

The Pied Piper of Hamelin

Suggested timing: 45 minutes

The Pied Piper has ended the rat problem in the town of Hamelin, luring the animals into the river with the sound of his magic pipe. However, the Mayor has refused to pay him the agreed fee, despite the Piper's warning: that 'folks who put me in a passion may find me pipe to another fashion' ...

- Once more he stept into the street
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
5 Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
10 Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering,
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
15 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.
- The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
20 Unable to move a step or cry,
To the children merrily skipping by –
And could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack
25 And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
However he turned from South to West
30 And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,

And after him the children pressed;
Great was the joy in every breast.
"He never can cross that mighty top!
He's forced to let the piping drop
35 And we shall see our children stop!
When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
40 And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame
45 His sadness, he was used to say,
"It's dull in our town since my playmates left!
I can't forget that I'm bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me."

From *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* by Robert Browning

1. The poet uses some old-fashioned language, as well as some difficult words which exist in modern English.

What do the following words mean?

- (a) **stept** (line 1) (1)
- (b) **ere** (line 4) (1)
- (c) **justling** (line 8) (1)
- (d) **dumb** (line 18) (1)
- (e) **portal** (line 37) (1)
- (f) **bereft** (line 47) (1)

2. *'And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running' (lines 11-12).*

**(a) The poet uses a particular technique to compare the children to chickens.
What is the one-word name for this technique? (1)**

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**(b) Why do you think Browning compares the children to chickens? Explain
your answer fully. (3)**

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3. **(a) Why is the Mayor described as being 'on the rack' (line 24)? (3)**

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(b) Explain why there is 'joy in every breast' (line 32). (3)

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4. The line 'I can't forget that I'm bereft' has a steady, quite heavy rhythm.

How would you describe the rhythm of the following lines? You don't need to write in full sentences.

- (a) 'Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane' (line 3) (2)

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- (b) 'Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling' (line 8) (2)

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5. (a) Explain why one child is left behind. (2)

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- (b) The left-behind child gives two reasons for being sad. Using your own words, explain these reasons clearly. (4)

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6. If you could be any character in this story, which would you choose to be? Explain your reasons, giving evidence from the passage to support your choice. (6)

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TOTAL 32 MARKS

Solutions

1. The poet uses some old-fashioned language, as well as some difficult words which exist in modern English.

What do the following words mean?

(a) **stept (line 1)** stepped (1)

(b) **ere (line 4)** before (1)

'Ere' (b) is tricky, because 'before', 'while' or 'after' might all fit. You have to know the word already – or just be lucky! I encourage logical thinking in comprehension and verbal reasoning tests, but sometimes you just have to know a particular word.

If you wrote 'while' or 'after', you might reasonably expect 0.5 marks for having made a sensible guess.

(c) **justling (line 8)** jostling or pushing and shoving (1)

You can explain the meaning of a word either with another (modern) word, or using several words.

(However, be wary of questions which ask for 'a word' which has the same meaning. In that case, you could not give the second answer above.)

(d) **dumb (line 18)** silent (1)

'Dumb' only means 'stupid' in the playground!

(e) **portal (line 37)** entrance (1)

Any similar idea, such as 'doorway', should also be fine.

(f) **bereft (line 47)** left without or deprived (1)

A similar, but incorrect answer such as 'removed' might be worth 0.5 marks.

Marking: See notes above. 1 mark each. Half marks may be given for close but incorrect answers. **[6 × 1 marks]**

2. 'And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running' (lines 11-12).

(a) The poet uses a particular technique to compare the children to chickens.
What is the one-word name for this technique? (1)

simile

A **simile** is when a writer says that something is like another thing, in order to help us imagine it more clearly. A **metaphor** is similar, but without a word such as 'like' or 'as'.

Simile: *like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering, out came the children running*

Metaphor: *the children ran out, a flock of chickens in pursuit of scattering barley*

Line 11 also contains **alliteration** ('fowls in a farm'), but this is **not** used 'to compare the children to chickens': it is just something which happens *during* the comparison.

Marking: Correct answer only.

[1 mark]

(b) Why do you think Browning compares the children to chickens? Explain your answer fully. (3)

The children rush out together as keenly as greedy chickens, pushing and shoving. The comparison to chickens also suggests that they act thoughtlessly – out of pure instinct.

The two points in the example are the most likely ones. You probably need both for 3 marks, but the second point (that they act thoughtlessly) is especially important.

You need to include enough extra detail/explanation for a third mark.

Marking: Two valid, different points, with enough extra detail for a third mark (or three valid points). Must include 'thoughtlessness' or similar for full marks. [3 marks]

3. (a) Why is the Mayor described as being 'on the rack' (line 24)? (3)

He is scared that the children will drown in the 'waters' of the river, like the rats before. His fear is like being tortured 'on the rack'. A rack also holds you in one place, and he is as still as a 'block of wood'.

To get full marks, you have to notice that this is a reference to torture, as well as explaining **how** the mayor is apparently being tortured and **why**.

The example includes more points than would be needed for three marks. For instance, the last sentence is probably unnecessary for the marks ... but it is always wise to be safe, time permitting.

Marking: Some reference to torture or similar for 1 mark. Other 2 marks for clear explanation based on the passage (quotation not essential), giving an idea of how and why the torture is being experienced. **[3 marks]**

(b) Explain why there is 'joy in every breast' (line 32). (3)

The children have not drowned, and the mountain is too steep and tall ('mighty') for the Piper to cross: he will have to stop walking off with the children.

You need a reference to both these things for three marks: line 32 is in between the reference to the river and to the mountain, and appears to refer equally well to both.

Marking: Minus a mark if misses out river or mountain reason. 3 marks if both clearly and correctly explained. Quotation not necessary. **[3 marks]**

4. The line 'I can't forget that I'm bereft' has a steady, quite heavy rhythm.

How would you describe the rhythm of the following lines? You don't need to write in full sentences.

(a) 'Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane' (line 3) (2)

Slow and lazy; like stirring syrup

The question gives an example to show that **two well-chosen adjectives** are enough.

However, an extra point, like the simile in the sample answer, can only help (so long as it has been carefully thought out).

'Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane' is a very languid phrase because of the alliteration, but also because it is packed full of strong syllables:

'Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane'
= DUM-duh-DUM-DUM-duh-DUM-DUM-DUM.

If you try to say it fast, or with a regular rhythm ('Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane'), it simply doesn't sound right.

Marking: Two appropriate adjectives, or a clear explanation or comparison. [2 marks]

(b) 'Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling' (line 8) (2)

Fast and jagged, like the rattle of a train on old tracks.

The rhythm here is fast and determined, in groups of three:

'Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling'
= duh-DUM-duh-duh-DUM-duh-duh-DUM-duh-duh-DUM-duh

Marking: Two appropriate adjectives, or a clear explanation or comparison. [2 marks]

5. (a) Explain why one child is left behind. (2)

They are disabled because of a leg injury ('lame') and cannot keep up.

You'll probably get away without quoting 'lame', but it's wise to include it in your answer nevertheless.

Marking: 2 marks for a clear explanation based on (even without quoting) the word 'lame'. [2 marks]

(b) The left-behind child gives two reasons for being sad. Using your own words, explain these reasons clearly. (4)

The town is boring without his friends to play with. Also, he's sad that he can't see the beautiful things which the other children are now experiencing, as promised by the Piper's magic tune.

You **need** to explain 'It's dull in our town since my playmates left' and 'I can't forget that I'm bereft of all the pleasant sights they see'.

It's **wise** also to mention that the 'Piper ... promised' these things.

Remember: when writing in your own words, **do not** simply change each word while keeping the sentence structure the same. **Work out the core ideas**, then think about how you would **explain them to a friend**, from scratch, using different words. (Key words like 'promised', which are obvious but also not easily replaced, can be re-used – with care.)

If you need more practice with this skill, have a look at some of the many similar questions in recent *11 Plus Lifeline* papers.

Marking: Needs clear own words explanation of 'It's dull in our town since my playmates left' and 'I can't forget that I'm bereft of all the pleasant sights they see'. Penalise lack of clarity or inconsistent use of own words. [4 marks]

6. If you could be any character in this story, which would you choose to be? Explain your reasons, giving evidence from the passage to support your choice. (6)

I would be the Piper. It would be wonderful to play 'such sweet soft notes' that people come running to hear me. It would be useful to have the option of controlling people magically ('like fowls'), even if I didn't use it, and the ability to magically do things like opening a 'wondrous portal' in a mountain. I wouldn't feel bad about leading the children away, because the adults in the town seem selfish and nasty, whereas my magic would be able to ensure the children a happy and interesting future with 'pleasant sights'.

You're free to write about any of the characters in the poem. You need **three clearly explained points**, with some **evidence for each one**. The example answer does a little more than necessary: by impressing the examiner, you make certain of the marks.

Notice how **short quotations in brackets** are used to support points, even when it is difficult to work evidence into a sentence.

I might be a little alarmed if my student wrote that they wanted 'the option of controlling people', as in the example ... but it still gets the marks!

Marking: Three different points, clearly explained with evidence for each. No marks just for choosing a character (though marks will be lost if this is missing). Two very well explained points might earn 6 marks if excellent. Evidence doesn't have to be in the form of quotations. [6 marks]

END
