Hand Out

When I set out for Lyonnesse

**Thomas Hardy**

**About The Poet Thomas Hardy**

The poem was written in 1869 and was first published in 1914 in Thomas Hardy’s collection of poems, Satire of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries.

Lyonnesse is a mythical place of the Arthurian legend and the poet’s employment of a mythical atmosphere adds a mystical flavor to the poet’s subsequent journey.

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| **Poet Name** | Thomas Hardy |
| **Born** | 2 June 1840, Stinsford, United Kingdom |
| **Died** | 11 January 1928, Dorchester, United Kingdom |
| **Poems** | The Darkling Thrush, Neutral Tones, The Man He Killed |
| **Movies** | Far from the Madding Crowd, The Mayor of Casterbridge |



Thomas Hardy

**Introduction to the poem**

The poet is a young architect who went to Lyonnesse to supervise the renovation work of a dilapidated church. It was 100 miles away.

It was winter season and snowfall was at the peak.

He was in a solitary state and during his journey he witnessed starlight.

When I set out for Lyonnesse

When I set out for Lyonnesse

- Thomas Hardy  
  
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.

**Stanza 1**

*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.*

In this stanza we see that the poet set out for Lyonnesse which was situated a hundred miles away. It was winter and the weather was cold. The light of the stars from the night sky helped him when he was lonely. He had no idea what would happen during his stay at Lyonnesse.

**Stanza 2**

*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.*

In this stanza, the poet expresses his anxiety about the unclear future and what would happen at Lyonnesse. He says that he doesn’t know what awaits him at Lyonnesse. The poet says that even a prophet or a ‘wisest wizard’ would fail to predict the experience accurately and vividly.

**Stanza 3**

*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.*

In this stanza the poet describes what happened on his return. On his return from the parish, people noticed a new glow in his eyes.

**Meanings of words and phrases:**

* **rime:**frost formed on cold objects by the rapid freezing of water vapour in cloud or fog.
* **lonesomeness :**a state for feeling lonely.
* **sojourn** : a temporary stay.
* **bechance:**to happen or find by chance.
* **mute :**silent.
* **surmise :**suppose that something is true without having evidence to confirm it.
* **radiance :**light or heat as emitted or reflected by something.
* **fathomless:**something unable to be measured or understood.
* **parish :** a community of Christians under their priest and their church.
* 1 Mile =1.6 k.m.

**Rhyme Scheme:**

*When I set out for Lyonnesse              a*

*A hundred miles away,                       b*

*The rime was on the spray;                b*

*And starlight lit my lonesomeness     a*

*When I set out for Lyonnesse              a*

*A hundred miles away.                       b*

*What would bechance at Lyonnesse a*

*While I should sojourn there,             b*

*No prophet durst declare;                  b*

*Nor did the wisest wizard guess         a*

*What would bechance at Lyonnesse a*

*While I should sojourn there.            b*

*When I returned from Lyonnesse       a*

*With magic in my eyes,                       b*

*All marked with mute surmise            b*

*My radiance rare and fathomless,     a*

*When I returned from Lyonnesse       a*

*With magic in my eyes.                       b*

The rhyme scheme of the poems is **abbabb**.

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