

MEDIEVAL FANTASY

Here is part of a fantasy story. The questions that follow require you to use your **inferential** skills – your ability to read between the lines.

Faylinn's Revenge

"You ready, Baalfire? We're waitin'. Get your twinkletoes in some boots and get out here!" Even my friend, Tom, with his failing hearing, couldn't mistake the rasping voice of Harald Ruffsnape, as coarse as bracken across the skin. He thumps the door in time to my name: "Vin – cent – Baal – fire!" The goats bleat in their stall; the mice scramble in the thatch of the roof.

Opening the door, I push his hand away as he reaches out to prod me, as usual, in the shoulder. He grins. "When you goin' to tie a pretty ribbon in that hair of yours and be a proper girl?" I save my reply for another day.

The evening's entertainment is to follow the ancient creature known as Faylinn, a well-known figure. A harmless hermit who huddles in a stinking cave on the other side of the river, she is taunted by the local children: imitating her hobble, throwing stones, daring each other. We pray that our dreams will contain no sight or sound of that creepy, old witch. But every night we wake up bawling like kittens in a sack.

The sun has gone but a glimmering cut of light shows Faylinn dragging a branch behind her. Kindling for her fire, I reckon. Her face is smoke black. We follow, but soon the fingers of darkness begin to close around us. Stunted trees are grey ghosts crouching among the swirls of marsh gas as she disappears into her cave. It's a poisonous place. The air catches throats.

"That's a filthy hole," says Tom, giggling. "It's filthier than the biggest pile of filth I've ever seen." This earns him a familiar slap that knocks him to the ground. The others laugh awkwardly. No one is prepared to help him up except me. I narrow my eyes. Harald glares back. The others wait. The moment passes.

"See that smoke whiffin' out of the cracks in them rocks. That's Faylinn talking with imps and demons of all varieties. So all you pipsqueakin' chickens, get ready with your howlin' and hollerin'."

A heartbeat barely passes when a burning ember comes spitting out of the cave mouth, making an

arc through the sour air. Then another and another. Here and there, the marsh gas bursts into flames. The treetops come alive and black shadows swoop about our heads, disturbed even more by our screaming terror. We scramble in all directions, till we all turn to find ourselves face to face with Faylinn. The evil grin. Three front teeth like chiselled stalactites. She points and growls something under her breath. "Good evening, sprouts," is all she says, but what we hear is a curse.

We run for it chased by nothing more than our own moon shadows. But no one turns to check. Least of all Harald. Somehow, those fat knees of his carry his wheezing body a good fifty yards in front of everybody else. Now that did us all a power of good.



1. What sort of person is Harald Ruffsnape? Write down a piece of evidence to support your answer.

2. Who is telling the story?

3. What clues are there to suggest the story is set in medieval times?

4. What evidence is there to suggest that Vincent is not frightened of Harald?

5. Why do you think Faylinn is taunted by the local children?

6. What would cause her face to be described as 'smoke black'?

7. What are the 'grey ghosts crouching among the swirls of the marsh gas'?

8. Why do you think Tom giggles when he talks about the cave?

9. Who slaps Tom?

10. Why do you think 'the others laugh awkwardly'?

11. 'The others wait.' What are they waiting for?

12. How does the burning ember come out of the cave?

13. What are the black shadows that swoop about their heads?

14. What makes them think they've been cursed?

15. What does the second last sentence tell us about Harald?

16. 'Now that did us all a power of good.' This final remark suggests that things might be a bit different in the future. In what way?
