

Name: _____ Class: _____

Where the Sidewalk Ends

By Shel Silverstein
1974

Sheldon Allan "Shel" Silverstein (1930-1999) was an American poet, cartoonist, and author of children's books. "Where the Sidewalk Ends" is a poem from Silverstein's collection by the same name, which features poems alongside illustrations. As you read, take notes on how the author describes "where the sidewalk ends," and consider what the end of the sidewalk represents.

- [1] There is a place where the sidewalk ends
and before the street begins,
and there the grass grows soft and white,
and there the sun burns crimson bright,
[5] and there the moon-bird rests from his flight
to cool in the peppermint wind.

Let us leave this place where the smoke blows black
and the dark street winds and bends.

- [10] Past the pits where the asphalt flowers grow
we shall walk with a walk that is measured and slow
and watch where the chalk-white arrows go
to the place where the sidewalk ends.

- Yes we'll walk with a walk that is measured and slow,
and we'll go where the chalk-white arrows go,
[15] for the children, they mark, and the children, they know,
the place where the sidewalk ends.



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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best describes the meaning of the phrase “peppermint wind,” as it is used in line 6?
 - A. The wind smells like sweet candy.
 - B. The wind is energizing and refreshing.
 - C. The wind is blue-green in color.
 - D. The wind is red-and-white in color.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. “soft and white” (Line 3)
 - B. “crimson bright” (Line 4)
 - C. “to cool” (Line 6)
 - D. “smoke blows black” (Line 7)

3. PART A: According to the narrator's descriptions, how does “a place where the sidewalk ends” and “this place” differ?
 - A. “The place where the sidewalk ends” is scary and unknown, while “this place” is familiar and comfortable.
 - B. “The place where the sidewalk ends” is dangerous because it is new, while “this place” is dangerous because it is old.
 - C. “The place where the sidewalk ends” requires accompaniment by children, while “this place” does not require accompaniment of any kind.
 - D. “The place where the sidewalk ends” is unknown and inviting, while “this place” is dirty and unwelcoming.

4. PART B: Which TWO details from the poem best support the answer to Part A?
 - A. “before the street begins” (Line 2)
 - B. “grass grows soft and white” (Line 3)
 - C. “Let us leave” (Line 7)
 - D. “measured and slow” (Line 10)
 - E. “chalk-white arrows” (Line 11)
 - F. “the children, they know” (Line 15)

5. How does the alliteration in line 9 contribute to the description of “this place”?
 - A. “Past the pits” sounds harsh, hissing, and unfriendly.
 - B. “[A]spphalt flowers” bring to mind a harsh and industrial place.
 - C. “Past the pits” sounds bouncy and playful.
 - D. “[A]spphalt flowers” would never grow in pits.

6. How does the point of view differ between the speaker and the person he is speaking to?
- A. The speaker doesn't know where the end of the sidewalk is, but the person he is speaking to does.
 - B. The speaker knows about the end of the sidewalk, and wants to make sure the person he is speaking to doesn't find it.
 - C. The speaker has heard of the end of the sidewalk, and is asking the person he is speaking to for help finding it.
 - D. The speaker knows about the end of the sidewalk, and wants to show it to the person he is talking to.

7. How do the children contribute to the theme of the poem?

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In the poem, only the children “know” the place where the sidewalk ends. What do you think Shel Silverstein meant in these lines? Explain your answer.
2. Do you think that adults are as imaginative as children? Why or why not?
3. Why should we value our youth? Explain your answer.