

Monday 20th April 2020

WALT understand a poem.

Read this poem:

The River by Valerie Bloom

*The river's a wanderer,
A nomad, a tramp.
He doesn't choose any one place
To set up his camp.*

*The river's a winder,
Through valley and hill
He twists and he turns,
He just cannot be still.*

*The river's a hoarder,
And he buries down deep
Those little treasures
That he wants to keep.*

*The river's a baby,
He gurgles and hums,
And sounds like he's happily
Sucking his thumbs.*

*The river's a singer,
As he dances along,
The countryside echoes
The notes of his song.*

*The river's a monster,
Hungry and vexed,
He's gobbled up trees
And he'll swallow you next.*

Now listen to it and follow along:

<https://childrens.poetryarchive.org/poem/the-river/>

Now tell someone about the poem:

- Did you like it? Why/why not?
- What is the poem about?
- Where is it set?
- What was your favourite language in the poem?
- What words or phrases did you not understand?

About the poem

The poem is set in the countryside, and clearly describes the features, functions and the destructive power of the river. The river winds its way through the countryside happily. But, the river can also cause erosion and flood. The poet talks about the gentle and harsh facets of the river.

Persona refers to the person that the poet creates to tell the story in the poem? So who is the persona in this poem?

The voice used in the poem The River is a 'he', which is the third person pronoun.

The persona describes what he sees, feels and hears about the river.

Some of the descriptions relate to his life's experiences and knowledge about how a river flows – upstream to downstream.

The persona provides details about where the river starts; meandering through the hills and valleys and finally, ending up in the sea or ocean.

Apart from being gentle, the persona also warns that the river can be destructive to both nature and Man.

The main theme of the poem is man and life. Man can choose to lead a stable life and stay put in one place or move around in search of his dreams. As he travels around, man may choose the straight path or the road less traveled. During his travels, man collects mementos and souvenirs. Contentment brings happiness and man moves with a light step of heart. Man may face challenges in life and this can prompt him to destruction.

The river is a physical feature in a landscape. It is an important part of nature especially in stabilizing the ecosystem. Its role is both positive and negative. It is in this aspect that the river is depicted as having many characteristics.

It flows from the mountains, meanders through the hills, valleys, and ends in the sea. As the river flows downstream, it erodes the riverbed and earth's soil as described by the poet in Stanza 3. These are then buried deep down by the river as 'little treasures'.

In Stanzas 4 and 5, the river shows its gentleness and happiness by the sounds that it makes. These are described as a baby's 'gurgles and hums' and 'sucking his thumbs'.

The river is called 'a singer' who sings a happy tune while dancing along.

Finally, in Stanza 6, the river shows its ugly and destructive side as a monster who not only 'gobbles up trees' but will 'swallow you next' if you are not careful.

EXERCISE 2

Write TRUE or FALSE for each statement below.

1. The river is personified in the poem. _____
2. The river does not stay in the same place. _____
3. The hill is a winder. _____
4. Hoarders always throw away their things. _____
5. The river stops flowing every night. _____
6. The river flows away the treasure it buries. _____
7. Like a baby, the river gurgles. _____
8. The river makes unhappy sounds when humming. _____
9. The river can sing notes of its songs. _____
10. If one is vexed, one is annoyed. _____