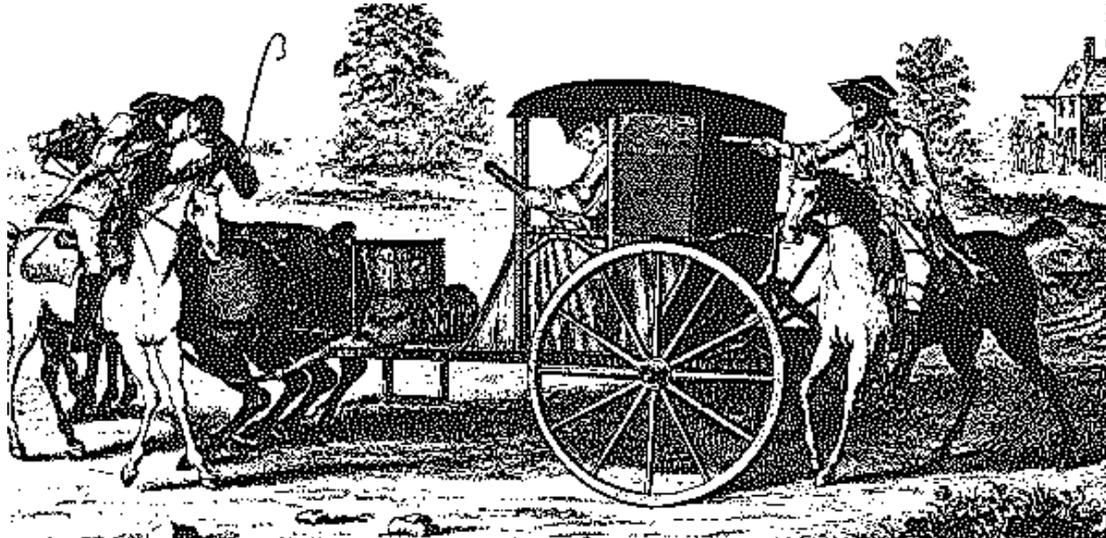


## Lesson 1: A Short History of Highwaymen



### Introduction

Highwaymen thrived in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, becoming legendary and romantic figures. Highwaymen were "as common as crows" from around 1650 to 1800. In an age where travel was already hazardous due to the lack of decent roads, no one rode alone without fear of being robbed, and people often joined company or hired escorts. Travellers often wrote their wills before they travelled.

### Lies, Exaggeration and Truth

The legend of the highwayman is that of a gentleman. High or low born, the legendary highwayman dressed well (with a 'kerchief' over his face), was well-mannered, and used threats rather than violence. "Stand and Deliver" and "Your money or your life," were his greetings.

Although there were some well-born and well-mannered highwaymen, they were far outnumbered by those who practiced their trade with brutality. Violence was very common. When Tom Wilmot, a notorious highwayman, had difficulty removing a woman's ring, he cut off her finger,

### Highwaymen's Haunts

The four main roads to London were infamous for their criminal activity. On the **Great Western Road**, Hounslow Heath was notorious for its highwaymen. Robbers on the **Great North Road** included Dick Turpin. The **Dover Road** had two infamous spots, Gad's Hill and Shooter's Hill. And John Cotinton, aka "Mulled Sack," stole 4,000 pounds from an army wagon on the **Oxford Road**. Wimbledon Common, Blackheath, Barnes Common, Bagshot Heath; all were frequented by robbers. Salisbury Plain was also noted for its highwaymen.

### The Most Famous Highwayman: Dick Turpin

Born in Essex in 1705, Turpin was taught to read and write and became an apprentice to a butcher. During his apprenticeship he "conducted himself in a loose and disorderly manner." When his apprenticeship was over, he opened a butcher shop, and began to steal sheep, lamb and cattle. When he was discovered doing this he was forced to give up his shop and opened a public house. He then became a member of the Essex, or Gregory Gang. The gang broke into farm houses and terrorised the

owners into revealing the whereabouts of any valuables. The gang was betrayed by one of their members for a reward, but Turpin escaped.

For a time Turpin worked with Thomas Rowden. They were renowned for their boldness, reportedly riding through the city in broad daylight. When they parted company Turpin began working with Tom King, in Epping Forest. Their partnership ended during a shootout with the owner of a stolen horse. Turpin fired at the owner, and hit King, who died as a result. Turpin was again on his own.

In 1737 Turpin killed a forest keeper of Epping Forest. A reward of £200 was offered for his capture. Shortly thereafter Turpin settled in Yorkshire under the name of John Palmer, stealing horses to supply his business as a horse trader. One day, returning from an unsuccessful hunt he shot his landlord's rooster. When the landlord complained he threatened to kill the landlord as well. He was taken into custody. His identity was discovered only by coincidence after he wrote to his brother-in-law. The schoolmaster who had taught him to write identified Turpin for the reward.

### **Highwaymen's Demise**

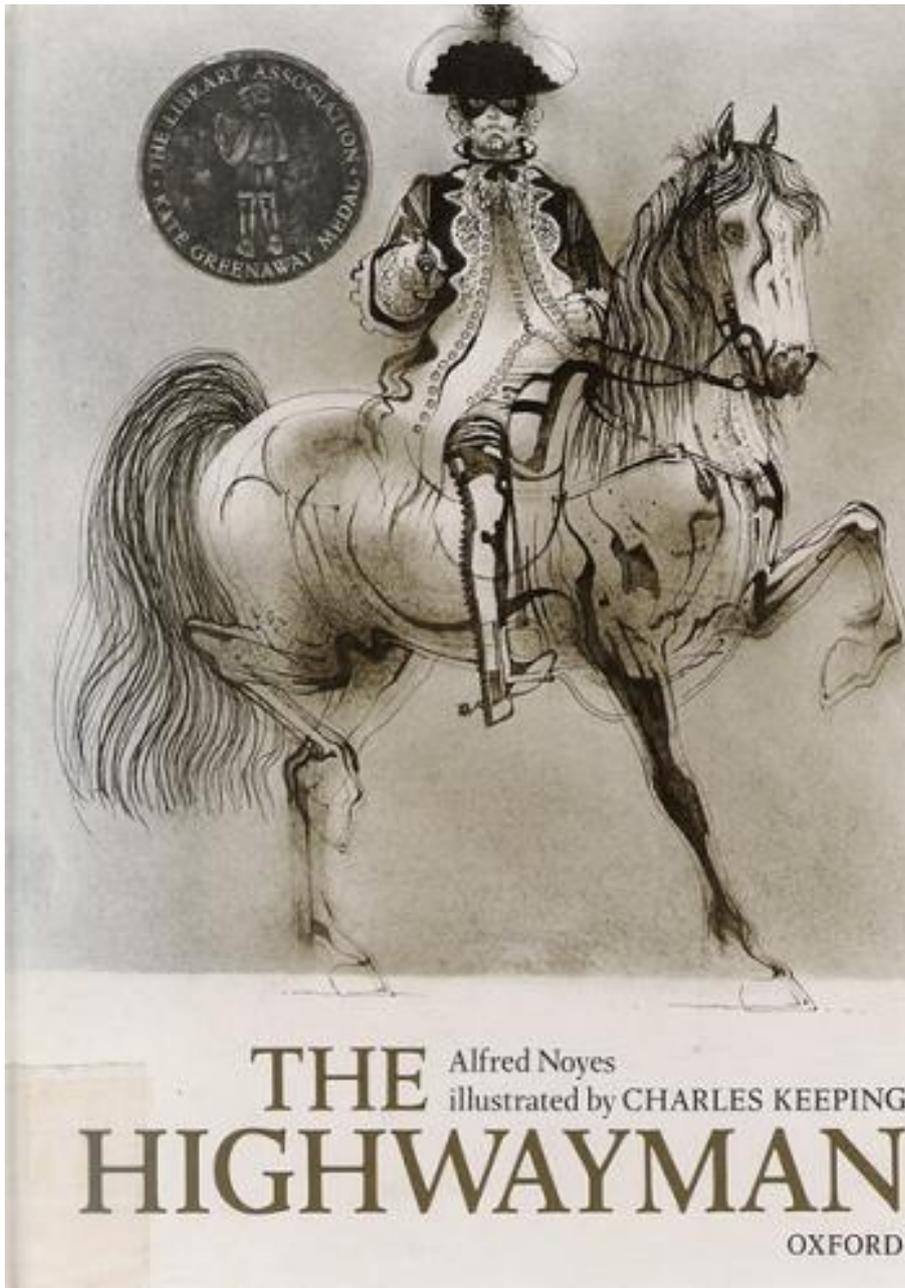
The demise of the highwayman began with the establishment of the Horse Patrol around London in 1805, and was furthered by the founding of the Metropolitan Police in 1829. Although highwaymen persisted in isolated areas, the growth of a paid police force meant their time was over.

### **Questions**

- 1) During what period of time would you be most likely to meet a highwayman?
- 2) It is said that highwaymen used to be as 'common as crows'. Explain what this means.
- 3) Name two of the main roads to London that were favourite robbing routes for highwaymen.
- 4) Who was the most famous highwayman?
- 5) What did he do before he became a highwayman?
- 6) Who did this highwayman 'work' with and how did they often behave?
- 7) When Turpin fled to Yorkshire, how did he support himself?
- 8) Give two reasons why Highwaymen became increasingly rare in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



## Lesson 2: Front Cover



What can you see on the front cover?

What can you *infer* from the image? E.G. what kind of person do you think he is?



What do you predict will happen in the story?

What questions do you have/ what are you wondering about?



Do you think you will like this poem?



Does it remind you of anything you have read or seen before?

### Lesson 3: The poem

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,  
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,  
The road was a ribbon of moonlight, over the purple moor,  
And the highwayman came riding- riding-riding-  
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.



He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,  
A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin;  
They fitted with never a wrinkle: his boots were up to the thigh!  
And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,  
His pistol butts a-twinkle,  
His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.



Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard,  
And he tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred;  
He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there  
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter, Bess, the landlord's daughter,  
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.



And dark in the old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked  
Where Tim the ostler listened; his face was white and peaked;  
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay,  
But he loved the landlord's daughter, The landlord's red-lipped daughter,  
Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say-



"One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-night,  
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light;  
Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day,  
Then look for me by moonlight, Watch for me by moonlight,  
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way."



He rose upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach her hand,  
But she loosened her hair i' the casement! His face burnt like a brand  
As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast;  
And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,  
(Oh, sweet black waves in the moonlight!)  
Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped away to the West.



He did not come in the dawning; he did not come at noon;  
And out o' the tawny sunset, before the rise o' the moon,  
When the road was a gipsy's ribbon, looping the purple moor,  
A red-coat troop came marching- Marching-marching-  
King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-door.

They said no word to the landlord, they drank his ale instead,  
But they gagged his daughter and bound her to the foot of her narrow bed;  
Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at their side!  
There was death at every window; And hell at one dark window;  
For Bess could see, through the casement, the road that he would ride.

They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering jest;  
They bound a musket beside her, with the barrel beneath her breast!  
"Now keep good watch!" and they kissed her. She heard the dead man say-  
Look for me by moonlight; Watch for me by moonlight;  
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way!

She twisted her hands behind her; but all the knots held good!  
She writhed her hands till here fingers were wet with sweat or blood!  
They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled by like years,  
Till, now, on the stroke of midnight, Cold, on the stroke of midnight,  
The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was hers!

The tip of one finger touched it; she strove no more for the rest!  
Up, she stood up to attention, with the barrel beneath her breast,  
She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive again;  
For the road lay bare in the moonlight; Blank and bare in the moonlight;  
And the blood of her veins in the moonlight throbbed to her love's refrain.

Trot-trot; trot-trot! Had they heard it? The horse-hoofs ringing clear;  
Trot-trot, trot-trot, in the distance? Were they deaf that they did not hear?  
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,  
The highwayman came riding, riding, riding!  
The red-coats looked to their priming! She stood up strait and still!

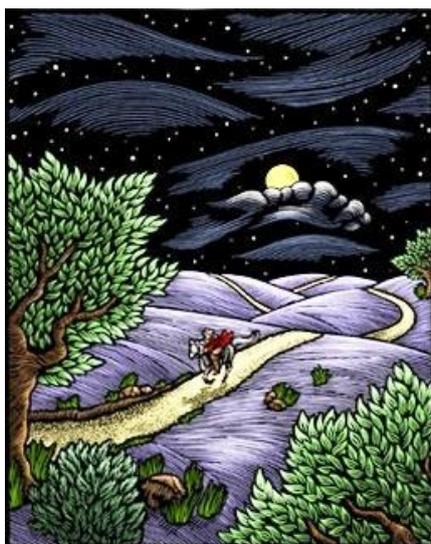


Trot-trot, in the frosty silence! Trot-trot, in the echoing night!  
Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!  
Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last deep breath,  
Then her finger moved in the moonlight, Her musket shattered the moonlight,  
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him-with her death.

He turned; he spurred to the West; he did not know who stood Bowed,  
With her head o'er the musket, drenched with her own red blood!  
Not till the dawn he heard it, his face grew grey to hear  
How Bess, the landlord's daughter, The landlord's black-eyed daughter,  
Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in the darkness there.

Back, he spurred like a madman, shrieking a curse to the sky,  
With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier brandished high!  
Blood-red were his spurs i' the golden noon; wine-red was his velvet coat,  
When they shot him down on the highway, Down like a dog on the highway,  
And he lay in his blood on the highway, with a bunch of lace at his throat.

And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees,  
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,  
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,  
A highwayman comes riding- riding-riding-  
A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.



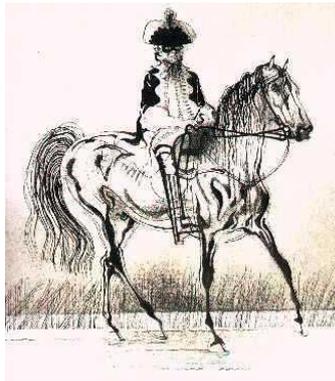
Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard,  
And he taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred;

He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there  
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter, Bess, the landlord's daughter,  
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

### Lesson 3: Understanding the plot

Finish the sentences

- 1) On the night the story starts the weather is ...
- 2) The highwayman wears ...
- 3) The two characters who love each other are ...
- 4) The highwayman attracts Bess's attention when he arrives at the inn at night by ...
- 6) Concerning Bess's relationship with the highwayman, Tim feels ... because....
- 7) The King's men knew to come to the inn because...
- 8) When King George's men come to the inn they ...
- 9) To warn the highwaymen that he is in danger, Bess...
- 10) When the highwayman finds out what has happened...



## Lesson 4: Similes and Metaphors

**Activity 1:** Which of the statements below use *Metaphor* and which use *Simile*?

The man fought with an iron fist. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

The stars glistened like diamonds in the sky. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

The birds on the telegraph wire looked like musical notes on a page. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

He didn't care; he had a heart of stone. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

The car shot through the night like a bullet. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

She was green with envy. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 3:** Below are lines from the poem. Decide which are *metaphor* and which are *simile*?

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

His hair like mouldy hay. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

His eyes were hollows of madness. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

When the road was a gipsy's ribbon. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

The hours crawled by like years. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

Down like a dog on the highway. This is a \_\_\_\_\_

Her face was like a light! This is a \_\_\_\_\_

Now create some of your own similes and metaphors to describe this scene:



## Lesson 5: Describing the highwayman

Annotate the picture with phrases from the poem that describe the highwayman. Now add in some of your own words and phrases to describe both his appearance and character.

