

Ava and Zain stood at the edge of the Whispering Meadow, peering into the swirling mist. They had been searching for the legendary Mist Dancers, ethereal beings that no one had ever managed to photograph. The Mist Dancers were said to appear only on the rarest of nights, when the conditions were just right.

The meadow stretched out before them, a vast expanse of silvery grass that rippled like water in the gentle breeze. Unlike most meadows, which are relatively flat and open, the Whispering Meadow became increasingly intricate and mysterious the further in one ventured. Ava and Zain couldn't see more than a few meters ahead, the mist obscuring their view.

The meadow was about a kilometer wide, with grass that reached waist-high near its edges. As one moved inward, the grass grew taller and denser, intertwining with delicate, luminescent flowers that seemed to pulse with an inner light. Higher still, floating spheres of mist hovered silently, their shapes constantly shifting and reforming. Ava and Zain couldn't see the center of the meadow from where they stood.

Zain recalled that under ideal conditions, the Mist Dancers could materialize in as little as five minutes, their forms coalescing from the surrounding mist. Once formed, they would dance for hours, their movements growing more intricate and mesmerizing as the night wore on. The dance of the Mist Dancers was said to be so beautiful that it could entrance onlookers, making them lose all sense of time and place. Mist Dancers were light-sensitive; they could only form in near-total darkness. A small Mist Dancer caught in even the faintest light would dissipate instantly, returning to the mist from which it came. If undisturbed, however, Mist Dancers could grow to the size of a human adult, their translucent bodies glowing with an inner radiance that illuminated the surrounding mist without dispersing it. The Whispering Meadow had clearly nurtured many generations of Mist Dancers - it was alive with possibility.

"You're not really planning to go in there, are you?" asked Zain incredulously.

No answer.

Ava looked again at the edge of the meadow, where the grass began to thicken. Without warning, she stepped forward, her foot sinking into the soft earth as she entered the meadow. She began moving inward, each step careful and deliberate.

"I really don't think that's very smart," Zain warned from behind.

Ten minutes later, Ava had ventured deep into the meadow. The grass had grown so tall and thick that it formed a canopy above her head, and she had to part it with her hands to move forward. Having gone as far as she dared, Ava looked around and spotted a cluster of the luminescent flowers, their petals unfurling in the misty air. A sphere of mist hovered just above them, slowly rotating.

Ava wanted to touch that sphere. She edged closer to it, and the flowers beneath her feet began to glow more brightly in response to her presence.

There was a gap between where Ava stood and the floating sphere. From the edge of the meadow, she hadn't realized how high these spheres floated, expecting that she could simply reach out and touch them. Ava studied the situation. If she could just stretch far enough, she might be able to graze the bottom of the sphere with her fingertips.

Trying not to think about how deep into the meadow she had ventured, Ava focused her mind on the problem. The gap was really not very large, the problem. The gap was really not very large, she thought. She would have to stand on her toes and reach as high as she could, like a ballet dancer extending towards the ceiling. She had to be careful not to disturb the delicate ecosystem around her, or she might scare away any Mist Dancers that were forming.

If I was standing on solid ground and I had to make this reach, I could do it, she thought. So why not here? She tried to will her arm to extend just a little further. Just a little more.

"I can't watch," Zain shouted anxiously from the edge of the meadow and closed his eyes. He dreaded hearing a cry followed by the sound of thrashing in the grass.

In the heart of the meadow, Ava stretched upward, her fingers extending towards the misty sphere.

She felt gravity seem to lessen. The world slowed down. Ava watched the sphere descend slightly, as if reaching for her in return, and saw her fingers extend towards it. There was a moment of cool dampness and she found herself touching the sphere, her hand partially engulfed in its swirling mass. Moving carefully, she lowered her arm and watched in awe as tendrils of mist followed her movement.

She had made contact with the magic of the Whispering Meadow, somewhere in its misty heart.

The flowers here were larger and more numerous, their glow pulsing in time with an unheard rhythm. The mist swirled around her in patterns too complex to follow. The meadow hadn't seemed so vast from the outside. Moving deeper into the heart of the meadow slowly and

carefully, Ava lost all sense of direction. It felt as if she was passing through a veil and entering another world. Her senses were overwhelmed by an impression of life all around. Glowing, pulsing, and swirling shapes danced at the edge of her vision - misty, ethereal, and hypnotic.

She began to sway gently, her body responding to the rhythm of the meadow. As she neared what she sensed was the very center of the Whispering Meadow, the mist began to glow with varied hues of blue and silver, and she saw the first shimmering outline of a Mist Dancer.

An hour after she'd entered the meadow, Ava emerged from its depths, her eyes wide with wonder. "They're real," she whispered. "The Mist Dancers are real."

Read Text A, The Mist Dancers, in the insert and answer Question 1 and Question 2.

### Question 1

(a) In what way is the structure of the Whispering Meadow 'unlike most meadows'?

• - It was not flat and/or open.

• - It was intricate / complex / mysterious (as one ventured in) [1]

(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by 'alive with possibility'.

- Alive: living / Flourishing / Full of / Brimming

- Possibility: Potential / Opportunity / Prospects / Chance / Hope [2]

(c) Give **two** features of the center of the Whispering Meadow that would make it difficult to see clearly.

• The grass was tall and dense there (plus the flowers)

• Floating spheres of mist [2]

(d) Give **two** details that show the 'mesmerizing' nature of the Mist Dancers' movements, according to the text.

• They danced for hours, their movements growing more "intricate"

• Movements could entrance onlookers, making them lose all sense of time and place [2]

(e) Explain what Ava is thinking when she 'looked again at the edge of the meadow, where the grass began to thicken'.

- She was thinking about "entering the meadow" [1]
- Questioning whether she can enter the meadow.

(f) (i) How does Ava feel about trying to enter the Whispering Meadow? Give **two** details from the text to support your answer. [3] Any 1 from: positive, confident, determined, enthusiastic  
Any two details from:

- "Without warning, she stepped forward"
- "Ten minutes later, Eva had ventured deep into the meadow."

• Eva did not give up when faced with a seemingly impossible task at the start.

(g) (i) During her exploration, Ava discovered a problem which she had not seen from the edge of the meadow.

What was the problem?

There was a gap between Eva and the sphere. [1]

(ii) What did Ava decide to do to solve the problem?

To jump to the floating sphere

[1]

(h) Explain using your own words Zain's different feelings about Ava entering the Whispering Meadow. Give **three** details from anywhere in the text to support your answer.

- At first is: "amazed"/"shock" can't believe Eva is going to go in  
- "You're not really planning to go in there..."
- Increasingly: "scared" - "I really don't think that's very smart."
- Becomes: "angry" - "I can't watch" - Zain shouted.
- By the end is: "pessimistic" - fears something bad will happen  
"he dreaded hearing a cry".

[3]

## Question 2

(a) Read this extract from the text:

'She felt gravity seem to lessen. The world slowed down. Ava watched the sphere descend slightly, as if reaching for her in return, and saw her fingers extend towards it.'

What does the writer want to suggest to us about the situation at this point in the story?

• **critical/tense moment / anything could happen/ dramatic moment**

• **turning point / potential for disaster / risking her life**

[1]

(b) Explain why the writer uses the word 'larger' rather than 'large' in the expression 'larger and more numerous'.

• **suggests that none of the branches are too large – all have less space to stand; can make his position slightly safer but not safe**

• **the branch is comparatively larger / larger in relative terms, but not strong (in absolute terms)**

[1]

(c) What **two** impressions does the writer want to convey to the reader in the sentence:

'Glowing, pulsing, and swirling shapes danced at the edge of her vision – misty, ethereal, and hypnotic.'

• **- Vivid and Dynamic Shapes: The shapes are described as glowing, pulsing, and swirling, giving the impression that they are alive and moving.**

• **- Otherworldly and Mesmerizing: The words misty, ethereal, and hypnotic suggest that the shapes are dreamlike, fragile, and have an entrancing effect on the observer.**

• **- Unclear and Faint Vision: The shapes are positioned at the edge of the vision, suggesting they are hard to focus on and appear faint or distant, contributing to a sense of mystery and elusiveness.**

[2]

(d) Read this sentence from the text:

'Moving deeper into the heart of the meadow slowly and carefully, Ava lost all sense of direction.'

What effect does the writer suggest about the meadow by using the phrase 'heart of the meadow' to describe it?

• **elaborate structure/ was in the centre, main part**

• **disorientating design / confusing**

• **heroic classical quest / trap or threat within / in another world**

• **hard to find your way through / easy to get lost / no clear way through**

[2]

(e) Identify **one** example from the text below of how the writer uses language effectively to convey Ava's feelings after Ava has lost all sense of direction:

'It felt as if she was passing through a veil and entering another world. Her senses were overwhelmed by an impression of life all around. Glowing, pulsing, and swirling shapes danced at the edge of her vision – misty, ethereal, and hypnotic. She began to sway gently, her body responding to the rhythm of the meadow. As she neared what she sensed was the very center of the Whispering Meadow, the mist began to glow with varied hues of blue and silver, and she saw the first shimmering outline of a Mist Dancer.' (lines 55-60)

Explain the impression the writer creates in the example you have identified.

example .....

explanation .....

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.....

.....

[3]

- as if he was passing through a veil:  
moving through a barrier, breaking a cloak, reminiscent of being exposed / hatching
- entering another world: discovering a new planet, coming out into a different medium, space exploration, adventure
- senses were overwhelmed: incapable of processing all the different sensations; bombarded and defenceless, as if buried or drowned beneath a huge mass of something
- glowing, pulsing, and swirling shapes: - Dreamlike, distorted reality  
- Emotional confusion, disorientation  
- Repeated motion, instability  
- Surreal, ungrounded experience
- misty, ethereal , and hypnotic: - Magical, otherworldly -Lack of clarity, direction  
- Fragile, beautiful, unreal  
- Trance-like vulnerability
- first shimmering outline: - Gradual reveal, suspense  
- Flickering light, unclear - Visual distortion  
- Tension, approaching revelation
- varied hues of blue and silver: range of shades, indistinct murky colours of light, making identification difficult, unfamiliar and unsettling