**Interrogative Reading Activity – Complete the following on "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" or “We are Seven”**

**First – Individual Task**

* Read the ballad of your choice to get a total sense of it.
* Reread the ballad, noting spots where you were certain or curious about plot, character, language, or meaning.
* Look over the work for a third time, searching these checkpoints. Were your questions easily resolved by the end? Do some puzzles still remain? Write phrases beside the checkpoints that you can later convert into full questions.
* Formulate five key questions from your initial curiosity, perplexity, or uncertainty—in other words, from points in the story where insights are emerging but doubts remain.

**Next – Pair Task**

* Take your five questions to a partner and compare your two lists. Can you answer each other’s questions? Do so.
* Select which ten queries to pose to the whole class. These questions can guide you:
* Do your partner’s questions lead you to any ideas that you had not considered?
* Do they deepen your insight into the work?
* Do your individual questions follow any particular pattern, such as clarifying details of setting, character, or situation? Puzzling over language? Interpreting meaning? Noticing formal patterns?

**Finally – Whole Class Conversation**

* Share your best questions with the whole class, both those that remain unanswered and that lead you to new ideas.
* Consider the following: were any of the questions the same? Has question asking revealed insights that were not present before?

# La Belle Dame sans Merci: A Ballad

BY [JOHN KEATS](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/john-keats)

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,

       Alone and palely loitering?

The sedge has withered from the lake,

       And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,

       So haggard and so woe-begone?

The squirrel’s granary is full,

       And the harvest’s done.

I see a lily on thy brow,

       With anguish moist and fever-dew,

And on thy cheeks a fading rose

       Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,

       Full beautiful—a faery’s child,

Her hair was long, her foot was light,

       And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,

       And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;

She looked at me as she did love,

       And made sweet moan

I set her on my pacing steed,

       And nothing else saw all day long,

For sidelong would she bend, and sing

       A faery’s song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,

       And honey wild, and manna-dew,

And sure in language strange she said—

       ‘I love thee true’.

She took me to her Elfin grot,

       And there she wept and sighed full sore,

And there I shut her wild wild eyes

       With kisses four.

And there she lullèd me asleep,

       And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!—

The latest dream I ever dreamt

       On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,

       Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;

They cried—‘La Belle Dame sans Merci

       Thee hath in thrall!’

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,

       With horrid warning gapèd wide,

And I awoke and found me here,

       On the cold hill’s side.

And this is why I sojourn here,

       Alone and palely loitering,

Though the sedge is withered from the lake,

       And no birds sing.

**“We Are Seven”-** BY [WILLIAM WORDSWORTH](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-wordsworth)

———A simple Child,

That lightly draws its breath,

And feels its life in every limb,

What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage Girl:

She was eight years old, she said;

Her hair was thick with many a curl

That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,

And she was wildly clad:

Her eyes were fair, and very fair;

—Her beauty made me glad.

“Sisters and brothers, little Maid,

How many may you be?”

“How many? Seven in all,” she said,

And wondering looked at me.

“And where are they? I pray you tell.”

She answered, “Seven are we;

And two of us at Conway dwell,

And two are gone to sea.

“Two of us in the church-yard lie,

My sister and my brother;

And, in the church-yard cottage, I

Dwell near them with my mother.”

“You say that two at Conway dwell,

And two are gone to sea,

Yet ye are seven! I pray you tell,

Sweet Maid, how this may be.”

Then did the little Maid reply,

“Seven boys and girls are we;

Two of us in the church-yard lie,

Beneath the church-yard tree.”

“You run about, my little Maid,

Your limbs they are alive;

If two are in the church-yard laid,

Then ye are only five.”

“Their graves are green, they may be seen,”

The little Maid replied,

“Twelve steps or more from my mother’s door,

And they are side by side.

“My stockings there I often knit,

My kerchief there I hem;

And there upon the ground I sit,

And sing a song to them.

“And often after sun-set, Sir,

When it is light and fair,

I take my little porringer,

And eat my supper there.

“The first that died was sister Jane;

In bed she moaning lay,

Till God released her of her pain;

And then she went away.

“So in the church-yard she was laid;

And, when the grass was dry,

Together round her grave we played,

My brother John and I.

“And when the ground was white with snow,

And I could run and slide,

My brother John was forced to go,

And he lies by her side.”

“How many are you, then,” said I,

“If they two are in heaven?”

Quick was the little Maid’s reply,

“O Master! we are seven.”

“But they are dead; those two are dead!

Their spirits are in heaven!”

’Twas throwing words away; for still

The little Maid would have her will,

And said, “Nay, we are seven!”

**Apostrophe Definition**

In literature, **apostrophe** is a figure of speech sometimes represented by an exclamation, such as “Oh.” A writer or speaker, using **apostrophe**, speaks directly to someone who is not present or is dead, or speaks to an inanimate object.