

TEXT	'WINDY NIGHTS' and 'THE LAND OF NOD' from <i>A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES</i> (1885)
AUTHOR	Robert Louis Stevenson
THEMES	Life experiences (unit 13), life changes (unit 20)
VOCABULARY	Night, wind, dreams, noises
WRITING	Students describe a place in a dream.
SPEAKING	Students perform a poem.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson (1850–1894) was a Scottish novelist, poet, essayist, musician and travel writer. Although most famous for novels such as *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Treasure Island*, the poetry he wrote for young readers is skillfully executed and refreshingly free of the kind of moralising, pedantic verse so typical of the period. He is very modern in the way he works with sound and rhythm in his poems, allowing images and atmosphere to combine and form vivid pictures.

WARMER

Find 'wind' and 'night' sound effects online. Tell the students to close their eyes and, as they listen, imagine the scene. Working in pairs or small groups, students tell each other what they saw.

ABOUT YOU

Students discuss the questions and talk about their ideas. Most of the questions will be developed in later activities.

Use the notes to introduce the poems and check that students understand the expression: *land of nod*.

1 It is important to read the poems out loud. It's a good idea to practise this in advance and think about the words you want to emphasise. You might want to have students just listen the first time you read and then read the poems the second time you read. Ask students to talk to each other about which one they liked most. You could take a class vote. After the Speaking activity, it could be interesting to take the vote again and see if the preference of the class has changed.

2 Possible answers

- 1 The man is probably the wind. (Note: this is a more complicated question than it might appear as it relies on our understanding of metaphor and personification. The connection is implicit rather than explicit. You may want to discuss very generally the way we give natural things human characteristics – the happy sun, the rain crying, the angry wind, etc.)
- 2 Because it sounds like a horse galloping (You may need to read the poem another time to elicit this answer.)
- 3 It has streams, mountains, strange things to see and it is frightening.
- 4 It was a dream and we often don't remember things from our dreams.

VOCABULARY

3

Answers

- 1 galloping 2 stream 3 curious 4 out

4

Answers

- 1 curious 2 frightened 3 abroad 4 whenever

WRITING

5 Explain that the students should use the questions to imagine their dream place and emphasise that this can be a real place or imaginary. Elicit/remind students that dreams don't have to make sense and that all kinds of strange things can happen in dreams. It could be a good idea to set a word limit of about 80 words. An additional idea would be to get students to illustrate their descriptions.

SPEAKING

6 For this activity explain the idea of 'poems read with several voices'. This is a performance activity in which students decide who (and how many people) are going to read each line. For example, two students might read line 1, the whole group line 2, one student line 3, etc. Or individual words can be read by more than one person. The activity encourages students to think about important words and their sounds, effectively working on meaning and interpretation. Allocate half the groups the first poem to work on and the other half the second poem.

MIXED ABILITY

This is an ideal activity to give stronger students an organising role – they need to check everyone knows when to read (and when not to). Weaker students can enjoy the reading part, even if they are not sure about the meaning or vocabulary, so everyone participates according to their ability.