

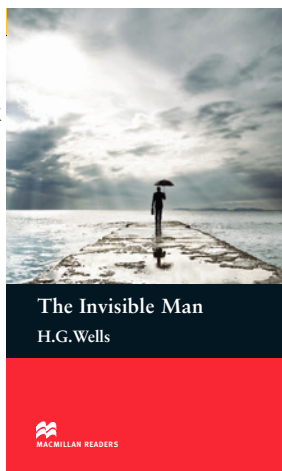
## Guessing the meaning of words from context

**1** When we read, we sometimes find words that we don't know. How do you find out the meaning of these words? Answer the questions for you with yes (Y) or no (N).

- 1 Do you use a dictionary when you read? Y/N
- 2 Do you look up the meanings of words that you don't understand? Y/N
- 3 Do you ever try to guess the meaning of a word from the words around it? Y/N
- 4 Do you prefer not to use a dictionary if you are reading for pleasure? Y/N

**2** Look at the cover of a bestselling novel. What do you think it's about? Choose words from the box that describe the book.

crime novel • romance •  
science fiction  
mystery • human  
interest



**3** Read the blurb from back of the book and check your answers to exercise 2.

The stranger arrived early in February, on a day of cold wind and snow. He walked over the hill from Bramblehurst railway station, carrying a small bag. He was wearing black gloves, and a long coat, and he was covered from head to foot ...

When a mysterious stranger arrives in a small English village, the villagers are shocked by the unusual clothes he wears that conceal his whole body, and even his face. The stranger is a lone scientist, and he continues his experiments in the village. It's not long before the villagers wonder: what are these experiments? And what is he trying to hide? As they start to demand answers, the stranger takes serious action.

The *Invisible Man* remains one of H.G Wells most inspired works: original, creative and, at times, funny. It's a story about secrecy and isolation, but on the other hand, shared-identity and community. The story is surprising and difficult to predict; it will keep readers guessing until the final page.

**4** Look at the underlined words in exercise 3 and answer the questions.

- 1 The main character is described as a *stranger*. Can you think of an adjective that is similar to this noun? What does it mean?  
.....
- 2 Do you think the stranger works as a scientist on his own, or with anyone else?  
.....
- 3 What does the stranger wear? What do you think a synonym for *conceal* is?  
.....
- 4 Do you think *demand* has a positive or negative meaning? How do you know?  
.....
- 5 Do you think *wonder* is a verb or a noun? When you *wonder*, are you asking yourself a question or telling yourself something?  
.....
- 6 Which three words together mean *inspired*?  
.....
- 7 Do you think *isolation* and *community* have similar or opposite meanings? How do you know?  
.....
- 8 What makes you want to read on to the end of the book? Do you think the reader guesses what will happen next once, or several times?  
.....

**5** Match the Study tips (a-g) with the questions (1-8) in exercise 4.

### STUDY TIP

You don't always need to use a dictionary if you don't know a word or phrase. You can guess the meaning by looking at information before and after the word or phrase. For example:

- a Look for synonyms (words that mean the same thing) around the word. ....
- b Look for antonyms (words with opposite meanings) near the word. ....
- c Try to get the sense of the whole sentence, not just a single word. Sometimes ideas are repeated in sentences in different ways, particularly after a semi-colon (;) or a dash (-). ....
- d Think of other forms of the same word. ....
- e Look for words you know inside the word (and prefixes). ....
- f Look for information that tells you whether a word is positive or negative. ....
- g Look at the position of the word in a sentence. Is it a noun, verb, adjective or adverb? ....

**6** Choose a book that you haven't read yet. Read the blurb and underline words you don't know. Then use the Study tips to help you to guess the meaning of these words.