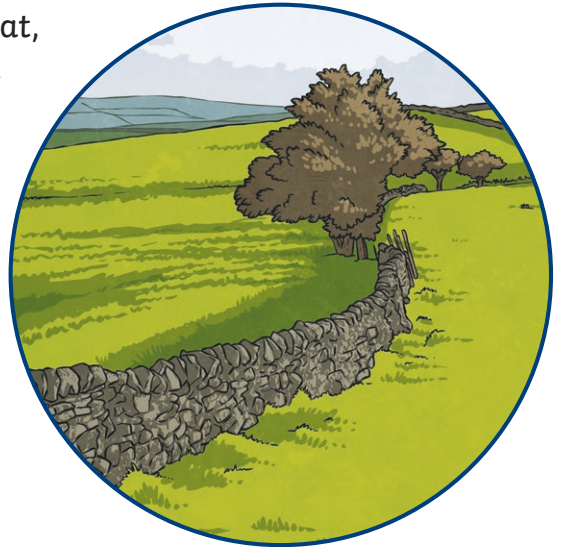




The Legend of the Elfwind

Ave was walking in the Fens on her own. It was a flat, harsh landscape stretching as far as the eye could see, with miles of brown fields and grey skies that seemed never-ending. Ave had been here plenty of times before, delivering messages or tending the land; sometimes she could walk for hours without spotting another human being. It could be bleak but, over time, Ave had developed a form of love for the place. It didn't ask anything from her. It treated her as an equal. There was a certain beauty to the stillness of the Fens that she'd never known growing up in the house: a peacefulness that even now seemed so strange.



Today was different.

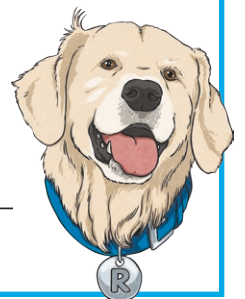
For a start, she was out after six. She was never out after six; it was forbidden. The wind was biting and the mists had begun to roll in from the sea. She was still three miles from her adopted home, Auberon's Keep, and it was getting dark. Her master would not be happy.

She wrapped her scarf tightly around her head, bending into the wind as the rains lashed at her hands and body. She prayed that her master would understand; hoping beyond hope that he would be merciful this time.

But at the back of her mind, she hoped the stories of the creatures were true.

Q1: Find and copy two facts about the Fens from the first paragraph.

- _____
- _____



Q2: '*...tending the land;*'

How else could the author have written this phrase?

Q3: Why do you think that it was forbidden to be out after six o'clock?



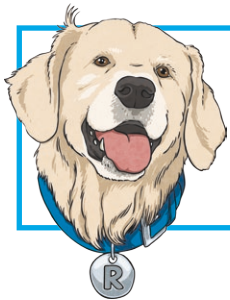
Ave decided to take a short cut through the fields and along Elven Dyke. All the fields had dykes running alongside them. They were man-made waterways built to drain the land. Most were made two or three hundred years ago when the Fen people had reclaimed the land, but not Elven Dyke. Some said it had been there since Roman times, some said even longer. Its long, straight course had separated her master's land from the other farmers' fields for centuries. Her master always said its steep banks and deep waters were the perfect protection from thieving villagers. 'To walk its banks is to invite trouble', he would sneer by the fireside.

But Ave had no choice. There wasn't enough time to take the long road; not with the mist thickening and daylight almost gone. Deep down, something told her to go this way anyway. With the wind howling and the rain stinging her eyes, Ave jumped across and made her way along Elvin Dyke, her sodden boots squelching through long grass and overgrown reeds.

A mile or so later, Ave came to a thin, dead-looking tree. She could just about make out its twisted, leafless branches silhouetted against the charcoal-grey sky beyond. Wet and cold, she peered back the way she came. She could hardly see a thing. As if a thick blanket had been thrown across the land, the fields were now shrouded in blurry darkness.

That's when she first heard the noise. Like a laughing, or a howling, the sound was high-pitched and distant. Ave stopped. Her heart was racing. She had heard of the Elfwind. She had listened to the children and to her master's stories about how the Fenland air could play tricks on lost travellers in the night.

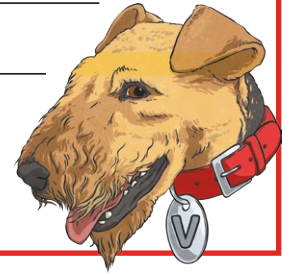
That's when she heard a voice. A soft voice, singing on the wind.



Q4: What was the name of the dyke that Ave walked along?

Q5: Find and copy three ways in which the author gives the impression that the setting is unpleasant.

- _____
- _____
- _____



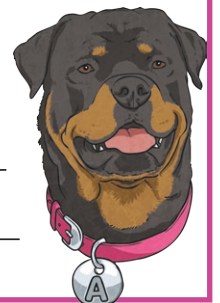
Q6: *'But Ave had no choice.'*

Why do you think that Ave felt this way?

Q7: How do you think Ave felt when she first heard the noise? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.



Q8: Why do you think that the author compares the mist to a thick blanket being thrown across the land?



“Avery Tanner from Auberon’s Keep,” the voice sang. “You’ve come to find us, your memories weep.”

Ave stood frozen as the wind and rain continued to whip at her face and body. “Who’s there?” she shouted.

“Make up for the past, yourself you must give; let us protect you, you cannot forgive,” the voice whispered on the wind.

“Show yourself!” Ave yelled.

The rain eased and the mist cleared, revealing the eerie looking tree and a bright yellow moon. “We are the Elfwind, we know you by name; we know of your sorrow, we know who’s to blame,” the voice replied. “The one you call master, he took you away; he took you from Mother, and now he must pay.”

Ave stepped closer to the tree. The legend of the Elfwind was true! In the legends, the elves were carried unseen by the wind. They would seek out wrong-doers and carry out their own elf-like justice. All you had to do was ask for their help. But, Ave had been warned, it always came at a price. “What do you want from me in return?” Ave asked.

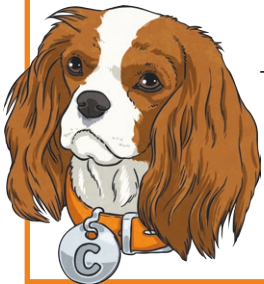
“Your heart,” was all the Elfwind sang back.

Ave closed her eyes and tried to picture her mother. It was so long since she’d last seen her, the image had become faded and incomplete. Auberon had done that. When he took her, he robbed Ave of her childhood memories and her mother’s love. His crime was unforgivable. He had to pay. “Agreed,” Ave whispered, tears falling from her cheeks.

When she returned to Auberon’s Keep, the fire was roaring in the hearth but there was no sign of her master, just his chair rocking gently on the wooden floorboards. She never saw him again. Never more was she sent to deliver messages or tend the land; never again would he treat her cruelly. She had a new master now.

Years after her death, the village children would talk of a mysterious woman who walked along Elven Dyke in the dead of night, singing songs of love. But they never saw her face; it was only ever her voice they heard. Like the legend of the Elfwind, drifting on the breeze...

Q9: How does Ave’s life compare to her master’s?



Q10: Why did Ave stand 'frozen'?

Q11: What do you think happened to Auberon?



Q12: Retell the main points of this text in three sentences.





The Legend of the Elfwind **Answers**

Q1: Find and copy two facts about the Fens from the first paragraph.

Accept any two of the following facts:

- **The Fens have a flat, harsh landscape.**
- **The Fens go for as far as the eye can see.**
- **The Fens are miles of brown fields and grey skies.**
- **They are deserted – you can walk for hours without seeing another human being.**
- **The Fens can be a bleak place.**
- **They are peaceful.**

Q2: ‘...tending the land;’ How else could the author have written this phrase?

Accept any reasonable rewording of the phrase which conveys the same meaning, such as:

- **Looking after the land.**
- **Farming.**
- **Taking care of the land.**

Q3: Why do you think that it was forbidden to be out after six o'clock?

Accept any answer which discusses the dangers or difficulties of being out after six:

- **It is dangerous to be out after six because of the weather/lighting/conditions.**
- **It would be difficult to find your way home in the dark.**
- **Without lighting, it would be hazardous to cross the uneven land.**
- **That was the curfew set by her master so that he could keep control over her actions.**

Q4: What was the name of the dyke that Ave walked along?

Accept the answer ‘Elven Dyke’ only.

Q5: Find and copy three ways in which the author gives the impression that the setting is unpleasant.

Accept answers which incorporate any three of the following:

- **The wind was howling.**
- **The rain stung her eyes.**
- **Sodden boots squelching.**
- **Long grass and overgrown reeds.**
- **Thin, dead-looking tree.**
- **Twisted, leafless branches.**
- **Wet and cold.**
- **Hardly able to see.**
- **Fields shrouded in blurry darkness.**
- **The sky was charcoal-grey.**

Q6: *'But Ave had no choice.'* Why do you think that Ave felt this way?

Accept any answer which discusses her curfew or the worsening conditions:

- **Ave knew that she needed to get back before her curfew.**
- **Ave did not have enough time to take the long road.**
- **The mist was thick and daylight was almost gone.**
- **The route by the dyke was quicker and she needed to save time.**

Q7: How do you think Ave felt when she first heard the noise? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Accept any answer which infers that Ave was scared, shocked, nervous, frightened or intrigued, quoting any part of the piece of evidence:

- **Ave was afraid because she suddenly stopped and her heart was racing.**
- **Ave could have felt curious about the noise because she had listened to her master's stories about Elfwind.**

Q8: Why do you think that the author compares the mist to a thick blanket being thrown across the land?

Accept any reasonable answer regarding the imagery provided to the reader, helping them to understand the density and coverage of the mist, such as:

- **The author says that to show that the mist is very thick and you cannot see through it.**
- **The author tries to make a point that the whole of the land is covered.**

Q9: How does Ave's life compare to her master's?

Accept any of the following answers:

- **They both live at Auberon's Keep.**
- **Ave has to tend to the land and deliver messages across the Fens whereas her master does not.**

Q10: Why did Ave stand 'frozen'?

Accept answers which discuss the fact that Ave did this because she was scared of the voice, taken by surprise, shocked that it knew her name or frozen with fright.

Q11: What do you think happened to Auberon?

Accept any answer which infers that Auberon had been taken by the elves/Elfwind as a punishment/in return for Ave's heart.

Q12: Retell the main points of this text in three sentences.

Accept any reasonable retell of the story, which covers most main points, within three sentences, such as:

'Ave takes a shortcut across the harsh, inhospitable Fens by walking next to Elven Dyke. As she does, she hears the elves in the wind offering revenge on her master in return for her heart. Ave accepts and her master disappears.'