



Meanwhile back in the forest, Count Owl wept pearly tears of rage.

Master Stone sighed and stared up at the sky. Mistress Grimsly Mushroom fussed and scolded more than ever. She could never finish her lessons any more, for the woodsman returned, dawn after dawn, **distracting** them all with his noise. Only Miss Marsha dared to smile whenever she heard the far-off tapping of his axe.

“I think I hear him coming closer,” she whispered to her friend, the shiny speckled toadstool. “I must get ready for the Feast.”

Then she disappeared underground for many days, only to return long after twilight on the Eve of Midsummer. By then, all the little mushrooms were dressing up in their prettiest dresses. They were excited and quite a bit noisier than usual.

“Silence in the marshwoods!” said Mistress Grimsly, raising her wooden pointer. When she saw Marsha, she held her **eyeglass** closer to one eye. “Where have you been all this time, child? What have you been doing?”

“I’ve been as far as the oyster sands, searching for **seed pearls** to **embroider** to my gown.”

“I see, and what’s that you have in your hair?”

“Just a few wild rose blossoms I picked.”

“And in your hands?”

“These are my dancing slippers, Madam. I wove them from sticky **silkworm** threads and dried them between the **thistles**.”

For a few moments, Mistress Grimsly was too amazed to speak.





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. (**embroider**) to decorate cloth with fine needlework
2. _____
a prickly plant
3. _____
bother, disturb
4. _____
tiny imperfect pearls
5. _____
glass lens with a handle
6. _____
a worm that makes silk threads inside its body



Midsummer Moon



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Page 16

- a. How does Marsha Mushroom know that the woodsman is coming closer?
- b. Why is Count Owl upset?
- c. What disturbs Mistress Grimsly's lessons?
- d. What is Marsha wearing for the Feast of the Midsummer Moon?



Can you draw Marsha Mushroom in her dancing slippers and beautiful new clothes?



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





Dancing slippers!" she cried. "Have you forgotten everything you've learned? Where is your **Manual** of Modest Mushroom Manners? Don't you know that sensible mushrooms anchor their feet firmly to the ground? They are never permitted to dance."

A sudden wave of disappointed murmurs was clearly heard among the pretty toadstools.

"But the witch hazel gave me the secret. It's magic," said Marsha. "I had to soak my dancing slippers for three nights in the moonlit lake of dreams."

"Lake of dreams!" said Mistress Grimsly. "What a foolish child you are! Who has ever seen a mushroom dancing?"

"But I want to try," said Marsha **stubbornly**. "I think I can dance. I know I can."

"A dancing mushroom!" giggled all the other little mushrooms. "Can you imagine little Marsha dancing in her magic slippers at the Woodland Ball?"

Master Stone yawned **irritably** and opened his eyes. "Could we have a little peace and quiet, please?" he said. "I know it's your special feast, and all that, but it's getting late and some of us are trying hard to sleep."

"Sleep!" screeched Count Owl. "Who can sleep? I haven't slept a wink since I first set eyes on that rogue, the woodcutter. **Hark!** Is that him I hear again?"



"Yes," said Marsha. "It is him. He has come back just as he promised!" She pulled sharply at the **stump** of her foot. She **tugged** and tugged, but it would not come free.

"Where are you, little mushroom?" whispered the woodsman, stepping carefully through the grass.





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. (Hark!) Listen!
2. _____
pulled hard
3. _____
handbook (of rules)
4. _____
in an annoyed manner
5. _____
short thick stem on a plant
6. _____
obstinate, determined



Midsummer Moon



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Page 17

- a. Why is Mistress Grimsly so upset with Marsha?
- b. Who gave Marsha the magic secret to make her dancing slippers?
- c. Why are all the other little mushrooms laughing at Marsha?
- d. Why is Master Stone so irritable?
- e. Why is the woodsman coming back to the forest?



Can you draw all the little mushrooms laughing at Marsha Mushroom?



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



He thought he knew the forest well. There was the moonlit pond. Here, close by it, stood grandfather oak. For years it had been his guiding **landmark**. But tonight these woods were washed in the strangest, most enchanting shade of moonglow. He passed the **furrowed** trunk of the linden tree. Nearby, hundreds of hawthorn blossoms tossed their **silky filaments** of spiked fire. Tiny **maple keys** winged round and around. The birch mooned over its silver image in the pond.



“*Whooooh!*” hooted Count Owl softly from his dark leafy perch. The enchantment almost made him forget the danger for a moment. “This Midsummer night reminds me of olden times, long ago, when I was Lord of the forest!”

“It really is a rare and magical night,” said Master Stone. He tried to shift from his hollow, mossy bed under the oak tree. “How I wish I could roll to the top of that hill! You’re so lucky you can fly, Count Owl. I can’t move. I can’t dream. I can hardly see anything where I am!”

A handful of prickly burs broke loose and clung to the woodsman’s breeches. The witch hazel grinned saucily at him as she combed her thick yellow hair. The pale magnolia, draped in narrow petals, held her head and shoulders high. The passionflower curled her **tendrils**, as the woodsman passed, and flushed deep crimson beneath her corona.

Stretched on the forest floor was a tablecloth of lacy moonbeams. Buttercups brimmed to their flimsy tops with the pale gold honey of midsummer. Empty **seed pods** flashed glassy black from rainwater hollows. A tender dragonfly **shed its skin**, then stretched its filmy wings on a leaf. A swarm of fireflies lanterned through the bush.

“Where are you, little mushroom?” said the woodsman. “I can’t find you.”

“Here—I’m here,” cried Marsha. “Behind the oak tree.”

She was fully grown now, almost as tall as a lady in her pink silk dress. One last tug, and she tore herself free from the mushroom stump; then she slipped both her feet into her magic dancing slippers.

“What are you doing?” said Mistress Grimsly in alarm. “Marsha, come back at once.”

But Marsha didn’t even hear her. “I knew you wouldn’t forget me,” she cried **triumphantly**, as she rushed, almost stumbling, into the arms of the woodcutter. “Look! I’m wearing my magic slippers. I can dance—I’m sure I can!”





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. (**silky filaments**) long threads, like silk, inside the petals of a flower
2. _____
peeled off a layer of skin
3. _____
a place you always recognize
4. _____
proudly, like the winner in a battle
5. _____
tiny green curling shoots on a plant
6. _____
deep, criss-cross mark (on a tree trunk)
7. _____
maple seeds shaped like flat green wings
8. _____
a small hard case containing seeds

Midsummer Moon



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Page 18

- a. What does the woodsman find so strange about the forest on Midsummer Eve?
- b. How does the special magic of Midsummer Eve affect Count Owl and Master Stone?
- c. What has happened to Marsha Mushroom?



Can you draw a picture of this magical Midsummer night in the forest?



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





And so, on this sacred Eve of the Midsummer Moon, Marsha danced for the first time with the woodsman. Her slippers laced a silver thread of footprints around the pond. A hundred times around the moonsilver pond she danced. It made the woodsman smile, yet he seemed sad, as though he were thinking of something else.

“You promised to grant me one wish, little mushroom. Will you lend me your magic slippers for the Princess Sharma to dance in?”

“My dancing slippers?”

“Tomorrow is Princess Sharma’s wedding day. I must bring her the slippers before noon.”

“I remember, a very long time ago, I made you a promise. I know I promised you all my ‘Tomorrows’, but that means I have so little time.”

The **swollen** moon smiled through her tears. They splashed over the crest of the black hill and **silvered** the rough barks of trees. They stilled the woodland into the deepest, most magical silence. And all the little forest creatures stared, like stones, as Marsha danced for the very last time in the arms of the handsome woodsman. Then the moon slipped away. The sky became pale, as pale as the woodsman. A roll of mist rose, like the breath of a ghost, from the pond.

“I have to go now—I’m sorry,” he said. “Do you remember your promise?”

“I remember,” said Marsha, sinking her **limp**, grey head upon his arm.

“Goodbye, little mushroom, goodbye,” said the woodsman. “Today Princess Sharma must dance in your magic slippers—or I will die.”





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. (limp) lifeless, shapeless

2. _____
turned or made silvery

3. _____
very full



Midsummer Moon



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Page 19

- a. What was Marsha's promise to the woodsman?
- b. What do you think will happen to Marsha after she keeps her promise to the woodsman?
- c. Where must the woodsman go now?



Can you draw Marsha saying goodbye to the woodsman?



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



As the sun rose, the woodsman bathed in the forest pond. Then he strode back to the house of the Tailor. “Master Tailor, have you finished your stitching?” he said.

“Heavenly mercy upon us all,” cried the Tailor. “Wherever did you sleep last night? The Duke de Vieux-Boisy drove down to our shop in his carriage this morning. He tried on your green velvet coat. It was much too long, of course, so he kept tripping and **stumbling** on the hem.”

“He could hardly walk through my doorway in your high leather boots!” said the Cobbler.

“And when he saw your **initials** on his wedding cake,” said the Baker, “he tore at his wig and swore he’d have us dragged to the **dungeons** before sundown!”

“Trust me, honest gentlemen,” said the woodsman, as he dressed in his rich new clothes. “**Your lives will be spared.**”

“But where are you going?”

“To the Palace, of course. This Midsummer day may well be my last—so I shall spend it as rashly as 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. (**stumbling**) falling over something
2. _____
underground prison in a castle
3. _____
the first letters of your name
4. _____
you will not be hurt or harmed

Midsummer Moon



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Page 20

- a. Why are the three old men so frightened as the woodsman returns from the forest?
- b. Do you think they are in great danger? Why or why not?
- c. Is the woodsman in great danger? Why or why not?



Can you draw the woodsman going to the Palace in his splendid new clothes?



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

