Walter De La Mare
1873-1956

“The Listeners”
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?
"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,
Hearkening 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?
8. supernatural, gothic elements?
9. levels of analysis?