

The Lost Letter

Vocabulary: Fiction

1.Read about Mykhola Gogol and answer the questions.

Where was Gogol born?

Where is Sorochyntsi?



Mykola Gogol was born in Sorochyntsi, Poltava region in 1809. One of his great grandfathers was Ostap Gogol, a Ukrainian Hetman. In 1828 he went to St. Petersburg where he began writing his famous stories about Ukraine. He became a master of the short story and a classic of Russian literature. His stories include Christmas Eve, Taras Bulba, Viy and Dead Souls.

2. Read Part 1 and answer the questions.

Part I



In the city of Baturyn there lived a Cossack called Vasyl. He was brave and **well-educated.** He could read and write and he was good at playing cards. He had a wife and two little children and he loved them a lot.

One day the Hetman wrote a letter to the Tsarytsia in St Petersburg and told Vasyl to **deliver** the letter. The road was long and dangerous so he sewed the letter into his Cossack hat, jumped on his horse and rode off.

When he arrived in the town of Konotop he went to the market place. There was a **fair** and a lot of people gathered there. They were buying and selling **goods** and a lot of them were having fun. Some men and women were dancing and singing. Some were eating and drinking in taverns.

1. Where does the story begin?
2. What was Vasyl like?
3. What was he good at?
4. Why did he go to St Petersburg?
5. Why did he sew the letter into his hat?
6. Where did he go when he arrived in Konotop?
7. What was there?
8. What were the people doing?

3. Read Part 2 and answer the questions.

Part II



Vasyl quickly made friends with some other Cossacks. One of his new friends said that he had sold his soul to the devil but Vasyl just laughed at him. At night all the Cossacks went to sleep and Vasyl **stood guard.**

During the night he heard **horrifying** noises and cries, saw strange shadows and felt the **chilly** wind which was unusual for a summer night. He didn't remember how he fell asleep but when he woke up it was morning. His new friend, his horse and his hat with the letter were **missing!**

1 What problem did Vasyl's new friend have?
2 Why did Vasyl laugh at the Cossack?
3 What happened at night?
4 What happened in the morning?

4. Look at the words and phrases in bold. What do they mean? Complete the sentences.

1. The Cossacks *stood guard* at the camp.
2. Bohdan Khemlnytskyi was ….He could speak seven languages.
3. The days in September are still warm but the nights can be quite...
4. The National Sorochyntsi …has a long history.
5. There were a lot of different…at the fair.
6. When the sun goes down, all …become longer.
7. 'I can… the letter,' said Vasyl to the Hetman.
8. The Cossack couldn't find his horse. It was …
9. Vasyl was a brave man but all those …noises made him scared.

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5. Read Part 3. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

Part III

Vasyl was very upset but nobody could help him. Then one man in the tavern said, 'There is a place in the woods. Nobody goes there. People say it is the home of witches, demons and vampires. Maybe, you can try to find your things there?'



Late in the evening Vasyl went to the woods. The trees and the bushes were thick and it was difficult for him to make his way through the forest. It was very dark when he came to a river. The water in the river was almost black. On the other side of the river he saw a light.

He crossed the river and soon he came to a fire. Some strange creatures were sitting by the fire. They had ugly faces and they didn't look at him. He told them about his problem and asked them questions but they didn't talk to him. Only one witch looked at him with interest.

0 An old woman told him what to do.
1 The people of Konotop liked to go to that place in the woods.
2 It was almost night when Vasyl went to the woods.
3 He didn't go through the woods.
4 There were witches and demons near the fire.
5 They invited Vasyl to their fire.
6 They were very unfriendly.

6. Read the last part of the story and answer the questions.

Part IV



Vasyl put his hand into his pocket, took out the money that he had and threw it at the demons and witches. Suddenly the earth quaked and trembled and the ugly creatures started to fight for the money! "OK," said the witch when they stopped. "Let's play cards! If you win, you will have your hat with the letter and leave. If you lose, you'll go with us! We are going to play three times." The Cossack agreed.

The witch dealt the cards, they played and Vasyl lost. "The fool! The fool!" cried the evil spirits around him. They played for the second time and the Cossack lost again! "The fool! The fool!" cried the demons.

The man thought for a moment and then made the sign of a cross over his cards. Suddenly there was a thunderbolt and lightning around him and his Cossack hat fell into his hands! The demons and the witches vanished and Vasyl was sitting on the roof of his house in Baturyn! His face and hands were covered with blood! On the same day he jumped on his other horse and galloped to St Petersburg without stopping anywhere.

0 What was in the Cossack's pocket? There was some money.
1 What did Vasyl do with the money?
2 Who offered a game of cards?
3 How many games did they have to play?
4 Who won the first game?
5 Who lost the second game?
6 Why were the evil spirits happy?
7 What happened when Vasyl made a sign of cross over his cards?
8 Did the Cossack get his hat with the letter?
9 Do you think he delivered the letter?

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