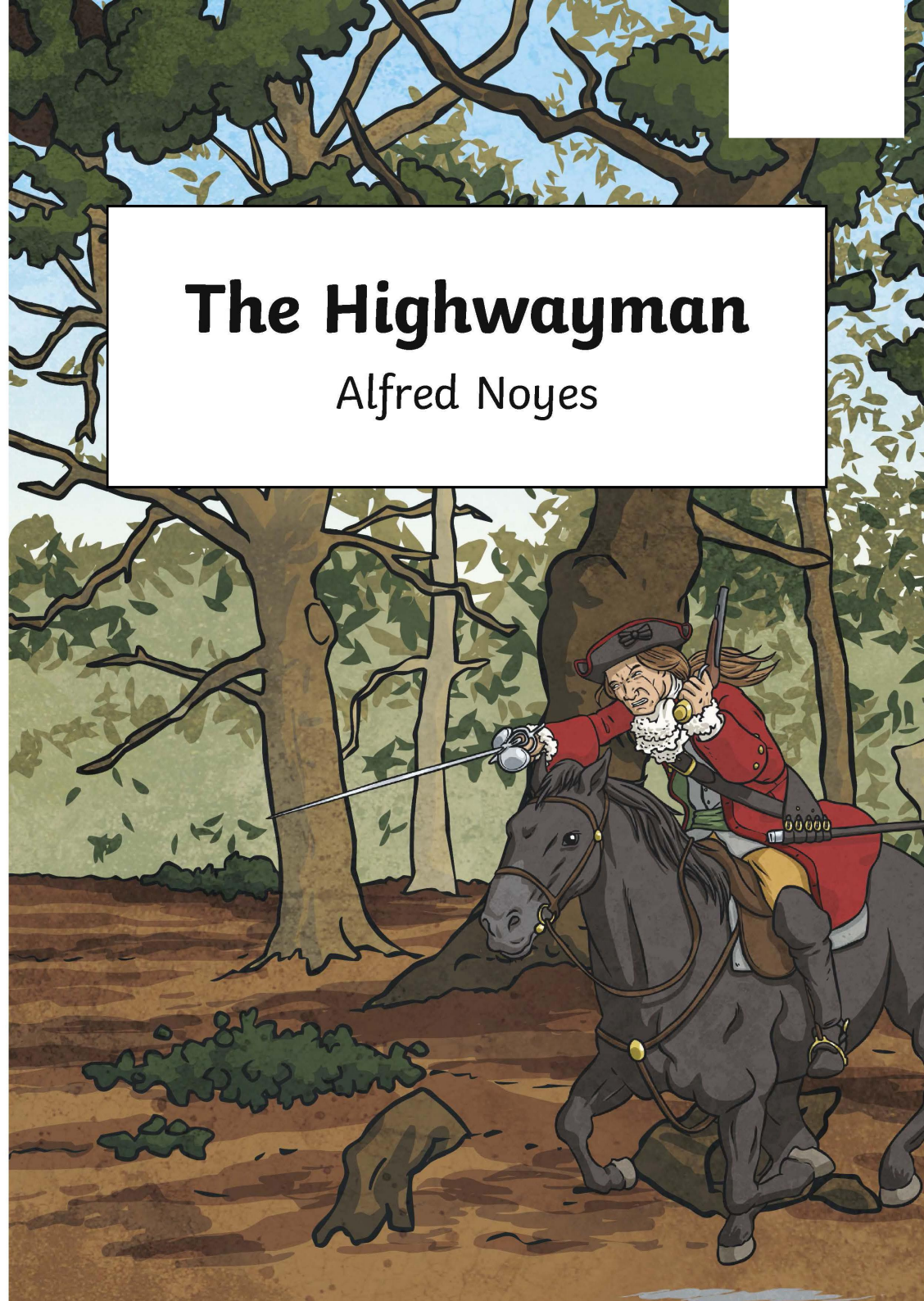


# The Highwayman

Alfred Noyes



**REGENT STUDIES**

Focused education on life's walk!

[www.regentstudies.com](http://www.regentstudies.com)



**Part 1: I**

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.





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.

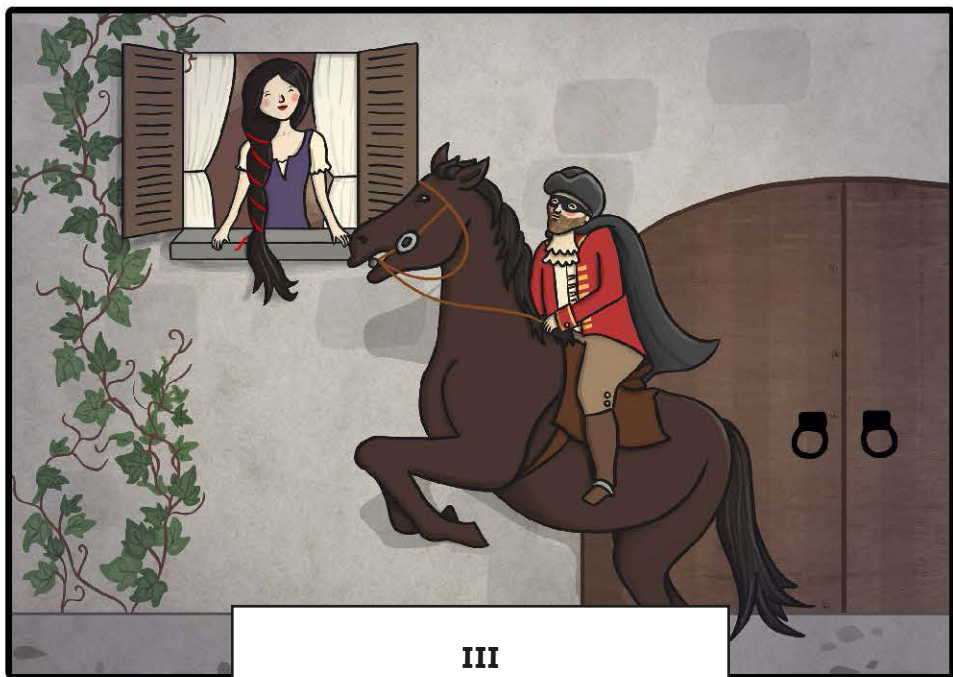


He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace  
at his chin,  
A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of doe brown skin;  
They fitted with never a wrinkle: his boots were up to  
the thigh!

And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,

His pistol butts a twinkle,

His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.



III

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.



X

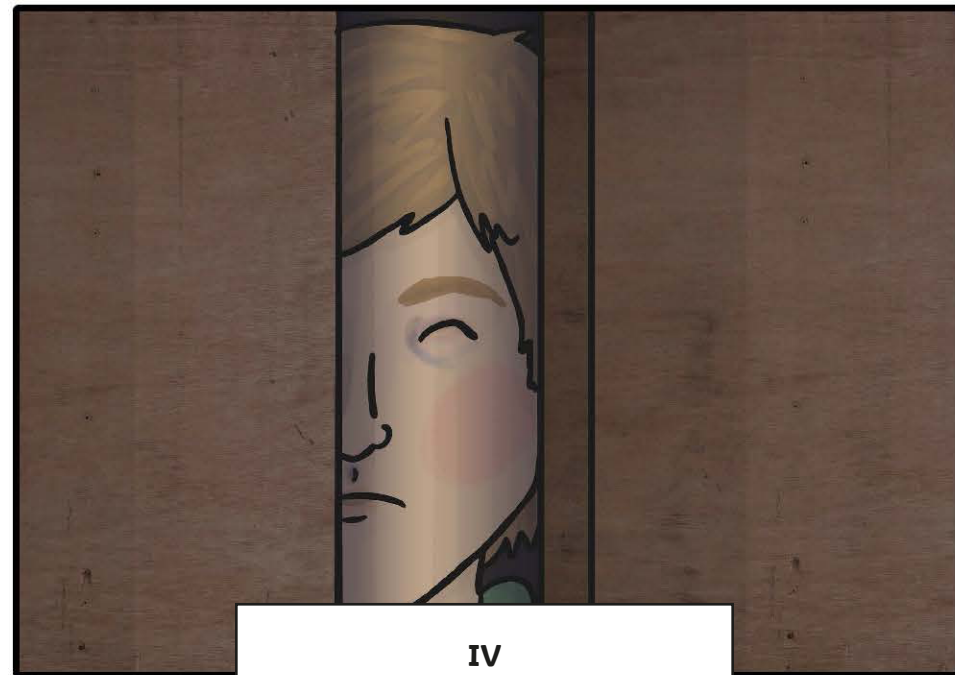
And still of a winters night, they say, when the wind is in  
the trees,  
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,  
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,  
A highwayman comes riding-  
Riding-riding-  
A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.





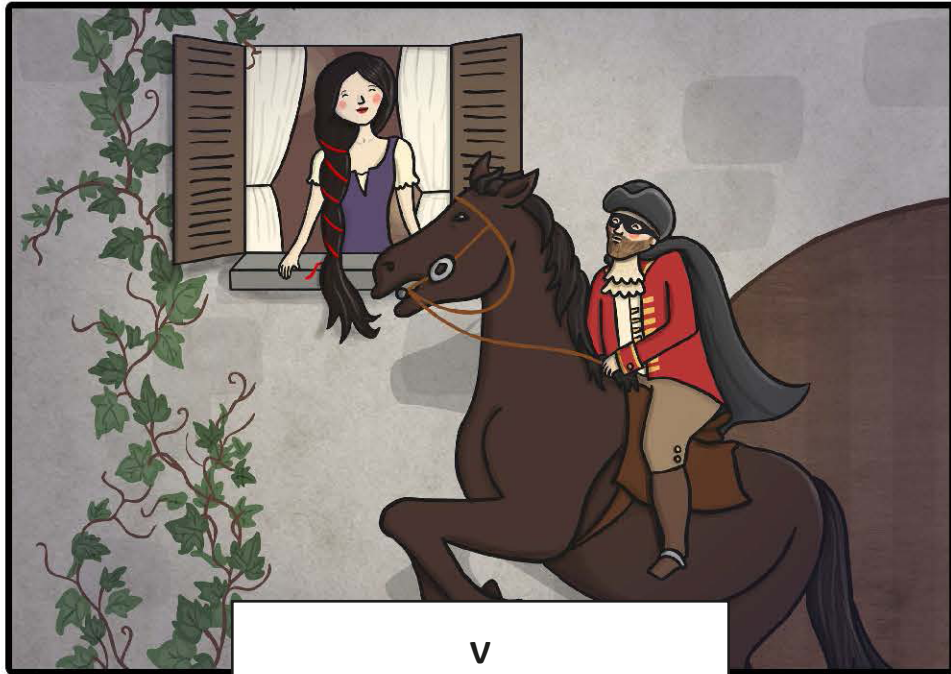
IX

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.



IV

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



V

“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.”



VIII

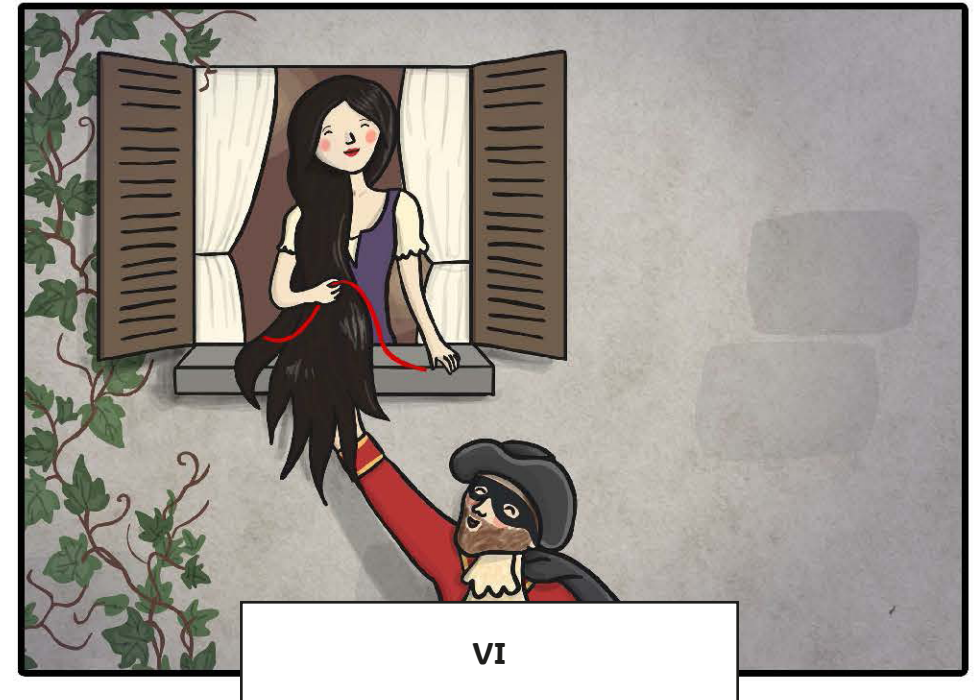
He turned; he spurred to the West; he did not know who stood  
Bowed, with her head o’er the musket, drenched with her own  
red blood!

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.

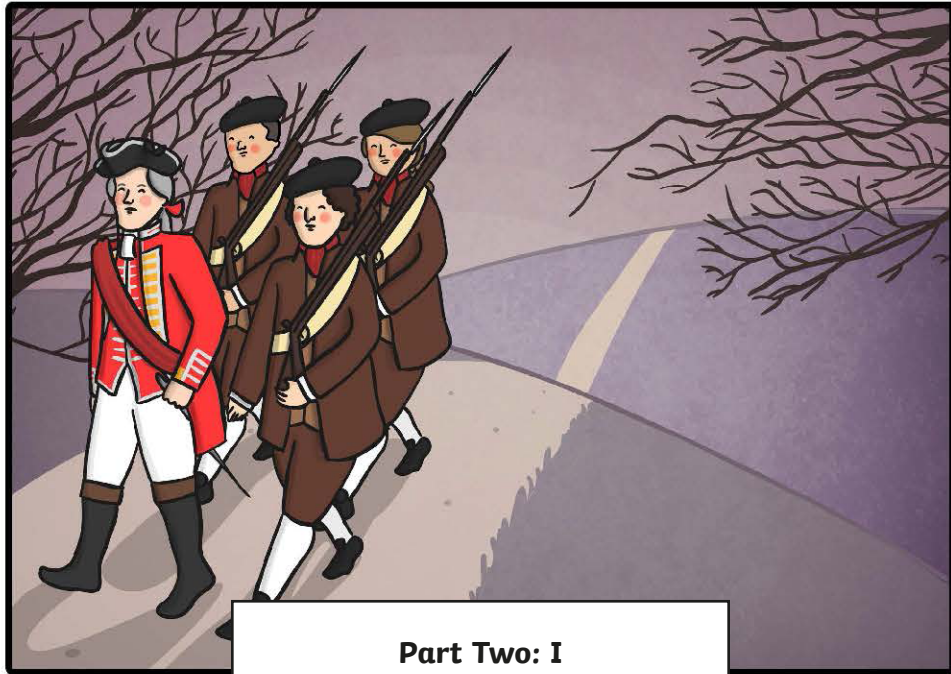




Tlot-tlot in the frosty silence! Tlot-tlot, in the echoing night!  
Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!  
Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last  
deep breath,  
Then her fingers moved in the moonlight,  
Her musket shattered the moonlight,  
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him-with  
her death.



He 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.



Part Two: I

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.



VI

Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot! Had they heard it? The horse-hoofs  
ringing clear;  
Tlot-tlot, tlot-tlot, 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!





V

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.



II

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!