**The Last Wolf**

**Michael Morpurgo**

**Miya's 'New-fangled Machine**

'You’re an ostrich, Grandpa,' Miya told me, sitting herself down on my bed and peeling an orange for me.

'And why's that then?' I asked her.

'Because whenever you see something you don't like, you just bury your head in the sand and pretend it's not there.'

It was an old argument between us, not that you'd call it an argument as such, more of a tease.

But whatever it was, I knew that sooner rather than later she was going to wear me down. Miya was determined to drag me into the twenty-first century whether I liked it or not. And now she'd found the perfect opportunity.

'You’ve got nothing else to do, Grandpa,‘ she went on. ‘You're bored out of your mind. Why not try it, at least? I'll come in and teach you, if you like, every evening. Won't take long. It's easy-peasy - nothing to be frightened of.'

'I'm not frightened,' I replied. 'I just don't see the point of all these new-fangled machines, that's all.'

Like I said, you're an ostrich. Here.' She gave me my orange. 'Eat. It's good for you,’ she said. ‘Listen, Grandpa, it's brilliant, honest it is. There's millions of different things you can do on it on it - e-mail, word processing, games, shopping...’

‘I hate shopping.’ I told her.

‘You're a grumpy old ostrich too,’ she said, bending over to kiss me on the cheek. ‘We’ll get started tomorrow. I’ll bring over my laptop, all right? Byeee!’

And she was out of the door and gone, ignoring all my protests. She had won.

All this came about because I'd been ill - just flu at first, but then it became pneumonia. The doctor, who's a good friend of mine as well as my doctor, wagged his finger at me, and said, 'Now you listen to me, Michael McLeod, this is serious. You’re no spring chicken any more. You've got to stay in bed and in the warm. No more gardening, no more golf, no more fishing. You've got to look after yourself.'

So, cooped up in my flat for weeks on end, I had become, as Miya had so rightly diagnosed, bored out of my mind.

Miya was fourteen, my eldest granddaughter and the apple of my eye. She was always popping in to cheer me up, bless her - she lives just round the corner. And she did cheer me up too, even if she did go on and on about the joys of her wretched computer. The truth was that so long as she came to see me, I didn't mind what we did, or what she talked about. It would pass the time, and talking about computers made a welcome change from losing to her at chess - again.

The computer lessons did not start well. I just could not get my head around it all. Then, bit by bit, day by day, with Miya’s help, I began to make some sense of it, and once I’d made sense of it, I began to enjoy it - much to my surprise.

A couple of weeks later Miya went off on her summer holidays leaving me strict instructions as to how to plug in and keep in touch with her by e-mail. She told me I must promise to practise every day on the computer. I promised, and I like to keep my promises.

So, except for occasional check-up visits from my doctor friend and from my neighbour who very kindly did all my shopping for me, I was left alone in the house with Miya's computer. One morning, as I sat there in front of it, about to switch it on, I began asking myself why I was doing this. I mean, what was this machine really for? What could it do for me? How, now I'd begun to master it, could I use it to help me through the long days of convalescence that still lay ahead of me? I needed a project, I thought. Something to occupy my mind, something I could really get my teeth into, and something this computer could help me to achieve.

I had a sudden idea. It was an old idea, one I'd had in the back of my mind for many years, but had never bothered to do anything much about. This was my opportunity. I had the time, and now I had the means literally at my fingertips. I would set out on a quest, a quest I could achieve without ever leaving the flat. I could do it all, the whole thing, on Internet, by email. I would search out my roots, piece together my family tree, discover where I came from, who I came from. I would trace my family, back as far as I could go.

## The Last Wolf questions

1. What does Grandpa mean when he describes the laptop as **‘new-fangled’**?(1 mark)
2. Why do you think Grandpa doesn’t like computers? Give two reasons for your answer.(2 marks)
3. Do you think Grandpa likes Miya’s visits? Give reasons for your answer.(2 marks)
4. What does the doctor mean when he uses the phrase **‘You’re no spring chicken any more’** to describe Grandpa?(1 mark)
5. What does Grandpa decide to use the computer to do?(1 mark)
6. What do you think the word **convalescence** means?(1 mark)
7. Why do you think Miya and her Grandpa have different views on computers?(2 marks)
8. What does Grandpa mean when he says: **‘I had the means literally at my fingertips.’**?(1 mark)
9. Do you think Grandpa will change his mind about computers? Give reasons for your answer.(3 marks)
10. What do you think Miya will say to Grandpa when she returns from holiday?(2 marks)