

Y6 18.5.20 The Explorer

The screaming was not coming from inside Fred's head.
He sat bolt upright and stared around the stone room. Dawn was beginning to break. Con was pushing her hair out of her eyes. Lila was already on her feet.
Max was not lying on the stone floor. Max was missing.
Fred ran out into the stone square, staring around at the grey light, praying that Max would jump out from a tree and stick his tongue out at them.
"Max!" shouted Lila.
"Max?" roared Fred.
The screaming stopped and the silence battered itself against his skin harder than the noise. Then Fred's stomach turned suddenly cold, full of something writhing and maniacal.
"Is that him?" He pointed at the sloping wall they had tumbled down, to the foot of the tree. There was a bundle lying at the base.
Fred sprinted to the bank but Lila outpaced him, legs working like fury.
Max lay in a ball. He was shaking, his spine convulsing against his shirt, and his breathing was rough and erratic.
"Max?" said Lila. "Are you hurt? Can you hear me?" Her hair fell over her brother's face. "Say something."
Max moaned and shook. His lips formed shapes, but he spoke no words.
"What's wrong with him?" said Con.

"What's happening to him?" asked Fred.
"He's been bitten."
"By what?"
"Ants."
"Ants? Oh thank God. I thought it was a snake! Con let out a bark of laughter and relief. The explorer shook his head.
"A snake would have been better. He must have stood on a bullet-ant colony."
"Bullet-ants! "Lila let out a moan. "Aren't they" She couldn't say the word.
"Deadly?"

1. What words and phrases show you that Max is very sick?
2. Why was the silence worse than the sound of the screaming?
3. Why was Con relieved?
4. Why would it have been better for Max to have been bitten by a snake?
5. Why couldn't Lila say the word deadly?

Write a definition of the words:

- erratic
- convulsing
- maniacal
- writhing
- outpaced
- fury