

## The Depths

Rusted rivets hissed and howled under immense pressure. Droplets of water dripped down the inside of the curved walls. Judd spun on his chair and snatched up a wrench. So far, the vessel had held up just fine. He knew he was pushing it beyond anything he had tried before. It was his only choice, and he knew it. Francois DuBois was just waiting for him to fail.

Ever since he was a child, Judd Hoolihan had explored. His mother been raised in a wealthy house and had made the most of her family's vast fortunes. She'd spent it all building some of the most amazing contraptions the world had ever seen.

Her steam-powered robots had been the talk of the town at the Great Exhibition. Judd remembered joining her one day and marvelling at the wonders of the age. Clockwork men had stuttered and stumbled around the hall, providing refreshments for the guests. All the while, his mother's men danced and performed circus tricks. She'd smiled with a faraway look as one of her creations leapt through a flaming ring.

Judd had often spent days in his mother's workshop. He loved to watch her tinker. The smells of coal and steam filled his dreams. Now, it was his time to show the world what the Hoolihan's could do.

Queen Victoria's officials had discovered an ancient text somewhere in the Empire. It revealed the location of the fabled Lost City of Atlantis. If the historians were reading the language correctly, then there were thousands of gold bars buried underneath the ocean. The first man to recover it would win the gratitude of Her Majesty. Judd wanted to be that man. But so did Francois DuBois!

Judd's machine had been ready first, so he'd had a head start. Now, he was descending rapidly to the bottom of the deepest part of the Atlantic Ocean. There was no way of steering the small brass orb, he just had to hope he'd dropped at the right point. Once he reached the bottom, he would step out in a suit built of the toughest metals he could find. The small steam engine on board would continue to pump clean air so that he could breathe.

Eerie darkness gripped the snug cabin as he sank. All of the Queen's experts had told him he was mad. There was a chance he would drop through the bottom of the ocean and into the core of the Earth, they'd



said. He doubted it.

He'd fitted circular windows to allow him to see what was out there. Each one was only a few inches across and an inch thick. All he could see in the darkness were ghostly white eyes.

Suddenly, the ship crashed to a halt. Clouds of sand billowed up and obscured the view. The metal groaned and creaked. With a deep breath, Judd slipped into the suit. He dropped into the airlock at the bottom of the sphere. Somewhere out there was a lost city and his fortune. There was only one way to get it.

## INFERENCE FOCUS

1. How is Judd feeling in the first paragraph?
2. Who inspired Judd to be an adventurer?
3. What is Judd trying to achieve on his mission?
4. Does Judd trust the Queen's advisors? How do you know?
5. How is Judd feeling when he lands? How do you know?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**R**

Why did Judd have a head start on DuBois?

**S**

How will Judd be able to breathe underwater?

**R**

What is Judd's surname?

**V**

Find a word that describes something as floating up in clouds.

**V**

Find an example of personification within the text.

Answers:

1. He is desperate. He knows that what he is doing is his only choice - this means he might not want to be doing it.
2. His mother
3. To find the gold in the Lost City of Atlantis and win the Queen's gratitude
4. He trusts them enough to go hunting for the treasure they say is there, but he doesn't trust them about falling into the centre of the Earth
5. He is nervous. He breathes deeply before getting into the suit

R: His ship was ready first

S: The steam engine will pump clean air into his suit

R: Hoolihan

V: Billowed

V: Eerie darkness gripped the...