

Lucy Gray

Based on the poem by William Wordsworth

For many years, wherever I travelled across the moors, I heard tell of a Lucy Gray. Each time, the details differed slightly, but the story never wavered. This suddenly became more relevant this past week as I made my way across the wide moor to the south of my house. There, over the rough and weathered landscape, I happened to see a solitary child skipping as if at play. Not once did she look back, and soon the ghostly spectre had disappeared from my sight. Of course, I chased it as far as I could until I could no longer see its ethereal majesty. As if it had never been, it disappeared atop an old wooden bridge.

The fire in my hut had burnt almost to ashes by the time I returned home, and the sparks barely leapt above the logs. It didn't matter. So enraged was I by the sighting of that sweet girl that I was burning up. I thought back to what I had been told on my travels. I tried my hardest to recall the legend of Lucy Gray as best I could, though by then old age and time had left their mark.

Many winters ago (some say more than a hundred) the sweet young girl by the name of Lucy Gray was out working in the snow-covered fields with her father, a farmer. They'd been working long past midday when her father took to his feet and glanced at the sky.

"There's a storm coming tonight, Lucy, a bad one. Take this lantern and go find your mother down in the town. She will need your help to guide her through the snow."

Nodding her head in obeisance, his daughter replied, "Of course, father. It's scarcely afternoon, the clock has only just struck two. I can't even see the moon in the sky yet, there should be plenty of time."

Little did they know that their confidence was to be their undoing. Her father set back to his chores and Lucy headed off to find her mother, lantern in hand and playfully kicking up the powdery snow. The sound of her giggling as it rose like smoke drifted away on the hills.

Unfortunately, the storm broke long before Lucy reached the town. Thunder crashed across the moor - the falling snow formed an impenetrable white fog that stung the eyes and caught in the throat. Lucy's father managed to make it back to their house, where he found his wife alone. Fearing for their daughter's safety, they took to the moor themselves, but their cause was hopeless. All night, the wretched parents wandered

far and wide, shouting for their lost sweetheart, yet every word was swallowed whole by the blizzard. In the end, there was nothing to guide them: neither sight nor sound.

Walking out onto the moor the following morning, Lucy's parents wept. Crying to the heavens that they would meet once more, they staggered back towards their hut. Out of the corner of her eye, the mother saw a set of footprints. With renewed hope, they set about following the indentations until, finally, they disappeared on the wooden bridge, a furlong from their door.

The same bridge on which I lost sight of the ghostly apparition earlier this week. It is said around these parts that you yet may see the fawns at play, or the hares hopping around on the green. And yet, no matter how hard you try, the sweet face of Lucy Gray shall never more be seen. After my experience this week, maybe I am just lucky.

INFERENCE FOCUS

1. How did the author feel when he saw the ghost in the first paragraph? How do you know?
2. Why do you think he was so angry when he returned to his hut?
3. Why does he think he is lucky at the end of the poem?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V

What does the word "strolled" tell us about how the author moved across the moors?

R

How many years ago did Lucy Gray disappear, according to some people?

V

What does the word "impenetrable" mean in the context of the poem?

E

Explain why the author thought that the ghost was that of Lucy Gray.

S

Write a short summary of the story of Lucy Gray.

Answers:

1. He chased it so he wanted to see it, he was excited or curious

2. He'd heard of the legend and wanted to see Lucy Gray

3. He has seen Lucy Gray when so many others haven't

V: He walked slowly or at a comfortable pace

R: More than a hundred

V: The falling snow was so thick that you couldn't see through it

E: It disappeared at the same place where the girl was said to have disappeared

S: Any suitable summary that focuses on the story of Lucy Gray rather than that of the poem/
author