



A Green Cornfield by Christina Rossetti

ABOUT THE POEM

A Green Cornfield is a description of a beautiful summer's day in the countryside. It describes an afternoon the writer spent in a cornfield. It is not her first time there, but it is the first time that she realises how wonderful it is. She spends a very long time there as she is enjoying watching the butterflies and listening to the birds sing.



ABOUT THE POET

Christina Georgina Rossetti was an English poet born to Italian parents in 1830. She came from a very educated and talented family – her brother, Dante Rossetti, was a very famous painter. Her early home life was happy, but after her father became ill, her family had money problems and she later became ill herself. She started writing poems in around 1842 and quickly became very successful – at that time many people thought she was the best female poet. Many of her poems are romantic, or for children; however, *A Green Cornfield* is one of her most famous descriptive poems. Many of her poems also focus on women's rights – an important issue at that time in Victorian England.

A Green Cornfield

The earth was green, the sky was blue:

I saw and heard one sunny morn

A skylark hang between the two,

A singing speck above the corn;

5 A stage below, in gay accord,

White butterflies danced on the wing,

And still the singing skylark soared,

And silent sank and soared to sing.

The cornfield stretched a tender green

10 To right and left beside my walks;

I knew he had a nest unseen

Somewhere among the million stalks.

And as I paused to hear his song

While swift the sunny moments slid,

15 Perhaps his mate sat listening long,

And listened longer than I did.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

skylark (line 3): a type of bird

speck (line 4): a very small spot

gay (line 5): happy or excited (old-fashioned)

soared (line 7): to fly high in the sky

tender (line 9): gentle or soft

nest (line 11): the place where birds keep their eggs

stalks (line 12): the long thin parts of a plant

swift (line 14): quickly

slid (line 14): became less (in this context)

mate (line 15): partner



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Before reading

1a You are going to read a poem by Christina Rossetti called *A Green Cornfield*. Look at the different kinds of poems she wrote. What kind of poem do you think it is? Tick [✓] the correct answer.

- a a children's poem ☐
- b a descriptive poem ☐
- c a romantic poem ☐
- d a poem about women's rights ☐

1b Now read the *About the poet* section and check your answer.

2 The poem is about the countryside. What do you like about the countryside? Work in pairs and discuss.

3 The title of the poem is *A Green Cornfield*. Work in pairs. Discuss the questions and make predictions about what it is like.

- 1 What colours are there?
- 2 Are there any animals there? If so, which animals?
- 3 What can you hear?
- 4 What time of year do you think it is?

While reading

1 Read the poem. Find all the colours used. What do they describe?

2 Read the poem again and answer the questions.

- 1 What time of day is it when the poem starts?
- 2 What two animals does she describe?
- 3 What is each animal doing?
- 4 Where is the nest?
- 5 What does she stop to listen to?
- 6 What time of year do you think it is? Why?

3 Circle the correct answers. Find the word(s) or phrase(s) that tells you the answer.

- 1 The skylark is high/low in the sky.
- 2 The cornfield is small/very big.
- 3 It is/isn't the writer's first time in the cornfield.
- 4 She stays there a long time/a short time.

4 Find examples of the descriptive language used to create the picture of the scene. Complete the table in the next column.

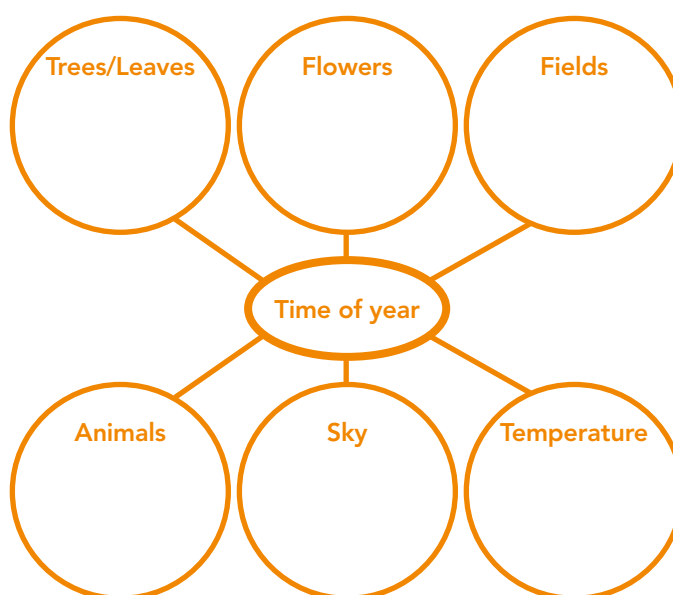
To describe the time of day:	
To set the scene:	
To describe the activity of the animals:	
To describe the cornfield:	

After reading

1 Work in groups and discuss these questions.

- 1 Do you like this poem? Why/Why not?
- 2 Do you think this is a happy or sad image of nature? Why?

2a What is your favourite time of year? What is the countryside like at that time? Make notes in the mind map below. Include colours and other descriptive words.



2b Look at the words in your mind map. Try to think of a word that rhymes with each of the words you wrote.

3a You are going to write a stanza (verse) about your favourite time of year. Look back at the first stanza of *A Green Cornfield*. Which of the lines rhyme?

3b Now write your stanza. Use some of the rhyming words from exercise 2a.