

In Plain English

Part A

Draw lines to match up the stanzas to the descriptions opposite.

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees.
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding-

Riding-riding-

The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at
his chin,
A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin.
They fitted with never a wrinkle. His boots were up to the thigh.
And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,
His pistol butts a-twinkle,
His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard.
He tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked
and barred.
He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting
there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked
Where Tim the ostler listened. His face was white and peaked.
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay,
But he loved the landlord's daughter,
The landlord's red-lipped daughter.
Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber 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,
Watch for me by moonlight,
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way.'

He rose upright in the stirrups. He scarce could reach her hand,
But she loosened her hair in the casement. His face burnt like
a brand
As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast;
And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,
(O, sweet black waves in the moonlight!)
Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped away
to the west.

The highwayman rides into
the inn-yard. He knocks on
the window but nobody
answers so he whistles a
tune and Bess comes to the
window. Bess is plaiting a
love-knot in her hair.

The scene is set. It is night
time and the moon is
reflecting off the road over
the moor. It is a windy night
when the highwayman rides
over the road towards the
inn.

The highwayman asks Bess
for a kiss. He tells Bess her
that he is going out to make
some money but that he will
be back tomorrow with some
gold. He tells Bess that if he
is being chased in the day he
will come back at night-time
instead.

The highwayman's clothes
are described. He is well-
presented and appears to
twinkle in the moonlight as
he rides along.

The highwayman has to
stand up in the stirrups to
just about reach Bess's hand.
She lets her hair fall down
towards him so he can smell
the perfume on it. He then
gallops away on his horse.

A wild-looking man called
Tim, who looks after the
horses, is listening to the
conversation between Bess
and the highwayman. He is
hiding so they will not see
him. Tim also loves Bess.

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Part B

Choose one of the stanzas of the poem and write it out in modern-day English to describe exactly what is happening.

e.g. 'The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,' could be written:

The wind rushed unseen through the trees, causing them to swish and sway violently.

Challenge Task

Write an additional stanza for Part 1 describing Tim's reaction to Bess and the highwayman's meeting. Use the details about Tim from stanza 4 to help you.



In Plain English Answers

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