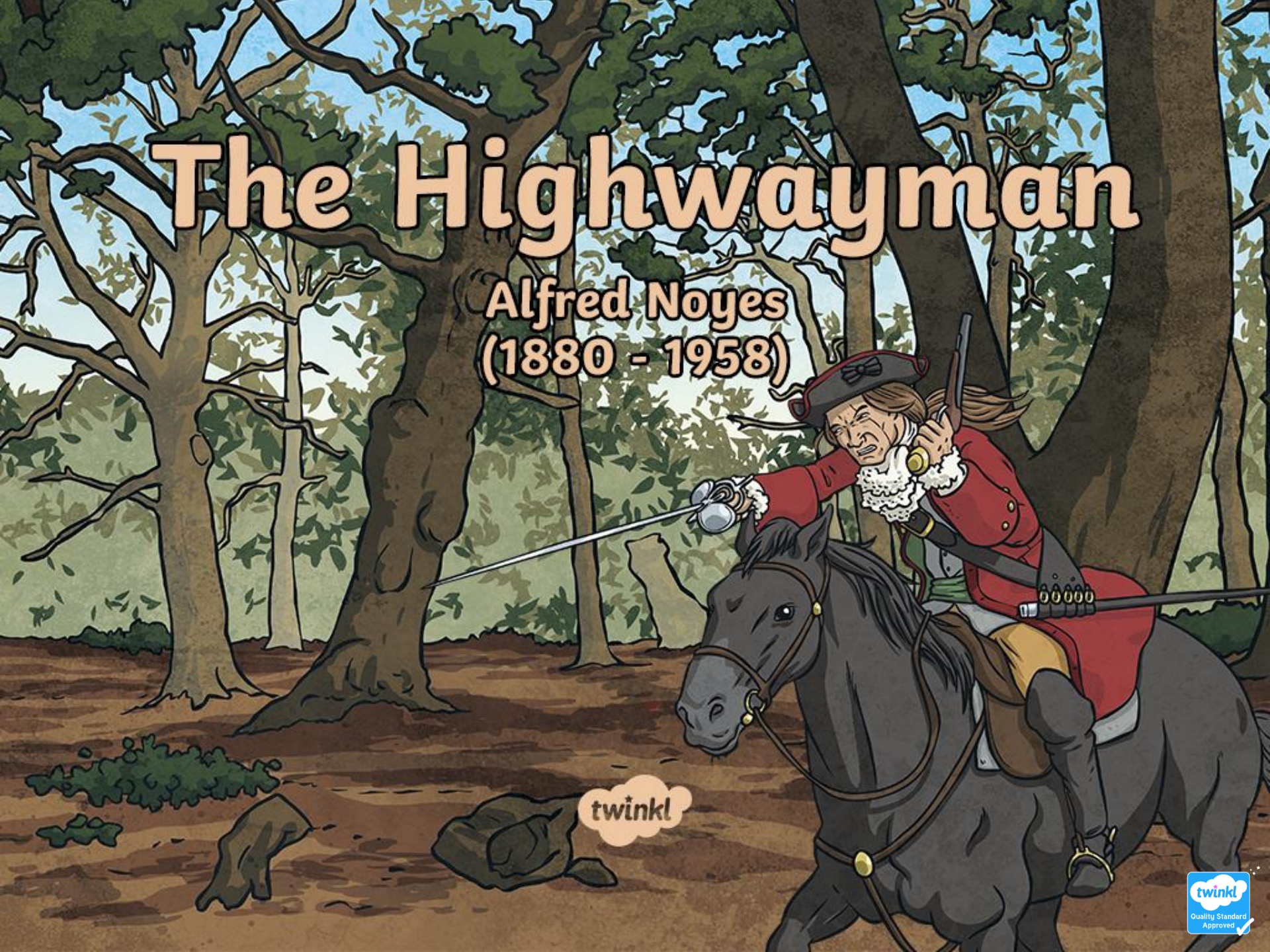
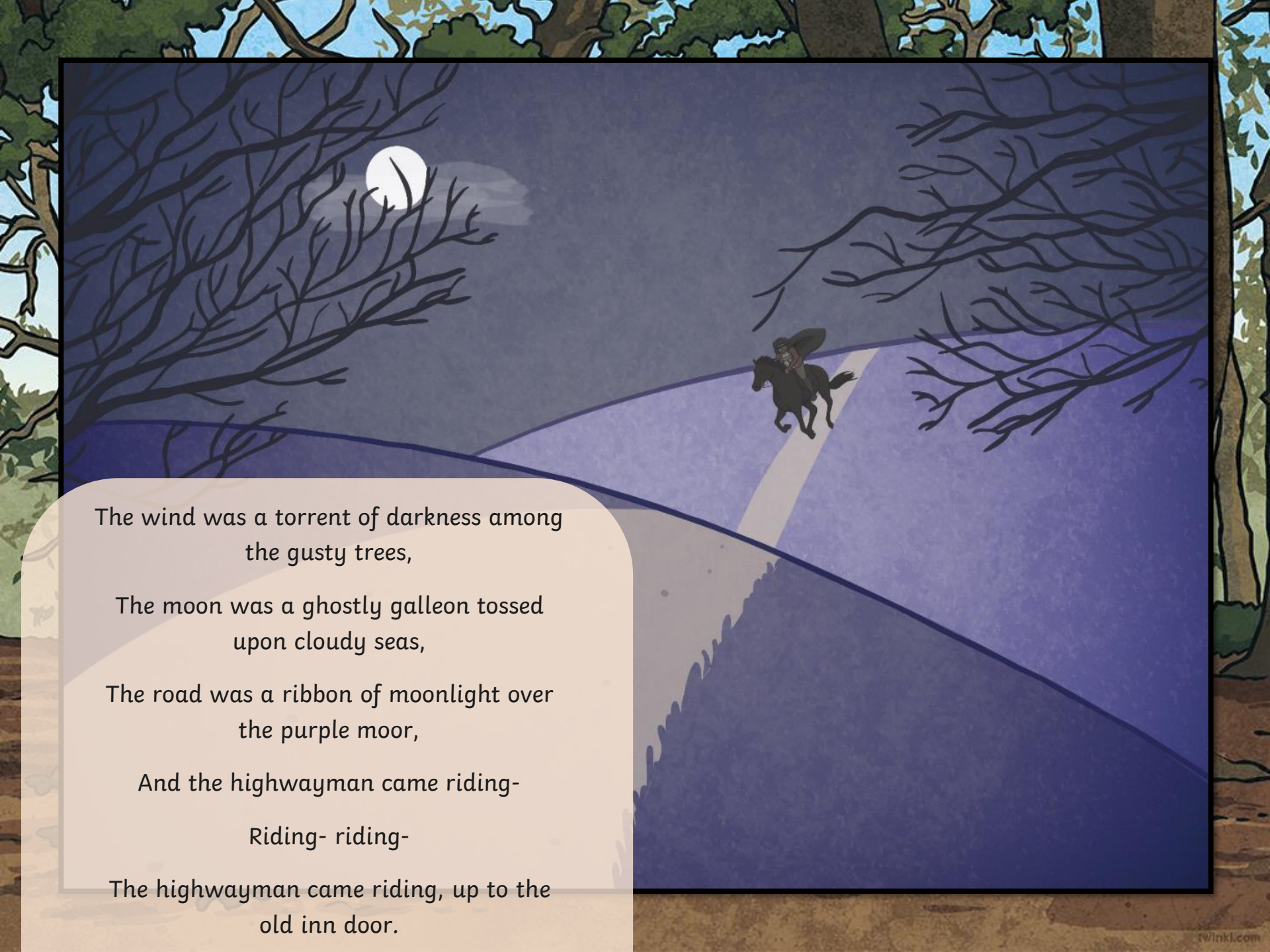


# The Highwayman

Alfred Noyes  
(1880 - 1958)





An illustration of a highwayman on a dark horse riding along a winding road at night. The road is illuminated by a bright, glowing light source, possibly the moon, creating a path of light. The surrounding landscape is dark and moorland-like, with silhouettes of trees and bushes. A full moon is visible in the dark sky, partially obscured by tree branches. The overall mood is mysterious and suspenseful.

The wind was a torrent of darkness among  
the gusty trees,

The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed  
upon cloudy seas,

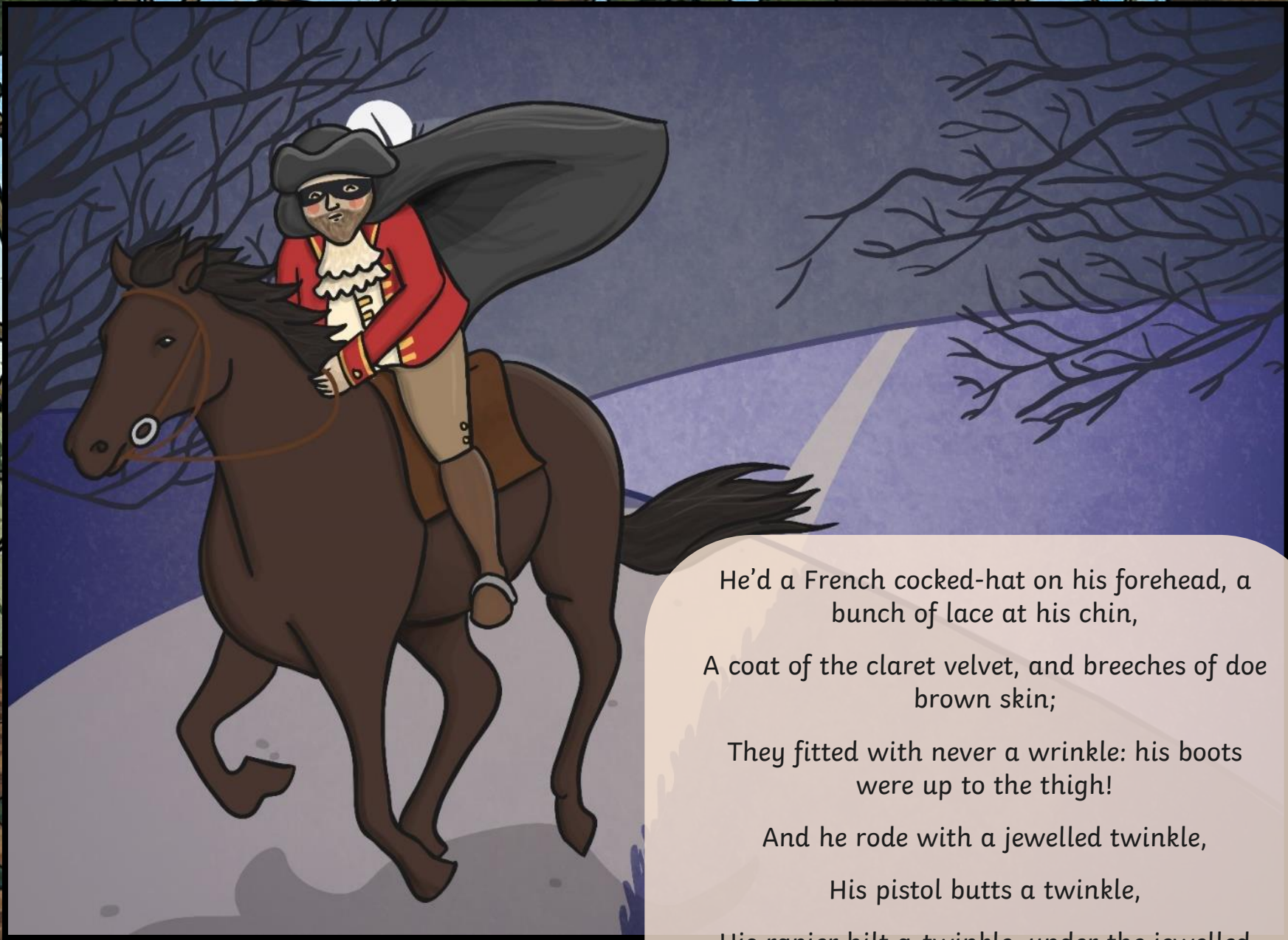
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over  
the purple moor,

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 doe  
brown 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;

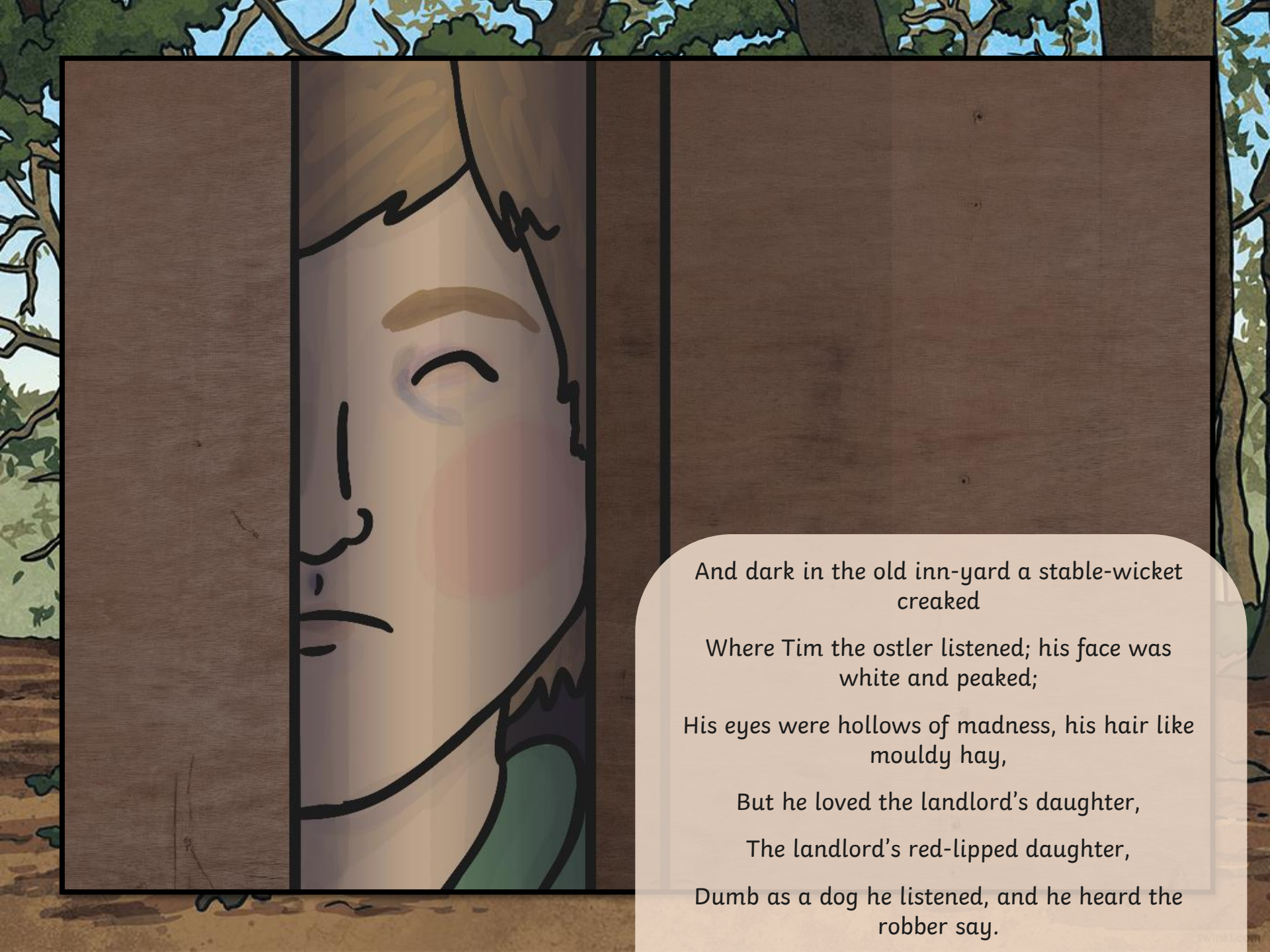
He whistled a tune to the window, and who  
should be waiting there

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

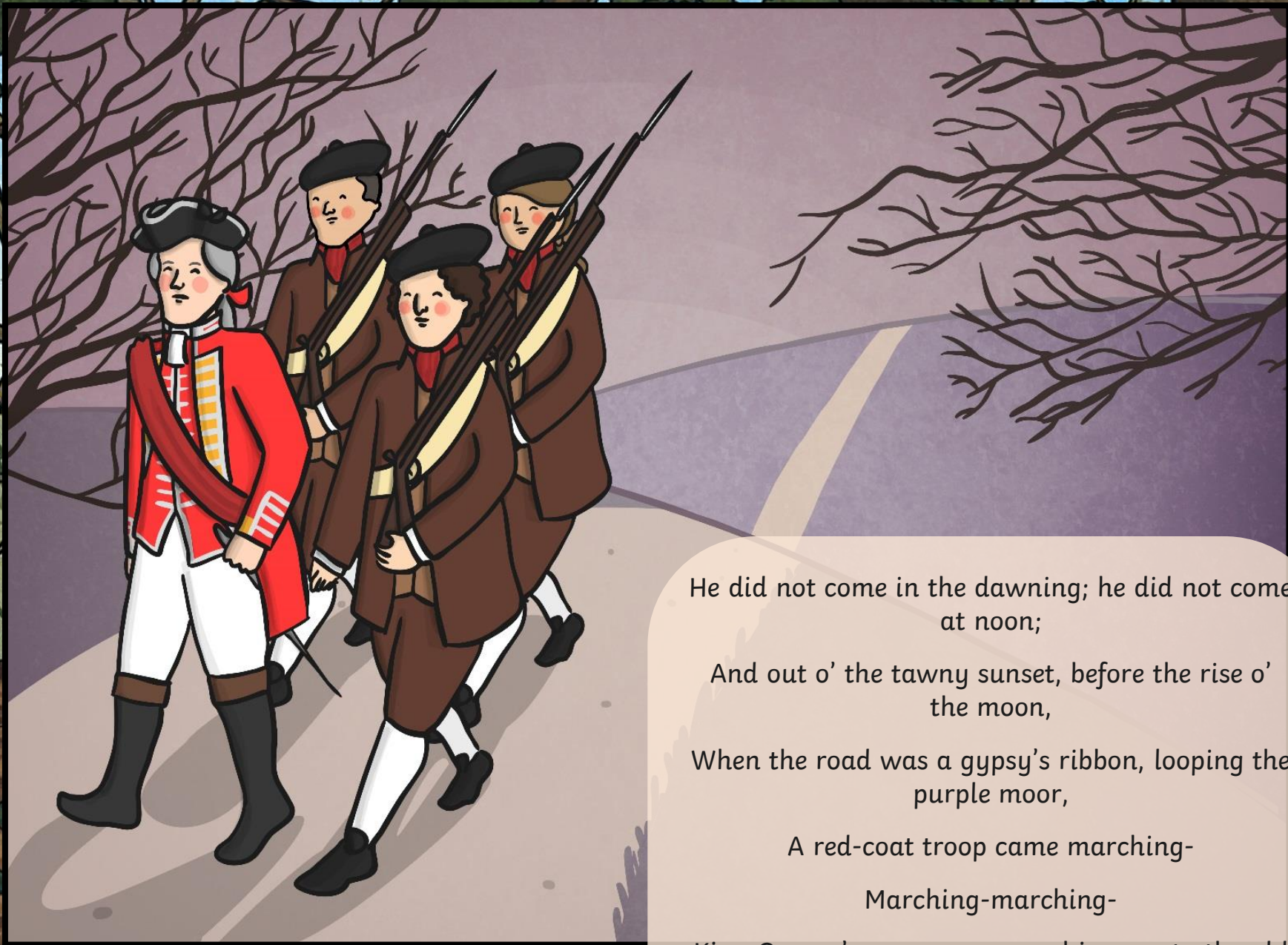
As the black cascade of perfume came  
tumbling over his breast;

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 gypsy'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 the 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  
barrel beneath her breast!

"Now keep good watch!" and they  
kissed her.

She heard the dead man say-

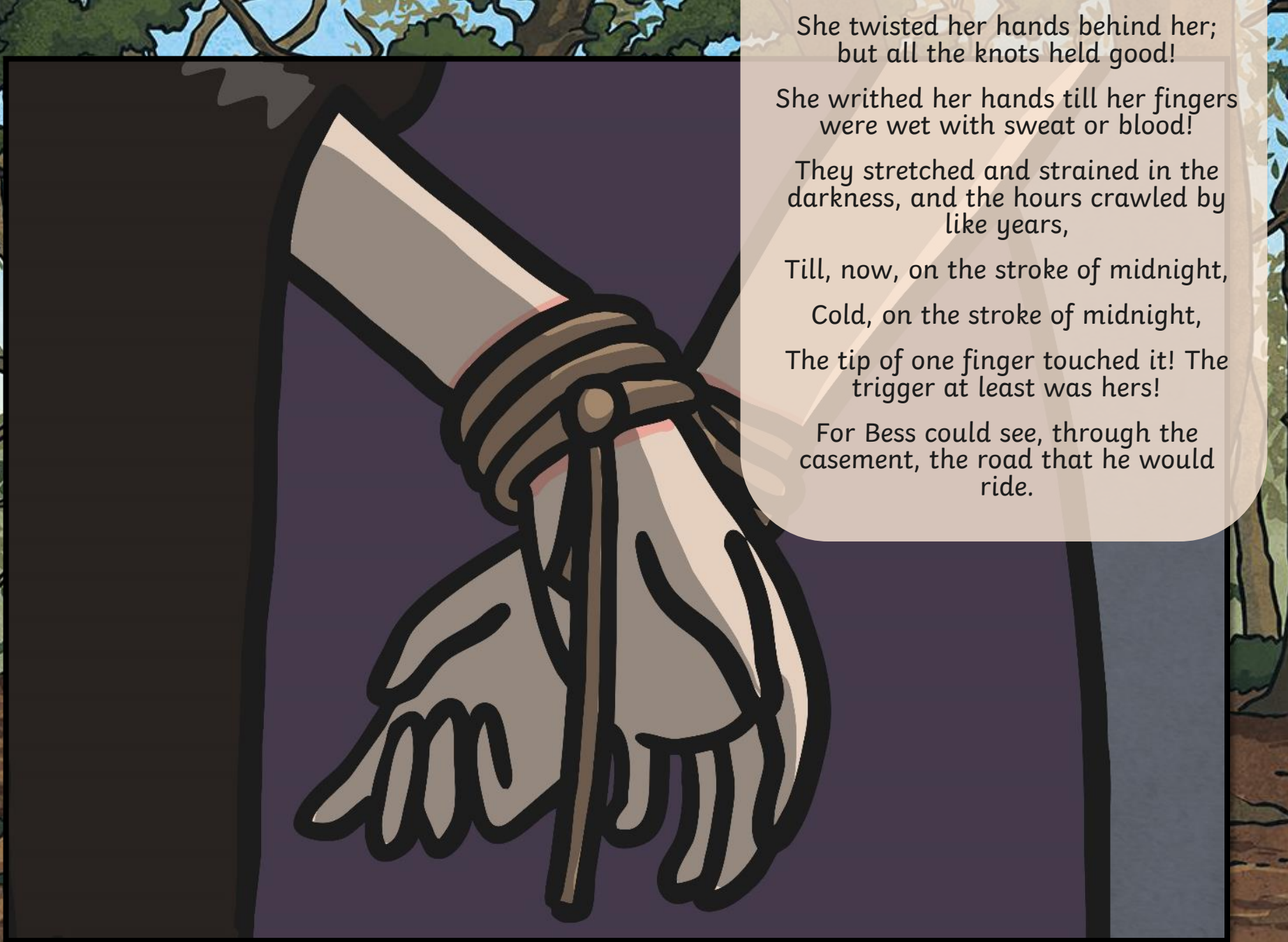
Look for me by moonlight;

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 her 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!

For Bess could see, through the  
casement, the road that he would  
ride.



An illustration depicting a scene from the poem. On the right, a woman with long dark hair and a purple dress has her mouth covered with a white bandage. She has a sad expression. In the background, a soldier in a dark uniform and beret stands with a rifle slung over his shoulder, looking out a window with white curtains. The scene is set in a room with a grey wall and a window looking out onto a night landscape with a full moon and trees.

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.

For Bess could see, through the casement, the  
road that he would ride.





Flot-flot; flot-flot! Had they heard it? The horse-  
hoofs ringing clear;

Flot-flot, flot-flot, 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 straight and still!





Tlot-tlot in the frosty silence! Tlot-tlot, 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 fingers 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!

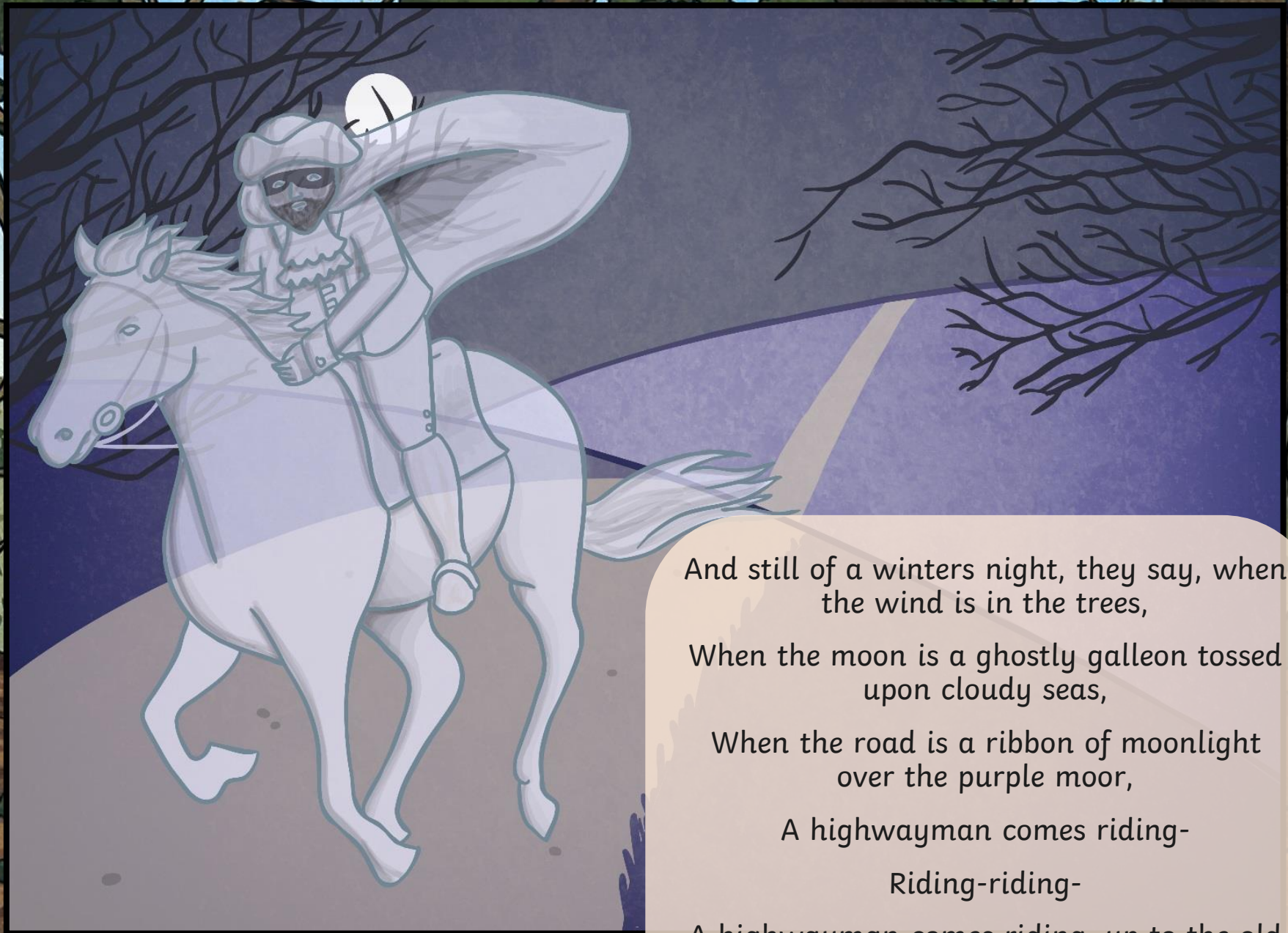
Blood-red were his spurs i' the golden  
noon; wine-red was his velvet coat,

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 the bunch of lace at his  
throat.





And still of a winters 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.



An illustration of a scene from a story. A man with a black eye, wearing a white tunic and a grey hood, sits on a white horse. He is looking towards a woman who is leaning out of an open window. The woman has long, dark hair with a red braid and is wearing a blue dress. The window has yellow curtains and brown shutters. The background shows a stone wall and some green foliage on the left. The entire scene is framed by a dark border.

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.





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