“The Gambler” – Don Schlitz (sung by Kenny Rogers)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hx4gdlfamo>

On a warm summer's evening, on a train bound for nowhere  
I met up with a gambler, we were both too tired to sleep  
So we took turns a-staring out the window at the darkness  
The boredom overtook us and he began to speak

He said, "Son, I've made my life out of reading people's faces  
And knowing what the cards were by the way they held their eyes  
So if you don't mind my sayin', I can see you're out of aces  
For a taste of your whiskey, I'll give you some advice"

So I handed him my bottle and he drank down my last swallow  
Then he bummed a cigarette and asked me for a light  
And the night got deathly quiet, and his face lost all expression  
Said, "If you're gonna play the game, boy, you gotta learn to play it right"

You got to know when to hold 'em, know when…

You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em  
Know when to walk away, know when to run  
You never count your money when you're sittin' at the table  
There'll be time enough for countin', when the dealin's done

Now, every gambler knows, the secret to survivin'  
Is knowing what to throw away, knowing what to keep  
'Cause every hand's a winner and every hand's a loser  
And the best you can hope for, is to die in your sleep

So when he'd finished speakin', he turned back toward the window  
Crushed out his cigarette and faded off to sleep

Then somewhere in the darkness, the gambler he broke even  
But in his final words, I found an ace that I could keep

You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em  
Know when to walk away, know when to run  
You never count your money when you're sittin' at the table  
There'll be time enough for countin', when the dealin's done

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Journal: “The Gambler” – Don Schlitz

1. Interpret the various card terms mentioned.
2. This is an example of a dramatic poem. Explain what you think is meant by the term and how “The Gambler” illustrates the main features of dramatic poetry.
3. In one or two paragraphs, analyze life in terms of another game, pastime, or hobby.
4. Tell about an experience in which someone, a stranger perhaps, changed your views on life.

Ballad #2: “The Listeners” – Walter De La Mare

Read and respond to the following questions:

1. What has happened here? Can you see why these events attract a balladeer?
2. What are the feelings that rise from this action for the characters? For you, the reader?
3. Could any of the stanzas be omitted? Do they build to a climax?
4. Are important things implied, not stated? What is gained by what is *not* told?
5. If there is repetition, what is its effect on you? Does it add to the suspense or emotional intensity?

# The Listeners

BY [WALTER DE LA MARE](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/walter-de-la-mare)

‘Is there anybody there?’ said the Traveller,

   Knocking on the moonlit door;

And his horse in the silence champed the grasses

   Of the forest’s ferny floor:

And a bird flew up out of the turret,

   Above the Traveller’s head:

And he smote upon the door again a second time;

   ‘Is there anybody there?’ he said.

But no one descended to the Traveller;

   No head from the leaf-fringed sill

Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,

   Where he stood perplexed and still.

But only a host of phantom listeners

   That dwelt in the lone house then

Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight

   To that voice from the world of men:

Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,

   That goes down to the empty hall,

Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken

   By the lonely Traveller’s call.

And he felt in his heart their strangeness,

   Their stillness answering his cry,

While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,

   ’Neath the starred and leafy sky;

For he suddenly smote on the door, even

   Louder, and lifted his head:—

‘Tell them I came, and no one answered,

   That I kept my word,’ he said.

Never the least stir made the listeners,

   Though every word he spake

Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house

   From the one man left awake:

Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,

   And the sound of iron on stone,

And how the silence surged softly backward,

   When the plunging hoofs were gone.

Source: The Collected Poems of Walter de la Mare (1979)