

Alice woke to the drip-drip-drip of the rain outside. She shivered. It had rained all night and it still persisted. She was surprised that the water hadn't found its way through the thatch and into the room. She breathed out and could see a puff of white cloud in front of her face. She pulled the blankets tighter around her head and tried to get to sleep. It was hard with the constant snoring of her father and the whimpers of Peter on the other side of the room.

She must have fallen back to sleep because she was woken by her mother's voice. It was hushed but there were times when she caught a few words here and there. She was talking urgently to Pa.

"I can't... it's wrong... I won't make them..." What was she talking about? Alice lay still as the dead, hoping to eavesdrop while they presumed her to still be sleeping.

Suddenly, her father exploded. "I'm not asking you, I'm telling you! Peter will distract them, then Alice will nip over and gather the piglets. They're ours by right!"

Alice pretended to wake up at that moment, stretching her hands into the frigid air and murmuring to alert her parents that she was conscious.

"Good morning, Alice," said Ma breezily. Were they tears she was wiping away from her face? Pa placed a kiss on Alice's cheek, raised the wooden bar on the door and exited, extending no word of comfort to his wife.

Ma helped Alice to roll up the mattress and store it with the others in the corner. Tabitha immediately jumped on top of it, curling her striped body round and tucking her head in for a long nap in the shelter of the house. Alice stroked her tenderly. She'd had Tabitha since she was a baby and they'd often shared a bed and warmth in the rawness of winter.

Alice removed her nightgown and quickly pulled her tunic over her head; it wasn't the weather for hanging around half-dressed and, anyway, their home afforded her no privacy. She sat on the edge of the wooden seat near the hearth, absorbing what warmth the glowing embers produced as she tugged her stockings up her thin legs. What was it that she'd overheard earlier? Her mind began to bubble with thoughts.

Circle the words which are antonyms for the word breezily.

bleakly

merrily

heartily

cheerily

heavily

sullenly

When do you think this story is set? Why?

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How is Alice's father feeling? Find some evidence to prove your idea.

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What do you think Alice's father was talking about to her mother?

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What clues are there that it is cold? Find two.

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Explain who the following characters are and the evidence you have for this.

Peter is...	I know because...
Tabitha is...	I know because...

Circle the words which are antonyms for the word breezily.

bleakly
merrily
heartily
cheerily
heavily
sullenly

When do you think this story is set? Why?

**It is set in medieval times. The family are sleeping in the same room and we are told the house is thatched. Alice wears clothes such as a nightgown, tunic and stockings. Her mattress is rolled up after use. There is an open fire in the room.**

How is Alice's father feeling? Find some evidence to prove your idea.

**He is feeling cross. We are told he explodes when talking to Alice's mother. He says to her that he is not asking her but instead is telling her, which suggests he's annoyed. He also walks out of the house without comforting her.**

What do you think Alice's father was talking about to her mother?

**Alice's father is talking about stealing some piglets but he feels they are rightfully theirs. He is planning to use Peter to distract the family while Alice takes the animals.**

What clues are there that it is cold? Find two.

- Any two from:**
- Alice shivers.
  - She can see her breath in front of her face.
  - She pulls the blankets tighter round her.
  - The air is described as frigid.
  - We are told it wasn't the weather for hanging about half-dressed.

Explain who the following characters are and the evidence you have for this.

Peter is... Alice's brother	I know because... he is sleeping in the same room as the rest of the family; Alice's father suggests something that Alice and Peter will do; we are told that Peter is younger and has fewer chores, inferring that he is Alice's brother
Tabitha is... the cat	I know because... she jumps on top of the mattresses and curls up to sleep; Alice strokes her; we are told she was the only one left in the litter

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