

## Paper 8

A powerful enchanter in the guise of a crocodile, on winning a game of heads or tails against King Merrion the Carefree, requested as his prize all the dark in the King's kingdom. This he was granted but it had a devastating effect. The princess and her greatest friend the horse called Houniman decided to solve the predicament that King Merrion had got them in ...

The princess rode on Houniman and he galloped steadily northwards for seven days and what ought to have been seven nights, over a sea of ice, until they came to the Land of Everlasting Winter, where the words freeze as you speak them, and even thoughts rattle in your head like icicles.

There they found the Lord of Winter, in the form of a giant eagle, brooding on a rock. 'Sir,' called Gudrun from a good way off – for it was so cold in his neighbourhood that the very birds froze in the air and hung motionless – 'can you tell us where we can find a bit of dark?' 5

He lifted his head with its great hooked beak and gave them an angry look.

'Why should I help you? I have only one little piece of dark, and I am keeping it for myself, under my wing, so that it may grow.' 10

'Does dark grow?' said Gudrun.

'Of course it grows, stupid girl! Cark! Be off with you!' And the eagle spread one wing (keeping the other tight folded) so that a great white flurry of snow and wind drove towards Gudrun and Houniman, and they turned and galloped away. 15

At the edge of the Land of Winter they saw an old woman leading a reindeer loaded with wood.

'Mother,' called Gudrun, 'can you tell us where we might find a bit of dark?'

'Give me a piece of bread and cheese for myself and some corn for my beast and I will consider.' 20

So they gave her the bread and corn and she considered. Presently she said:

There will be plenty of dark in the past. You should go to No Man's Land, the frontier where the present slips into the past, and perhaps you might be able to pick up a bit of dark there.' 25

'Good,' said the princess, 'that sounds hopeful. But in which direction does the past lie?'

'Towards the setting sun, of course!' snapped the old woman, and she gave her reindeer a thump to make it jog along faster.

So Gudrun and Houniman turned towards the setting sun and galloped on for seven days and what should have been seven nights, until they reached No Man's Land. This was a strange and misty region, with low hills and marshes; in the middle of it they came to a great lake, on the shore of which sat an old poet in a little garden of cranberry shrubs. Instead of water the lake was filled with blue-grey mist, and the old poet was drawing out the mist in long threads, and twisting them and turning them into poems. It was very silent all around there, with not a living creature, and the old poet was so absorbed in what he did that he never lifted his head until they stood beside him. 30

'Can you tell us, uncle poet,' said Gudrun, 'where we might pick up a bit of dark?'

'Dark?' he said absently. 'Eh, what's that? You want a bit of dark? There's plenty at the bottom of the lake.' 35

So Gudrun dismounted and walked to the edge of the lake, and looked down through the mist. Thicker and thicker it grew, darker and darker, down in the depths 40

of the lake, and as she looked down she could see all manner of strange shapes, and some that seemed familiar too – faces that she had once known, places that she had once visited, all sunk down in the dark depths of the past. As she leaned over, the mist seemed to rise up around her, so that she began to become sleepy, to forget who she was and what she had come for...

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'Gudrun! Come back!' cried Houniman loudly, and he stretched out his long neck and caught hold of her by the hair and pulled her back, just as she was about to topple into the lake.

'Climb on my back and let's get out of here!' he said. 'Dark or no dark, this place is too dangerous!'

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But Gudrun cried to the poet, 'Uncle poet, isn't there any other place where we might pick up a bit of dark?'

'Dark?' he said. 'You want a bit of dark? Well, I suppose you might try the Gates of Death; dark grows around there.'

*The Cost of Night* by Joan Aiken

Answer these questions.

1 Where do words freeze as you speak?

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2 Which animal was the Lord of Winter? \_\_\_\_\_

3 What is the princess's name? \_\_\_\_\_

4 What are Houniman and the princess looking for?

\_\_\_\_\_

5 Find an **onomatopoeic** word used by the Lord of Winter. \_\_\_\_\_

6 Where does the present slip into the past?

\_\_\_\_\_

7 Why do Gudrun and Houniman gallop for 'what should have been seven nights' (line 29)?

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8-9 Describe in your own words how Gudrun felt at the edge of the lake. Use evidence from the passage to support your answer.

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10 What did Houniman mean when he said, 'Dark or no dark, this place is too dangerous' (lines 49-50)?

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11 The title of this story is 'The Cost of Night'. Why do you think it is called this?

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12-15 The princess and Houniman meet three characters in this passage. Describe briefly each character they meet and make a note of something they all have in common.

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16-20 Describe five events or features of the story that make it a fable.

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Write a word, beginning with a, which has the same meaning as the word on the left.

21 stick      ad\_\_\_\_\_

22 quicken      ac\_\_\_\_\_

23 leave      ab\_\_\_\_\_

24 sharp      ac\_\_\_\_\_

25 change      al\_\_\_\_\_

26 plentiful      ab\_\_\_\_\_

27 shorten      ab\_\_\_\_\_

28 try      at\_\_\_\_\_

Put these words in the correct columns.

29-40

happy

energy

expect

caught

met

uncertainty

drown

Footlist  
Explore

sunlight

reality

carefree

artificial

