

Ll: can I use
more
adventurous
(new)
vocabulary?



“THE HIGHWAYMAN”

~ ALFRED NOYES ~

Last week you explored new vocabulary and you practised using it.

We looked at the **first two stanzas** of the poem, which **established the stormy, slightly spooky night-time setting** of when the story started, and **presented the Highwayman** as a Fashion Dude kind of guy.

This week, we will look at the next four stanzas which set out how the story starts. **There's a lot of reading here, people – but you are Year 6 and well up to it!**

Again, I suggest you read my notes out loud – they are as near as I can get to what I would say to you if you were in class and I was teaching you directly.

This is the third 'stanza' (verse 3) of the poem.

It tells of the arrival of The Highwayman at the Inn where his girlfriend, Bess, lives with her father. Again, I've colour-coded certain parts.

1. Over the **cobbles** he **clattered and clashed** in the dark inn-yard,
2. And he tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred;
3. He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there
4. But the landlord's **black-eyed** daughter,
5. Bess, the landlord's daughter,
6. Plaiting a dark red **love-knot** into her long black hair.

LINES 1 & 2

The highwayman comes into the dark courtyard of the inn, making a lot of noise ("**clattered and clashed**") on the paving stones ("**the cobbles**"). He taps on the shutters that cover the windows, but everything is locked up for the night, so he doesn't get any answer at first.

LINES 3, 4, 5 & 6

Trying again, he gives a whistle, and Bess appears at the window. Alfred Noyes would like us to know how attractive she is, so he spends some time telling us about her looks - he uses a metaphor to describe her eyes ("**black-eyed**") - *I do hope you realise that no-one has given her two black eyes!* - and mentions her long black hair. When the highwayman arrives, Bess is plaiting a "**love-knot**" into her hair. This love-knot would be some kind of ribbon, tied in a knot to symbolize her love for the highwayman. The knot is dark-red, a colour associated with love and passion, but also, of course, blood. You'll find out more about that later...

This is the fourth 'stanza' (verse 4) of the poem.

Now, all of a sudden, we turn away from the couple we just met, and we meet a third character. He is **crucial** to the way that the story turns out, although we don't hear about him again. I'm giving him two slides worth of importance, though! You must really focus upon this character, and try to get inside his head.

And dark in the 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-

Firstly, we read about hearing the creaking sound of a "**stable-wicket**", which is a door or gate in a stable. Someone unseen is secretly watching the lovers, hidden in the shadows. It's Tim, the "**ostler**" - the man employed to take care of the horses at an inn.

We get a good description of Tim, and we can understand a lot about him by reading between the lines:

He's a sorry-looking fellow, with a face that is "**white and peaked**". This indicates he is not very healthy or well-nourished - we always look white when we are ill, and the peaked nature of his face lets us know that his bones are poking out - I would guess this is because he doesn't have enough of the right kinds of things to eat. **Why do you think this might be? Why doesn't he eat well? Does he choose not to eat well, or does his lifestyle mean he can't eat well?**

"His eyes were hollows of madness" tells us he is insane – he doesn't think straight. The "mouldy hair" description tells us even more about his general unattractiveness

We realise that Tim is also in love with Bess, although it's hard to imagine he has much of a chance, given his job, his rotten looks and his madness.

Noyes tells us about Bess's "red lips" which helps to emphasize her beauty, and the contrast with poor Tim's white, unhealthy, ugly face.

And dark in the 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-

As Tim listens to the highwayman, Noyes tells us he is "**dumb as a dog**." In this case "**dumb**" just means silent, but the comparison to a dog is no accident. We're definitely supposed to notice the difference between the beautiful lovers and this pathetic, ugly servant

Do you feel for Tim, people? How must he feel? What might he do?

The fifth 'stanza' (verse 5) of the poem.

Here we read about what Tim the ostler overheard the Highwayman say to Bess. He hears the Highwayman tell Bess that he can't hang around tonight because he is going to be robbing on the highway, but he will be back as soon as he can, come what may.

The "prize" he's after is what he will steal.
The "yellow gold" is the stuff he will steal.
"before the morning light" means that he hopes to be back with her before morning.

The next line is really important: it's highlighted in orange.

It tells us that the Highwayman is warning Bess that he might be chased; that the law might "press him sharply" and "harry" him all day.

If that happens, he tells her to wait for night-time ("moonlight"). Then he promises he'll come to her, no matter what, even if "hell should bar the way"

This is really vital – he is telling her that nothing on earth will stop him coming back to her and keeping their date.

"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."

Think about what Tim might be feeling and thinking hearing this!

- could be imagining a way to get the Highwayman out of Bess's life?
- What do you think he might do?

The sixth 'stanza' (verse 6) of the poem.

This stanza describes the sweet goodbye! It's supposed to be very romantic, and lets us know very clearly how these two feel about each other. **AND** don't forget that Tim, desperately in love with Bess, is watching all this unseen from the dark shadows of the stable yard!

LINES 1, 2 & 3

The highwayman stands up in his saddle, and reaches up. Bess must be leaning out of a high window, just barely grabbing her hand. Then she lets her hair down from the window ("**the casement**"), a bit like Rapunzel. He blushes bright red, like hot iron ("**a brand**") when her sweet smelling hair tumbles over him.

LINES 1, 2 & 3

The highwayman kisses Bess's hair, and Noyes makes a big deal about its "**sweet black waves**." Notice that he also mentions **the moonlight** three times in three lines – it's a big part of the atmosphere of this poem. Then the highwayman grabs the reins of his horse and takes off to do some robbing. This ends the first scene in this poem

1. He rose upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach her hand,
2. But she loosened her hair i' **the casement**! His face burnt like **a brand**
3. As **the black cascade of perfume** came tumbling over his breast;
4. And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,
5. (**Oh, sweet black waves** in the moonlight!)
6. Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped away to the west.

"**the black cascade of perfume**" is a **metaphor**.

A **cascade** is a **waterfall**: to the Highwayman, Bess's hair is like a waterfall of perfume flooding over the front of his body.

The poem so far:

I

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.

II

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.

III

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

IV

And dark in the 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-

V

"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."

VI

He rose upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach her hand,
But she loosened her hair i' the casement! His face burnt like a brand
As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast;
And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,
(Oh, sweet black waves in the moonlight!)
Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped away to the west.

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Here are a couple of pictures I've pulled from the internet that might help us to visualise Tim.



Imagine him watching, feeling, thinking about what he sees.

1. How does he compare himself to the Highwayman?
2. What does he think and feel about him?
3. Do you think he likes him or hates him? Why?
4. What might Tim's next step be?



Your task is to write 2 or 3 paragraphs describing Tim:

1. say the kind of person you think he is
2. describe why you think he may be the way he is
3. what you think he may do and why

Words that will help!

They are in groups of synonyms:

- use at least **12** of these words in your written description

miserable	hatred	pathetic	revenge	hopeless	insane	downtrodden
unhappy	loathing	pitiful	vengeance	desperate	mad	broken
dejected	dislike	sad	payback	despairing	crazy	beaten
low	animosity	tragic	retaliation	downhearted	senseless	demoralised
wretched	disgust	helpless		despondent	irrational	defeated
dismal					peculiar	oppressed
grim						
sad						