

What's to be done with the Iron Man (The Iron Man: part 3)

So the spring came round the following year, leaves unfurled from the buds, daffodils speared up from the soil, and everywhere the grass shook new green points. The round hill over the Iron Man was covered with new grass. Before the end of the summer, sheep were grazing on the fine grass.

Until one day, the farmers realised that the Iron Man had freed himself. What could they do now? They had decided to call the army who could pound him to bits with anti-tank guns. But Hogarth had another idea. At first, the farmers would not hear of it, least of all his father. But at last they agreed. Yes, they would give Hogarth's idea a trial.

Hogarth walked up towards the Iron Man. "Hello," shouted Hogarth. "We've got all the iron you want, all the food you want and you can have it for nothing, if only you'll stop eating up all the farms. We're sorry we trapped you and buried you. We promise we'll not deceive you again. Follow us and you can have all the metal you want."

Hogarth joined the farmers. Slowly they drove back down the lane, and slowly, with all of his cogs humming, the Iron Man stepped after them. At last they came to the town and there was a great scrap-metal yard. Everything was there, old cars by the hundred, old trucks, old railway engines, old stoves, old refrigerators, old springs – all the scrap iron of the region was piled up there, rusting away.

The Iron Man gazed and his eyes turned red. He kneeled down in the yard, he stretched out on one elbow. He picked up a greasy black stove and chewed it like a toffee. There were delicious crumbs of chrome on it. He followed that with a double decker bedstead and the brass knobs made his eyes crackle with joy. Never before had the Iron Man eaten such delicacies. As he lay there, a big truck turned into the yard and unloaded a pile of rusty chain. The Iron Man lifted a handful and let it dangle into his mouth – better than any spaghetti.

So there they left him. It was an Iron Man's heaven. The farmers went back to their farms. Hogarth visited the Iron Man every few days. Now the Iron Man's eyes were constantly a happy blue. He was no longer rusty. His body gleamed blue, like a new gun barrel. And he ate, ate, ate, ate – endlessly.

1. How do we know that the Iron Man has a large appetite?
2. How does the author use colour to describe the Iron Man's emotions?
3. How has your opinion of the Iron Man changed? What does the author want you to think? Compare this to the beginning of the story.
4. The farmers wanted to call the army to help them. Do you agree or disagree with their idea?
5. Can you think of any other places/ways the Iron Man could be helpful?
6. Why do you think the author has described the place where the Iron Man was buried (in the first paragraph) as having flowers and grass, then in the second paragraph suddenly explains that the Iron Man had freed himself? How did the author want you to feel after reading the first paragraph and how does this affect the way you feel when you find out about the Iron Man escaping from the pit?
7. There are two more parts to this story. What do you think will happen next? If the author wants to grab the reader, they can add another problem to the story. What else could go wrong? Will the Iron Man remain helpful or become a villain again?