

# The way through the woods



Rudyard Kipling was the British writer and poet who wrote *The Jungle Book* and the *Just So Stories*, which are still popular with children today. He wrote 'The way through the woods' for a young girl called Christabel, who was a friend of his daughter. When he asked Christabel if she had enjoyed a recent holiday in the New Forest, she told Kipling that she had been frightened of ghosts there. Her remark inspired him to write this poem.

They shut the road through the woods  
 Seventy years ago.  
 Weather and rain have undone it again,  
 And now you would never know  
 5 There was once a road through the woods  
 Before they planted the trees.  
 It is underneath the coppice and heath  
 And the thin anemones.  
 Only the keeper sees  
 10 That, where the ring-dove broods,  
 And the badgers roll at ease,  
 There was once a road through the woods.

Yet, if you enter the woods  
 Of a summer evening late,  
 15 When the night air cools on the trout-ringed pools  
 Where the otter whistles his mate,  
 (They fear not men in the woods,  
 Because they see so few),  
 You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,  
 20 And the swish of a skirt in the dew,  
 Steadily cantering through  
 The misty solitudes,  
 As though they perfectly knew  
 The old lost road through the woods.  
 25 But there is no road through the woods.



Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936)

- 1 Name the flowers that grow where the road once ran through the woods.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 mark
- 2 What clues are there that few people walk in the woods?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 mark
- 3 What clues are there that the horse and rider were not really there?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 mark
- 4 Apart from the horse's hooves and the swish of the skirt, what other sound can be heard in the woods?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 mark
- 5 Explain the meaning of 'solitudes'.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 mark
- 6 What causes rings to appear on the surface of the pools?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 mark
- 7 If you were reciting the poem, where might you  
 a) change tempo?  
 b) change volume?  
 Explain how and why.  
 a) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 b) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 marks