



The Brook

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
Any many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling.

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

Alfred Lord Tennyson



Understanding the text

- 1 Where does the brook come from?
- 2 Where is it going?
- 3 When is the brook moving quickly?
- 4 When is the brook moving slowly?
- 5 How long does the brook go on for?

Looking at language

- 6 Explain the meaning of these words as they are used in the poem. Use a dictionary to help you.

a haunts	b sally	c thorps
d fret	e foreland	f loiter

- 7 Can you find in the poem:
 - a** three types of birds? **b** two types of fish? **c** three type of plants?

Exploring the poem

- 8 What things does the brook do, that we would normally think of humans doing?
- 9 If the brook was human, what sort of person do you think it would be?
- 10 Why do you think the poet has used the words 'chatter', 'babble' and 'murmur'?
- 11 How do you know the brook goes on during the night as well as during the day?
- 12 Explain in your own words the meaning of the last two lines of the poem.
- 13 Explain why you like or do not like the poem.

Taking it further

▶ **RB, Unit 9, Extension**

- 14 In groups, learn and recite the poem. Use different people to say different verses.

The River's Story

I remember when life was good.
I shilly-shallied across meadows,
Tumbled down mountains,
I laughed and gurgled through woods,
Stretched and yawned in a myriad
of floods.
Insects, weightless as sunbeams,
Settled upon my skin to drink.
I wore lily-pads like medals.
Fish, lazy and battle-scarred,
Gossiped beneath them.
The damselflies were my ballerinas,
The pike my ambassadors.
Kingfishers, disguised as rainbows,
Were my secret agents.
It was a sweet-time, a gone-time,
A time before factories grew,
Brick by greedy brick,
And left me cowering
In monstrous shadows.
Like drunken giants

They vomited their poison into me.
Tonight a scattering of vagrant bluebells,
Dwarfed by the same poisons,
Toll my ending.
Children, come and find me if you wish,
I am your inheritance.
Behind the derelict housing-estates
You will discover my remnants.
Clogged with garbage and junk
To an open sewer I've shrunk,
I, who have flowed through history,
Who have seen hamlets become villages,
Villages become towns, towns become cities,
Am reduced to a trickle of filth
Beneath the still, burning stars.

Brian Patten



Understanding the text

- 1 Where did the river flow 'when life was good'?
- 2 Name three groups of living things associated with the river.
- 3 What has happened around the river that has changed everything?
- 4 What do the factories put into the river?
- 5 What is now left of the river?

Looking at language

- 6 Explain these phrases in your own words.

a shilly-shallied **b** battle-scarred **c** a gone-time
d toll my ending **e** your inheritance **f** reduced to

- 7 Explain the meaning of these words as they are used in the poem. Use a dictionary to help you.

a myriad **b** ambassadors **c** cowering **d** vomited
e vagrant **f** derelict **g** remnants **h** trickle

Exploring the poem

- 8 Why do you think the poet has made the river appear human?
- 9 If the river was human, how do you think it felt when:
 - a 'life was good'? b 'factories grew'?
- 10 Why do you think the fish were 'battle-scarred'?
- 11 Why do you think the factories are described as 'greedy'?
- 12 What does the river mean when it says it has 'flowed through history'?
- 13 What do you think the poem is warning us about?

Taking it further

▶ **RB, Unit 9, Extension**

- 14 Using the information in the poem, make a poster to warn people about polluting rivers. Write the text as if it were the river speaking.

Coral Reef

I am a teeming city;
 An underwater garden
 Where fishes fly;
 A lost forest
 of skeleton trees;
 A home for starry anemones;
 A hiding place for frightened fishes;
 A skulking place for prowling predators;
 An alien world
 Whose unseen monsters
 Watch with luminous eyes;
 An ancient palace topped by
 Improbable towers;
 A mermaid's maze;
 A living barrier built on
 Uncountable small deaths;
 An endlessly growing sculpture;
 A brittle mystery;
 A vanishing trick;
 A dazzling wonder
 More magical than all
 Your earthbound dreams;
 I am a priceless treasure;
 A precious heirloom,
 And I am yours

To love
 Or to lose
 As you choose.

Clare Bevan



Understanding the text

- 1 Find three things in the poem which are normally found on land.
- 2 For what do 'frightened fishes' use the coral reef?
- 3 What phrase in the poem tells you the coral reef is always getting bigger?
- 4 What word tells you that the coral reef is very fragile and can break easily?
- 5 What choice do people have to make about coral reefs?

Looking at language

- 6 Find adjectives in the poem that describe:

a garden **b** forest **c** predators
d palace **e** treasure **f** heirloom

- 7 Explain the meaning of these words as they are used in the poem. Use a dictionary to help you.

a teeming **b** skeleton **c** skulking
d luminous **e** brittle **f** heirloom

Exploring the poem

- 8 Explain what the poet means when she says that the coral reef is 'built on / Uncountable small deaths'.
- 9 What do you think the 'unseen monsters' are?
- 10 Why do you think the towers are described as 'improbable'?
- 11 The poet has given the coral reef a voice. What warning is the coral reef giving to the reader?
- 12 If the coral reef were human, what sort of person do you think it would be?
- 13 Using what you have learnt from the poem, write briefly about why you think we should, or should not, protect coral reefs.

Taking it further

▶ RB, Unit 9, Extension

- 14 Read the three poems again. Choose which one you like the best and explain your reasons.