

Deepening Understanding
YR6 Narrative Text
The Visitor by Laura Curtis



The visitor could be smelt long before his grazed knuckles rapped sharply on the door. Little Tommy peered down in awe at the lonely figure down in the courtyard below, his aroma seeping up through the curling tendrils of the midnight mist. The scent was distinguishable, conclusive - he was a grave digger. He looked like one too: his matted hair draped across the collar of his weather-beaten leather coat like rats tails; his breeches were caked in mud; and his hands...no amount of scrubbing was going to shift the earth embedded into his skin. He was forever tattooed with the reminder of death.

Little Tommy felt the timbers of the inn shudder under the visitor's incessant blows as, once again, the strange figure requested admittance. Upon the third knock, Little Tommy could sense the man's growing agitation and so could everyone else in the yard. The stable-hand boy was pretending to shovel hay whilst gazing back over his shoulder. Arthur, the kitchen hand, showed no such inhibition: he was literally hanging out of the open, lead-paned cracked window with his mouth open. And Marie - darling, sweet Marie - had momentarily paused her bed-making to discreetly gaze out of the upstairs window, attempting to hide herself by a veil of long, brown hair. Even the horses tethered in the leaky stables had paused their munching despite being starving after

a hard days trotting over the moors. Little Tommy listened. Not a sound could be heard and the only things moving were the puffs of breath as they mingled with the mist. He held his own breath, wishing to maintain the spell...waiting for the inevitable bang on the door to come once again. Knock, knock, knock! And with that the spell was broken, the teeny wooden shutter in the door was opened and everyone sprang to life once again.

'Who goes there?' Little Tommy could hear the inimitable voice of his father booming up through the floorboards. He could imagine the little specks of dust as they trickled down from the wooden beamed ceilings through the hazy candlelight of the smoke-filled room down below. A great hulk of a man - like the stranger - his father was certainly one to be reckoned with. Having sailed the seas for many long years, there was nothing in this world that he had not seen or heard and his wisdom shone through his jet black eyes. Suffering and hardship had not turned this man's heart hard and Little Tommy could not imagine what a better father would be like. To Little Tommy, this man was his whole world. Apart from darling Marie of course - everyone needed a mother-figure after all.

'It is I.' Tommy held his breath once more, expecting further revelations. Yet, after a few long-stretched seconds it became apparent that no more words were forthcoming. Little Tommy sensed his father's tension and decided that it was time to open his own hatch. Dropping to his knees, he lifted the moth-eaten rug to reveal a secret opening in the floorboards. He slipped his finger through the rusty metal ring and eased it open with the dexterity of one who had completed this manoeuvre many, many times before. Twisting his head so he could see the imminent action, he relaxed into his usual position and waited.

Evidently, the visitor did not feel any further explanation as to his identity was necessary and so Little Tommy watched as his father shifted position: he was clearly deciding what to do. Unbeknownst to Little Tommy, however, was that this stranger - this visitor - had been expected. The handwritten letter - secured with a red seal - had arrived a mere three hours before; the messenger and the horse had arrived giving the distinct impression that they had ridden like the wind. At the time, Little Tommy had clocked their arrival but exhausted riders were nothing unusual, it happened everyday - his father owned a travelling



inn after all. Of course, Little Tommy was oblivious to the existence of the letter and so clearly thought that his father was now simply deciding whether he should permit entrance to the stranger...or not. Yet, never in his whole ten years of being on this earth, had Little Tommy ever known his father to refuse entry so was unsurprised when the little door hatch was shut, the bolt was slid with an ease that belied its huge size and weight, the huge key was turned and the vast expanse of the ancient oak door was heaved open.

With a nod, Little Tommy's father greeted the visitor as he stepped foot inside. The man was so large that his head was at risk of making contact with the beams and so it was that with a dominance and might that seemed to make all the other travellers inside shrink back into their seats and hide their faces behind their ale jugs, the man strode across the inn to a vacant area and slumped down with a small sigh. With this, the rest of the inn, slowly began to bubble back into life: the fire gave a little crackle in the grate, the candles gave a little burst of energy and Pip the dog, who was stretched out enjoying the warmth of the fire, gave a yawn and fell back to sleep once more.

His eyes wide, Little Tommy found himself gazing down directly onto the top of the man's head. Hardly daring to breathe, he continued to watch as the man was swiftly joined by none other than his father who sat down in the wooden pew next to him. Watching almost in disbelief at his father's apparent immediate tolerance of the man, despite his rugged, rather menacing appearance, Little Tommy listened as the two men bowed their heads closer together and fell into a deep, almost inaudible conversation. Yet, it was what happened in the next moment that really made his heart stop and his nose tingle as the stench of death wafted up through the smoky air...All of a sudden, the conversation was paused and the visitor surreptitiously reached into the great folds of his leather coat. Hardly able to believe his eyes, Little Tommy gasped as he saw the man withdraw a small package, wrapped neatly in brown paper and tied with string.

'I believe you've been expecting this,' the visitor murmured, sliding the package into the lap of Little Tommy's father.

Little Tommy gasped.

