

# Katherine Mansfield

READING

LEVEL  
Advanced

NUMBER  
C1\_3067R\_EN

LANGUAGE  
English



lingoda





## Goals

- Can read and understand a complex literary excerpt from Katherine Mansfield's short story 'At the Bay'.
- Can analyse how the author describes the setting, atmosphere and the characters as well as her overall attitude towards nature.







## Nature as therapy

**Visualise a time that being outside in nature made you feel great.**

**Discuss it with your teacher, and try to use descriptive vocabulary to enrich your explanation.**







## The bay

**Katherine Mansfield's lush prose paints an impressionistic picture of the New Zealand coastline.**

**Describe the setting in each of the pictures.**

**Are you familiar with any other writers who can 'paint a picture' with words?**

**Talk to the teacher.**





## Vocabulary



The family came home from their picnic in a state of **tranquility**.

He was adept at painting in an **impressionistic** style.



We continued our journey through the **lush** rainforest.

The pizza is **smothered** with cheese.





## Vocabulary



The resort offered some charming **bungalows** by the sea.

The **fuchsias** drooped beautifully in the afternoon sun.



A cluster of **marigolds** decorated the edge of Mrs Smith's garden.

Laura walked down the street in a **dignified** way.





## Katherine Mansfield



Very early morning. The sun was not yet risen, and the whole of Crescent Bay was hidden under a white sea-mist. The big bush-covered hills at the back were **smothered**. You could not see where they ended and the paddocks and **bungalows** began. The sandy road was gone and the paddocks and bungalows the other side of it; there were no white dunes covered with reddish grass beyond them; there was nothing to mark which was beach and where was the sea. A heavy dew had fallen. The grass was blue. Big drops hung on the bushes and just did not fall; the silvery, fluffy toi-toi was limp on its long stalks, and all the **marigolds** and the pinks in the bungalow gardens were bowed to the earth with wetness.





## Katherine Mansfield



Drenched were the cold **fuchsias**, round pearls of dew lay on the flat nasturtium leaves. It looked as though the sea had beaten up softly in the darkness, as though one immense wave had come rippling, rippling—how far? Perhaps if you had woken up in the middle of the night you might have seen a big fish flicking in at the window and gone again....



## Katherine Mansfield

Ah-Aah! sounded the sleepy sea. And from the bush there came the sound of little streams flowing, quickly, lightly, slipping between the smooth stones, gushing into ferny basins and out again; and there was the splashing of big drops on large leaves, and something else—what was it?—a faint stirring and shaking, the snapping of a twig and then such silence that it seemed some one was listening.



## Rewrite the sentences, adding rich descriptive language

1. The sun rose over Crescent Bay.



Warm amber flooded the horizon as the sun rose over Crescent Bay.

2. A mist lay over the paddocks.



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3. The flowers were wet with dew.



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4. The waves crashed in the distance.



\_\_\_\_\_

5. The countryside was very quiet.



\_\_\_\_\_



## Nature and self-care

**It's a special feeling to wake up to an environment like the one Mansfield describes in the excerpt. What psychological benefits can you gain from spending some time in nature?**



After spending time in nature I found my attention span and concentration levels much higher.

I feel much more energy after taking in the fresh air and laying in the sun.

Returning from my hike, I felt all of my worries had slipped away – a sense of calm had washed over me.



## Katherine Mansfield



Round the corner of Crescent Bay, between the piled-up masses of broken rock, a flock of sheep came pattering. They were huddled together, a small, tossing, woolly mass, and their thin, stick-like legs trotted along quickly as if the cold and the quiet had frightened them. Behind them an old sheep-dog, his soaking paws covered with sand, ran along with his nose to the ground, but carelessly, as if thinking of something else. And then in the rocky gateway the shepherd himself appeared.





## Katherine Mansfield

He was a lean, upright old man, in a frieze coat that was covered with a web of tiny drops, velvet trousers tied under the knee, and a wideawake with a folded blue handkerchief round the brim. One hand was crammed into his belt, the other grasped a beautifully smooth yellow stick. And as he walked, taking his time, he kept up a very soft light whistling, an airy, far-away fluting that sounded mournful and tender.



## Katherine Mansfield



The old dog cut an ancient **caper** or two and then drew up sharp, ashamed of his **levity**, and walked a few **dignified** paces by his master's side. The sheep ran forward in little pattering rushes; they began to bleat, and ghostly flocks and herds answered them from under the sea. "Baa! Baaa!" For a time they seemed to be always on the same piece of ground. There ahead was stretched the sandy road with shallow puddles; the same soaking bushes showed on either side and the same shadowy palings. Then something immense came into view; an enormous shock-haired giant with his arms stretched out. It was the big gum-tree outside Mrs. Stubbs' shop, and as they passed by there was a strong whiff of eucalyptus. And now big spots of light gleamed in the mist.



## Katherine Mansfield



The shepherd stopped whistling; he rubbed his red nose and wet beard on his wet sleeve and, screwing up his eyes, glanced in the direction of the sea. The sun was rising. It was marvellous how quickly the mist thinned, sped away, **dissolved** from the shallow plain, rolled up from the bush and was gone as if in a hurry to escape; big twists and curls **jostled** and shouldered each other as the silvery beams broadened. The far-away sky—a bright, pure blue—was reflected in the puddles, and the drops, swimming along the telegraph poles, flashed into points of light.



## Katherine Mansfield

Now the leaping, glittering sea was so bright it made one's eyes ache to look at it. The shepherd drew a pipe, the bowl as small as an **acorn**, out of his breast pocket, **fumbled** for a chunk of speckled tobacco, pared off a few shavings and stuffed the bowl. He was a grave, fine-looking old man. As he lit up and the blue smoke wreathed his head, the dog, watching, looked proud of him.



## New words

to dissolve

He waited impatiently as the painkiller **dissolved** in the water.

to jostle

The impatient people in the queue **jostled** up against one another.

caper

A movement like a playful skip.

acorn

Look at that squirrel climbing the tree with an **acorn** in his mouth.

levity

Lightness, humour or lack of seriousness.  
It's nice to see you approaching this sad issue with a little much needed **levity**.

to fumble

He **fumbled** with his car keys and dropped them on the street.





## Explain

**Find the quotations below in the text and describe what is happening in that part in your own words.**

1. The far-away sky—a bright, pure blue—was reflected in the puddles, and the drops, swimming along the telegraph poles, flashed into points of light.
2. There ahead was stretched the sandy road with shallow puddles; the same soaking bushes showed on either side and the same shadowy palings.
3. They were huddled together, a small, tossing, woolly mass, and their thin, stick-like legs trotted along quickly as if the cold and the quiet had frightened them.
4. It was marvellous how quickly the mist thinned, sped away, dissolved from the shallow plain, rolled up from the bush and was gone as if in a hurry to escape; big twists and curls jostled and shouldered each other as the silvery beams broadened.





## Recap



In your own words, explain what has happened in the text so far.

What do you know about Crescent Bay? What do you think of the way the story is written? Do you like very descriptive stories or do you prefer a lot of action?



## New adjectives

mournful  
silvery shadowy  
soaking leaping  
tender  
upright immense  
glittering  
airy



Use the adjectives on the previous slide to describe the pictures





## Description

What other techniques does Mansfield use to make her description so vivid?





## Katherine Mansfield



“Baa! Baaa!” The sheep spread out into a fan. They were just clear of the summer colony before the first sleeper turned over and lifted a drowsy head; their cry sounded in the dreams of little children... who lifted their arms to drag down, to cuddle the darling little woolly lambs of sleep. Then the first inhabitant appeared; it was the Burnells’ cat Florrie, sitting on the gatepost, far too early as usual, looking for their milk-girl. When she saw the old sheep-dog she sprang up quickly, arched her back, drew in her tabby head, and seemed to give a little **fastidious** shiver.



## Katherine Mansfield

“Ugh! What a coarse, revolting creature!” said Florrie. But the old sheep-dog, not looking up, waggled past, flinging out his legs from side to side. Only one of his ears twitched to prove that he saw, and thought her a silly young female.

The breeze of morning lifted in the bush and the smell of leaves and wet black earth mingled with the sharp smell of the sea. Myriads of birds were singing.



## Katherine Mansfield



A goldfinch flew over the shepherd's head and, perching on the tiptop of a spray, it turned to the sun, **ruffling** its small breast feathers. And now they had passed the fisherman's hut, passed the charred-looking little whare where Leila the milk-girl lived with her old Gran. The sheep strayed over a yellow swamp and Wag, the sheep-dog, padded after, rounded them up and headed them for the steeper, narrower rocky pass that led out of Crescent Bay and towards Daylight Cove. "Baa! Baa!" Faint the cry came as they rocked along the fast-drying road.



## Katherine Mansfield

The shepherd put away his pipe, dropping it into his breast-pocket so that the little bowl hung over. And straightway the soft airy whistling began again. Wag ran out along a ledge of rock after something that smelled, and ran back again disgusted. Then pushing, nudging, hurrying, the sheep rounded the bend and the shepherd followed after out of sight.

A few moments later the back door of one of the bungalows opened, and a figure in a broad-striped bathing suit flung down the paddock, cleared the stile, rushed through the tussock grass into the hollow, staggered up the sandy hillock, and raced for dear life over the big **porous** stones, over the cold, wet pebbles, on to the hard sand that **gleamed** like oil. Splish-Splish! Splish-Splish! The water bubbled round his legs as Stanley Burnell waded out exulting. First man in as usual! He'd beaten them all again. And he swooped down to **souse** his head and neck.



## Katherine Mansfield



He floated, gently moving his hands like fins, and letting the sea rock his long, skinny body. At that moment an immense wave lifted Stanley, rode past him, and broke along the beach with a joyful sound. What a beauty! And now there came another. That was the way to live—carelessly, recklessly, spending oneself.





## Katherine Mansfield



He got on to his feet and began to wade towards the shore, pressing his toes into the firm, wrinkled sand. To take things easy, not to fight against the ebb and flow of life, but to give way to it—that was what was needed. It was this tension that was all wrong. To live—to live! And the perfect morning, so fresh and fair, **basking** in the light, as though laughing at its own beauty, seemed to whisper, “Why not?”

But now he was out of the water Stanley turned blue with cold. He ached all over; it was as though some one was wringing the blood out of him. And stalking up the beach, shivering, all his muscles tight, he too felt his bathe was spoilt. He’d stayed in too long.



## New words

**porous**

Sponges are very **porous**. So is anything with little holes that water can run through slowly.

**to gleam**

The fireflies **gleamed** late into the evening.

**to ruffle**

The magpie stood, proudly **ruffling** his feathers.

**to souse**

I **soused** the sponge in water before washing my face with it.

**to bask**

The cat spread itself out on the ground, **basking** in the afternoon sunshine.

**fastidious**

The pastor was highly **fastidious** about his personal appearance.



## Nature in the text

**What associations does the text make with nature? Is it good or bad for you, under control or does it have a life of its own?**



## Discussing character

Based on your understanding of the text, what kind of character is Stanley Burnell? Make 3 points about him.

Do you know more or less about him than the shepherd?





## Match the descriptive vocabulary to the character in the image. Write an extra sentence of description

1. She radiated a sense of danger in her pose.

2. Her scowl seemed permanently fixed to her face.

3. Wilson was a man of letters, who smoked incessantly.

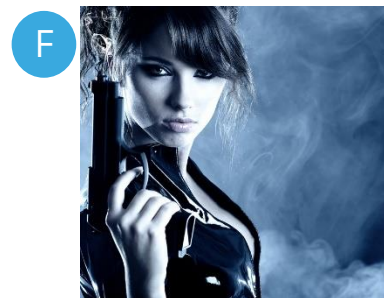
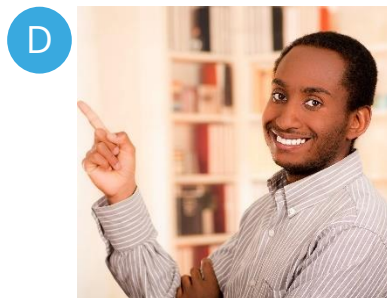
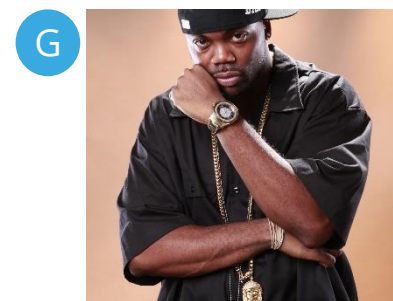
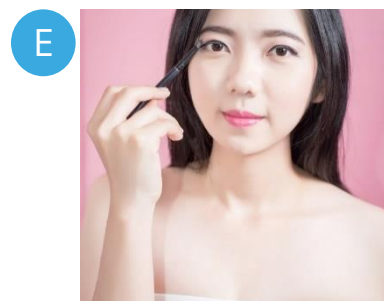
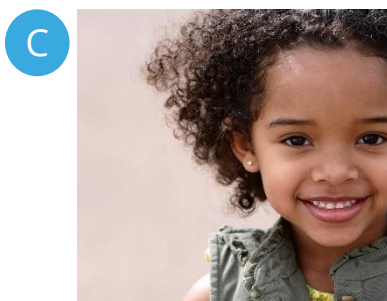
4. Her hair was straight; her features immaculate.

5. He dressed in baggy clothes and had a swarthy figure.

6. His young unshaven face was unmarked by time.

7. Her innocent face bloomed with new life.

8. His broad smile made it feel you could trust him easily.





## Writing character

**Writing character is about getting inside their head and describing their behaviour, unconscious gestures and what makes them stand out.**

**Pick one of the character descriptions below and complete it. By the end of your writing you should have a full picture of a person.**



The first thing I noticed about Marta was that her eyes sparkled like stars. Her eyebrows were always arched up as if she was waiting for you to suggest the most interesting thing in the world.

George's wrinkles told the story of his life. His strong, sturdy hands were marked with lines that illustrated hundreds of different laboring jobs.

Valentine had a husky voice, maybe as a result of her habit of smoking. She walked with the assured confidence of a cat knowing it was going to get its dinner.





## Character

**You are creating a character for a story**

**Write a description of a character of your choice.**

**Write a short history of their life and describe who they are and the kind of place they live. Describe your character physically, but also think about their inner character.**

Writer's block?  
Describe the  
character below!





## Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

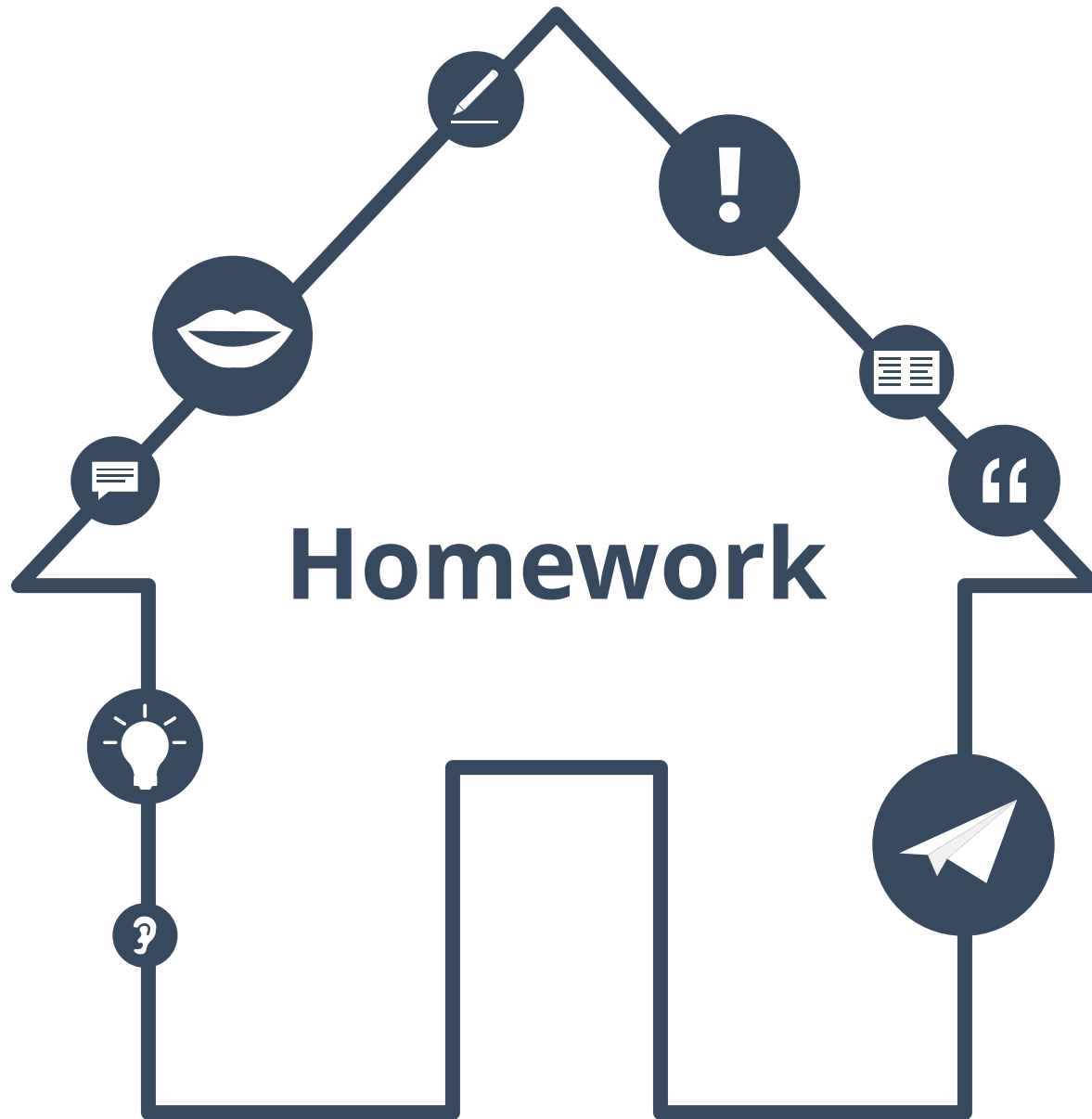
Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





## Answer key

**Activity P. 33** 1F, 2H, 3B, 4E, 5G, 6A, 7C, 8D





Write a short response to the statement below

“To take things easy, not to fight against the ebb and flow of life, but to give way to it—that was what was needed. It was this tension that was all wrong. To live—to live!”

How does Katherine Mansfield’s story portray nature as a solution to the stress of modern life?





## Use vocabulary

**Write sentences using the vocabulary from today's lesson.**

porous

dissolved

impressionistic

glittering

fastidious

fumbled



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## Homework answer key

Homework task p. 30  
1C, 2D, 3B, 4A



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