

Read the poem. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Spider and the Fly

A Fable
by Mary Howitt

“Will you walk into my parlor?” said the spider to the fly;
“’Tis the prettiest little parlor that ever you did spy.
The way into my parlor is up a winding stair,
And I have many pretty things to show when you are there.”
“O no, no,” said the little fly, “To ask me is in vain,
For who goes up your winding stair can ne’er come down again.”

“I’m sure you must be weary, dear, with soaring up so high;
Will you rest upon my little bed?” said the spider to the fly.
“There are pretty curtains drawn around, the sheets are fine and thin,
And if you like to rest awhile, I’ll snugly tuck you in.”
“O no, no,” said the little fly, “for I’ve often heard it said,
They never, never wake again, who sleep upon your bed.”

Said the cunning spider to the fly, “Dear friend, what shall I do,
To prove the warm affection I’ve always felt for you?
I have within my pantry good store of all that’s nice;
I’m sure you’re very welcome; will you please to take a slice?”
“O no, no,” said the little fly, “kind sir, that cannot be;
I’ve heard what’s in your pantry, and I do not wish to see.”

“Sweet creature!” said the spider, “you’re witty and you’re wise,
How handsome are your gauzy wings, how brilliant are your eyes!
I have a little looking-glass upon my parlor shelf,
If you’ll step in one moment dear, you shall behold yourself.”
“I thank you, gentle sir,” she said, “for what you’re pleased to say,
And bidding you good-morning now, I’ll call another day.”



The spider turned him round about, and went into his den,
 For well he knew the silly fly would soon be back again:
 So he wove a subtle web, in a little corner sly,
 And set his table ready to dine upon the fly.
 Then he came out to his door again, and merrily did sing,
 “Come hither, hither, pretty fly, with the pearl and silver wing;
 Your robes are green and purple; there’s a crest upon your head;
 Your eyes are like the diamond bright, but mine are dull as lead.”

Alas, alas! how very soon this silly little fly,
 Hearing his wily flattering words, came slowly flitting by.
 With buzzing wings she hung aloft, then near and nearer drew,
 Thinking only of her crested head—poor foolish thing! At last,
 Up jumped the cunning spider, and fiercely held her fast.
 He dragged her up his winding stair, into his dismal den,
 Within his little parlor; but she ne’er came out again!

And now, dear little children, who may this story read,
 To idle, silly, flattering words, I pray you ne’er give heed;
 Unto an evil counselor close heart, and ear, and eye,
 And take a lesson from this tale of the Spider and the Fly.

 **Think**

- 1** Read this line from the poem.

The way into my parlor is up a winding stair,

Which sentence below **best** describes the meaning of the metaphor in this line from the poem?

- A** The poet is comparing the spider's legs to steps on a winding stair.
 - B** The spider is comparing the way the fly moves to a winding staircase.
 - C** The poet is describing the spider as a friendly next-door neighbor to the fly.
 - D** The spider is describing his web to the fly as if it were a beautiful old house.
- 2** How does the spider's point of view influence how he describes his "home" to the fly in the first three stanzas?
- A** He sees the fly could use some food and rest and tells her what he can offer.
 - B** He wants to make his home sound as appealing as possible to attract the fly.
 - C** He doesn't get many visitors so he makes his place sound better than it really is.
 - D** He can't help boasting about his home to the fly because he's really proud of it.
- 3** Underline **two** lines in this stanza that reflect the spider's point of view that the fly is easily fooled prey.

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Kate's Vigil*

by Thomas R. Levine

- 1 Kate Alden was worried about her father, Captain Joshua Alden. Captain Alden commanded a whaler. He was a month late returning home from his latest whaling voyage. Whaling was an important industry in Nantucket in the early 1800s. Whale oil lit the lamps in many homes. Whalebone, which is actually the stiff plates hanging from the roof of the mouth of a baleen whale, was used to make everything from umbrella ribs to springs. To Kate, the money that whaling brought to her island home paled next to the safety of her father—for whaling was a dangerous business indeed.
- 2 Kate awoke with a start and listened intently to the sounds of the household stirring. Was that her father's tread in the hall? Had he come home in the middle of the night and no one had awoken her? No, it was just her older brother, Daniel, leaving for work at the ships' store down by the docks. Kate flung off the covers and threw a warm shawl over her shoulders. She slipped into her boots, grabbed the spyglass her father had given her, and raced up the long, narrow flight of stairs to the rooftop. Here on a high porch called a widow's walk, Kate could gaze out into the ocean for her father's ship. Her eyes frantically scanned the waters, as they did every day. Today, as on every day this past month, Kate spotted many ships, but she saw no evidence of her father's ship sailing into the harbor.
- 3 That night at dinner, Daniel talked of the ships that had arrived in port that day, of his work at the chandlery, and of the rumors of coming bad weather. Daniel tried to keep the conversation going, but no one was much in the mood for talking. Although Daniel spoke not a word about his father, Kate could see Daniel's anxiety in the deep lines that creased his forehead. Before long, Kate begged to be excused from the table. She drifted aimlessly from room to room, unable to settle down in any one place.

* **Vigil:** staying awake and being watchful during the night or normal hours for sleeping

4 Without being conscious of going there, Kate found herself again on the widow's walk. Fast-moving clouds blanked out the stars, further dimming her hopes. As the night wore on, Kate's mother joined her daughter. She wrapped a blanket around the girl and tried to calm her fears with soothing words and warm embraces. Kate wanted to be reassured, but at the same time she needed the truth. Instead of allowing her worries to be whisked away, Kate accepted the worry that her mother barely hid behind her own eyes. They hugged each other, and together they wept. Were they just another Nantucket family watching in vain from a rooftop porch for a father, husband, brother, or son who would never return?



5 Before long, Kate's mother headed back down the stairs into the house while Kate remained on the porch. At dawn, Kate woke up cold and uncomfortable. Somehow she'd fallen asleep on the small porch. Kate pulled herself up and leaned her elbows on the rail. Her eyes were a sunless sea, watching and waiting for signs of hope. She knew she should get on with the duties of the day. But not being there, watching and waiting, seemed out of the question.

6 Kate's eyes automatically scoured the waters for her father's ship. One by one, she eliminated each of the ships that she spotted. Some ships were clearly too big, others too small. Some ships carried too many or too few sails and masts. The rigging on others had the wrong kind or arrangement of sails and masts. Having grown up around ships, Kate could easily tell the difference among ships of various kinds.

7 Then one odd-looking ship caught Kate's eye like a bit of precious gold in the gray rock slab of the sea. It looked somewhat similar to her father's ship except that its main mast was far too short. The more Kate looked at that mast, she realized that it was far shorter than it should have been on any ship of any kind. With a shout that woke her family and half the neighborhood, Kate realized that it truly was her father's ship. The main mast had obviously broken halfway down, and only the lower sails were flying. Her father was home at long last.

 **Think**

- 6** Which **two** statements explain how paragraphs 3 and 4 contribute to the overall structure of the story?
- A** They build suspense.
 - B** They foreshadow the ending.
 - C** They develop the main characters.
 - D** They establish the problem in the story.
 - E** They explain why whaling is important in Nantucket.

- 7** This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A

Read the following sentence from the passage.

To Kate, the money that whaling brought to her island home paled next to the safety of her father—for whaling was a dangerous business indeed.

Which words have about the same meaning as paled next to?

- A** more than made up for
- B** was worth the risk
- C** was far less important than
- D** lessened concerns about

Part B

Which of the phrases from the passage **best** helps the reader understand the meaning of paled next to?

- A** “a dangerous business indeed”
- B** “was used to make everything”
- C** “lit the lamps in many homes”
- D** “an important industry in Nantucket”