What stories he told the children!
At the end of day,
When tired of play,
All bathed and well fed,
They cuddled in bed.
What stories he told then!
What stories he told the children!
Their eyes open wide,
With him by their side,
They listened in awe,
To fables of yore.
What stories he told then!
What stories he told the children!
Of shadows that crept,
While they soundly slept;
And phantoms that played
If first they’d not prayed!
What stories he told then!
What stories he told the children!
Now they feel a chill,
Yet repeat them still,
To their young and old,
Those stories of gold.
What stories he told then!

Nicholas Horsburgh
WORDS TO KNOW
awe  mixed feelings of respect and fear brought about by authority, genius or great beauty

Cuddled  hugged in the arms

Fables  short stories, usually with a lesson or message

Phantoms  ghosts

Yore  time long past

COMPREHENSION

1. Answer the following questions.
   a. When were the stories told to the children?
   b. How do we know the children were comfortable and at ease?
   c. How do we know the stories were interesting to the children?
   d. What are fables of yore?
   e. When would the shadows creep and phantoms appear?
   f. Who tells the stories now and to whom?

   These questions are more difficult. Discuss them first.
   g. What clues are there in the lines which tell us the stories were really good ones?
   h. Do you think the stories were frightening? Why?
   i. Do you think the storyteller was a good storyteller? Why?

2. More questions!
   a. What is the difference between a story and a fable?
   b. Which words in the poem describe actions?
   c. Which words in the poem rhyme?

3. Answer the questions about this line from the poem.
   If first they'd not prayed!
   a. Who is 'they'?
   b. What might happen to them if they had not prayed?
   c. Which word or phrase in the last verse reminds us of these things?
WORKING WITH WORDS

1. Find words in the poem that rhyme with the following.
   a. bold  b. tables  c. fired  d. peel
   e. stayed  f. defeat  g. red  h. muddled

2. Put the following in alphabetical order.
   Dickens, Bond, Yeats, Tagore, Shakespeare, Bacon, Dryden, Keats, Narayan, Shelley,
   Blyton, Sterne, Wodehouse, Gardner, Ludlum, Webster, Xenophon, Alcott, Quincey

   The names above are all surnames. Look up the word ‘surname’ in a dictionary.
   Can you guess what profession all the people above were or are in?

LEARNING ABOUT LANGUAGE

EXCLAMATIONS

1. Find an exclamation in the poem about the storyteller. Make up three exclamations based on
   the poem. Write them in your notebook.

USING ‘NO’

2. Give short answers to the following questions. Each one must start with No.
   Example: Do you eat rotten eggs?
            No, I don’t.

   a. Can you fly?
   b. Will she make a speech?
   c. Do you live in Switzerland?
   d. Does a tiger climb trees?
   e. Did you break your arm?
   f. Have you been to the North Pole?
   g. Has he gone yet?
   h. Is she in this school?

REPORTED SPEECH

Look at this sentence:
   ‘They are strong,’ he said.
   The exact words of the speaker are in inverted commas.

   We can report this sentence like this:
   He said they were strong.
   (Note how the verb changes when we report what happened; are becomes were.)
3. Now change the following sentences in the same way.
   a. ‘Where are they?’ he asked Arun.
   b. ‘We are young,’ they said.
   c. ‘I am Mina,’ she told us.
   d. ‘I like mangoes,’ he told me.
   e. ‘It is dead,’ he said.
   f. ‘We are tired,’ they said.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

1. Listen to the following carefully and repeat aloud.
   a. A goat in a boat afloat on the coast heard a toad croak on the road.
   b. Excuse me! How rude! Don’t use this excuse.

2. Sometimes when you hear one word, you immediately think of another. Write down the first word you think of when you see the following words. The first one has been done for you.
   a. doctor
   b. engine
   c. school
   d. beautiful
   e. exciting
   f. house
   g. hospital
   h. tiger
   i. jeep
   j. cruel
   k. sleep
   l. mangoes

COMPOSITION

If you were the storyteller, which scary story would you tell?

Think of a spooky story of your own and write it down.
First, think of a plot. Who are the characters and what do they do? Include some conversation.
Where does the story take place? Remember to describe the scenes.
What words will you use to describe sounds and movement to make your story sound ‘chilling’.