

They all looked round, and yes, the mouth of the tunnel was only a few feet away from them now, and in the circle of daylight beyond they could see

the two huge black tractors almost on top of them.

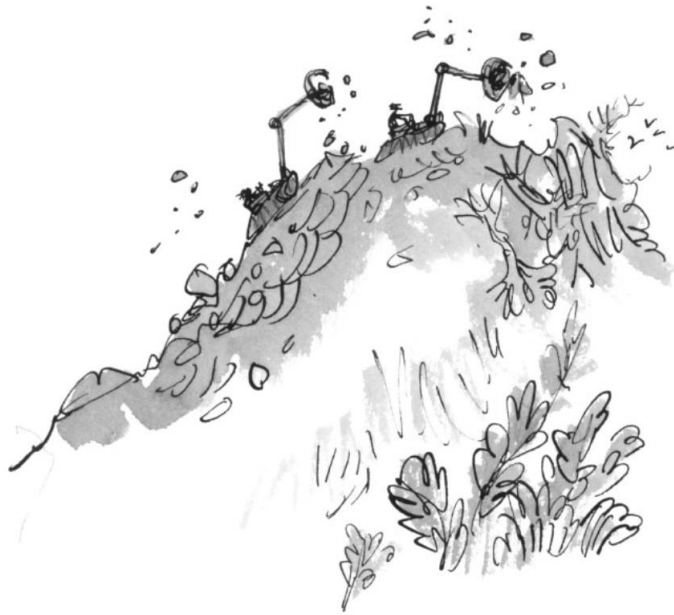
‘Tractors!’ shouted Mr Fox. ‘And *mechanical* shovels! Dig for your lives! *Dig, dig, dig!*’



**6**

## **The Race**

Now there began a desperate race, the machines against the foxes. In the beginning, the hill looked like this:



After about an hour, as the machines bit away more and more soil from the hilltop, it looked like this:



Sometimes the foxes would gain a little ground and the clanking noises would grow fainter and Mr Fox would say, 'We're going to make it! I'm sure we are!' But then a few moments later, the machines would come back at them and the crunch of the mighty shovels would get louder and louder. Once the foxes actually saw the sharp metal edge of one of the shovels as it scraped up the earth just behind them.

'Keep going, my darlings!' panted Mr Fox. 'Don't give up!'

‘Keep going!’ the fat Boggis shouted to Bunce and Bean. ‘We’ll get him any moment now!’

‘Have you caught sight of him yet?’ Bean called back.

‘Not yet,’ shouted Boggis. ‘But I think you’re close!’

‘I’ll pick him up with my bucket!’ shouted Bunce. ‘I’ll chop him to pieces!’

But by lunchtime the machines were still at it. And so were the poor foxes. The hill now looked like this:



The farmers didn't stop for lunch; they were too keen to finish the job.

'Hey there, Mr Fox!' yelled Bunce, leaning out of his tractor. 'We're coming to get you now!'

'You've had your last chicken!' yelled Boggis. 'You'll never come prowling around *my* farm again!'

A sort of madness had taken hold of the three men. The tall skinny Bean and dwarfish pot-bellied

Bunce were driving their machines like maniacs, racing the motors and making the shovels dig at a terrific speed. The fat Boggis was hopping about like a dervish and shouting, 'Faster! Faster!'

By five o'clock in the afternoon this is what had happened to the hill:



The hole the machines had dug was like the crater of a volcano. It was such an extraordinary

sight that crowds of people came rushing out from the surrounding villages to have a look. They stood on the edge of the crater and stared down at Boggis and Bunce and Bean.

‘Hey there, Boggis! What’s going on?’

‘We’re after a fox!’

‘You must be mad!’

The people jeered and laughed. But this only made the three farmers more furious and more obstinate and more determined than ever not to give up until they had caught the fox.

Task: Predict what you think will happen next.

**Remember to explain why you think it is going to happen.**

**Use the sentence stem:**

**I think this will happen because....**