

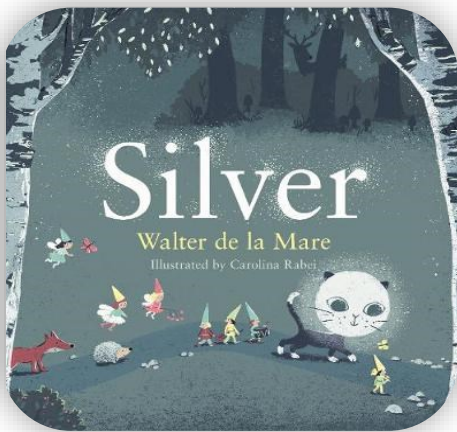
Lockdown Tales Activities



'Silver', 'The Listeners', 'Hide and Seek', and 'Dream-Song'

By Walter de la Mare

Read for Wonderful Beast's Lockdown Tales by Petra Markham, with original music by Sylvia Hallett.



These poems are all interested in nature, and the moon. Let's have a look at the poem '**Silver**' and explore the magical word picture Walter de la Mare painted for us.

Poems are not just about the words that we see on the page, but about the **shapes** and **sounds** those words make, and the ways they can make us **feel**, or **think**.

Are there some words that always make you think of others? When you hear the word 'silver', what do you think of?

Silver

Slowly, silently, now the moon
Walks the night in her **silver** shoon;*
This way, and that, she peers, and sees
Silver fruit upon **silver** trees;
One by one the casements* catch
Her beams beneath the **silvery** thatch;
Couched in his kennel, like a log,
With paws of **silver** sleeps the dog;
From their shadowy cote the white breasts peep
Of doves in **silver**-feathered sleep.
A harvest mouse goes scampering by,
With **silver** claws, and **silver** eye;
And moveless fish in the water gleam,
By **silver** reeds in a **silver** stream.

shoon: an old fashioned British dialect word for 'shoes'

casements: another word for 'windows'

Why do you think Walter de la Mare chose the word 'shoon' instead of 'shoes'?

How many words can you count that begin or end with the letter 's' in this poem?

*What do you think the poet was trying to conjure with his **repetition** of this sound?*

*Is it a **soft** sound, or a **hard** sound? What does it make you **think** of? What about the repetition of the word '**silver**'?*

*What do you think are the **most important bits** of the poem? What do these bits do to help us imagine the scene?*

*Can you find any words that describe **sounds**, or is the scene as **silent** as the moon?*

*It's difficult to say 's' sounds **loudly**. Try it! Why do you think the poet might have chosen to use this sound so much here?*

*How might **other sorts of sounds** influence how you would read a poem?*

Send us videos and pictures of your activities! Use the hashtag **#LockdownTales**
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Activity: write a Haiku

A **haiku** is traditionally a Japanese poem consisting of **three short lines** that **do not rhyme**. Haikus are often about nature. Every word should count, painting a vivid picture of a moment in time. The first line is **always the subject** of the poem. Here is a haiku about the moon:

Autumn moonlight —
a worm digs silently
into the chestnut.

...and another about a pond:

An old silent pond
A frog jumps into the pond —
Splash! Silence again.

(both by Matsuo Bashō, a poet considered the master of the haiku)

A haiku usually has **seventeen** syllables, or '**beats**', and when printed in English is usually **three lines**, with **beats counting 5** (first line), **7** (second line), **5** (third line).

But you don't have to be too strict about your haiku.

Here is one by American writer, Jack Kerouac, which goes 7,5,7:

Early morning gentle rain, (7)
two big bumblebees (5)
Humming at their work (7)

*Can you **count the beats** in this haiku by Richard Wright?*

He discovered haikus just eighteen months before he died, in which time he wrote over 4,000 of them.

From across the lake,
Past the black winter trees,
Faint sounds of a flute.

Now it's **your turn**. Your haiku can be about the moon or something else that springs to mind... like the rain, or food, or a dream. What subject do you think suits three lines?

Think about **how you can use sounds** and particular **kinds of words**, like Walter de la Mare did. Choose **carefully** and you will be able to say much more than you think in just three lines.

Send your haikus to info@wonderfulbeast.co.uk and we'll put them on our website!

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