



A mysterious story poem

Read this poem aloud.

The Listeners

“Is there anybody there?” said the Traveller,
 Knocking on the moonlit door;
 And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
 Of the forest’s ferny floor:
 And a bird flew up out of the turret,
 Above the Traveller’s head:
 And he smote upon the door again a second time;
 “Is there anybody there?” he said.
 But no one descended to the Traveller;
 No head from the leaf-fringed sill
 Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
 Where he stood perplexed and still.
 But only a host of phantom listeners
 That dwelt in the lone house then
 Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
 To that voice from the world of men:
 Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
 That goes down to the empty hall,
 Harkening in an air stirred and shaken
 By the lonely Traveller’s call.



And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,
 While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
 ’Neath the starred and leafy sky;
 For he suddenly smote on the door, even
 Louder, and lifted his head: -
 “Tell them I came, and no one answered,
 That I kept my word,” he said.
 Never the least stir made the listeners,
 Though every word he spake
 Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
 From the one man left awake:
 Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
 And the sound of iron on stone,
 And how the silence surged softly backward,
 When the plunging hoofs were gone.



Walter de la Mare

This poem seems to be part of a longer mystery story. Why is it mysterious?

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Suitable for 7–8 years | Check the last page of this pack for the correct answers
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Understanding the poem

Answer these questions about the **poem** called *The Listeners*.

Where does this part of the story happen?

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When does it happen (day or night)? Which words tell you this?

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In your opinion, who or what are "The Listeners"?

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The Traveller speaks in this **poem**. What are his words?

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How does the first line of the **poem** make you feel?

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What do you notice about the sounds in the third and fourth lines,

And his horse in the silence champed the grasses

Of the forest's ferny floor

and what does this tell you about the horse's behaviour?



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Make a list of the **adjectives** that are used to describe the Traveller.

Remember: An **adjective** is a describing word.

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Understanding the poem

Answer these questions about the **poem** called *The Listeners*.

What words did the writer use to capture your interest?

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Find the meanings of the old-fashioned words in the **poem**. Then write down why you think the poet chose these words. **D**

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Read the **poem** again, looking at the lines and listening for the **rhymes**. How would you describe the **rhyming pattern**?

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Count the **syllables** in the first eight lines – can you find a **rhythmic pattern**? What is it?

Remember: A **syllable** is a word or part of a word that is one beat long.

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Writing practice

Choose a section from the **poem** and write it here.

Remember: Join your letters carefully and space your words evenly.

Begin new lines in the same places as in the printed **poem**.

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Answers:



A mysterious story poem

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And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

Walter de la Mare



This poem seems to be part of a longer mystery story. Why is it mysterious?

The poem seems mysterious because neither the Traveller nor the reader know why the people who live in the house are not there.
.....
.....

Listen to your child read the poem, helping where necessary with any difficult words. Encourage him or her to reread the poem, this time thinking about its meaning. Accept any answer that can be justified by some aspect of the poem.



Understanding the poem

Answer these questions about the poem called *The Listeners* on page 11.

Where does this part of the story happen?

This part of the story happens by a house in a forest.

When does it happen (day or night)? Which words tell you this?

It happens at night. The word moonlit, moonlight, moonbeams, dark, starred shadowiness and left awake tell me so.

In your opinion, who or what are "The Listeners"?

The Listeners are ghosts.
Answers may vary

The Traveller speaks in this poem. What are his words?

"Is there anybody there?"
"Tell them I came, and no one answered, that I kept my word"

How does the first line of the poem make you feel?

The first line makes me feel curious to know if anybody is there.
Answers may vary

What do you notice about the sounds in the third and fourth lines,

And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor
and what does this tell you about the horse's behaviour?
There are a lot of 's' and 'f' sounds in the third and fourth lines. The horse's eating made soft sounds in the quiet night.

Make a list of the adjectives that are used to describe the Traveller.

Remember: An adjective is a describing word.
grey (eyes), perplexed, still, lonely.



The questions on this page encourage your child to look at the words of the poem carefully and help him or her to develop comprehension skills. Some answers require a subjective response and are acceptable as long as they can be justified.



Understanding the poem

Answer these further questions about the poem on page 11.

What words did the writer use to capture your interest?

Answers may vary

Find the meanings of the old-fashioned words in the poem. Then write down why you think the poet chose these words. D'

smote - hit; dwellt - lived; hearkening - listening; heath - beneath; spake - spoke
ay - always. The poet chose these words because they give the poem a sense of something happening long ago.
Answers may vary

Read the poem again, looking at the lines and listening for the rhymes.

How would you describe the rhyming pattern?
The poem has a regular pattern of rhyming pairs. Every second line rhymes.
Answers may vary

Count the syllables in the first eight lines - can you find a rhythmic pattern?

What is it?
Remember: A syllable is a word or part of a word that is one beat long.
The poem follows a rhythmic pattern of a long line followed by a shorter line.

Writing practice

Choose a section from the poem and write it here.
Remember: Join your letters carefully and space your words evenly.
Begin new lines in the same places as in the printed poem.



ANSWERS MAY VARY