

Note: The transactional processes suggested in CISCE curriculum are highlighted in grey.

### Learning Outcomes

- To recognise the poem as didactic in nature
- To familiarise with ballads
- To summarise the poem
- To trace the sequence of events

**Summary:** *Inchcape Rock* is a ballad describing the bitter end of those who resort to evil. An Abbot installs a bell on the Inchcape rock to warn sea-farers about the reef near the Scottish coast. With evil intentions, Ralph the Rover cuts off the bell, hoping that this would be the end of people blessing the Abbot for being saved from death. Ultimately, as the saying goes, *As you sow, so shall you reap*, Sir Ralph's own ship collided with Inchcape Rock and he died there, probably repenting for his devilish action.

### Pre-reading

Explain to the class the features of a ballad.

Note: A ballad is a narrative and it tells a story. The stanzas in a typical ballad consist of four lines. Sometimes they have a refrain (lines that are repeated for emphasis).

### READING

Students read to comprehend and analyse

Write the proverb *As you sow, so shall you reap* on the board.

Brainstorm for the meaning. (You will be rewarded or punished according to the good or bad deeds that you do.)

Proceed to tell students that they will be reading a didactic ballad. In other words, it is a ballad with a moral message and the message is closely related to the saying that was discussed.

- Play the audio track and pause after the fifth stanza. / Read the poem aloud till the fifth stanza.

Ask students:

*What is the tone of the first stanza?* (Calm, everything was peaceful and normal) *Identify*

*the subject of personification in the first stanza. Why did the Abbot place the bell on the Inchcape Rock? In what way was the Inchcape Rock dangerous? What adjectives would you use to describe the Abbot? How is the day described in the fifth stanza?*

- Play the audio track and pause after the eleventh stanza. / Read the poem aloud till the eleventh stanza.

Ask students:

*What caught the Rover's eye from afar? What was his state of mind at this time? Why does the poet say that his joy was one of wickedness? (He was scheming to do something devious) Why was Sir Ralph determined to 'plague the Abbot'? (Perhaps he was filled with jealousy that the Abbot was being blessed by sailors whenever they were saved by the ringing*

of the bell. It is possible that he might have been planning to loot the ships after they were wrecked at sea.)

- Play the audio track till the end. / Read the poem aloud till the end.

Ask students:

*Where was Sir Ralph heading? How was the weather here? What do the words 'there is the dawn of the rising moon' mean? (It is dark all around but there is hope that there might be light when the moon starts shining in the sky.) What did one of the sailors think he had heard? (One of them thought that he had heard the waves breaking against the shore and concluded that they may be near the shore) What did the mariners wish for at this point in time? – What did Sir Ralph hear while he was drowning in the sea? Why was it that the devil and not the angels were ringing his death knell?*

## Post-reading

Group work

- Make a flow chart tracing the events in the poem.
- The Inchcape Rock* is a didactic ballad. Explain.

### Poetic devices

*Alliteration:* (The first few examples) No **stir** in the air no **stir** in the **sea**/ The **ship** was as **still** as **she** could be / Without either **sign** or **sound**

*Personification:* The ship was as still as she could be

*Metaphor:* A sound as if it were the Inchcape Bell; The Devil below was ringing his knell.

*Rhyme scheme:* aa bb...

*Style:* Ballad

## STUDENTS' BOOK ANSWER KEY

### The Inchcape Rock

#### Comprehension

A. 1. b    2. a    3. a    4. c    5. c    6. c

- B. 1. a. 'They' refers to the sailors that were warned by the Inchcape bell about the presence of the Inchcape rock. They knew about the presence of the 'perilous rock' when the rough waves and wind washed over the rock, thus making it ring.
- b. The rock is described as 'perilous' because when the sea was rough, the large, strong waves covered the rock and hid it from sight. Passing ships that could not see it crashed into the rock and often sunk, killing many sailors.
- c. The sailors blessed the Abbot for his thoughtfulness and kindness in placing the bell which rung out and warned ships of the presence of the rock which was hidden when the sea was rough.
2. a. 'They' refers to Sir Ralph and his mariners. They are in their ship, on a rough sea, close to the Inchcape rock.
- b. If not for Sir Ralph, they would have heard the sound of the Inchcape bell.
- c. They reacted in this way because they knew that they were now doomed. The Inchcape rock was notorious for causing shipwrecks which had cost so many sailors their lives and now, it was their own ship, the one in which Sir Ralph sailed to the rock to cut off the bell, that had now crashed into the rock.

3. a. Sir Ralph was on his ship caught in the storm at sea.
- b. Sir Ralph cursed himself because he realised that they would have been saved had the bell been there to warn them about the Inchcape Rock. He now realised his folly in cutting off the bell that the Abbot had placed on the rock.
- c. In his dying moments he could hear the Devil sounding his death knell by ringing the Inchcape bell.

**C.** In the poem, Sir Ralph the Rover cut off the bell on the Inchcape Rock that had been placed there by the Abbot of Aberbrothok. He thought that if he cut off the bell, no one would ever bless the Abbot nor would his efforts be appreciated. He was too selfish to think of the other sailors who would be safe due to the Abbot's good deed. Little did he know or understand that he and his men would face a storm at sea like other sailors before them. However, by the end of the poem, Sir Ralph and his sailors die from a shipwreck caused by a collision with the Inchcape rock. When he encountered the storm at sea there was nobody to help him, there was no bell to warn them and so the ship sank. Sir Ralph intended harm unto others and was punished for his wickedness in the end.

*Free response*

### **Appreciating the Poem**

*Free response*

### **Vocabulary**

- |                      |                  |                        |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 1. betwixt – between | 2. hark – listen | 3. hither – here       |
| 4. prithee – please  | 5. ere – before  | 6. yonder – over there |

### **Going further**

*Free response*

## **QUESTION BANK**

### **The Inchcape Rock**

#### **A. Answer in brief.**

What attracted the attention of Sir Ralph on the sea?

**Ans:** It was a pleasant and calm sea and Sir Ralph the Rover was in a good mood. He was walking on his deck when his eyes focused on a dark speck on the ocean. There he saw the buoy of the Inchcape bell floating near the Inchcape Rock.

#### **B. Answer in detail.**

What proves that Sir Ralph was wicked?

**Ans:** Sir Ralph was extremely happy as the day was pleasant in the spring season. However, though he was in a happy mood, he had wicked plans in his mind. He saw the buoy floating with the Inchcape bell, placed by the Abbot of Aberbrothok. All set to execute his wicked plan to 'plague' the Abbot of Aberbrothok, he asked his sailors to take him to the rock in the boat. As soon as he reached the rock, he cut the bell from the Inchcape float and threw it into the sea. After that he declared, with total disregard,

that no more will anyone thank the Abbot of Aberbrothok. This evil thought and immoral action showed that Rover was a wicked man.

**C. Choose the correct answer.**

*What did the Rover hear when he was dying?*

- a. The sound of the waves crashing against the rocks on the stormy seas
- b. The dreadful voice of the Abbot of Aberbrothok.
- c. A solemn sound announcing his death

**Ans:** c

**D. Read the lines and answer the questions.**

*When the rock was hid by the surge's swell,  
The mariners heard the warning bell;  
And then they knew the perilous rock,  
And blest the Abbot of Aberbrothok.*

- a. What was the warning bell for?
- b. How did the mariners come to know of the perilous rock?
- c. Why did they bless the Abbot of Aberbrothok?

**Ans:** a. The sound of the Inchcape bell ringing would warn sailors of the rock beneath the waves.

b. The bell was placed on a buoy. When a storm started, the buoy would float and the bell would ring with the movement and this would warn the seamen.

c. The seamen would thank and bless the Abbot of Aberbrothok, for it was his idea to place the bell on the rock to prevent shipwrecks and loss of life.

**E. Answer in detail. (Think and answer)**

The Inchcape bell had saved so many mariners from hitting the perilous rock but in the end it could do nothing to save Sir Ralph the Rover. Elaborate.

**Ans:** Many sailors had blessed and thanked the Abbot of Aberbrothok for placing the bell on the Inchcape Rock. However, the bell at the bottom of the sea was silent now because Sir Ralph the Rover had cut it and thrown it into the sea. It could no longer warn any mariners. Ralph and the sailors could not hear the warning bell and as a result met their end as the ship struck the Inchcape Rock Ralph cursed himself in despair when he started sinking along with the ship. While dying he heard the ringing of a bell which, to him seemed to be the death knell rung by the devil himself.