

So, what did they do?

At the bottom of the hill, below where the Iron Man had come over the high cliff, they dug a deep, enormous hole. A hole wider than a house, and as deep as three trees one on top of the other. It was a colossal hole. A stupendous hole! And the sides of it were sheer as walls.

They pushed all the earth off to one side.

They covered the hole with branches and the branches they covered with straw and the straw with soil, so when they finished the hole looked like a freshly-ploughed field.

Now, on the side of the hole opposite the slope up to the top of the cliff, they put an old

rusty lorry. That was the bait. Now they reckoned the Iron Man would come over the top of the cliff out of the sea, and he'd see the old lorry which was painted red, and he'd come down to get it to chew it up and eat it. But on his way to the lorry he'd be crossing the hole, and the moment he stepped with his great weight on to that soil held up only with straw and branches, he would crash through into the hole and would never get out. They'd find him there in the hole. Then they'd bring the few bulldozers and earth-movers that he hadn't already eaten, and they'd push the pile of earth in on top of him, and bury him for ever in the hole. They were certain now that they'd get him.

Next morning, in great excitement, all the farmers gathered together to go along to examine their trap. They came carefully closer, expecting to see his hands tearing at the edge of the pit. They came carefully closer.

The red lorry stood just as they had left it. The soil lay just as they had left it, undisturbed. Everything was just as they had left it. The Iron Man had not come.

Nor did he come that day.

Next morning, all the farmers came again. Still, everything lay just as they had left it.

And so it went on, day after day. Still the Iron Man never came.

Now the farmers began to wonder if he would

ever come again. They began to wonder if he had ever come at all. They began to make up explanations of what had happened to their machinery. Nobody likes to believe in an Iron Monster that eats tractors and cars.

Soon, the farmer who owned the red lorry they were using as bait decided that he needed it, and he took it away. So there lay the beautiful deep trap, without any bait. Grass began to grow on the loose soil.

The farmers talked of filling the hole in. After all, you can't leave a giant pit like that, somebody might fall in. Some stranger coming along might just walk over it and fall in.

But they didn't want to fill it in. It had been such hard work digging it. Besides they all had a sneaking fear that the Iron Man might come again, and that the hole was their only weapon against him.

At last they put up a little notice: "DANGER: KEEP OFF", to warn people away, and they left it at that.

Now the little boy Hogarth had an idea. He thought he could use that hole, to trap a fox. He found a dead hen one day, and threw it out on to the loose soil over the trap. Then towards evening, he climbed a tree nearby, and waited. A long time he waited. A star came out. He could hear the sea.

Then - there, standing at the edge of the hole,

was a fox. A big, red fox, looking towards the dead hen. Hogarth stopped breathing. And the fox stood without moving - sniff, sniff, sniff, out towards the hen. But he did not step out on to the trap. Slowly, he walked around the wide patch of raw soil till he got back to where he'd started, sniffing all the time out towards the bird. But he did not step out on to the trap. Was he too smart to walk out there where it was not safe?

But at that moment he stopped sniffing. He turned his head and looked towards the top of the cliff. Hogarth, wondering what the fox had seen, looked towards the top of the cliff.

There, enormous in the blue evening sky, stood the Iron Man, on the brink of the cliff, gazing inland.

In a moment, the fox had vanished.

Hogarth carefully quietly hardly breathing climbed slowly down the tree. He must get home and tell his father. But at the bottom of the tree he stopped. He could no longer see the Iron Man against the twilight sky. Had he gone back over the cliff into the sea? Or was he coming down the hill, in the darkness under that high skyline, towards Hogarth and the farms?

Then Hogarth understood what was happening. He could hear a strange tearing and creaking sound. The Iron Man was pulling up the

barbed-wire fence that led down the hill. And soon Hogarth could see him, as he came nearer, tearing the wire from the fence posts, rolling it up like spaghetti and eating it. The Iron Man was eating the barbed fencing wire.

But if he went along the fence, eating as he moved, he wouldn't come anywhere near the trap, which was out in the middle of the field. He could spend the whole night wandering about the countryside along the fences, rolling up the wire and eating it, and never would any fence bring him near the trap.

But Hogarth had an idea. In his pocket, among other things, he had a long nail and a knife. He took these out. Did he dare? His idea frightened him. In the silent dusk, he tapped the nail and the knife blade together.

Clink, Clink, Clink!

At the sound of the metal, the Iron Man's hands became still. After a few seconds, he slowly turned his head and the headlamp eyes shone towards Hogarth.

Again, Clink, Clink, Clink! went the nail on the knife.

Slowly, the Iron Man took three strides towards Hogarth, and again stopped. It was now quite dark. The headlamps shone red. Hogarth pressed close to the tree-trunk. Between him and the Iron Man lay the wide lid of the trap.

Clink, Clink, Clink! again he tapped the nail on the knife.

And now the Iron Man was coming. Hogarth could feel the earth shaking under the weight of his footsteps. Was it too late to run? Hogarth stared at the Iron Man, looming, searching towards him for the taste of the metal that had

Chapter 2 Can I gain information and give opinions in response to the text?

Draw a labelled diagram to show what the trap set by the farmers was like.

Do you think the farmers were right to try to trap the Iron Man?
Why?

How do you think they felt when they found the trap was empty?

What do you think they should do next?