



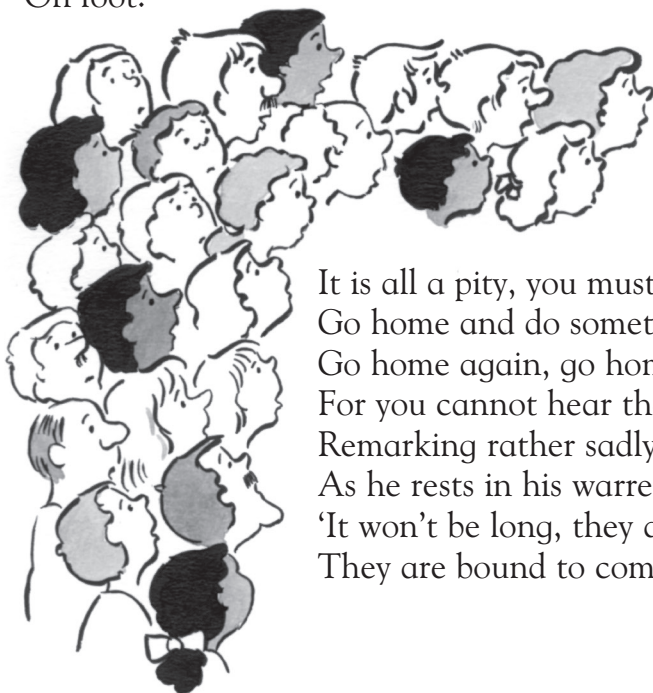
Understanding poetry

Read this poem aloud.

The Rabbit

We are going to see the rabbit.
We are going to see the rabbit.
Which rabbit, people say?
Which rabbit, ask the children?
Which rabbit?
The only rabbit,
The only rabbit in England,
Sitting behind a barbed-wire fence
Under the floodlights, neon lights,
Sodium lights,
Nibbling grass
On the only patch of grass
In England, in England
(Except the grass by the billboards
Which doesn't count.)
We are going to see the rabbit
And we must be there on time.

First we shall go by escalator,
Then we shall go by underground,
And then we shall go by motorway
And then by helicopterway,
And the last ten yards we shall have to go
On foot.



And now we are going
All the way to see the rabbit,
We are nearly there,
We are longing to see it,
And so is the crowd
Which is here in thousands
With mounted policemen
And big loudspeakers
And bands and banners,
And everyone has come a long way.
But soon we shall see it
Sitting and nibbling
The blades of grass
On the only patch of grass
In – but something has gone wrong!
Why is everyone so angry,
Why is everyone jostling
And slanging and complaining?

The rabbit has gone,
Yes, the rabbit has gone.
He has actually burrowed down into the
earth
And made himself a warren, under the
earth,
Despite all these people.
And what shall we do?
What *can* we do?

It is all a pity, you must be disappointed,
Go home and do something else for today,
Go home again, go home for today.
For you cannot hear the rabbit, under the earth,
Remarking rather sadly to himself, by himself,
As he rests in his warren, under the earth:
'It won't be long, they are bound to come,
They are bound to come and find me, even here.'

Alan Brownjohn



Reading and understanding



Reread the **poem** *The Rabbit*, then answer the following questions in complete sentences.

Is this **poem** about the past, the present, or the future? What evidence is there in the poem for your answer?

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Why do you think that this is the only rabbit on the only patch of grass?

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What is a billboard?



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Five ways of traveling are mentioned in the **poem**. What are they? Which is least harmful to the environment?

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.....

Find the **noun** that names the rabbit's home, then write another word for a rabbit's home.
Remember: A **noun** is a naming word.

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Can you name the wild animals that live in a **sett**, an **earth**, and a **holt**.

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Why is the rabbit sad?

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In some places rabbits are regarded as pests. What does this mean?

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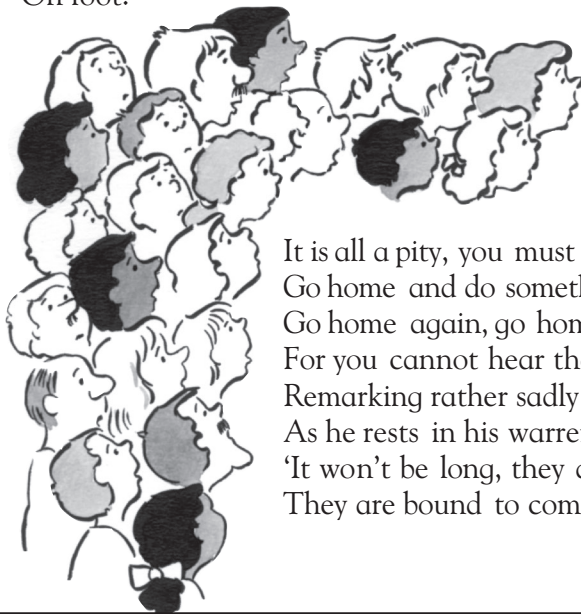
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Listen to your child read the poem. Help your child if he or she finds any parts difficult. This poem is a good example of free verse (unrhymed or irregular verse) that nevertheless has a pattern. Talk about what gives the poem pattern, e.g., the repetition.

Reading and understanding



Reread the **poem** *The Rabbit*, then answer the following questions in complete sentences.

Is this **poem** about the past, the present, or the future? What evidence is there in the poem for your answer?

I can tell this poem is about the future because there is only one patch of grass left in England and only one rabbit.

Why do you think that this is the only rabbit on the only patch of grass?

I think that there is no room left for grass and so the rabbits have died out because they had nothing to eat.

What is a billboard?



A billboard is a large board on the side of the road that displays advertisements.

Five ways of traveling are mentioned in the **poem**. What are they? Which is least harmful to the environment?

The five methods of transport in the poem are escalator, underground, motorway, helicopter way, and on foot. On foot is the least harmful.

Find the **noun** that names the rabbit's home, then write another word for a rabbit's home.

Remember: A **noun** is a naming word.

In the poem the rabbit's home is called a warren. It can also be called a burrow.

Can you name the wild animals that live in a **sett**, an **earth**, and a **holt**.

A badger lives in a sett, a fox lives in an earth, and a otter lives in a holt.

Why is the rabbit sad?

The rabbit is sad because he is alone and because he can't escape the crowds of people.

In some places rabbits are regarded as pests. What does this mean?

In some places rabbits eat crops that people have grown.

The questions on this page refer to the poem *The Rabbit*. Encourage your child to think about the major issue conveyed by the poem and to form and express opinions on that issue.