

Stig of the Dump

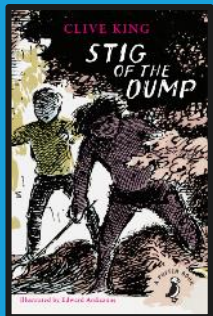
Chapter 2: Digging with Stig (Part Two)

Written by Clive King and illustrated by Edward Ardizzone
Read by Tony Robinson



Puffin Schools





Puffin Book of the Week

Stig of the Dump



Reading...

It was more difficult finding his way to Stig's den along the floor of the pit than it had been finding his way out the night before. The dump looked quite different – more cheerful, with the sunlight pouring down through the golden autumn leaves, and the ash and sycamore seeds twiddling down from the trees on top.

But the tail of the aeroplane was only part of a farm machine, and the ship's helm was a broken cartwheel. There was the bicycle too, just a rusty frame with bits of brake hanging on to it.

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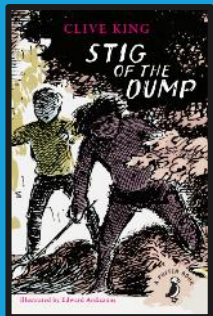
Never mind, he'd found something much more interesting, and he'd seen it and spoken to it in broad daylight. A real live Stig, and he was going to visit him.

That's if he could find his way among the giant nettles. Suddenly, there was Stig, coming to meet him straight through a nettle patch as if stings meant nothing to him. Barney stopped. What now? Shake hands? Rub noses? – no, perhaps not! He remembered the apples he had stowed inside his shirt, took one out and held it towards Stig on the palm of his hand as if he was trying to make friends with a horse.

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‘I hope you liked the carrots, Stig,’ said Barney. ‘Have an apple!’ Stig took the apple quite politely between finger and thumb – not between his teeth, as Barney somehow expected him to – and sniffed it. Barney took out another apple for himself and bit into it.

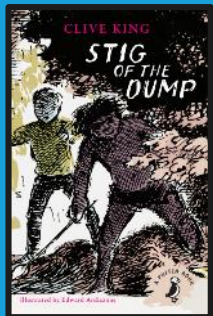
‘Good!’ he said. ‘Delicious!’

Stig took a bite, seemed to like it, smiled, and they both started walking towards the den, munching their apples.

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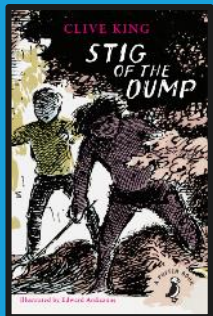
Stig just blundered through the nettles, and as far as Barney could see they stung him and raised bumps as they did on other people, but he just didn't care. Barney himself avoided the nettles as much as he could. He got stung once or twice but decided not to make a fuss about it. Stigs don't mind stings, he thought, so he'd better not.

Stig led the way to the den. Barney noticed several dumps of new white chalk near the path, and remembered the new tunnelling he had seen yesterday, and the baby's bath full of chalk.

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‘Been digging, Stig?’ he asked, pointing to the dumps. Stig grinned and nodded. It was gloomy and overhung at Stig’s end of the pit even on this bright day, and the den itself, now that the hole in the roof was mended, was even darker.

The teapot lamp was flickering and throwing a dim light on the den and the place where Stig had been digging, but it was not very cheerful. Come to think of it, thought Barney, rabbits and things that live in holes don’t have any light at all. Not much fun for them, with no windows.

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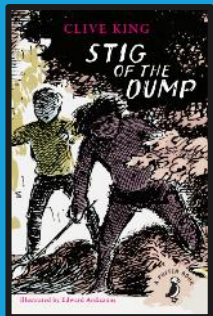
Couldn't he find some windows for Stig?

What made it worse was that Stig had started a small fire in the den part. He must have just done it, because Barney had not noticed any smoke when he was sitting on the tree-trunk. The smoke was filling the den, and there was no way out for it except to trickle through the gaps in the roof. It made Barney's eyes water, but he supposed it was one of the things you just had to put up with, like nettles. All the same, the place could do with a chimney, as well as windows.

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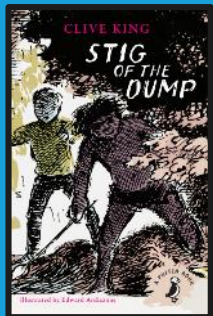
He began to get used to the darkness, and he could see that the tunnel at the back of the cave went further back into the chalk than he had noticed. The digging tools were lying about: the bedstead leg, a broken cast-iron shoe-scraper, and an iron bar like the one he'd seen his father use on the jack to lift the car up.

Stig was reaching up to offer Barney another turnip, but Barney didn't feel like turnip so soon after breakfast. 'Can I help you dig, Stig?' he asked. 'I expect you're busy anyhow.' He went to the end of the tunnel and picked up the bit of bedstead, and began to attack the wall of chalk.

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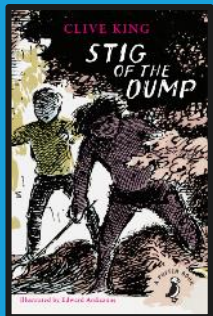
It was not as easy as he had expected. The chalk in the inside of the hill here was firm, not crumbly as it was on the outside where the rain got at it. Barney's bashes with the awkward piece of metal only broke off smallish chips of chalk, and he was soon puffed.

Stig, who had been standing watching him, took the digger from his hands and showed him how to dig out a hollow at the bottom of the chalk wall, then knock down large chunks which came away easily because they were not held up underneath.

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Reading...

There was soon a pile of loose chalk, and Barney picked it up with his hands and put it in the small tin bath. When it was full it was about as much as he could do to drag it along the floor of the cave towards the entrance. Stig helped him, and between them they lugged the load out of the den and dumped it. But Barney noticed that Stig took care to put it some way from his door. He supposed that piles of new white chalk would let people know that something was going on.

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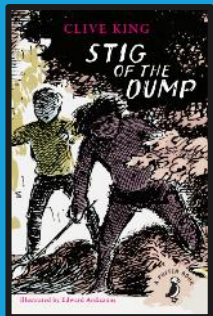
Reading...

Stig let him dig next time, and he soon got the hang of cutting under and letting it tumble down from the top. Now and then they would come to a great flint embedded in the chalk, like a fossil monster with knobs and bulges, and they would have to chip round it, worry it, and loosen it like a tooth until at last it came free, usually bringing down a lot of chalk with it. They worked on happily for quite a time, taking it in turns to dig and load, and now and then they would stop for a break and take a drink of water from the tin or eat a refreshing apple.

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Reading...

Barney's jeans were white with chalk dust, and his hair and nails were full of it. He suddenly wondered what his Grandmother would say – then he suddenly wondered what time it was! In spite of the apples his tummy was telling him that it might be lunch time. 'You haven't got a clothes-brush, have you Stig?' he asked. Stig looked blank and Barney decided that he probably hadn't. His eye fell on Stig's water-pipe. Somebody had thrown away a vacuum cleaner, so there must be one of the brush things somewhere.

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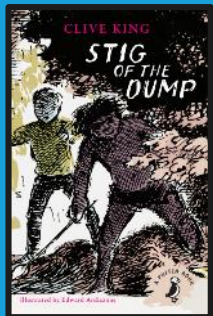
Sure enough he spied one, fixed as a sort of T-piece on the end of a long thin pole that was helping to hold the roof up. He thought the roof might hold itself up for a bit while he got the worst of the chalk dust off with the vacuum-cleaner end, and it did. Stig was watching with a puzzled look, wondering why Barney should be pulling down part of his roof to brush at his clothes with.

‘You’re lucky, Stig,’ said Barney. ‘Nobody asks you how you got in such a mess. I’ve got to go now. Must be nearly lunch time. Pity I can’t ask you to lunch, but . . .’

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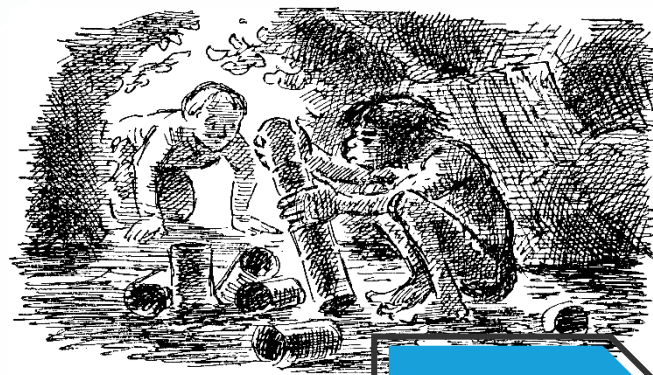
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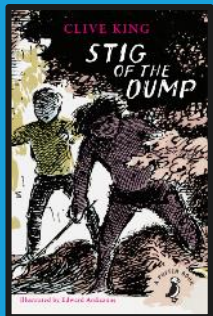
But really, he thought, nobody else even believes in him yet. 'I'll be back this afternoon,' Barney said from the door. 'Thanks for letting me help you. Goodbye!'



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Reading...

Grandmother and Lou were late getting back from the town, so he had time to get the chalk out of his nails and hair and to look fairly respectable for lunch. They were too full of talk about how they had spent their morning to question him much about what he had been doing.

Over the stewed apples he was able to say quietly:
'Granny, have you got any things you don't want?'
'Things I don't want, dear?' Grandmother repeated.
'What sort of things? Chilblains? Grandchildren?'

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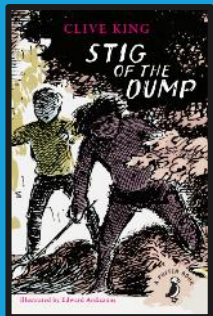
‘No, Granny. I mean – things like windows and chimneys.’ Grandmother thought about this for a moment, and then said that really she couldn’t think of anything like windows and chimneys except windows and chimneys, and she thought the house had only just enough of these to go round. And Lou just laughed and said, ‘Really, Barney!’

Then Grandmother said that it did remind her there were some tins and jam-jars she had meant to put out for the dustbin man, and perhaps Barney would be a dear and carry them to the gate.

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Reading...

There were more jam-jars than Barney had thought possible, and quite a lot of useful tins, the sort with lids. Barney looked at them. The dustbin man wouldn't say thank you for them, he thought. Why shouldn't Stig have them?

He remembered a big wooden box which Grandfather had helped him fix wheels on to, so that he and Lou could use it as a cart. He searched round and found it among the firewood, but still with its four wheels more or less straight and the piece of rope on the front to pull it with. He loaded it with jam-jars and tins, and found it quite a weight when he set off across the paddock with it.

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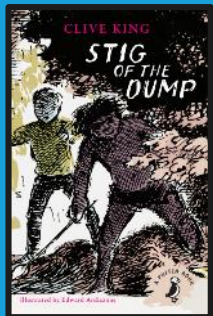
By the time Barney had got his load to the edge of the pit he was quite tired, but there was still the problem of getting them to the bottom. He sat on the camel's-neck tree-trunk.



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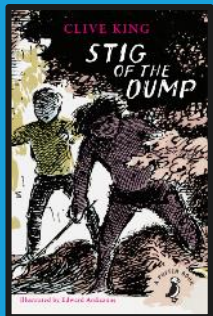
Reading...

The string was still there. It was the thick brown sort, and he thought it would be strong enough for a few jam-jars. He called to Stig, and after a time Stig came out backwards, like a badger with its bedding, dragging a load of chalk. 'I've got some things for you, Stig!' Barney called. He pulled up the string and took the end to the pile of jam-jars. About eight of them were packed in a cardboard box. It would take too long to pass them down one by one, so he tied the string round the box, took it carefully along the tree-trunk, and started to lower it. This wasn't nearly as easy as the carrots.

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Reading...

The box swung wildly, the string round it started slipping, the part he was holding tried to run through his fingers and burned his hands. He took a turn round the stump of a branch and let it run out round that, hardly daring to look down and see what was happening. He hoped Stig wouldn't get a jam-jar on his head. The box was hanging by one corner when it reached the ground, but instead of untying it Stig disappeared into his den.

'Hey! Stig! Undo it!' Barney called. 'There's some more to come.'

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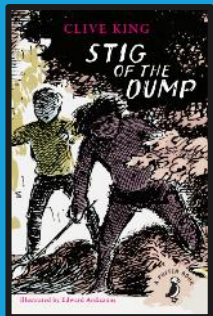
Reading...

Stig came out again holding what was left of a large broad-brimmed lady's straw hat, with ribbons to tie it under the chin. He untied the string from the box and tied it to the ribbons. It made quite a useful-looking cargo-sling. 'Jolly good idea, Stig!' Barney shouted. Stig's got brains, he thought. After that it was quite easy. He hauled up the hat, filled it with jam-jars, lowered it down with the string running round the stump of branch, waited for Stig to unload, hauled it up again, and so on. When he had finished the jam-jars he started on the tins, which were much lighter.

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Reading...

And when he had lowered all the tins he looked at the truck. How strong is string? he wondered. Could he send the truck down the same way? If he didn't he would have to trundle it all the way round the top and along the bottom of the pit.

He wound the string a few times round the branch-stump, leaving enough loose to reach the truck on the cliff-top, humped himself along the tree-trunk, tied the string to a wheel of the truck, moved back along the trunk, and pulled the truck towards him by the string.

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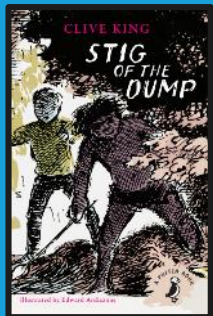
The truck lurched over the edge of the cliff, swung wildly outwards on the string, which ran out so fast that he couldn't stop it – until a tangle in the string made it stop with a jerk, the string broke, and the truck was falling through the air.

Barney held on for dear life to the tree, with his face against the mossy bark, and shut his eyes. He felt weak and dizzy. At last he allowed himself to look down. He couldn't see the truck at first. Then he saw that it had swung out to land in the branches of an elder tree, and was hanging there quite happily.

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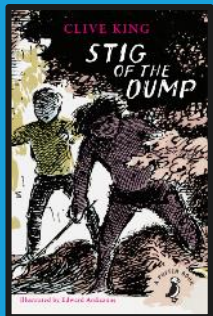
‘I’ve sent the truck down,’ he called to Stig. ‘It may come in useful.’ He was still feeling what his Grandmother used to call hot-and-cold-all-over, but he carefully inched himself off the tree and on to firm ground, and set off round and down to the pit. A pity he couldn’t let himself down on a rope – but no, he thought, he wouldn’t try just yet.

His idea of sending the things down on the string had been a good one though, he thought to himself as he walked through the copse.

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End



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Now that you have read the second part of Chapter 2,
how would you finish this sentence?



People probably don't believe that
Stig exists because...

Dream Big Question



Puffin Book of the Week

Dream Big Question

If you could dream of the perfect present to give someone, what would it be? Who would you give it to?





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