

Worksheet 1

Black Knight

Studying the Subtext

'**Subtext**' refers to content within a text that is not specifically stated but understood by the reader – the meaning behind the words. In a narrative text, subtext can reflect unspoken inner thoughts, emotions and motives of a character or refer to underlying meanings of certain events as narrated by the author. We can learn to identify subtext within a narrative by analysing:

- ❖ what the characters say, how they act and interact with others
- ❖ the inclusion of particular events and descriptions

Task 1: Try to identify the subtext of the following excerpts from *Black Knight*.

1. At the beginning of the story, Jack reveals that 'Living in town was out of the question'. Why?
2. 'It was in surprisingly good condition for its age, and absurdly cheap.' After reading the story, why do you think the cottage was absurdly cheap?
3. 'The dark knight's hands are held up in everlasting prayer'. Given his true nature as a 'fierce and wicked man', why do you think he is placed in this position?
4. After Jack hears the story of the dark knight from Mrs Dorritt he reveals: 'I had promised not to laugh, but inwardly I chuckled at her absurd fiction'. What does this tell us about Jack's personality?
5. Jack 'was determined not to tell Laura the legend'. How does this decision impact the outcome of the story?
6. On the morning of the night Laura dies, she and Jack do two things: they take an afternoon walk that is 'the happiest time of all Jack's life' and they 'spend a happy hour or two playing piano and singing'. Why do you think these events are included in the story?
7. 'We watched the deep black clouds gathering against a sky, and saw the white mists curl up along the hedgerows near the distant sea...' How does this description of the onset of night set the scene for the night's events?
8. 'I strolled out of the front door, leaving it unlatched'. What insight does this give us into how Jack is feeling about the story of the dark knight?

Extension Activity:

- Describe how metaphorical language (such as similes, metaphors and personification) has been used in the story of *Black Knight* e.g. *We were as happy as the summer was glorious* (simile); *Her voice was enough to make your blood run cold* (metaphor); *My heart reached out to her* (personification).