



Midsummer Moon

Believe it or not,” said Count Owl, “I can **trace my family roots** all the way back to the **Transylvanian** House of Kronenberg. Once upon a time, we were **Lords** of the forest!”

He looked down from the oak tree and a huge tear dropped from his yellow eyes. The Count was talking to Mistress Grimsly Mushroom, who was the headmistress of the Grimsly Mushroom **Academy**. She taught lessons here under the oak tree from **dusk to dawn**.

“Hush, girls, stop your giggling,” she said to the grinning toadstools. They were dressed, as usual, in crimson hooped skirts **spangled** with bright spots, which was such a bad example for her serious young ladies at the Mushroom Academy. “Now, does anyone remember last night’s lesson? What are the best colours for young ladies?”

“**Woodbark** brown,” answered one of her brightest pupils.

“Very good,” said the headmistress. “What else?”

“Creamy satin for evening dresses.”

“Excellent!” said Mistress Grimsly with a smile. “And occasionally, I might allow a dainty flush of rose pink.”

Some excited chattering broke out among the **toadstools**.

“I said only occasionally,” said the schoolmistress. “At most, once or twice a year, at the **Feast** of the Midsummer Moon.”

“Oh, Mistress Grimsly, what happens then?” asked little Marsha Mushroom, poking her head out of the ground. She often arrived late and so she had missed a lot of what was happening.



“Well, everyone dresses up in their finest gowns and we all have a midnight feast to **celebrate** the coming of summer.”

“Oh, that must be such fun! When is the Feast of Midsummer?”

“Not soon,” said Mistress Grimsly. “The ground is bitter cold and spring is late again this year.”



Can you write down the word that is missing on each line? If you don't remember, look back at the Midsummer Moon story. **Example number one is done for you.**

1. (**Transylvanian**) across or through the woods, from the Latin.
2. _____
know about my family history
3. _____
the hard crust around a tree trunk
4. _____
a kind of poisonous mushroom
5. _____
dotted with bright colours
6. _____
all through the night
7. _____
Masters, Rulers
8. _____
a special meal
9. _____
have a party
10. _____
school

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Page 1

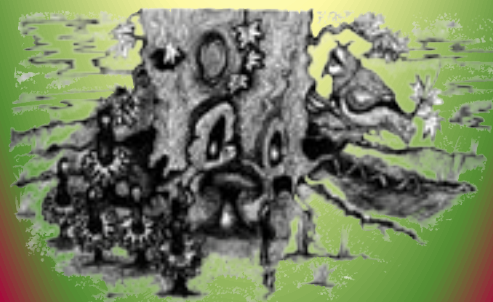
- a. Why is Count Owl so proud of his family history?
- b. What do you think the pretty toadstools are giggling about?
- c. What is Mistress Grimsly trying to teach her students?
- d. Who always arrives late for lessons?
- e. When is the Feast of the Midsummer Moon?



Can you draw a picture of Marsha Mushroom talking to Mistress Grimsly?



Listen to the CD again and imagine what you might see.





I remember when the forest was all ours,” said Count Owl. “My **ancestors** used to—Halt! Who goes there?” He blinked his **topaz** eyes at the **pearly dawn**.

“A stranger,” frowned Mistress Grimsly.

“A **peasant**,” said Count Owl **contemptuously**. “A **nouveau riche**, no doubt.”

“What a handsome young man he is,” whispered Marsha Mushroom to her friend, the toadstool.

“Silence!” said Mistress Grimsly.

“I beg your pardon, Mistress Grimsly,” said Marsha. “What is a nouveau riche?”

“Look in your dictionary, Miss Marsha,” said the headmistress.

“A nouveau riche,” said Count Owl (who was very wise and **learnèd**), “is a vulgar peasant who steals his master’s new cloak, then wears it himself.”

“But that can’t be true,” said Marsha. “The young man’s tunic is all torn. I see holes in the soles of his shoes.”

“*Whooh-Whooh!* Is that so, little mushroom?” hooted Count Owl. “Well, let me tell you something! He may look like a peasant, but deep in the heart of every peasant is the **secret desire** to be king.”





Can you write down the word that is missing on each line? If you don't remember, look back at the Midsummer Moon story. **Example number one is done for you.**

1. (**nouveau riche**) a tradesperson who becomes very rich
2. _____
rough-mannered worker from the countryside
3. _____
members of my family who were born before me
4. _____
a yellow precious stone
5. _____
the pale morning sky
6. _____
well educated
7. _____
disrespectfully
8. _____
a hidden wish

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Page 2

- a. Why doesn't Count Owl trust the stranger in the woods?
- b. Do you think that wise old Count Owl is right to be suspicious?
- c. What does Marsha Mushroom think about the woodsman?



Can you draw a picture of the woodsman?



Listen to the CD again and imagine what you might see.





Perhaps Count Owl startled the young man in his most secret thoughts, for just at that moment he tripped over a mossy stone and **tumbled** into the acorns.

“A king!” **snapped** Mistress Grimsly, shaking the soil from her skirt. “Why, for a king, this huge creature is **magnificently clumsy**.”

“**It is below my dignity** to speak to a peasant,” said Count Owl. So he settled his **ruffled** feathers and fell silent.

The young man rubbed his scraped **shin**. I’d better gather some of these mushrooms for my breakfast, he thought, looking around.

“Not me, young man,” hissed the toadstool in a **crimson rage**. “I promise if you taste me, I shall poison you.”

“Ugh! That one’s much too **bitter**,” said the woodsman, making a face. Then he reached for Mistress Grimsly.

“**Unhand me, you lout!**” screamed the headmistress. She stiffened in the woodsman’s fingers, and almost fainted.

“Hmmm, that one’s too woody, too **coarse**,” said the young man, pushing Mistress Grimsly aside. “Ah!” he said, spotting little Marsha Mushroom, “I think I’ve found the tenderest one.”

“Don’t **pluck** me, kind Sir,” begged Marsha, with tears in her eyes. “I am not yet fully grown.”

“What?” cried the young man.

“**Spare my life** until the Feast of the Midsummer Moon,” she said. “That’s when I dance in my prettiest silks.”





Can you write down the word that is missing on each line? If you don't remember, look back at the Midsummer Moon story. **Example number one is done for you.**

1. (lout) an idiot, a ruffian
2. _____
fell
3. _____
let me live
4. _____
bad tasting
5. _____
hard, tough
6. _____
red-faced anger
7. _____
very very clumsy
8. _____
spoke very sharply
9. _____
disturbed, unsettled
10. _____
pick from the ground
11. _____
take (your) hands off (me)
12. _____
I'm too grand (to speak to...)
13. _____
front part of the leg, below the knee

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Page 3

- a. What do the toadstools taste like?
- b. What does Mistress Grimsly taste like?
- c. What favour does Marsha Mushroom ask of the woodsman?



Can you draw Marsha Mushroom talking to the woodsman?



Listen to the CD again and imagine what you might see.





The Midsummer Moon!" echoed the woodsman in **amazement**, (for what can be stranger than a mushroom talking?) "But I shall certainly die of hunger before then."

"But aren't you a **quiche**?" said Marsha.

"A what?"

"Count Owl said you were a quiche. Er—no, no, I mean a nouveau riche."

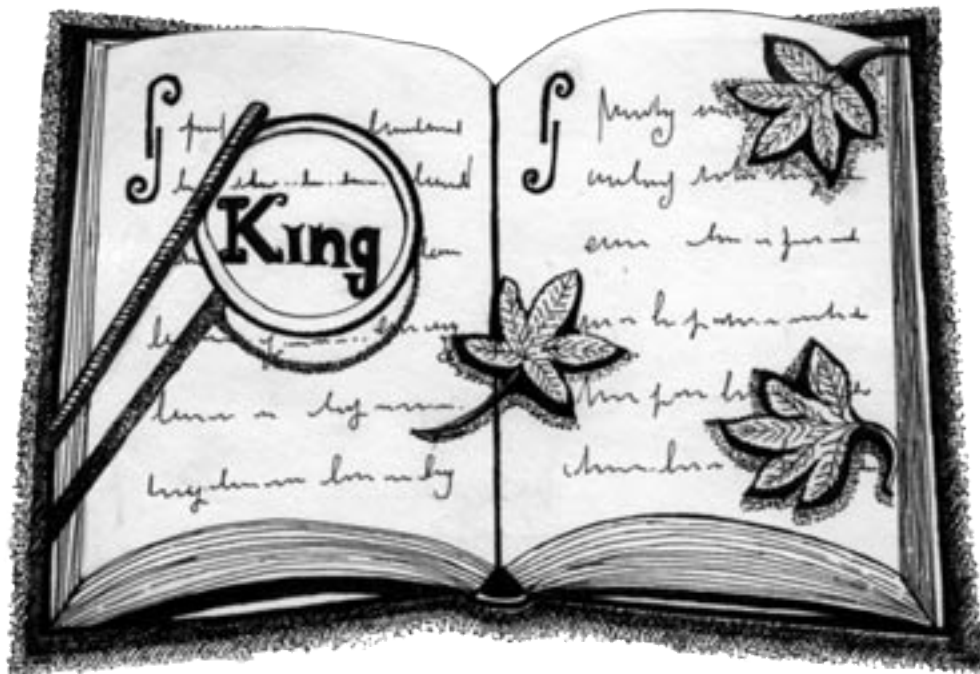
"Look here, little mushroom, I am the son of a poor woodcutter and I live in that old cottage on the hill. This winter I broke my cartwheel on a stone, so I can't drag any more firewood into the village to sell. I haven't a penny left so I must find something to eat or I shall die."

"Stop! Stop! Stop!" cried Marsha **rashly**. She **shrank** beneath the shadow of his outstretched hand and thought as fast as she could. Didn't Count Owl just say that every peasant wanted to become a king?

"I promise to **grant** your most secret desire, young woodsman, in return for the gift of my life."

"*Hah!*" said the woodsman **bitterly**. "Since when do little mushrooms promise such grand favours?"

"Nothing could be easier for me," said Marsha. She had lost Mistress Grimsly's **Lexicon** of Kings and Commoners, Peasants and **Parvenus**, **Monarchs** and Maids. Besides, she wasn't exactly sure what a king was. Someone very grand and important, like Count Owl perhaps. And this young woodsman looked handsome enough to be a king. So be it. He would be a king.





Can you write down the word that is missing on each line? If you don't remember, look back at the Midsummer Moon story. **Example number one is done for you.**

1. (parvenu) a common upstart who pretends to be important
2. _____
quickly and carelessly, without thinking
3. _____
became very small, tried to hide herself
4. _____
a delicious French meal
5. _____
in a sulky manner
6. _____
great surprise
7. _____
dictionary
8. _____
give
9. _____
king

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Page 4

- a. Have you ever heard a mushroom talking?
- b. How do you know that Marsha never pays much attention to her French lessons?
- c. What is a quiche? What is a nouveau riche?
- d. Does the woodsman believe that Marsha can grant his most secret desire? Do you think she can?



Draw the woodsman's hand, about to pick Marsha Mushroom for breakfast.



Listen to the CD again and imagine what you might see.





I can read your thoughts, young woodsman,” Marsha said bravely. “I can read your heart.”

“Oh, can you, indeed?” grinned the woodsman.

Marsha glanced up at his torn **breeches**. She tried to remember exactly what Count Owl had just said. “Deep in your secret heart of hearts you’re a king, dressed in rags of a **slave**.”

“Wha-a-a-t?” said the woodsman. “A king? Me?”

“*Er—hum!* Hearts and secrets; secrets and hearts!” cracked the Stone. “Don’t listen to such **romantic folly**, young man. I am Master Stone. You were clumsy enough to fall over me a moment ago, but I don’t really mind. I’m just stone-tired of sitting under this oak tree. Would you do me a little favour?”

“Surely.”

“Would you push me up to the **crest** of that hill?”

“But you look very heavy. I really don’t think I’d be able to move you,” said the woodsman.

“Well, please try, young man. I can’t promise to make you a king. But you’ll get a pair of strong arms and a **sturdy** back for your trouble, that’s certain.”





Can you write down the word that is missing on each line? If you don't remember, look back at the Midsummer Moon story. **Example number one is done for you.**

1. (crest) top
2. _____
strong
3. _____
servant
4. _____
silly, fanciful notions or ideas
5. _____
knee-length trousers



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Page 5

- a. Does Marsha remember Count Owl's exact words?
- b. Marsha tells the woodsman something that Count Owl would never say. What is it?
- c. What favour does Master Stone ask of the woodsman? What does Master Stone promise in return?
- d. Can anyone move Master Stone? Why or why not? Can you think of another reason why he can't be moved?



Can you draw a picture of the woodsman talking to Master Stone?



Listen to the CD again and imagine what you might see.