

'The Highwayman' by Alfred Noyes
A narrative ballad written in 1906 and retold as a
story by Dr Fawell's Year 6 writing group.

'The Highwayman' retold by Morola, Year 6

Deep in the night's emptiness, the moon sailed the misty, murky sea of clouds like a celestial wanderer. Using its nocturnal eye, it was anticipating the nefarious tragedy that was soon to unfold. The wind was a banshee, screaming through the night, injuring all who it touched. Below, the winding trees were like overhanging limbs across the meandering cobbles. This road had many stories to tell; stories of evil deeds and immoral, ungodly doings. His name whispered through the town. He was feared by all. This path was the Highwayman's. He had darkness in his eyes and his heart was an ignoble void. But Bess, the landlord's daughter, loved him; the poetry of their romance etched in the stars. But fate had already been decided- their future was to be denied.

The Highwayman, adorned in claret velvet, that draped smartly across his shoulders, was exceptionally well-dressed. Clustered at his throat was a bunch of white lace and had breeches of brown, that smothered his legs. Perched on his head was a jet-black, French-Cocked hat that glistened in the moonlight. He wore flawlessly fitting thigh-high boots on his feet. But don't be fooled by his class and deceptive charm for all he loves is money. By his side, his jewelled rapier and pistol twinkled in the moonlight.

As midnight loomed, the egregious felon rode up to his second home; the old inn-yard. Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed, swiftly riding to his beloved Bess the landlord's daughter. Their love was unable to break. However, she was too consumed by their cherished love to recognise his danger. He would kill the innocent in a blink. Locals all around the town disapproved of their love due to their differences. How could their love possibly be true? The Highwayman tapped his whip at the shutters but nobody came; everything was barred. But in a second attempt, he whistled a soft melody to the casement and suddenly, the narrow aperture opened and out came Bess, the landlord's daughter. In all her charming elegance, she was tying a deep-red, love knot into her long, black cascading tresses. But deep in the dark stable wicket was Tim the ostler compulsively waiting and listening like a blood-thirsty tiger stalking its prey. He was obsessed. Obsessed with Bess. So obsessed that he would do anything to attain her love. Day and night all he would think about was her.

"One kiss my dear sweetheart. I'm going to chase a prize tonight, but I shall be back with the treasures before dawn.", announced the Highwayman, "However, if they push me hard and pester me during the day, then look for me by moonlight. Even if hell blocks my path, I'll find you by moonlight." he declared.

"Yes love." Bess replied. "But be cautious: you know the Red Coats are out searching for you."

"I know my lovely but I am sure that I will be fine. I'm on my way now."

"Ok love. I'll be waiting for you." Bess sighed.

Muttering under his breath, Tim the ostler said, "Not on my watch."

He thought that if he could just report the Highwayman to the Red Coats- and eliminate the Highwayman- he would finally get the recognition he so desperately wanted.

The Highwayman did not appear in the dawning. He did not arrive at noon. Minutes crawled by like hours- even days. She couldn't wait; she was impatient; her faith was waning. Until... there was a loud thud at the old inn door.

"We have been informed that there is a highwayman present."

A Red Coat regiment appeared at the door. They didn't say anything to the landlord. Instead, they drank his ale and marched upstairs. Bess' breathing quickened. She knew that they were there for *him*. Whilst drunk, they seized Bess and bound her up, next to her bed.

"Tie her up by the window!" shouted one drunken soldier.

"Is positioned a musket under her breast." answered another, "She can't move at all!"

Every soldier laughed and took position. They were situated so that there were two men at every window. Patiently, they waited for the 'tlot tlot' of the horse hooves for that was their signal to shoot. Bess wrapped her hand around herself, but they remained securely knotted. She writhed until her hands were drenched in blood. In the dark she strained and stretched; the hours passed like years.

Suddenly they heard it. The horse hooves ringing clear- tlot tlot. Tlot tlot. He was here! But Bess couldn't let him die. She had to warn him. With one tiny miniscule movement, she discovered that she could reach the trigger of the musket. Her heartbeat was pounding and her breathing accelerated. Even though her face was stone, her mind was full of motion. Hesitant, she took one last breath and pulled the trigger. She was dead. A sacrifice to save her love.

He heard the gunshot. He turned around- but too late. But with another thunderous roar, it made its way through to their target. Shrieking a curse to the sky, the Highwayman spurred like a madman and fell to the cobbles, straining the floor a dark crimson, like Bess' dark red love knot. He was dead too.

They also say that during a winter's night, when the wind is a banshee screaming through the night and the moon is a ghostly celestial wanderer overlooking the moor below, a highwayman comes riding, riding and riding up to the old inn door to meet his beautiful love, that is plaiting a dark red love knot in her long black hair. Even in death, their love still endured. The figures meet in an embrace. They are together again.

'The Highwayman' retold by Mia, Year 6

It was a cold, eerie night. You could hear the wind screaming like a banshee through the ghostly, moonlit sky. The moon was high in the ebony ink, the gusty trees were standing tall over the dull moor. Surrounding the moon, diminutive glistening stars sparkled like a seething caldron, occasionally hidden by passing clouds, which were being swept along by blustery winds. The road was a meandering ribbon. Solitary. Barren. Wild. Along this desolate stretch of road, a cocked figure lurked in the shadows, his presence a whisper of danger in the stillness. The Highwayman.

The Highwayman came riding—riding—riding. The Highwayman's horse could be heard on the cobbled roads from a mile away. As his trusted steed galloped tirelessly to reach their destination, his claret-red coat billowed and flew behind him. He wore a french cocked-hat on his distinguished head. Clustered at his throat, there was a flash of exquisite white lace furthermore his breeches were made of a soft doe-skin ; he yielded a sharp rapier on his leather hilt. High fashionable boots were also worn above the knee. Do not be fooled by this effulgent gentleman for he had murder in his eyes. The Highwayman.

In the heart of the night, where silence held its breath and the world seemed to stand still, the Highwayman would appear at the inn, his presence announced by the thundering hooves of his mount. Bess. He rode past the old-inn door and to the back of the building ; he did not arrive unnoticed. Tim, the ostler, was listening, his eyes hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay and his skin pale like a ghost. Bess, the landlord's daughter, was plaiting a dark, red love knot into her long, black hair. Her eyes shone like diamonds in the night sky and she blew the Highwayman a kiss as he arrived. Tim, the ostler, listened and he heard the Highwayman say, "One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-night, 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, look for me by moonlight, I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way." As he turned away in the moonlit sky to the west, Tim knew his jealousy had encompassed him and he knew what he would do. Oblivious to his fate, the Highwayman threw up dust from his steed and hurtled across the moors. The Highwayman.

As the curtain of night fell deeper and deeper, King George's men arrived at the Inn. Tim, the ostler, was with them and sent them to immediately put their plan into action. They charged in like mad men ; they drank the landlord's ale ; they murdered and tortured innocent lives. Bess heard her father scream for help and she knew what was coming. She was sitting at her window casement, watching out for her love. But suddenly, the red-coated soldiers barged in and gagged her. They tied her to a wooden stand and placed her up against the window as bait. The drunk red-coats laughed as they kept her at gunpoint. He was oblivious to this plan for his demise. The Highwayman.

She wriggled and she bled. There was congealed blood and sweat on her hand due to her straining and stirring to reach the trigger. After what had seemed like an eternity, her finger managed to touch its target. Her heart pounded and tears smarted into her eyes, but she knew

she had to warn her love of the danger ahead. She had no choice. She took her one last breath and she pulled the trigger. Blood. Sweat. Danger. Bess was dead. Was he warned? The Highwayman?

He heard the gunshot ; he tried to turn but it was too late. Another shot was let out, he was shot down like a dog, his body slumped off his horse. The yellow gold he carried, laid across the road alongside him. A bunch of red lace at his throat, his rapier snapped and broke : he fell. There was silence. All that could be heard was the horse in the distance riding away. The Highwayman.

And still of a winter's night when the wind is a banshee, screaming through the rough trees and the moon is a ghostly eye watching the road below, a highwayman (dressed in a claret-red coat with sparkly, brass buttons) comes riding—riding—riding up to an old inn-yard to meet a beautiful woman with long, black hair. He whistled a tune and who was there? Bess the landlord's daughter. Finally, they were reunited again...

The Highwayman Retold By Vismitha, Year 6

The wind was a whirlpool, swirling in the air as it ruptured through the night. It howled and wailed, making its way down the rusty-coloured route. Like a shadowy pearl the abandoned moon drifted in the sky, illuminating the wave of road beneath it. The cobbled path clattered as it meandered through the lifeless terrain over the mauve moors, into the darkness of the night. This path was well known. This path had many ales to be told. This path was the Highwayman's.

The Highwayman was besuited in a red velvet coat down to his thighs, coated with bas buttons. Perched on his head was a French, cocked hat with a bunch of lace at his chin and breeches of brown doeskin were worn underneath his knee-high, jet black boots. But do not be fooled by his effulgent clothes as he is evil deep down as his murderous and his egregious pistol which he carries wherever he goes.

The highwayman came riding, riding, riding up to the old inn-door, where the love of his life resided. As he gently tapped on the dilapidated shutter, a familiar tune was whistled and slowly the shutters were unlatched to reveal Bess the landlord's daughter. Delightful dark-haired Bess, who was plaiting a dark-red love knot into her long black hair. Love and admiration radiated through her eyes as the Highwayman had come.

"My love, I'm after a prize tonight!" I'll be back home with yellow gold by morning!"

"Oh dear one be careful. You know that King George's men are searching for you tonight on the moor," Bess replied.

"Don't worry about me! If they harry me or press me sharply, I'll just come back later the next day," said the highwayman, chuckling, "they won't catch me."

While the highwayman talked to Bess, deep in the shadows, he listened. Tim the ostler listened. Burning with envy, his eyes hollowed with madness as he observed the Highwayman. "George's men will hear about this!" he beseeched to bequeath this news for he was not a complicit observer.

As the curtain of night grew darker and darker, the sound of hives were heard and the redcoats descended upon the inn. Their rifles beamed in the moonlight, warning Bess that they had made their appearance. Bess tried to alert the highwayman, though her voice was a desperate plea in the darkness. But it was too late; a net was thrown around Bess and she was captured.

With rope and a musket under her breast, Bess stood silent and waited for the tlot tlot of the Highwayman. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. Tlot Tlot! Tlot Tlot! Her love was arriving. Bess had to warn him! With only a stifling blanket of air between her and the men, she had room for only one slight small movement: her finger could reach the trigger of the musket. Her eyes grew wide for a moment, she drew one final deep breath, then her finger moved in the moonlight, her musket

moved in the moonlight, her musket moved in the moonlight, she warned him in the moonlight - with her death!

He heard the gunshot. He turned but it was too late. Another shot spoke from the musket and made its way through the moonlight to execute its target. Bang! As the echoes of the gunshot faded into the night, the highwayman fell, his lifeblood staining the ground like crimson petals scattered upon the earth. King George's men had succeeded but they were both... gone.

And still on a winter's night, when the wind is a whirlpool and the moon is a shadowy pearl, a highwayman comes riding up to an old, inn-door to meet a girl with long black hair. Whilst the fog oozes from the ground; it mingles with the wispy, ethereal figures as it rises. The figures meet in an embrace. They are together again.