

Cider With Rosie

Cider With Rosie by Laurie Lee is an autobiographical novel, based on the author's own childhood. It is set in the rural village of Slad in Gloucestershire. This extract is set just before the end of World War One and describes the day Lee's family moved to Slad from the nearby town of Stroud.

I was set down from the carrier's cart at the age of three; and there with a sense of bewilderment and terror my life in the village began.

The June grass, amongst which I stood, was
5 taller than I was, and I wept. I had never been so close to grass before. It towered above me and all around me, each blade tattooed with tiger-skins of sunlight. It was knife-edged, dark, and a wicked green, thick as a forest and alive with grasshoppers that chirped and
10 chattered and leapt through the air like monkeys.



I was lost and didn't know where to move. A tropic heat oozed up from the ground, rank with sharp odours of roots and nettles. Snow-clouds of elder-blossom banked in the sky, showering upon me the fumes and flakes of their sweet and giddy suffocation. High overhead ran frenzied larks, screaming, as though the sky were
15 tearing apart.

For the first time in my life I was out of the sight of humans. For the first time in my life I was alone in a world whose behaviour I could neither predict nor fathom: a world of birds that squealed, of plants that stank, of insects that sprang about without warning. I was lost and I did not expect to be found again. I put back
20 my head and howled, and the sun hit me smartly on the face, like a bully.

From this daylight nightmare I was awakened, as from many another, by the appearance of my sisters. They came scrambling and calling up the steep rough bank, and parting the long grass found me. Faces of rose, familiar, living; huge shining faces hung up like shields between me and the sky; faces with grins and
25 white teeth (some broken) to be conjured up like genii with a howl, brushing off terror with their broad scoldings and affection. They leaned over me – one, two, three – their mouths smeared with red currants and their hands dripping with juice.

“There, there, it's all right, don't you wail any more. Come down 'ome and we'll stuff you with currants.”

30 And Marjorie, the eldest, lifted me into her long brown hair, and ran me jogging down the path and through the steep rose-filled garden, and set me down on the cottage doorstep, which was our home, though I couldn't believe it.

An extract from *Cider With Rosie* by Laurie Lee.

1 Give two reasons why the narrator is afraid when he is standing in the grass.

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.....
.....

2 marks

2 Write down one metaphor from lines 11-15 and explain its effect.

.....
.....
.....

2 marks

3 a. Which of the following techniques does the narrator use to describe the sun in line 20? Circle one.

- a. onomatopoeia b. alliteration c. a simile d. repetition

1 mark

b. What effect does this description of the sun have on the reader?

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.....

2 marks

4 Why do you think the narrator compares his sisters' faces to "shields" (line 24)?

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.....

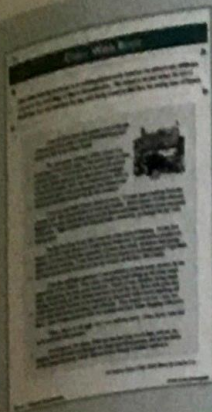
1 mark

5 Do you find the narrator's description of the natural world in lines 4-20 surprising? Explain your answer.

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2 marks

Total out of 10

**Question Book:**

Year 6, pages 10-11

Author / Source:

Laurie Lee

Genre:

Autobiographical novel

Cross-curricular links:

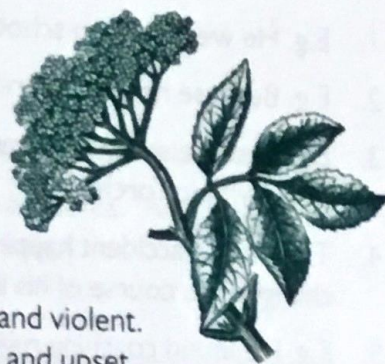
- History (change over time)
- Geography (the British landscape)

Introduction

Laurie Lee is best known for his autobiographical novel *Cider With Rosie*, first published in 1959. The novel begins just before the end of World War I and follows Lee's experiences growing up in the small Gloucestershire village of Slad. In some respects the novel presents country life as idyllic, but it also explores the hardships of life at that time. By the end of the novel, Slad is beginning to be affected by the changes brought by the post-war years, such as the introduction of the motor car, and people leaving to work in larger towns and cities. This results in the decline of the traditional village life the narrator knew as a child. Make sure pupils read the introduction so that they understand when and where the text is set.

Answers

1. E.g. Because the grass is unfamiliar and tall, so it seems threatening, and because he is on his own for the first time in his life.
2. "Snow-clouds of elder-blossom" E.g. It helps you to imagine what the elder-blossom looks like, because it creates a picture of the blossom being white and fluffy, like clouds of snow.
3. a. c. a simile b. E.g. Comparing the sun to a bully makes it sound cruel and violent. This helps the reader to understand why the narrator feels so frightened and upset.
4. E.g. Because a shield protects you, and his sisters' faces form a shield that protects him from the sun.
5. Any appropriate answer. E.g. Yes, because writers often make the natural world sound beautiful, but the narrator makes it sound frightening and horrible. For example, he says that the air smelled "rank".



Extra Activities

- With the whole class, explore the feelings that Lee conveys in this extract. Ask pupils to suggest one or two adjectives to describe how the narrator feels in each paragraph, and to explain their choices.
- As a class, identify the language that Lee uses to describe the natural world and explain how it affects the reader. Drawing on their answers to question 5 in the Question Book, get pupils to explain whether they share Lee's view of nature. Ask pupils to rewrite the extract in a way that reflects their own attitude towards the natural world.
- In small groups, ask pupils to investigate different aspects of life (e.g. education, leisure activities, communication, transport) for children in the early twentieth century. Pupils should share their findings with the class so that they can build up a detailed picture of the similarities and differences between children's lives then and now.
- The village of Slad is located in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Give pupils a list of all the AONBs and National Parks in the UK and a map showing their location. Challenge pupils to name the parks on their map and to look for pictures on the Internet of the landscape in some of them.