

Year 5 Reading Comprehension

Excerpt from *The Highwayman* by Alfred Noyes (1906)



The wind was a torrent of darkness among the
gusty trees.

The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.

The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,

And the highwayman came riding—

Riding—riding—

The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,

A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin.

They fitted with never a wrinkle. His boots were up to the thigh.

And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,

His pistol butts a-twinkle,

His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard.

He tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred.

He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there

But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Bess, the landlord's daughter,

Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

Excerpt from *The Highwayman*
by Alfred Noyes (1906)

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked
Where Tim the ostler listened. His face was white and peaked.
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay,
But he loved the landlord's daughter,

The landlord's red-lipped daughter.

Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say—

“One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-night,
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light;
Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day,
Then look for me by moonlight,

Watch for me by moonlight,

I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way.”

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Questions

1

Find and write down 3 examples of metaphors in the text.

2

Why do you think the writer has repeated the word **riding** in the first verse?

3

Describe what the Highwayman looked like.

4

Draw lines to match the descriptions to the nouns.

Tim's face

black-eyed

Tim's hair

white and peaked

Bess's face

long black hair

Bess's hair

like mouldy hay

Excerpt from *The Highwayman*
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And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked
Where Tim the ostler listened...

5

a) What do you think an **ostler** is?

- A person who cleans houses
- A person who cooks for a family
- A person who takes care of the horses

b) Explain why you have chosen your answer for 5a.

6

What is the Highwayman planning to do?

“Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day...”

7

Who do you think the Highwayman is referring to when he says **they**?

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8

Put the events of the poem in order by writing a number next to each statement. The first one has been done for you.

	The Highwayman whistled a tune.
	The Highwayman told Bess to wait for him.
	Tim the ostler listened to the Highwayman.
1	The Highwayman rode up to the inn-door.
	The Highwayman tapped on the shutters.

9

Summarise the events of the poem in as few words as you can.

10

What do you think will happen next in the poem?

Answers

1

Find and write down 3 examples of metaphors in the text.

Any three of the following:

- The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees.
- The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.
- The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor.
- His eyes were hollows of madness.

2

Why do you think the writer has repeated the word **riding** in the first verse?

The writer has repeated the word riding to show that the Highwayman is travelling a long way.

3

Describe what the Highwayman looked like.

The Highwayman was wearing a French cocked-hat and had a bunch of lace at his chin. He had a dark red velvet coat and brown doe-skin breeches (short trousers). His clothes weren't wrinkled. His boots were up to his thigh and his pistol and rapier were twinkling.

4

Draw lines to match the descriptions to the nouns.

Tim's face	black-eyed
Tim's hair	white and peaked
Bess's face	long black hair
Bess's hair	like mouldy hay

Excerpt from *The Highwayman*
by Alfred Noyes (1906)

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked
Where Tim the ostler listened...

5

a) What do you think an **ostler** is?

- A person who cleans houses
- A person who cooks for a family
- A person who takes care of the horses

b) Explain why you have chosen your answer for 5a.

I think an ostler is a person who takes care of horses because Tim the ostler is in the stable where the horses would be kept.

6

What is the Highwayman planning to do?

The Highwayman is planning to rob someone and bring the gold back to Bess by morning.

“Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day...”

7

Who do you think the Highwayman is referring to when he says **they**?

Since he is planning to rob someone, I think that ‘they’ might refer to either the person who he is robbing or the police/the authorities.

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8

Put the events of the poem in order by writing a number next to each statement. The first one has been done for you.

3	The Highwayman whistled a tune.
5	The Highwayman told Bess to wait for him.
4	Tim the ostler listened to the Highwayman.
1	The Highwayman rode up to the inn-door.
2	The Highwayman tapped on the shutters.

9

Summarise the events of the poem in as few words as you can.

Child's own answer, such as:

The Highwayman rode a long way to the inn, where he tapped on the shutters and whistled for Bess, the landlord's daughter. Tim the ostler listened while the Highwayman told Bess he was going to bring her some gold in the morning.

10

What do you think will happen next in the poem?

Child's own answer, such as:

- **I think that Tim the ostler will try to stop the Highwayman from robbing.**
- **I think that the Highwayman will be caught by the police.**

We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. As far as possible, the contents of this resource are reflective of current professional research. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. The information given here is intended for general guidance purposes only and may not apply to your specific situation.



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