

My Shadow

By Robert Louis Stevenson

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow-
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball,
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

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Answer in full sentences.

1. Who is 'he' in the poem?

2. What do we call the device we use to give human characteristics to something that isn't human? Can you find three examples of this in the poem?

3. How many rhyming couplets are there in the poem?

4. How does the narrator describe how children grow?

5. Why is the way the shadow grows 'not at all like proper children'?

6. What do you think the word 'notion' means on line 9?

7. Use the text to help explain what a coward is. How do you know?

8. Who does the narrator mean when using the word 'nursie'?

9. Does the language in the poem indicate that this is an old or modern poem? Give three examples to back up your answer.

10. In the final verse, which line gives the scientific reason as to why the narrator can't see their shadow when they go outside? Explain your choice.
