

The Last Signal

A Fleydo English School Story

A2 Level | Teens (11–16) | Reading | Story | 14 Pages

Zara is a 14-year-old girl who loves science and radio technology. One night, while listening to the sky with her grandfather's old radio, she picks up a strange signal that nobody else can hear. The signal is a pattern — a code. With the help of her best friend Marco and a retired astronomer, Zara races to decode the message before the signal disappears forever. But the message is not what anyone expected. It is not from another planet. It is from the future — and it carries a warning.

Learning Objectives

- Read and understand an A2-level science fiction story (14 pages)
- Learn 15 new vocabulary words in context
- Practise vocabulary with matching and fill-in-the-blank exercises
- Test reading comprehension with 10 multiple-choice questions
- Discuss themes: curiosity, teamwork, and responsibility for the future

1 Read the Story

Chapter 1: The Girl With the Radio

Zara and her grandfather's radio

Zara was not like other teenagers. While her classmates spent their evenings watching videos and chatting online, Zara sat in the attic of her house with a pair of enormous headphones, listening to the sky.

The attic was her favourite place. It smelled of old wood and dust. In the corner stood her grandfather's radio — a beautiful old machine with silver dials and a long antenna that went through the roof and up into the night air. Her grandfather had been a radio engineer. He had listened to signals from all over the world. Before he died, he gave Zara his radio and said, "Listen carefully, Zara. The sky is full of voices. Most people just don't know how to hear them."

Zara had been listening every night for two years. She heard weather reports from ships, pilots talking to airports, and sometimes strange static that sounded like the universe breathing. Her mother thought it was a waste of time. "Why don't you go outside and meet people?" she said.

"I AM meeting people," Zara replied. "They're just very far away."

Her best friend Marco understood. He was the only person at school who thought the radio was cool. "One day you'll pick up something amazing," he always said. "I know it."

Marco was right. But neither of them knew that tonight — a cold Thursday in November — Zara would pick up a signal that would change everything.



Chapter 2: The Strange Signal

A sound from nowhere

It was 11:47 p.m. Zara was about to turn off the radio and go to bed. She was tired and had a maths test tomorrow. But then she heard it.

A series of short, sharp beeps. Not like anything she had heard before. They were fast and rhythmic, like a heartbeat: beep-beep-beeeeep, beep-beep-beeeeep. The same pattern, over and over again.

Zara sat up straight. She adjusted the frequency dial very slowly. The beeps got louder and clearer. They were coming from a frequency that should have been empty — a part of the radio spectrum where nothing ever transmitted.

She grabbed her notebook and started writing down the pattern. Short-short-long. Short-short-long. Pause. Then a different pattern: long-short-long-long. She filled three pages before the signal suddenly stopped. The silence was enormous.

Zara's hands were trembling. She looked at the notebook. The patterns looked like some kind of code. Not Morse code — she knew Morse code well. This was something different. Something she had never seen before.

She picked up her phone and texted Marco: "Come to my house before school tomorrow. I found something incredible."



Chapter 3: Cracking the Code

Zara and Marco try to decode the message

Marco arrived at 7 a.m. with two cups of hot chocolate and wide, excited eyes. Zara showed him the notebook.

"This isn't Morse code," Marco said, studying the patterns. "But it's definitely a code. Look — there are only two elements: short beeps and long beeps. Like binary — zeros and ones."

"Binary!" Zara said. "Of course! If short is zero and long is one, then each group of beeps is a binary number."

They spent the next hour converting the beeps into numbers. The first group was 01001000. In binary, that equals 72. Marco opened a chart on his phone. "In the ASCII system, the number 72 is the letter H."

Zara's eyes went wide. "It's a message! Written in binary code!"

They worked through the numbers, one by one. H... E... L... P...

"HELP," Marco whispered. "The message starts with HELP."

But the rest of the message was much longer. There were hundreds of number groups, and they needed more time — and more knowledge — to decode them all. They needed an expert.



Chapter 4: Professor Chen

An old astronomer helps

After school, Zara and Marco rode their bikes to the university on the other side of town. Zara knew there was a retired astronomy professor who still used the observatory on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. His name was Professor Chen.

Professor Chen was seventy years old, with white hair and kind eyes behind thick glasses. He was sitting in the observatory, drinking tea, when Zara and Marco knocked on the door.

"Professor Chen? My name is Zara. I picked up a strange radio signal last night. We think it's a coded message. Can you help us?"

The professor looked at Zara's notebook. His expression changed from polite interest to genuine surprise. He put down his tea.

"Where exactly did you find this signal?" he asked.

"Frequency 1420.405 megahertz," Zara said.

The professor went pale. "That's the hydrogen line. It's the frequency of hydrogen in space. Scientists monitor it for signals from other civilisations. Are you telling me you received a coded message on the hydrogen line?"

"Yes," Zara said. "And the first word is HELP."



Chapter 5: The Full Message

The decoded message surprises everyone

Professor Chen had a computer program that could convert binary to text instantly. They fed all of Zara's numbers into the program. It took three minutes. Then the full message appeared on the screen.

They all read it in silence:

HELP. THIS MESSAGE IS FROM THE YEAR 2074. WE ARE SENDING IT BACK THROUGH TIME USING A QUANTUM RADIO. THE EARTH IS IN DANGER. THE OCEANS ARE DYING. THE TEMPERATURE IS TOO HIGH. MILLIONS OF PEOPLE HAVE NO WATER. WE MADE MISTAKES. WE IGNORED THE WARNINGS. WE THOUGHT SOMEONE ELSE WOULD FIX IT. PLEASE DO NOT MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES. YOU STILL HAVE TIME. START NOW. PLANT TREES. CLEAN THE RIVERS. USE LESS ENERGY. LISTEN TO THE SCIENTISTS. THIS IS NOT A GAME. THIS IS YOUR FUTURE TALKING TO YOUR PRESENT. PLEASE LISTEN. SIGNAL ENDS IN 48 HOURS.

Nobody spoke for a long time.

"Is this real?" Marco asked quietly.

Professor Chen took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. "I don't know. Quantum communication across time is theoretical. It shouldn't be possible. But this signal... the frequency, the encoding... it's sophisticated. Whoever sent this is extremely advanced."

"It says the signal ends in 48 hours," Zara said. "What do we do?"



Chapter 6: Spread the Word

Zara decides to take action

Zara didn't sleep that night. She lay in bed thinking about the message. Was it real? Was it a trick? Did it matter?

By morning, she had made a decision. Real or not, the message was right. The oceans WERE in trouble. The temperature WAS rising. People WERE ignoring the warnings.

"We don't need to prove the signal is from the future," Zara told Marco at school. "The message is true NOW. Everything it says is already happening."

Marco nodded. "So what do we do?"

"We share it. We tell people. We start here, at our school."

That afternoon, Zara asked the headteacher for permission to show the message at the school assembly. She was nervous. She had never spoken in front of the whole school before. Public speaking terrified her.

But she thought about the message: "Please listen." Someone from the future — maybe — was begging them to pay attention. How could she stay quiet?

She stood on the stage, her voice shaking at first, and read the message aloud. The hall was completely silent. When she finished, she said, "I don't know if this message is from the future. But I know this: everything in it is true. And we can do something about it. Starting today."



Chapter 7: The Signal Fades

The signal disappears — but Zara's work begins

Exactly 48 hours after Zara first heard the signal, it stopped. One moment the beeps were there; the next, silence. Zara listened for hours, turning the dial slowly, searching. But the signal was gone.

Professor Chen ran tests on his equipment. "It's as if it was never there," he said, shaking his head. "No trace."

But the message had already done its work. Zara's speech at the school assembly had gone viral. A student recorded it on their phone and posted it online. Within a week, thousands of teenagers around the world were sharing it. #TheLastSignal became a global movement.

Schools organised river clean-ups. Students planted trees. Young people wrote letters to politicians demanding action on climate change. Zara and Marco started an environmental club at their school. Professor Chen gave talks at universities about the signal.

"Do you think it was really from the future?" Marco asked Zara one evening, as they sat in the attic, the old radio humming softly between them.

Zara smiled. "Maybe. Maybe not. But does it matter? The warning was real. The problems are real. And now people are actually listening."

She put on the headphones and turned the dial. The radio crackled with static — the sound of the universe breathing. Somewhere out there, across time or space, someone had sent a message. And Zara had listened.

The End

The future is not something that happens to us. It is something we create. — Zara's notebook

2 Key Vocabulary

These words from the story will help you improve your English.

Word	Type	Definition	Example
signal	<i>noun</i>	a sound, light, or radio wave that sends information	<i>Zara picked up a strange signal on the radio.</i>
attic	<i>noun</i>	the room at the very top of a house, under the roof	<i>Zara listened to the radio in the attic.</i>
adjusted	<i>verb</i>	changed something slightly to make it better	<i>She adjusted the dial to make the sound clearer.</i>
frequency	<i>noun</i>	how often a radio wave repeats; a radio channel number	<i>The signal was on an unusual frequency.</i>
trembling	<i>adjective</i>	shaking because of fear or excitement	<i>Zara's hands were trembling after hearing the signal.</i>
pattern	<i>noun</i>	a repeated design or sequence	<i>The beeps followed a clear pattern.</i>
decoded	<i>verb</i>	changed a secret message into normal language	<i>They decoded the binary message into English.</i>
observatory	<i>noun</i>	a building with a telescope for watching stars and space	<i>Professor Chen worked in the old observatory.</i>
genuine	<i>adjective</i>	real and honest; not fake	<i>The professor showed genuine surprise.</i>
theoretical	<i>adjective</i>	based on ideas, not yet proved in reality	<i>Time travel is still theoretical.</i>
sophisticated	<i>adjective</i>	advanced, complex, and cleverly designed	<i>The code was extremely sophisticated.</i>
assembly	<i>noun</i>	a meeting of all students and teachers in a school	<i>Zara spoke at the school assembly.</i>
terrified	<i>adjective</i>	extremely frightened	<i>Public speaking terrified Zara.</i>
demanding	<i>verb</i>	asking for something very strongly	<i>Students were demanding action on climate change.</i>
viral	<i>adjective</i>	spreading very quickly online to millions of people	<i>Zara's speech went viral on the internet.</i>

3 Fill in the Blanks

Choose the correct word to complete each sentence.

1. Zara picked up a mysterious _____ on her grandfather's old radio.
2. The radio was in the _____ at the top of her house.
3. She _____ the dial to hear the beeps more clearly.
4. The beeps followed a clear _____ that repeated again and again.
5. Zara's hands were _____ with excitement after hearing the message.
6. Zara and Marco _____ the binary numbers into English letters.
7. Professor Chen worked in the old _____ at the university.
8. Public speaking _____ Zara, but she did it anyway.
9. Students at the _____ listened carefully to Zara's speech.
10. The video of her speech went _____ and millions of people saw it.

Answer Key:

1. signal
2. attic
3. adjusted
4. pattern
5. trembling
6. decoded
7. observatory
8. terrified
9. assembly
10. viral

4 Comprehension Quiz

Choose the correct answer for each question.

Question 1. What did Zara like to do every evening?

- A. Watch videos online
- B. Listen to the radio in the attic
- C. Play video games
- D. Read books in her bedroom

Question 2. Who gave Zara the radio?

- A. Her father
- B. Professor Chen
- C. Her grandfather
- D. Marco

Question 3. What was special about the signal Zara found?

- A. It was very loud
- B. It was a coded message on an empty frequency
- C. It was music from another country
- D. It was a phone call

Question 4. How did Zara and Marco decode the message?

- A. They used a dictionary
- B. They converted binary numbers to letters
- C. They asked their teacher
- D. They used a translation app

Question 5. What is the hydrogen line?

- A. A type of water pipe
- B. A radio frequency that scientists monitor for space signals
- C. A line on a chemistry test
- D. A river near the university

Question 6. What did the decoded message say?

- A. It said hello from aliens
- B. It was a warning about Earth's future from the year 2074
- C. It was a joke from another radio station
- D. It asked for money

Question 7. How long did the signal last?

- A. 24 hours
- B. One week
- C. 48 hours
- D. Forever

Question 8. Why did Zara decide to speak at the school assembly?

- A. She wanted to be famous
- B. She felt the message's warning was important and true
- C. Her teacher made her
- D. She loved public speaking

Question 9. What happened after Zara's speech?

- A. Nothing changed
- B. The school closed
- C. It went viral and started a global movement
- D. People forgot about it

Question 10. What is the main lesson of the story?

- A. Radio technology is boring
- B. The future is something we create through our actions today
- C. Only scientists can save the planet
- D. Teenagers should not get involved in big issues

5 Quiz Answer Key

Q	Correct Answer
1	B. Listen to the radio in the attic
2	C. Her grandfather
3	B. It was a coded message on an empty frequency
4	B. They converted binary numbers to letters
5	B. A radio frequency that scientists monitor for space signals
6	B. It was a warning about Earth's future from the year 2074
7	C. 48 hours
8	B. She felt the message's warning was important and true
9	C. It went viral and started a global movement
10	B. The future is something we create through our actions today