

a sky original

The Amazing Mr Blunden



*Family Activity
Pack*

Introducing The Amazing Mr Blunden

Inspired by the 1972 motion picture of the same name and adapted from Antonia Barber's children's fantasy novel 'The Ghosts', The Amazing Mr Blunden is a new Sky original made especially for Christmas.

Adventure arrives for teenagers Jamie (Jason Rennie) and Lucy (Tsion Habte) in the form of a mysterious old man, Mr Blunden (Simon Callow), who offers their mum Christine (Vinette Robinson) the opportunity to become the caretaker of a ruined country house – one that's said to be haunted.

Within its neglected grounds, Jamie and Lucy have an encounter with what appears to be a pair of ghosts. But these kids, Sara (India Fowler) and Georgie (Xavier Wilkins), aren't actually ghosts. They've travelled forwards in time to seek help, believing they're in danger from the wicked Mr and Mrs Wickens (Mark Gatiss and Tamsin Greig), and Lucy and Jamie's strange visitor seems to be the key to it all.

With his help, they must travel back to 1821 to save Sara and Georgie and redeem their remorseful new friend - The Amazing Mr Blunden!

The Amazing Mr Blunden, available on Christmas Eve at 7pm on Sky Max and streaming service NOW



About the film

Actor, writer and director Mark Gatiss saw the original *The Amazing Mr Blunden* (1972) when he was seven years old, and it has stayed with him ever since. 'It was ghosts. It was time travel. It was magic. It was faintly sinister. It had brilliant baddies. It was historical. It had everything! And I just loved it.'

So when he was asked to make a new version, he jumped at the chance.

'In the book it's based on, "The Ghosts" by Antonia Barber, the kids are modern. So I thought, "there's something interesting here about making the kids defiantly 2021. Then there'll be much more of a contrast when they go back in time."

Actor Simon Callow was so keen to play Mr Blunden that he rearranged his holiday so that he could shoot the film. He finds Mr Blunden 'an irresistible character, charming, slightly eccentric, very vulnerable, consumed by guilt. He wants to turn the clock back on what he did - I suppose we've all had that feeling at one time or another.'

Jason Rennie and Tsion Habte, who play Jamie and Lucy, agree that *The Amazing Mr Blunden* will make perfect viewing for Christmas. 'It's a feelgood story that will bring the family together,' says Tsion. 'This film will be loved by everyone, including adults. I hope at the end of it, everyone will walk away with a heart-warming feeling, saying, "I loved that."

Quiz

Test your memory! How closely were you watching?

1. Mr Blunden says that time is like...
 - a) A long, winding road
 - b) A rollercoaster
 - c) A wheel

2. What are Jamie, Lucy and their mum eating when Mr Blunden comes to see them?
 - a) Tomato soup
 - b) Chips
 - c) Christmas dinner

3. What does Lucy see at the window of the house when she is taking pictures on Jamie's phone?
 - a) An old vase
 - b) A face looking out at her
 - c) A message written on the glass

4. Why does Mrs Wickens want to get rid of Sara and Georgie?
 - a) She wants her daughter, Bella, to inherit the house
 - b) She thinks they are noisy and rude
 - c) She wants more space in the house for all her books



5. How do Jamie and Lucy know which plants to pick for the time travelling potion?
 - a) The gardener in the churchyard shows them
 - b) They paid attention in biology classes
 - c) They look them up online

6. What song does Bella try to perform for the family?
 - a) 'A Fisherman's Wife, or Sailing Out to Sea'
 - b) 'A Soldier's Widow, or Return From Waterloo'
 - c) 'A Highwayman's Daughter, or Well Met by Moonlight'

7. What do Jamie and Lucy discover about their family history?
 - a) They were adopted
 - b) Mr Blunden was their long-lost great-uncle
 - c) Sara and Tom were their great-great-great Grandparents

8. What does the writing on Mr Blunden's gravestone say?
 - a) 'The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep'
 - b) 'Absence maketh the heart grow fonder'
 - c) 'Discretion is the better part of valour'

Answers: 1c; 2b; 3b; 4a; 5c; 6b; 7c; 8a

Discussion questions

After you've watched the film, chat together about your reactions. You might want to choose a few of these questions to guide you.

1. What did you like most about the film? Which parts did you find scary, funny or exciting?
2. How do you think Lucy, Jamie and their mum are each feeling when we meet them at the beginning of the film? What sort of Christmas are they expecting to have?

'Do you think you would be afraid if you saw a ghost?' – Mr Blunden

3. Would you be afraid to meet a ghost? Why, or why not? Have you ever seen something that you couldn't explain?
4. Why do you think that only children can see ghosts in the film? Do you think adults really lose the power to believe in magical or mysterious things?
5. If you could travel back in time, where in history would you choose to go, and why? Are there any parts of your own life that you might try to change?

'It's never too late to right a wrong if you're truly sorry.' – Sara





6. Do you agree with Sara that it's never too late to put things right? What is Mr Blunden sorry about that he wants to change?
7. Have you ever made a plan to correct a mistake you made, or said sorry to somebody you let down? What did you do, and what happened next?
8. Why does Mr Blunden choose to sacrifice himself for Sara and Georgie in the end? What's the kindest thing anybody has ever done for you? Could you do something good for the people you love this Christmas?



Activity: Once upon a spooky Christmas

You'll need: Enough sheets of paper and pens for everyone in your group

Everyone in your group starts with a sheet of paper, on which they write Once upon a spooky Christmas... This is the start of the story!

They then fold the top of the paper to hide their writing before passing it along to the next person. With each turn, the players fill in the steps of the story as follows, folding and passing the paper along after each step:

- [Someone's name – this could be somebody you know, a famous person, Father Christmas...]
- Met... [a ghost! Be as inventive as you like – describe what your ghost looks like]
- In/at/on....[describe where they met]
- They said... [what the person said]
- The ghost said...
- They... [what the person did]
- The ghost... [what the ghost did]
- And then... [what happened in the end?]

When everyone has written their final phrase, unfold the pieces of paper. Read each other your strange and spooky Christmas tales.



Activity: A message from the past

You'll need: A strong, waterproof container – such as a sealable glass jar, a plastic box or a tin; paper and pens; printed photographs and other meaningful items to include

In this activity, you'll be leaving a message for somebody else to find – maybe far in the future! You'll be sharing what your Christmas celebrations are like in the year 2021.

- Decide together where you're going to hide your Christmas time capsule. If you're burying it outside, you'll need a spade, and a container which won't leak or rot. Alternatively, you could hide it somewhere in your house where it won't be disturbed, such as under the floorboards or in the attic.
- Decide what you would like to include in your box. You could:
 - o Take photographs of your family opening presents or eating Christmas Dinner
 - o Write down the rules of your favourite Christmas games
 - o Write down the list of presents you're hoping to get
 - o Include the little gifts and party hat that you got in your cracker
 - o Write a poem or a story about what Christmas means to you
 - o Draw a picture of how you imagine Christmas will be celebrated in the future
 - o Make a scrapbook with pictures from magazines

Finally, write a note for the person who finds your time capsule. What do you want them to know about you and your life? Do you have a Christmas message for them?

The grown-ups in your group can take responsibility for properly sealing and hiding the time capsule. Now it's just a matter of time before somebody finds it...

Libraries support The Amazing Mr Blunden

Learning at the British Library



It's that time of year when all the classic literary tales we know and love return to our screens. From old favourites like *A Christmas Carol* to new adaptations like this year's film, *The Amazing Mr Blunden*. But why are so many of the stories we enjoy with our families on Christmas Day filled with fear and intrigue? Explore the roots of scary children's stories in this [article](#) from the British Library Learning team written by Michael Rosen and Kimberley Reynolds. The British Library's [Discovering Children's Books](#) website is also packed full of activities and content examining centuries of stories, poems and illustrations for children, teachers and book-lovers of all ages.

For older learners there are digital [resources](#) to help English and History students travel through time, like *Scrooge* himself, with films and articles on topics from [Women's Rights](#) to [Romantics and Victorians](#) or [Windrush Stories](#). You'll even discover some festive facts, including [this article](#) which looks at the origins of Christmas traditions in the 19th century, the setting for so many of the stories we'll be settling down to watch or read this season.

And the learning continues at the Library itself. Visit the [schools](#) page to find out about the Library's onsite programme and school visits to their latest exhibitions.



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A Christmas Carol in prose. Being a Ghost-story of Christmas by Charles Dickens, with illustrations by John Leech (1843). Dex.293. (1.). Public Domain.





The School Library Association (SLA) is a UK focused charity that supports everyone involved in school libraries. We're pleased to provide training and access to an array of resources that assist with the running of school libraries. We believe that all children are entitled to effective school library provision and the educational, emotional and developmental benefits and are proud to be the first port of call for school library staff seeking to achieve this.

When it comes to discovering a love of reading, it doesn't matter what form it takes. The value of the classic children's literature that's gone before us cannot be underestimated. The authors of the past have paved the way for the wealth of contemporary fiction that we enjoy today, just like the fantasy children novel, *The Ghosts*, written by Antonia Barber in 1969 which has inspired the film *The Amazing Mr Blunden*. These stories are timeless, and a good tale will produce wonder, joy and tears for generations. Interpretations and lifestyles may shift, but books, particularly those for children, change a developing soul and leave a mark which often passes from adult to child across the generations.

Many contemporary authors have taken classics and reworked them in their own way, adding another dimension to prompt more new readers into imagining how they would respond in similar circumstances. Some of these classics have also been taken and reworked to make films too. The exploration of these stories in both formats develops empathy, and often accesses strength in our young people that they previously had no reason to call upon. It is these classic texts that shape a resilience in children to work alongside others, and ultimately go on to achieve their dreams.

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