

The Lanterns

I remember when the lanterns first appeared on the horizon. It was close to midnight, as most strange occurrences often are, and I was lying awake in my bed desperately counting down the hours to morning. Morning would mean it was time for the harvest, and the start of the new calendar. The elders had always told us what happened if you were awake at midnight before the harvest, when the lights from the Others would try to lure children away. We hadn't believed it, of course, but they'd insisted and so something about it had crept into our imaginations.

By that point, I'd been training as a healer for a year and was getting quite good at it. I knew most of the basic herbs and elixirs to heal the wounded farmers, but I still had much to learn. That night, when the lanterns appeared on the horizon, I was destined to learn quickly.

The weather was warm, even at midnight, with a clinging humidity that threatened to suffocate you if you weren't careful. Shadowy wisps of mist clung to the edge of the riverbank as I wandered out of the hut and made my way to the top of the wooded hill. I'd hoped to get a better look at the lanterns from up there but, by the time I reached the summit, they were already there ahead of me.

From a distance, as I clambered up the rocks and slippery gravel on the side of the mound, I had been convinced that the lamps were floating through the air, like the paper lanterns we released every new moon. When I arrived, I realised that I was wrong. What I saw, shocked me.

Each light was held in the pale hand of a ghostly figure. There were maybe a hundred, maybe more, each one no taller than myself and slender like elves. Their bodies were almost transparent, only the moonlight glinting from their edges gave them any shape at all. It took me a moment to take in the scene before one of them broke away from the group and floated towards me.

Perhaps I should have run, sprinted down the hill and hidden away in my bed and pretended like it had never happened. Still, I was never one to run away from adventure. Strangely, I wasn't scared by the creatures; if anything, they gave off an air of sadness rather than terror.

When the spirit reached me, it spoke to me. Its soft voice seemed to be a whisper on the night air, nothing more than hushed wind, but it was echoed by all of the others and soon filled my head with its noise. "We need you. We need you to heal us. It is important."

Now, I was scared. How could I heal these phantom spirits that had appeared from nowhere? They were insistent, though. Gradually, they surrounded me and took my arms and legs and lifted me into the air. They weren't rough, or menacing, just gentle and urgent. We rose higher and higher until we were surrounded by clouds. Tufts of cold mist lazily drifted past, the lanterns lighting the way the entire time until we burst into darkness. Up ahead, a pinpoint of light slowly started to grow until, finally, it became an ivory tower.



1

Look at the first paragraph.

What is happening the following day?

1 mark

2

*That night, when the lanterns appeared on the horizon, I was **destined** to learn quickly*

What does **destined** mean in this sentence?

1 mark

3

Look at the paragraph beginning: *'Each light was held in the...'*

Which words would best describe what the strange creatures look like?

Tick **two**.

Translucent

Substantial

Muscular

Delicate

2 marks

4

What are the spirits carrying?

1 mark

5

Look at the paragraph beginning: *Perhaps I should have run...*

Find and **copy one** word that is the root of the word **terrific**.

1 mark



6

Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
The character is old.		
The character is training to be a witch.		
The character knows how to use herbs.		
The strange creatures were loud.		

_____ 2 marks

7

Complete the table below with **one** piece of evidence from the text to support each statement.

	Evidence
The character had started to believe the elders about the Others.	
The character hadn't expected to find anybody on the hill.	

_____ 2 marks

SATs Practice - Answers

1. The harvest and the beginning of the new calendar
2. It was going to happen/it had to happen
3. Translucent
Delicate
4. Lanterns
5. Terror
6. **Give 1 mark for two correct answers. Give 2 marks for three or more correct answers.**
False
False
True
False
7. a) Something about it had crept into our imaginations
b) I had been convinced that the lamps were floating through the air
or
What I saw, shocked me