

The Moon

by Robert Louis Stevenson

The moon has a face like the clock in the hall,
She shines on thieves on the garden wall,
On streets and fields and **harbour quays**;
And birdies asleep in the forks of the trees,

The **squalling** cat and the squeaking mouse,
The howling dog by the door of the house,
The bat that lies in bed at noon,
All love to be out by the light of the moon.

But all of the things that belong to the day,
Cuddle to sleep to be out of her way;
And flowers and children close their eyes
Till up in the morning the sun shall arise.

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Reader's Response

- 1 What does the writer mean by “all of the things that belong to the day”?
- 2 To what sense do the descriptions in lines 5 and 6 appeal?
- 3 How are the “thieves on the garden wall” (line 2) a good contrast to “flowers and children [who] close their eyes” (line 11)?

Writer's Response

- 1 What is the theme of this poem? How does the poet get this theme across?
- 2 Why did the poet title this poem “The Moon”? Is it an accurate title? Write another title that you think fits this poem.
- 3 How do you think the poet feels about the night—lonely, sad, frightened, or some other emotion? Explain your answer.

Be the Writer

- What is your feeling about the night? Express your thoughts in a poem of two or three verses. Select images that convey your feelings. Your poem may be rhymed or unrhymed.
- People have always been fascinated by the moon. Write a reflection paper exploring why people watch the skies and give so much imaginative thought to the moon.

Words to Know

harbour quays

squalling

From the Writer

Have you ever noticed that how you say something can change the meaning of the words? Suppose that a friend shows up unexpectedly just in time to join you for a movie that you really want to see. “Oh, great!” you might say with enthusiasm. Now imagine the opposite. You and your friend are all set to go. You’ve spent \$20 on the tickets. Then you get a phone call. Your friend has been grounded, and you’re on your own. “Oh, great,” you might say glumly. Same words, different tone.

Writers use tone, too. Tone is the way a writer gets across his or her feelings about the subject. Word choice, sentence structure, and emphasis convey what the writer thinks. Robert Louis Stevenson doesn’t say he dislikes cats, mice, or dogs. But he describes them with words that are disagreeable: squalling, squeaking, howling. He doesn’t tell about how bad the thief is, but he does tell where he is found: climbing over the garden wall, clearly intending to do wrong. The tone is not angry or frightened, but it does show a preference for the daylight.

Mood is related to tone. While tone is the writer’s attitude coming through the writing, mood is more like the emotion of the writing itself. The tone can sometimes be matter-of-fact; the writer is simply stating something. The mood, however, might be quite sad or frightening or silly; this has to do with subject matter.