writing to be more like the animal.

4 Ask students to read Extract 2 and tell them that Susie, a photographer, is at the zoo in the extract. Working in the same small groups as before, ask the students to write down what they think the wolf wants to say to Susie. When they have finished, ask them to read what they have written to the other students in their group.

5 Ask students to read Extract 3, in which Susie is talking to her husband Charlie. Ask the students the following questions: a. Why has Susie got dark circles under her eyes? b. Is Susie's father dead or alive? c. How does Susie feel now?

6 Ask students to read Extract 4, which is a description of the holiday cottage Susie and Charlie stay in when they are in Wales. Ask them what they think the cottage is like (e.g. is it a friendly house or a sad house?). Ask them why they think this and write what they say on the board. Now ask them to list all the adjectives in the extract (*little, cold, tall, dark, small, old, light, airy, high, round, small, empty, large*). Next, ask them to write out the extract using opposite adjectives (e.g. *big* instead of *little*). Ask them to read what they have written to a partner. Does the cottage seem different with the new adjectives? Does it feel like a cottage in a horror story now, or is it more like a cottage in a different story, e.g. a comedy, a ghost story or a romance?

7 Ask students to think of a house or a room they know well and write 150 words about this place. Tell them to use adjectives to show what the place is like. When they have finished, read out some of the texts to the class and ask students to say what they think the place is like (as they did in stage 6 – Is it a happy place or a sad place, etc.).

8 Ask students to look at Extract 5, which is a mixed up passage from the book. Divide students into pairs and ask them to work together to put the passage in the right order. Alternatively, you could give students numbered parts of the extract and ask them to walk around the room reading out their piece to each other until they think they know the right order. The students then line up and take it in turns to read the piece out. Does the scene make sense, or do any of the students need to swap places?

Correct order: c, g, e, i, a, k, j, d, h, f, b

9 Ask students what they think of the title *The Beast*. Do they think it is a good title for the book? Can they think of a better title? Write their ideas on the board.

10 If there are enough copies of *The Beast* for everyone, give them out and ask students to start reading.

The Beast

Extract 1

I sleep with my eyes open. My ears hear the smallest sound and I wake. If air moves softly over the hairs on my body, I will know that there is a living thing near me. Smells of animals brought by the wind can reach me over hundreds of kilometres.

Are you afraid of the dark? You are right to be afraid. We live in the darkness and there we do our work. You can be sure that we want only what is bad. Only what can hurt you. When you are feeling weak, we will know. Then we will watch you while you sleep, waiting for the time when we can take you into our darkness. In the night, we talk to you and call you to come to us. The knock on the door that wakes you in the night – that is one of us, come to invite you to a living death. Do not listen. Close your ears, if you want to escape with your life.

Extract 2

This morning there were not many visitors. She almost had the place to herself, except for the zoo keepers, who were giving food to the animals. Susie stopped to look at the grey wolves as they walked hungrily up and down. They were like large friendly dogs, really, not at all wild or dangerous. She remembered the stories her father used to tell her about the Volkodlak. It was a terrible thing, a sort of man-wolf-vampire who stole bad children away in the night and drank their blood. When she was little, of course, she thought the stories were true. She smiled as she thought about it.

She lifted up her camera. One of the wolves stopped moving and watched her. Susie found herself looking back through the camera. The hair on her skin stood up and she felt suddenly afraid. She couldn't move. She felt sure that the animal wanted to tell her something.

Extract 3

'Are you OK?' Charlie asked Susie that evening as they sat in their small kitchen. 'You're very quiet.' He watched her. Her dark, Eastern European eyes always made her face look white, but today she seemed whiter than usual. There were dark circles under her eyes.

'Yes, I'm fine. I'm not sleeping well at the moment, that's all,' Susie said. 'I keep having these dreams. It was about Dad last night. I thought he was alive again.' Her voice shook a little.

Charlie felt worried about Susie. Last August, after her father died, she'd seemed lost. She'd looked so ill that Charlie had made her go to the doctor. It was usual to feel bad after the death of a parent, the doctor had said. She would be better in a few weeks. He'd given her some pills to help her sleep. But today she seemed almost more afraid than sad, Charlie thought.

Susie didn't say any more. And Charlie didn't ask her to talk.

Extract 4

Inside, the little house felt cold and the tall trees outside made it rather dark. The front door opened into a small kitchen. From here, a door led into the sitting-room where there was an old sofa and an armchair in front of a fireplace. Beyond the sitting-room was a light airy room which looked south. Looking out of the window, Susie could see that the ground rose towards a high round hill. At the foot of the hill there was a small wood, but the top was empty of trees. Two large birds were flying round and round in the empty sky above the hill.

Extract 5

- a 'It was probably just a fox or a dog, wasn't it, Tom?' the landlady said.
- b 'Well, I'm going to have steak and chips. I'm really hungry,' Charlie told her, and went up to the bar.
- c 'Same again, Richard?' the landlady said to the man.
- d 'Oh, come on now!' the landlady said. 'There's no such thing.'
- e 'I'm afraid so, yes.' Tom answered, in English now.
- f Susie and Charlie couldn't help listening to this conversation. 'I think I'll just have a cheese sandwich,' Susie said quietly to Charlie.
- g 'Yes, please,' Richard replied. 'Problems, Tom?' he asked the man at the bar, a farmer.
- h 'Of course there is,' Richard said, smiling. 'It's a werewolf, everyone knows that. Half man, half wolf. Last seen on Brynmawr Hill a hundred years ago.' The landlady laughed loudly.
- i 'Found two of my sheep dead today. Looked terrible, they did. Tongues gone, ears and noses bitten off. Never seen anything like it.' His voice became quieter. 'And no blood. There was no blood. Not on the ground. Not on the body.'
- j 'It's the Beast of Brynmawr,' Richard told the landlady. 'It's come back again.'
- k Tom the farmer shook his head. 'Oh no,' he said. 'There's no animal on earth that kills like that.'