

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.

- ⑤ 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 a rubber ball,
And he sometimes goes so little that there's none of him at all.

- ⑩ 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 behind me, he's a coward you can see;
I'd think shame to stick to nursie¹ 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;

- ⑮ But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant² sleepy-head,
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.



¹ **nursie (n):** a caretaker similar to a babysitter

² **arrant (adj):** complete; a good example of something

My Bed is a Boat

by Robert Louis Stevenson

My bed is like a little boat;
Nurse helps me in when I embark;
She girds³ me in my sailor's coat
And starts me in the dark.

- ⑤ At night I go on board and say
Good-night to all my friends on shore;
I shut my eyes and sail away
And see and hear no more.

And sometimes things to bed I take,

- ⑩ As prudent⁴ sailors have to do;
Perhaps a slice of wedding-cake,
Perhaps a toy or two.

All night across the dark we steer;
But when the day returns at last,

- ⑮ Safe in my room beside the pier,
I find my vessel fast.



Jose Emrocca Flores

³ **gird (v):** to secure something around a person or thing

⁴ **prudent (adj):** having good sense

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“My Shadow” and “My Bed is a Boat” by Robert Louis Stevenson

Standard: Interpret Word Choice **Skill:** Define Vocabulary

Name: _____

1. Complete the *Related Words Cluster Diagram* on page 179. Explain the meaning of the phrase “my bed is like a little boat” and name words related to the phrase’s meaning.



Answer questions 2–5.

2. Which line from “My Shadow” tells about a time of day when the speaker does not see his shadow?
 - A. “He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head”
 - B. “For he sometimes shoots up taller like a rubber ball”
 - C. “And he sometimes goes so little that there’s none of him at all.”
 - D. “He stays so close behind me, he’s a coward you can see”
3. Which word is a synonym for *steer* as it is used in line 13 of “My Bed is a Boat”?
 - A. ox
 - B. toy
 - C. sleep
 - D. navigate

4. In "My Shadow," how does the speaker's shadow change?

Use details from the poem to support your answer.

5. In "My Bed is a Boat," if the speaker's bed is like a boat, what do you think his "sailor's coat" really is? Explain.

“My Shadow” and “My Bed is a Boat” by Robert Louis Stevenson

Answer Key

1. Possible responses: Phrase: “My bed is a little boat”
Meaning: The speaker’s bed is like a boat. When he gets on board to sleep, he can sail away to dream. He wakes up and his bed is still in his room.
Related Words: *bedroom, dark, sleep, pajamas, dreaming, good night*
2. C
3. D
4. Possible response: The speaker says his shadow sometimes “shoots up” tall and other times “goes so little that there’s none of him at all.” He also says that the shadow stays “close behind” him.
5. Possible response: If the speaker’s bed is like a boat, then the speaker is like a sailor when he goes to bed to sleep. His “sailor’s coat” is what he wears to sleep, so “sailor’s coat” means his pajamas.