

Jarred Dreams Comprehension

Read the extract from Jarred Dreams (pp 16-18) and answer the questions that follow.

He feels no cold, nor does the gentle breeze tug at his cloak as he waits in the shadows for the boy's dream to come again. He is perfectly camouflaged and can wait all night if necessary. Eventually the gentle rhythmic breathing of the boy gives him his cue. He tries to open the window, but it's locked from the inside. He can feel the dream beginning to grow stronger through the glass, the call of it warming up like instruments tuning before a concert. He decides to go through the glass as it's less conspicuous than opening the lock, and there will be less chill from the outside to awaken the boy. Sometimes he's able to step into the dream through glass, depending on how vivid it is. He imagines himself inside the room next to the boy, and so then, because he's imagined it, that's exactly where he is.

The Dream Thief unscrews the lid of the jar as he stands and watches the sleeping boy. He steadies his own breathing, bringing it in sync with the boy, in for three, out for two, in, out, that's it, now he can start to see the dream:

'Marshmallows are the best ones to bounce on don't you think?' I said and giggled.

'Yes, yes,' said the funny little man with the polka dot hat and shoes made out of jelly and he bounced on four in a row to prove it: a pink one, a white one, a pink and then a white.

'Come along,' he called to me over his shoulder. I was just about to follow him when his face started to change. It melted from being friendly to something twisted and I was too scared to follow. Instead I turned back and saw that the way of the rainbow had opened up. If I dived into the purple stream I'd float down to the number sevens at the bottom. The landing would be soft.

I tried to leap but my stupid fat trousers caught on something, what was it? Brambles? I turned to pull myself away only it wasn't brambles, it was him.

He'd changed out of his jelly shoes and was wearing a floating black cloak instead. He had me by the ankle. I could see his bony hands. His knuckles looked bruised. The black claw of his thumb hooked round me. My heart was hammering hard in my neck.

I was terrified to look at his face, even though I wanted to, more than anything in the whole world. I could feel his grip tightening against my skin. I struggled but he held me firm.

'Boy,' he said. It sounded like a big, angry wasp buzzing inside my head, 'let go, boy, if you try to run it makes it worse. Give your dream to me.'

And I knew then that it was definitely him. I remembered the feathers in my pocket and I pulled them out and threw them at his face. I saw it then, his face, twisted and melted and yellow. A beak nose and eyes so deep inside his head they were almost not there. I tried to scream, but the noise from me leaked out instead like sick. It came not just from my tummy but also from the whole of me, from the very middle of who I was. I knew that it was my soul that he was stealing and I couldn't do a thing to stop it.

There's the rush, the fast, intense rush of pleasure and now, like sand in water it starts to disappear. The Dream Thief focuses on the jar in his upturned hand, and the dream slides from him, obediently inside the glass. He quickly screws on the lid, checks it is tight (he will never make that mistake again) and then turns from the sleeping boy and back through the glass of the window.

1. How is the Dream Thief perfectly camouflaged?
2. What is the simile of 'concert instruments warming up' used to describe?
3. I use the word 'imagines' to describe how the Dream Thief enters into the boy's bedroom, why?
4. What techniques do I use to show the jump from the Dream Thief into the dream?
5. Can you highlight the lines where the mood of the dream changes?
6. Pick out the verbs used to show how the dream is being stolen. What effect does this have on you as a reader?
7. How do you know when we are no longer in the dream?
8. What does the extract show you about the Dream Thief's character?