

Robert Frost  
Mending Wall  
Even more challenging questions!

Worksheet by:  
Keith Tankard  
Knowledge4Africa.com

Every year in spring, the poet and his neighbour walk along the stone wall which separates their two farms and they repair the wall — putting back the stones which have rolled off. The poet asks questions about how the wall might have fallen down in the first place — making a game of it by suggesting such things as the elves having done it. The two men, however, have very different ideas about the purpose of the wall: the poet sees no need for it because it acts as a barrier between them, while the neighbour believes that the wall keeps the good relationship going between the owners of the separate farms.

1. "I could say 'Elves' to him,  
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather  
He said it for himself."
  - What does the poet mean by this? (4)
  - Why would the poet rather the neighbour said this himself? (4)
  
2. "I see him there  
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top  
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
He moves in darkness as it seems to me --  
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
He will not go behind his father's saying,  
And he likes having thought of it so well  
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.' "
  - What does the speaker mean by describing his neighbour as "an old-stone savage"? (4)
  - In what way does the neighbour "move in darkness"? (4)
  
3. Comment on the irony of the expression, "Good fences make good neighbors" as it is revealed in this poem. (4)
  
4. Is it true that "good fences make good neighbours"? (30)

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