When I set out for Lyonnesse

As a young apprentice architect, British poet and novelist Thomas Hardy once visited a parish to supervise the restoration of a church. On his return from the parish, people noticed two things about him — a new glow in his eyes and a crumpled piece of paper sticking out of his coat pocket. That paper, it is recorded in one of his biographies, contained the draft of a poem. You are going to read that very poem inspired by a visit to a place which the poet calls Lyonnesse.

When I set out for Lyonnesse
A hundred miles away,
The rime was on the spray;
And starlight lit my lonesomeness
When I set out for Lyonnesse
A hundred miles away.

What would bechance at Lyonnesse
While I should sojourn there,
No prophet durst declare;
Nor did the wisest wizard guess
What would bechance at Lyonnesse
While I should sojourn there.

When I returned from Lyonnesse
With magic in my eyes,
All marked with mute surmise
My radiance rare and fathomless,
When I returned from Lyonnesse
With magic in my eyes.

THOMAS HARDY

glossary

Lyonnesse: (in Arthurian legend) the mythical birthplace of Sir Tristram, in England, believed to have been submerged by the sea; here an imaginary place.

rime: frost

the spray: leaves and branches of trees; foliage

durst: (poetic word for) dared

bechance: happen/chance to happen

sojourn: stay

radiance: glow

fathomless: so deep that the depth can't be measured

working with the poem

1. In the first stanza, find words that show
    (i)   that it was very cold.
    (ii) that it was late evening.
    (iii) that the traveller was alone.

2. (i) Something happened at Lyonnesse. It was
        (a) improbable.
        (b) impossible.
        (c) unforeseeable.
    (ii) Pick out two lines from stanza 2 to justify your answer.

3. (i) Read the line (stanza 3) that implies the following.
        'Everyone noticed something, and they made guesses, but didn't speak a word'.
    (ii) Now read the line that refers to what they noticed,

Springtime

Question: Why is it unsafe to walk about in spring?

Answer: Because the grass has blades, the flowers have pistils and the trees are shooting.