



## The Voyage by Katherine Mansfield

### Before reading

- 1 Discuss as a class what a voyage is. Establish that a voyage is a very long journey, usually by sea or in space.
- 2 Students discuss their ideas in pairs. Discuss as a class, but don't confirm answers at this stage. (This will be revisited in *After reading* 1.)
- 3 Students read *About the author*. Discuss their ideas as a class. There are no right answers here, but students may pick up on the fact that Mansfield moved from New Zealand to the UK as a child (by ship), which is likely to be an influence for the story.

### i CULTURAL INFORMATION

At that time, it would not have been unusual for a child like Fenella to be sent to live with her grandparents when her mother died. It would have been difficult for her father to look after her as well as work, so living with other family members such as grandparents would have been the only option.

### While reading

- 1 Students work alone to read the extract and answer the general comprehension questions.

#### Answers

- 1 at a harbour in New Zealand
  - 2 Fenella, her father and her grandmother
  - 3 late evening (around half past eleven)
  - 4 to a boat
  - 5 Fenella and her grandmother
  - 6 her grandfather
- 2 Students now read the extract in more detail and decide whether the statements are true or false. When you check the answers, elicit the part of the text (in brackets in *Answers* below) that supported the answer.

#### Answers

- 1 True (The author uses lots of words to convey this e.g. *they went so fast, keep up*, etc.)
- 2 False (*they went so fast that she had ... to give an undignified little skip to keep up with them*)
- 3 True (*Men, their caps ...; a few women, all muffled ...; people pressed along the gangway ...; hurrying people ...*)
- 4 False (*Fenella and her grandma leapt ..., there sounded ...; the second whistle blared; a voice like a cry shouted; Fenella saw her father's lips say ...*)
- 5 False (*her luggage strapped into a neat sausage ...; giving grandma another strapped-up sausage ...*)
- 6 True (*I've got another three minutes.*)

- 3 Students can work in pairs to do this activity and underline the different verbs the author uses instead of 'walk'. Discuss with them what the verbs have in common (they are all verbs implying walking quickly or in a hurry) and establish that this contributes to an overall tone of hurrying and briskness. If you wish, you could focus on 'scurrying' – ask what animal 'scurries' (a mouse) and discuss what image this creates (an image of the women moving quickly and with small steps, like mice).

#### Answers

pushed on, bustled along, swung by, scurried along, jerked along, pressed along

- 4 Students look at the specific parts of the text and identify how the author uses sentence length to further contribute to the hurrying tone of the extract.

#### Answers

The author uses short sentences in parts to give an impression of hurrying. For example the first sentence of the first two paragraphs is short (*The Picton boat was due to leave at half-past eleven., Fenella's father pushed on with quick, nervous strides.*). In lines 57–58 at the end, the grandma speaks in very short sentences to create an impression of urgency (*Go now. You'll be left. Go now, Frank. Go now.*).

- 5 Students now read the text more closely and answer the questions. You may need to check that they remember *anthropomorphism* (giving objects human qualities).

#### Answers

- 1 The narrative mode is the third person, and the narrator is the author.
- 2 The vocabulary is relatively simple. This is because the story is written from a child's point of view.
- 3 **Anthropomorphism:** *the swan's head on the umbrella giving her a peck; the lantern, which is afraid to unfurl its light and burns softly for itself.*  
**Similes:** *a rounded wood-pile, that was like the stalk of a huge black mushroom; he looked like a baby fly that had fallen into the cream.*
- 4 The story is written from Fenella's point of view, so there are many childlike observations, including the description of the wharf as being 'very dark'; the cranes 'standing up so high'; the similes (the wood-pile as 'a huge black mushroom'; the boy like a 'fly that had fallen into the cream'); the anthropomorphism (*a swan's head, kept giving her shoulder a sharp little peck*); the description of the boat (*all beaded with round golden lights*) and its sound (*Mia-oo-oo-O-O*); and the description of the luggage (*strapped into a neat sausage*). Additionally, the use of relatively simple vocabulary and sentence structure further emphasises the child's perspective.



- 6 This exercise focuses on the characterisation of the three people in the story. Students can do this in pairs if you wish.

## Possible answers

- 1 Possibly serious, unemotional, not particularly affectionate (*sounded stern*), but here he is sad and emotional (*he looked tired and sad; To her surprise Fenella saw her father take off his hat. He clasped grandma in his arms and pressed her to him*).
- 2 She is upset (*very agitated*) and emotional (*she sobbed*).
- 3 Because she has been twisting her wedding ring. This implies she is, or has been, very nervous or worried (twisting a ring on one's finger is a sign of nervousness).
- 4 Possibly apprehensive due to the setting (*carved out of solid darkness; all that blackness*), but perhaps also excited about what will happen next (*Fenella, eagerly watching him*).
- 5 Students' own answers, but probably because they are nervous about the voyage; the father is probably worried about leaving Fenella, and her grandma is worried about making the voyage alone and about leaving her son by himself.

## After reading

- 1 Students work in small groups to discuss the questions. They read *About the story* after discussing question 1 to check their answers.

## Possible answers

- 1 She's going to live with her grandparents following the death of her mother.
  - 2 No, probably not. This is not actually confirmed in the extract, but the fact that her father and grandma seem so upset implies that she is not coming back.
  - 3 This line tells us that the boat is big and impressive, especially to Fenella who has probably never seen anything like it. It symbolises the fact that she will be sailing off somewhere new and unknown (a little like going out into the universe) and to a new experience.
- 2-3 Students follow the steps to brainstorm ideas and write their diary entry. Monitor and help as needed.
- 4 Students work in small groups to read their diary entries to each other.

## Follow-on task

Ask students to find the complete version of *The Voyage* online and to look at the characterisation of the grandma, which is developed in the main part of the story.