

# My Longest Journey

Winter's greeting, cheeks slapped red by the first morning's chill,  
Throats on fire, plumes erupting with every breath,  
Faces hidden, friends like highwaymen in hoods and scarves,  
Desperate dances; feet stamp and hands clap their reluctant beats.

Colour retreats, once happy gardens wither in silent submission,  
Shivering trees, branches stripped bare by leaf-greedy storms,  
Gatling-gun clouds, raindrops shower like bouncing bullets,  
Vampire skies, draining daylight into shadows and darkness.

Sledges poised, dreams of hilltops brushed cotton-wool white,  
Crunching footsteps, forging giddy pathways through fresh snow,  
Carrot-nosed sentries, standing proud in every garden,  
Streets at war, glove-tightened grenades explode with laughter.

Wasted weekends, reluctant dog walks and slow soggy Sundays,  
Countdown calendar, striking days like a gloomy prisoner,  
Reluctant traveller, wishing the long journey would finally end,  
Please give me a year of spring and summer. Winter is not my friend!



# Questions

1. In verse 1, what makes the poet's friends seem like **highwaymen**?

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2. Explain what has happened to the trees in verse 2.

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3. Explain what the **carrot-nosed sentries** are in verse 3.

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4. Does the poet like or dislike winter? Find one piece of evidence to back up your opinion.

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5. How would the poet prefer the year to be organised?

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# Answers

1. In verse 1, what makes the poet's friends seem like highwaymen?  
**Their faces are covered with hoods and scarves just as highwaymen cover their faces.**
2. Explain what has happened to the trees in verse 2.  
**The trees have no leaves and are moving/swaying in the wind.**
3. Explain what the **carrot-nosed sentries** are in verse 3?  
**Carrot-nosed sentries are snowmen.**
4. Does the poet like or dislike winter? Find one piece of evidence to back up your opinion.  
**The poet dislikes winter. Accept any of the following as evidence: cheeks slapped, throats on fire, desperate dances, once happy gardens, mention of guns, vampire skies, wasted weekends, reluctant walks, soggy Sundays, gloomy prisoner, wishing the journey would finally end, winter is not my friend!**
5. How would the poet prefer the year to be organised?  
**The poet would prefer the year to be made up only of spring and summer.**

# Questions

1. In verse 1, how are the **plumes** made?

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2. Explain what has happened to the colourful gardens in verse 2.

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3. In verse 3, are the sledges still or moving? Explain how you know.

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4. In verse 4, which word shows that the poet does not want to go on walks?

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5. Does the poet like or dislike winter? Find three pieces of evidence to back up your opinion.

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# Answers

1. In verse 1, how are the **plumes** made?  
**The plumes (like smoke) are the warm breath of the person being exhaled in the cold air.**
2. Explain what has happened to the colourful gardens in verse 2.  
**The flowers and leaves have disappeared for the winter (as they do every year). The days are getting shorter meaning there is less daylight and so the garden appears to be darker.**
3. In verse 3, are the sledges still or moving? Explain how you know.  
**The word 'poised' means ready to go so the sledges are not moving.**
4. In verse 4, which word shows that the poet does not want to go on walks?  
**reluctant**
5. Does the poet like or dislike winter? Find three pieces of evidence to back up your opinion.  
**The poet dislikes winter. Accept any three of the following as evidence: cheeks slapped, throats on fire, desperate dances, once happy gardens, mention of guns, vampire skies, wasted weekends, reluctant walks, soggy Sundays, gloomy prisoner, wishing the journey would finally end, winter is not my friend!**

# Questions

1. In verse 1, why are stamping feet and clapping hands **desperate**?

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2. How are the clouds behaving like a gun in verse 2?

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3. In verse 3, what are the **glove-tightened grenades**. Explain why this metaphor has been used.

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4. Explain why the poet has used the phrase **gloomy prisoner** in verse 4?

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5. Choose your favourite line from the poem, then try to write three more lines in the same style that could follow on from that line.

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# Answers

1. In verse 1, why are stamping feet and clapping hands desperate?  
**They are desperate to warm up and stamping and clapping helps you warm up.**
2. How are the clouds behaving like a gun in verse 2?  
**The clouds are like a gun as they are shooting out raindrops like guns shoot out bullets.**
3. In verse 3, what are the **glove-tightened grenades**? Explain why this metaphor has been used.  
**Glove-tightened grenades are snowballs. This metaphor has been used because snowballs and grenades are thrown towards a target where they explode.**
4. Explain why the poet has used the phrase **gloomy prisoner** in verse 4.  
**The poet has used the phrase gloomy prisoner because they do not like winter and feel trapped. They are counting the days until they can be free in spring again.**
5. Choose your favourite line from the poem, then try to write three more lines in the same style that could follow on from that line.  
**Pupils' own responses**