



A Green Cornfield by Christina Rossetti

Before reading

- 1a** Check students know what a cornfield is. Students read the title of the poem and tick the kind of poem they think it is.
- 1b** Discuss students' answer to exercise 1a, and then refer students to the *About the poet* section to check their answer. (Students shouldn't read the *About the poem* section until later.)

Answers

- b**
- 2** Students work in pairs to discuss what they like about the countryside. Discuss their ideas briefly as a class.
- 3** Students stay in the same pairs and make predictions about what they think the scene is like using the questions as prompts. Monitor and help as needed and then discuss their ideas as a class.

While reading

- 1** Students read the poem, referring to the *Vocabulary focus* box for help with unknown words. They find and write down all the colours used and what they refer to. Students can compare answers in pairs before checking as a class.

Answers

- green:** the earth, the cornfield; **blue:** the sky; **white:** the butterflies
- 2** Students answer the questions. When you check answers, ask students to read aloud the line that gave the correct answer (in italics in Answers below). If you feel your class needs extra support, give them the verse number where they can find each answer (given in brackets in Answers below).

Answers

- 1** morning (Verse 1 – *morn*)
- 2** butterflies and skylarks (Verse 1 and 2)
- 3** The butterflies are dancing and the skylark is singing and flying in the sky. (Verse 2)
- 4** hidden in the cornfield (Verse 3 – *somewhere among the million stalks*)
- 5** the skylark's song (Verse 4 – *And as I paused to hear his song*)
- 6** probably late spring/early summer, because the earth is green, the sky is blue and the cornfield is still green (Verses 1 and 3)
- 3** Students circle the correct answer. Ask them to underline the word or phrase that gives them the correct answer. If you feel your class needs extra support here, they can work in pairs for this. After you check answers, they can read *About the poem*, which gives a summary of the poem.

Answers

- 1** high (*speck* implies that the skylark is high in the sky, so only appears as a speck or small dot)
- 2** very big (*stretched* and *million stalks* both imply that the field is big)
- 3** isn't [the writer's first time] (*walks* in the plural implies she has been here before)
- 4** a long time (*the sunny moments slid* refers to the sun going down)
- 4** Ask students to identify examples of descriptive language used by Rossetti, and to complete the table.

Answers

To describe the time of day: sunny morn, sunny moments slid

To set the scene: the earth was green, the sky was blue

To describe the activity of the animals: a singing speck, white butterflies danced, singing skylark soared, mate sat listening

To describe the cornfield: stretched a tender green, the million stalks

After reading

- 1** Students work in groups and discuss the questions. Encourage confident students to share their ideas with the class.
- 2a** Students now think of their favourite time of year and complete the mind map. If you wish, you could brainstorm some ideas as a class first and write them on the board. Less confident classes could work in pairs.
- 2b** Students think of a word that rhymes with each of the words in their mind map. Monitor and help as needed.
- 3a** Check students understand what a stanza is (a number of lines in a poem that rhyme). Refer them to the first stanza of *A Green Cornfield* and establish that the first and third, and the second and fourth lines rhyme. Explain this is known as an ABAB rhyme.
- 3b** Students now work alone to write a simple four-line stanza about the countryside. They should choose pairs of rhyming words from their mind map and follow the same ABAB rhyming scheme.

CULTURAL INFORMATION

As well as a rich description of a summer's afternoon in the countryside, the poem is also an appreciation of the importance of the earth in providing food for people. This is shown through the line where she acknowledges for the first time the million stalks of the cornfield. Like many of Rossetti's poems it follows a strict ABAB rhyming scheme, that is, the first and third lines rhyme and the second and fourth lines rhyme. This kind of rhyming scheme was very popular with many poets of the Victorian era.