

My Shadow

By Robert Louis Stevenson

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow—
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball,
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

Questions

02

- 1 How many stanzas are there in this poem?
-

- 2 Who is 'he' in the poem? (tick)

- ☐ the poet
- ☐ the child
- ☐ the child's twin
- ☐ the shadow

- 3 What is the name of the language device used to give human characteristics to something that isn't human? (tick)

- ☐ simile
- ☐ metaphor
- ☐ personification
- ☐ alliteration

- 4 Which line shows that the poet does not think his shadow is very helpful to him? (tick)

- ☐ I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
- ☐ And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
- ☐ He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
- ☐ And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

- 5 In the second verse, how is the shadow different to 'proper children'? (tick)

- ☐ The shadow grows taller and shorter.
- ☐ The shadow grows very slowly.
- ☐ The shadow is flat.
- ☐ The shadow is funny.

- 6 'He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,'

What does this line mean? (tick)

- ☐ The shadow doesn't want to play with children.
- ☐ The shadow is not allowed to play with children.
- ☐ The shadow doesn't know how children should play.
- ☐ The shadow loves to play with children.

- 7 What is a coward? (tick)

- ☐ A person who is not brave.
- ☐ A person who sticks to someone.
- ☐ A person who behaves like a cow.
- ☐ A person who is very confident.

- 8 Which word is the name given to the person that has looked after the poet?

- 9 At the end of the poem, why was the shadow not with the poet? (tick)

- ☐ The shadow was lazy.
- ☐ The poet was out before the sun was up.
- ☐ The shadow does not like buttercups.
- ☐ The shadow was an arrant sleepy head.

- 10 'But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,'

The word 'arrant' is not a very common word today.

What does it mean? (tick)

- ☐ peaceful
- ☐ quiet
- ☐ noisy
- ☐ absolute

Score:

Answers

A

1 How many stanzas are there in this poem?

4

2 Who is 'he' in the poem?

☒ the shadow

3 What is the name of the language device used to give human characteristics to something that isn't human?

☒ personification

4 Which line shows that the poet does not think his shadow is very helpful to him?

☒ And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.

5 In the second verse, how is the shadow different to 'proper children'?

☒ The shadow grows taller and shorter.

6 'He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,'

☒ The shadow doesn't know how children should play.

What does this line mean?

7 What is a coward?

☒ A person who is not brave.

8 Which word is the name given to the person that has looked after the poet?

Nursie

9 At the end of the poem, why was the shadow not with the poet?

☒ The poet was out before the sun was up.

10 'But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,'

☒ absolute

The word 'arrant' is not a very common word today.

What does it mean? (tick)