Black Harvest by Nigel Gray (based on the novel by Anne Cheetham)

Setting the scene

Scene 1
1. Why are Colin and Prill surprised by the house they are staying in?
2. Who does the house belong to?
3. What problems are there with the house?
4. Why are they unhappy that Oliver is with them?
5. Why isn’t Dad with them?

Scene 2
1. What does Mum tell Father Hagan about Oliver?
2. What does Mum tell Father Hagan about Alison (the baby)?
3. Why doesn’t Oliver want to go swimming with the others?
4. What do we learn about Donal Morrisey? (at least three facts)
5. What is the name of the Parish that they are staying in?

Scene 3
1. Why is Mum irritated?
2. Why is Colin irritated?
3. What unpleasant sensation has Prill noticed, and how has this made her feel?
4. What has Oliver been doing?
5. How does this scene end?

‘Role on the wall’

Make larger copies of the following diagrams in your book, and write information about each of the characters inside the relevant silhouette.

Colin                                        Prill                                          Oliver
The story continues

Scene 4
1. What is growing in the garden described in scene 4?
2. How does Oliver know what is growing?
3. What does Oliver find on the plant?
4. Describe the creature and say what he does with it.
5. Why does Oliver disturb the old man?

Scene 5
1. What has woken Colin? (list three things)
2. What does Prill describe as ‘revolting’?
3. Why are Colin and Prill both happy that they are together?
4. Describe Prill’s dream.
5. What does Colin think is wrong with them?

Your own writing

Write a description of a dream you have had. It could be a pleasant dream or a scary dream. Write in as much detail as you can.

More unpleasantness

Scene 6
1. What are Prill and Colin doing when they make an unpleasant discovery in the fridge?
2. What is that discovery?
3. Give two reasons why it is strange that this has happened.
4. What does Colin wish? Why do you think this is?
5. What does Prill wish? Why do you think this is?

Scene 7
1. What noise can be heard in the background at the start of this scene?
2. Who or what is making this noise?
3. Why can’t Dad be contacted?
4. What discoveries has Oliver made?
5. How is he treating the things he has found?

Scene 8
1. Why has Colin gone to the O’Malley’s house?
2. What three pieces of information does Colin tell Mrs O’Malley?
3. How does Mrs O’Malley explain the problem with the milk?
4. What does Kevin tell Colin about Donal (find at least 3 things)?
5. What does Colin ask Kevin about the area, and what does Kevin tell him?
Visualise the place

Go back and make notes about the area, then draw a map of Ballimagliesh.

Desperation

Scene 9
1. Where are Colin and Prill planning to go?
2. Why does Oliver decide not to join them?
3. What does Prill tell Oliver he shouldn’t do?
4. How does Oliver respond to this warning?
5. Who do you agree with, and why?

Scene 10
1. At the start of this scene ‘Oliver sits dejectedly at the table…’ What does this mean, and what has happened to make him feel like this?
2. What does Mrs O’Malley think about what has happened?
3. How does Prill and Colin’s mother react?
4. How does Oliver justify his actions?
5. What historical event does he refer to?

Scene 11
1. What two good things seem to have happened at the start of this scene?
2. Why is Prill so disappointed and upset?
3. How does Mum try to explain things to her?
4. Describe the two other things that have gone wrong by the end of the scene.
5. How does Mum feel, do you think?

Reflect and imagine

Imagine you are Prill. Write a diary entry or a postcard home to a friend. Try to communicate what Prill is feeling.

Nightmares and visions

Scene 12
1. Describe Prill’s nightmare in your own words.
2. What strange thing has Colin seen, and how does this link with Prill’s nightmare?
3. What does Prill plan to do in the morning?
4. What response does Colin think she will get?
5. Colin says ‘What do you think’s happening to us?’, and Prill cannot answer him. What do YOU think is happening to them, and why?
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Scene 13
1. What does Oliver tell Prill he has found?
2. What does Prill find?
3. What does Oliver think is wrong with the house?
4. Why has he not mentioned this to the others before?
5. What message does Kevin have for Prill and Colin’s mum?

Scene 14
1. Where is Prill in this scene?
2. Why has she been taken there?
3. What does she say she saw in the shop?
4. Why do you think Father Hagan asks Prill what she knows about Irish history?
5. What does Father Hagan think about Oliver? Is he right, do you think?

An artist’s impression

Draw a picture of the scene Prill sees in the shop.

More surprising behaviour, more surprising events.

Scene 15
1. What do you think of Doctor Donovan’s actions? Does he behave as a doctor should?
2. Why do Colin and Prill ‘stare at each other dismayed, frightened’?
3. How does Oliver surprise his cousins:
   a. by what he says about Alison?
   b. by what he does to Alison?
4. What does Oliver think is wrong with Alison?
5. How does Colin respond to this and do you think he is right to respond like this?

Scene 16
1. Explain how Oliver has once again been helpful at the start of this scene.
2. Where is Colin at the start of the scene?
3. According to Mrs O’Malley, when will the electricity be back on?
4. Why does Colin say there won’t be a lot of his loaf to go round?
5. Why are they surprised by the appearance of ‘Young Danny’?
6. What does Prill see on the road that frightens her?
7. What explanation does Oliver give for this?
8. Why is Oliver horrified by the contents of the bag Mrs O’Malley has left for them?
9. Why does Prill takes some of the baby’s medicine?
10. What plans do the three children make for the rest of the day?
**Doctor’s Report**

Imagine you are Doctor Donovan. Write a short report of what you saw when you examined the baby. Comment on the state of mind of the mother and the other children in your report. Remember to write in a formal style.

**Moles, maggots and mysteries**

**Scene 17**
1. How long has Prill slept for?
2. What has Oliver been doing while Prill slept?
3. Meanwhile, Colin has made some discoveries. What has he found out?
4. What gruesome thing does Oliver find?
5. Why are the children going to go to the village to eat?

**Scene 18**
1. What is the weather like? How does this make you feel?
2. Why is it strange that the cottage has no electricity or telephone again?
3. Summarise the conversation the children have about water. Do you think this is in any way significant?
4. Explain why the children are worried about the dog.
5. What happens when Colin goes to try the dog food?

**Scene 19**
1. Describe Oliver’s dream.
2. When Oliver wakes Colin, the two boys hear real cries. Which two people are these coming from?

**Scene 20**
1. What do you think has happened to Prill?
2. Where do you think the sound of the baby crying is coming from?
3. Describe how Oliver takes control.

**Ghosts?**

If the children are, as previously suggested, being haunted, who are the ghosts? Write an explanation as if you were an expert in the paranormal, responding to a letter in a magazine.

**Resolution**

**Scene 21**
1. Does Donal seem surprised to see the children?
2. What does Oliver give to Donal, and how does Donal respond?
3. What object does Donal show to the children, and what is surprising about it?
4. Explain *in detail* what Donal tells the children about his grandmother’s life.
5. Why has Father Hagan called at Donal’s caravan?

Scene 22
1. Why is it surprising that many crops did very well during the famine years?
2. How does Father Hagan say the English landlords grew rich?
3. Father Hagan tells of the Morrisey woman who left a dead child as payment for goods. Prill says ‘I saw her.’ What does she mean?
4. What exactly has Oliver uncovered?
5. Why are things suddenly back to normal in the cottage? What has been resolved?

Review
Draw a mobile phone in your book. In the ‘screen’, write a text message briefly reviewing the play.