

# My Shadow

By Robert Louis Stevenson

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.

He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;  
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow-  
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;  
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball,  
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,  
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.  
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;  
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,  
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;  
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,  
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.



## LEVEL 1

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Answer in full sentences.

1. Who is 'he' in the poem?

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2. What do we call the device we use to give human characteristics to something that isn't human?

a) simile

b) metaphor

c) personification

d) ellipsis

3. How many rhyming couplets are there in the poem?

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4. Use the text to help explain what a coward is.

\*Clue: What does the shadow do?

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5. Who does the narrator mean when using the word 'nursie'?

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6. Does the language in the poem tell us that this is an old or modern poem? Give one example to back up your answer.

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7. In the final verse, why had the shadow 'stayed at home'?

(a) His shadow went to bed late the night before.

(b) His shadow doesn't like buttercups.

(c) His shadow is too lazy to get up.

(d) The sun wasn't up so the narrator  
wouldn't be able to see their shadow.

## LEVEL 1

# My Shadow By Robert Louis Stevenson **Answers**

1. Who is 'he' in the poem?

'He' is the narrator's shadow.

2. What do we call the device we use to give human characteristics to something that isn't human?

(c) personification

3. How many rhyming couplets are there in the poem?

There are eight rhyming couplets in the poem.

4. Use the text to help explain what a coward is. \*Clue: What does the shadow do?

A coward is someone who lacks courage or is scared.

5. Who does the narrator mean when using the word 'nursie'?

The narrator means someone who takes care of a child, like a nanny or a babysitter.

6. Does the language in the poem tell us that this is an old or modern poem? Give one example to back up your answer.

Various answers which suggest that the language is old rather than modern, e.g. words such as notion, arrant, ought and nursie tell us that this poem is old as these words aren't used very much today.

7. In the final verse, why had the shadow 'stayed at home'?

(d) The sun wasn't up so the narrator wouldn't be able to see their shadow.