

Walter De La Mare
1873-1956

“The Listeners”

LIFE

- 1. one of modern literature's chief exemplars of the romantic imagination.
- 2. THEMES are dreams, death, rare states of mind and emotion, fantasy worlds of childhood, and the pursuit of the transcendent.
- 3. began writing short stories and poetry while working as a bookkeeper.

- 4. Critics often assert that a childlike richness of imagination influenced everything de la Mare wrote.
- 5. His greatest concern was the creation of a dreamlike tone implying a tangible but nonspecific transcendent reality.
- 6. in his short stories he uses elaborate prose style and ambiguous, often obscure treatment of supernatural themes.

- 7. his novels mainly deal with; fantasy, naturalism, and a study of the social and spiritual outsider.
- 8. escape from life or criticism of life?

THE LISTENERS



THE LISTENERS

- "Is there anybody there?" said the Traveller,
- Knocking on the moonlit door;
- And his horse in the silence champed the grass
- Of the forest's ferny floor;
- And a bird flew up out of the turret,
- Above the Traveller's head:

- And he smote upon the door again a second time;
- "Is there anybody there?" he said.
- But no one descended to the Traveller;
- No head from the leaf-fringed sill
- Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
- Where he stood perplexed and still.

- But only a host of phantom listeners
- That dwelt in the lone house then
- Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
- To that voice from the world of men:
- Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
- That goes down to the empty hall,

- Harkening in an air stirred and shaken
- By the lonely Traveller's call.
- And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
- Their stillness answering his cry,
- While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
- 'Neath the starred and leafy sky;

- For he suddenly smote on the door, even
- Louder, and lifted his head:--
- "Tell them I came, and no one answered,
- That I kept my word," he said.
- Never the least stir made the listeners,
- Though every word he spake

- Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
- From the one man left awake:
- Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
- And the sound of iron on stone,
- And how the silence surged softly backward,
- When the plunging hoofs were gone.

ANALYSIS TIPS

- 1. Ballads are usually narrative, or story-telling, poems, and early ballads often addressed themes important to common people: love, courage, the mysterious and the supernatural.
- 2. Though the ballad is generally rich in such musical qualities as rhythm and repetition, it often portrays both characters and events in highly dramatic but simplistic terms.

- 3. dialogue.
- 4. sound and silence.
- 5. anachronism.
- 6. Two realities: which is more important?
- 7. Alliteration(4,7,25,26,35), anaphora(15,17), paradox(22,33-37), metaphor(19).
- 8. supernatural, gothic elements?
- 9. levels of analysis?