

# The Highwayman



By Alfred Noyes (1880-1958)

Glossary	
<b>A French cocked-hat</b>	An old-fashioned three corner hat.
<b>blanched</b>	Went pale.
<b>casement</b>	Window.
<b>claret</b>	Dark red, like wine.
<b>harry me</b>	Hound me- chase me.
<b>jest</b>	Joke, something to laugh at.
<b>musket</b>	An old-fashioned rifle.
<b>ostler</b>	A person who looks after horses at an inn.
<b>peaked</b>	Having a sickly look.
<b>pistol butts</b>	The handles of the pistol.
<b>priming</b>	Charging muskets with gunpowder.
<b>rapier</b>	A long thin sword.
<b>stable-wicket</b>	Stable door.
<b>tawny</b>	Yellow, golden.

**Learning Intentions:** To understand the narrative poem *The Highwayman* by Alfred Noyes.

To identify the figurative language (imagery) contained in the poem

To explain my thinking clearly and fully.

### **How will you achieve this?**

By working as an individual and with your peers.

By using a dictionary, thesaurus and the writing aids

### **By the end of the unit you should be able to:**

Explain what the poem is about.

Identify, explain and apply figurative language and imagery: onomatopoeia, simile, metaphor, idiom, hyperbole, personification and alliteration.

Use the WHAT, HOW & WHY method to answer questions in depth.

### **How do I explain my answer fully in reading?**

Use **WHAT?**, **HOW?** and **WHY?** sentence starters to help you explain your thinking. For example, here is a 3 mark answer:

The writer uses the word 'peaked' because it helps the reader to picture Tim the Ostler as being ill and different to other men. This makes the reader feel sorry for him until they discover he betrays Bess, the girl he loves. 3 marks

<b>WHAT?</b> <i>Identify</i>	The writer creates ... by ... My overall impression is... The writer uses ... because...
<b>HOW?</b> <i>Analyse</i>	I get this impression from...because... For instance, when the writer describes...as... The word... makes the reader think about...
<b>WHY?</b> <i>Evaluate</i>	This implies that... This suggests that... This makes you realise that... This makes the reader feel...

# *The Highwayman*

**By Alfred Noyes (1880-1958)**

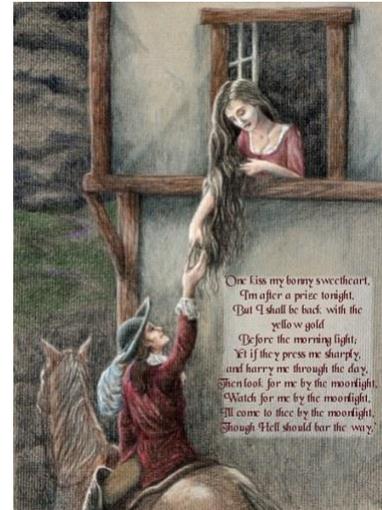
1. The wind was a torrent of darkness upon the gusty trees,  
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,  
The road was a ribbon of moonlight looping the purple moor,  
And the highwayman came riding--  
Riding--riding--  
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn door.
2. He'd a French cocked hat on his forehead, and a bunch of lace at his chin;  
He'd a coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of fine doe-skin.  
They fitted with never a wrinkle; his boots were up to his thigh!  
And he rode with a jewelled twinkle--  
His rapier hilt a-twinkle--  
His pistol butts a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.



3. 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
4. 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 black-eyed daughter;  
Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say:

5. "One kiss, my bonny sweetheart; I'm after a prize tonight,  
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."

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



7. He did not come in the dawning; he did not come at noon.  
And out of the tawny sunset, before the rise of the moon,  
When the road was a gypsy's ribbon over the purple moor,  
The redcoat troops came marching--  
Marching--marching--  
King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-door.

8. They said no word to the landlord; they drank his ale instead,  
But they gagged his daughter and bound her to the foot of her narrow bed.  
Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets by their side;  
There was Death at every window,  
And Hell at one dark window,  
For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that he would ride.

9. They had bound her up at attention, with many a sniggering jest!  
They had tied a rifle beside her, with the barrel beneath her breast!  
"Now keep good watch!" and they kissed her.  
She heard the dead man say,  
"Look for me by moonlight,  
Watch for me by moonlight,  
I'll come to thee by moonlight though Hell should bar the way."



10. She twisted her hands behind her, but all the knots held good!  
She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with sweat or blood!  
They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled by  
like years,  
Till, on the stroke of midnight,  
Cold on the stroke of midnight,  
The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was hers!
11. The tip of one finger touched it, she strove no more for the rest;  
Up, she stood up at attention, with the barrel beneath her breast.  
She would not risk their hearing, she would not strive again,  
For the road lay bare in the moonlight,  
Blank and bare in the moonlight,  
And the blood in her veins, in the moonlight, throbbed to her love's  
refrain.
12. Tlot tlot, tlot tlot! Had they heard it? The horse-hooves, ringing clear;  
Tlot tlot, tlot tlot, in the distance! Were they deaf that they did not hear?  
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,  
The highwayman came riding--  
Riding--riding--  
The redcoats looked to their priming! She stood up straight and still.
13. Tlot tlot, in the frosty silence! Tlot tlot, in the echoing night!  
Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!  
Her eyes grew wide for a moment, she drew one last deep breath,  
Then her finger moved in the moonlight--  
Her musket shattered the moonlight--  
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him--with her death.



14. He turned, he spurred to the West; he did not know who stood  
Bowed, with her head o'er the casement, drenched in her own red  
blood!

Not till the dawn did he hear it, and his face grew grey to hear  
How Bess, the landlord's daughter,  
The landlord's black-eyed daughter,  
Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in the darkness  
there.

15. Back, he spurred like a madman, shrieking a curse to the sky,  
With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier brandished  
high!  
Blood-red were his spurs in the golden noon, wine-red was his  
velvet coat  
When they shot him down in the highway,  
Down like a dog in the highway,  
And he lay in his blood in the highway, with the bunch of lace at his  
throat.

16. *And still on a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the  
trees,  
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon  
cloudy seas,  
When the road is a gypsy's ribbon looping the  
purple moor,  
The highwayman comes riding--  
Riding--riding--  
The highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-  
door.*



*17. Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard,  
He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred,  
He whistles 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.*

**Alfred Noyes**

## The Highwayman

The Highwayman by Alfred Noyes is written in true ballad form and is full of action, drama and passion.

Ballads have their roots from storytelling around a fire (believe it or not people haven't always had televisions!) and that many of the early ballads were never written down. Audiences included all members of the family and local community, so ballads were made simple. By being simple they were easy to understand and therefore easy to remember. These ballads could then be told over and over again.



Task 1: Read through the poem and then answer the questions below; these will help you to understand the poem. Make brief notes for each answer: we will discuss these questions and answers in class together.

1. What does the Highwayman look like?
2. Why has the Highwayman rode to the inn?
3. What does Bess the landlord's daughter feel about him?
4. What does Tim feel about the Highwayman?
5. "Yet if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day, then look for me by moonlight....." What do you think this line means? (Verse 5)

6. Verse 7 describes the arrival of King George's soldiers. How do you think they know the Highwayman was coming?
  
7. Why did the soldiers tie Bess to the bed by the window?
  
8. What does Bess do to stop the Highwayman from coming to the inn?
  
9. How does the Highwayman respond to the news about Bess?
  
10. Does the poem have a happy or sad ending? Explain in your own words.
  
11. Find 3 words or phrases in the poem that show the story is from a long time ago. Why does the writer use these words? What effect do they have?

