

Plot, character and setting

SECTION

4

Responding to characters

Objective: To infer writers' perspectives from what is written and from what is implied.

What you need: Copies of *The Highwayman*, photocopiable page 15.

What to do

- Ask the children to focus on the characters (the highwayman, Bess, Tim and the red-coats) as they listen to you read through the poem again.
- At the end of the reading, ask the children for their immediate thoughts about Bess. Note down their responses (they might say romantic, brave, beautiful, resourceful, foolish, controlled, true to her love). Can they explain these thoughts? Encourage them to find passages in the poem – those that describe Bess and those that describe her actions – that support their thoughts. Can

the children find any additional evidence in the illustrations?

- As a class, create a couple of sentences about Bess in the children's own words, for example, 'Bess loves the highwayman more than she loves life'; 'Bess is so controlled and determined she's able to hide her plan from the soldiers'.
- Hand out copies of photocopiable page 15. Ask the children to describe in their own words their thoughts about each character and then to justify their thoughts by referring to events or passages from the poem.

Differentiation

For older/more confident learners: Challenge children to provide two separate thoughts about each character, each with a justification from the poem.

For younger/less confident learners: Ask children to focus on just two characters.

Why?

Objective: To understand underlying themes, causes and points of view.

What you need: Copies of *The Highwayman*, photocopiable page 16.

What to do

- Explain to the children that they are going to explore the things that they are not told in the poem and see if they can infer the reasons behind some of the events.
- Ask: *Why did the soldiers come to the inn?* Discuss the first child's answer then challenge it with alternative thoughts. *Did they come because Tim summoned them? Were they searching for the highwayman anyway? Perhaps the landlord summoned them, worried about his daughter? Perhaps they were stationed in the area and just came for a drink?* Try to illustrate to the children that there is no way of knowing from the text, but encourage them to provide justification for

their answer – Tim's actions are suspicious early on; the red-coats tie up Bess as soon as they've had a drink as if this was their plan.

- Organise the children into appropriate groups for group discussion. Provide each group with a copy of photocopiable page 16. Ask the children to talk about each question in their groups. Encourage the children to think as widely as possible about each question, coming up with as many possible answers as they can.
- Hand out individual copies of photocopiable page 16 and ask the children to fill in their own answers to these questions.

Differentiation

For older/more confident learners: Challenge these children to explain their thinking behind each answer.

For younger/less confident learners: Ask these children to choose the two questions they find the most interesting.