

Owl Moon

By Jane Yolen

Read the excerpt and then answer the questions.

It was late one winter night, long past my bedtime, when Pa and I went owling. There was no wind. The trees stood still as giant statues. And the moon was so bright the sky seemed to shine. Somewhere behind us a train whistle blew, long and low, like a sad, sad song.

I could hear it through the woolen cap Pa had pulled down over my ears. A farm dog answered the train, and then a second dog joined in. They sang out, trains and dogs, for a real long time. And when their voices faded away it was as quiet as a dream. We walked on towards the woods, Pa and I.

Our feet crunched over the crisp snow and little gray footprints followed us. Pa made a long shadow, but mine was short and round. I had to run after him every now and then to keep up, and my short, round shadow bumped after me. But I never called out. If you go owling you have to be quiet, that's what Pa always says. I had been waiting to go owling with Pa for a long, long time.

We reached the line of pine trees, black and pointy against the sky, and Pa held up his hand. I stopped right where I was and waited. He looked up, as if searching the stars, as if reading a map up there. The moon made his face into a silver mask.

Then he called: "Whoo-whoo-who-who-who-whooooooo," the sound of a Great Horned Owl.

"Whoo-whoo-who-who-who-whooooooo."

Again he called out. And then again. After each all he was silent and for a moment we both listened. But there was no answer. Pa shrugged and I shrugged. I was not disappointed. My brothers all said sometimes there's an owl and sometimes there isn't.

We walked on. I could feel the cold, as if someone's icy hand was palm-down on my back. And my nose and the tops of my cheeks felt cold and hot at the same time. But I never said a word. If you go owling you have to be quiet and make your own heat.

We went into the woods. The shadows were the blackest things I had ever seen. They stained the white snow. My mouth felt furry, for the scarf over it was wet and warm. I didn't ask what kinds of things hide behind black trees in the middle of the night. When you go owling you have to be brave.

1. Underline the similes.

2. Circle the metaphors.

3. Which simile was the most powerful for you? Why? _____

4. Which metaphor was the most powerful for you? Why? _____
