

When I set out for Lyonesse

As a young apprentice architect, British poet and novelist Thomas Hardy once visited a parish to supervise the restoration of a church. On his return from the parish, people noticed two things about him — a new glow in his eyes and a crumpled piece of paper sticking out of his coat pocket. That paper, it is recorded in one of his biographies, contained the draft of a poem. You are going to read that very poem inspired by a visit to a place which the poet calls Lyonesse.

When I set out for Lyonesse
A hundred miles away,
The rime was on the spray;
And starlight lit my lonesomeness
When I set out for Lyonesse
A hundred miles away.

What would bechance at Lyonesse
While I should sojourn there,
No prophet durst declare;
Nor did the wisest wizard guess
What would bechance at Lyonesse
While I should sojourn there.

When I returned from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes,
All marked with mute surmise
My radiance rare and fathomless,
When I returned from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes.

THOMAS HARDY

glossary

Lyonnesse: (in Arthurian legend) the mythical birthplace of Sir Tristram, in England, believed to have been submerged by the sea; here an imaginary place.

rime: frost

the spray: leaves and branches of trees; foliage

durst: (poetic word for) dared

bechance: happen/chance to happen

sojourn: stay

radiance: glow

fathomless: so deep that the depth can't be measured

working with the poem

1. In the first stanza, find words that show
 - (i) that it was very cold.
 - (ii) that it was late evening.
 - (iii) that the traveller was alone.
2. (i) Something happened at Lyonnesse. It was
 - (a) improbable.
 - (b) impossible.
 - (c) unforeseeable.
 - (ii) Pick out two lines from stanza 2 to justify your answer.
3. (i) Read the line (stanza 3) that implies the following.
'Everyone noticed something, and they made guesses, but didn't speak a word'.
 - (ii) Now read the line that refers to what they noticed,

Springtime

Question: Why is it unsafe to walk about in spring?

Answer: Because the grass has blades, the flowers have pistils and the trees are shooting.