

The family picnic at North Head overlooked the blue waters of the harbour. I could see all the boats coming in and out, past the big island of Rangitoto. This was why the big guns had been built here.

Leaving the pizza behind, I ran off to explore the tunnels. Underground the darkness seemed complete so I walked forward with a hand out in front. The walls were rough under my fingers but they gave me a sense of comfort. Up ahead, light streamed into a room, showing an impossibly large gun. This was the 'Disappearing Gun' that could fire a shell over two and a half kilometres and retract underground between being fired.



When I made it back to the picnic my mum told me that the gun was designed to defend against a feared Russian invasion in 1887. More importantly she also saved me a piece of cake!

**Questions (look in the text for highlight clues!)**

- 1) What was the main reason why the big guns had been built at North Head?
- 2) Why did you think the rough walls gave the boy a sense of comfort?
- 3) How far could a shell travel after being fired?
- 4) Why was the gun called a 'Disappearing Gun'?
  - a) It disappeared behind all the gunsmoke when fired.
  - b) It went underground between shots.
  - c) It was made by the Disappearing Company.
- 5) What two things do we know the boy ate at the picnic?
- 6) The guns at North Head were originally built to defend Auckland from which country?

*Responses to war - international*

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**New Words (look in the text for highlight clues!)**

What do you think the word **retract** means in the story? Read the sentence. Does it mean:

- a) To reload.
- b) To fire again.
- c) To draw back.

**Action Words (Verbs)**

For each sentence find the action word. This is usually an action, state or occurrence.

- 1) I walked through the tunnel entrance.
- 2) The gun can disappear below ground.
- 3) I had eaten three pieces of cake.

