

Where Go the Boats? — Poem, Questions & Answers

A complete study guide by Poemsteric.com | Poem by Robert Louis Stevenson

Full Poem Text

*Dark brown is the river,
Golden is the sand.
It flows along for ever,
With trees on either hand.*

*Green leaves a-floating,
Castles of the foam,
Boats of mine a-boating —
Where will all come home?*

*On goes the river
And out past the mill,
Away down the valley,
Away down the hill.*

*Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore.*

About the Poet

"Where Go the Boats?" was written by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), a Scottish novelist and poet best known for *Treasure Island* and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. This poem appears in his 1885 poetry collection *A Child's Garden of Verses*, which explores childhood imagination through simple, rhythmic verse.

Complete Questions and Answers

1. Who is the poet of the poem "Where Go the Boats?"

Answer: Robert Louis Stevenson, a Scottish poet and novelist, wrote this poem.

2. What colour is the river described as in the poem?

Answer: The river is described as dark brown, with golden sand along its banks.

3. What kind of boats does the child float on the river?

Answer: The child floats paper boats, a common childhood pastime referenced throughout the poem.

4. What can be seen on either side of the river?

Answer: Trees line both sides of the river, described as "trees on either hand."

5. What does the child imagine happening to the boats?

Answer: The child imagines the boats travelling far downstream, eventually being found by other children.

6. Why does the river keep flowing without stopping?

Answer: The river flows continuously due to gravity and constant water supply from rain and melting snow upstream.

7. What is the significance of the poem's final lines?

Answer: The final lines suggest hope and connection — the boats reaching other children symbolizes shared childhood joy across distance.

8. What is the central theme of the poem?

Answer: The theme centers on childhood imagination, the passage of time, and letting go of things we can't control.

9. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?

Answer: The poem follows a consistent ABCB rhyme scheme in each of its four stanzas.

10. Is this poem the same as Tagore's "Paper Boats"?

Answer: No. They are separate poems by different authors with a similar theme — a child floating paper boats — but different literary traditions and tones.

Poetic Devices at a Glance

- **Imagery** — vivid colour descriptions ("dark brown," "golden sand") make the river feel immediate.
- **Personification** — the river is treated almost like a living companion carrying the boats onward.
- **Rhyme scheme** — a consistent ABCB pattern gives the poem a light, song-like rhythm.
- **Symbolism** — the paper boats symbolize dreams or moments of childhood that drift away but are not lost.
- **Repetition** — structural repetition across stanzas reinforces the steady movement of the river.