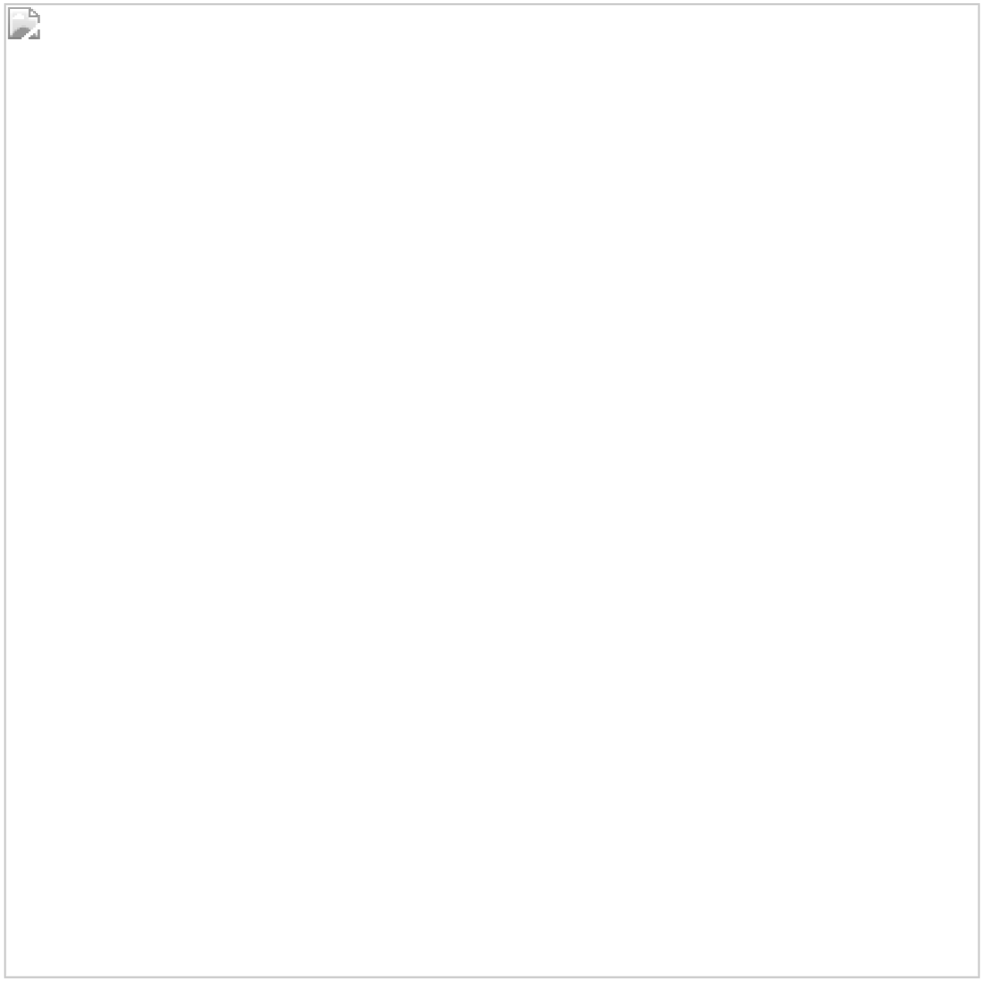
COLORING THE CLASSICS

The Goblins Who Stole a Sexton

A Christmas Story from The Pickwick Papers



A long, long while ago, in an old abbey town, there lived a gravedigger named Gabriel Grub. A gravedigger is called a sexton, and Gabriel looked after the churchyard.

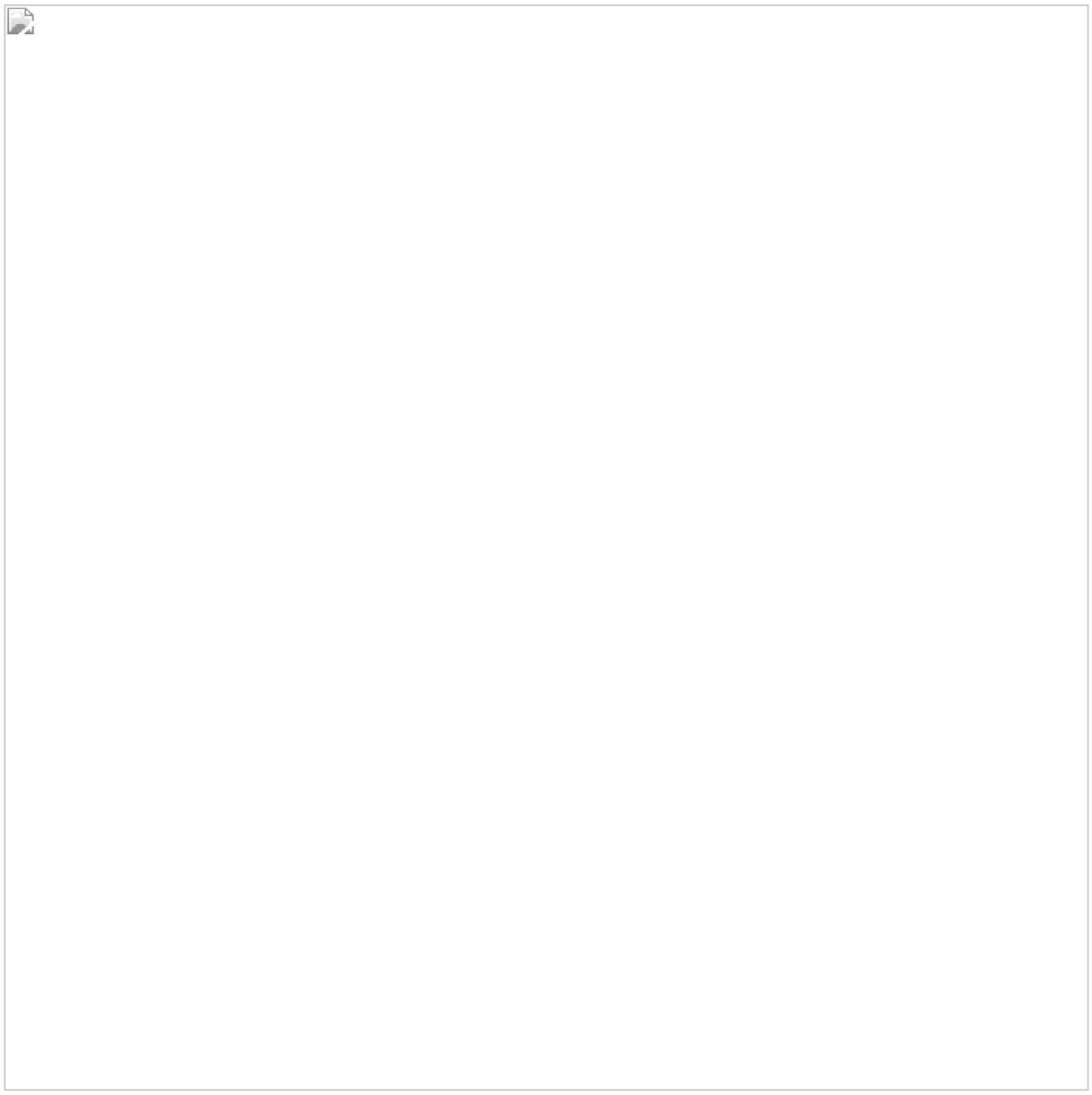
Gabriel was “an ill-conditioned, cross-grained, surly fellow--a morose and lonely man.” He looked at every merry face with a deep scowl.

TALK ABOUT IT

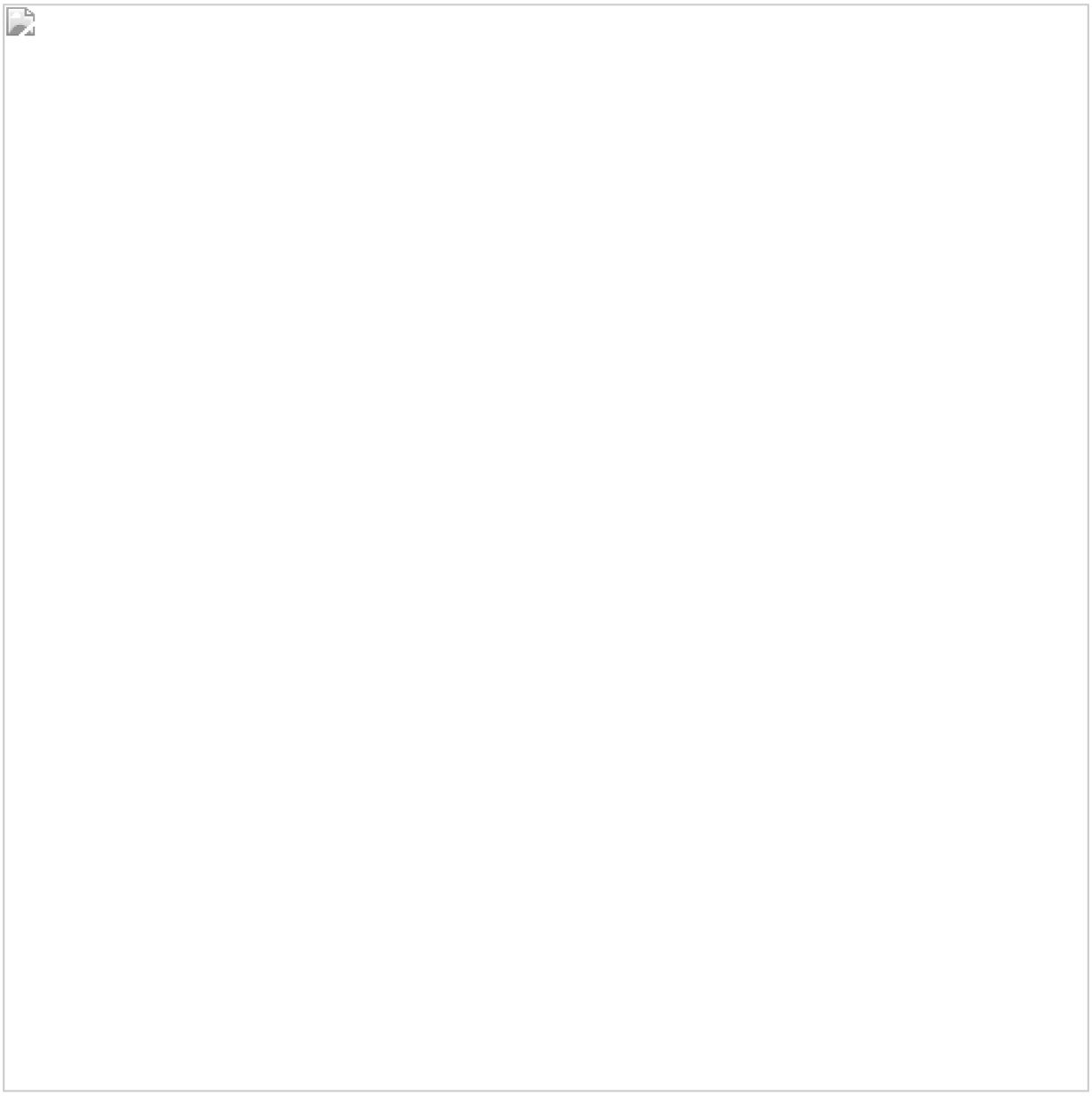
Gabriel scowled at happy faces. Why might someone do that?

This book belongs to _____

The Goblins Who Stole a Sexton · another picture



Christmas Eve



One Christmas Eve, just before dark, Gabriel put his spade on his shoulder and lit his lantern. He had a grave to finish by morning.

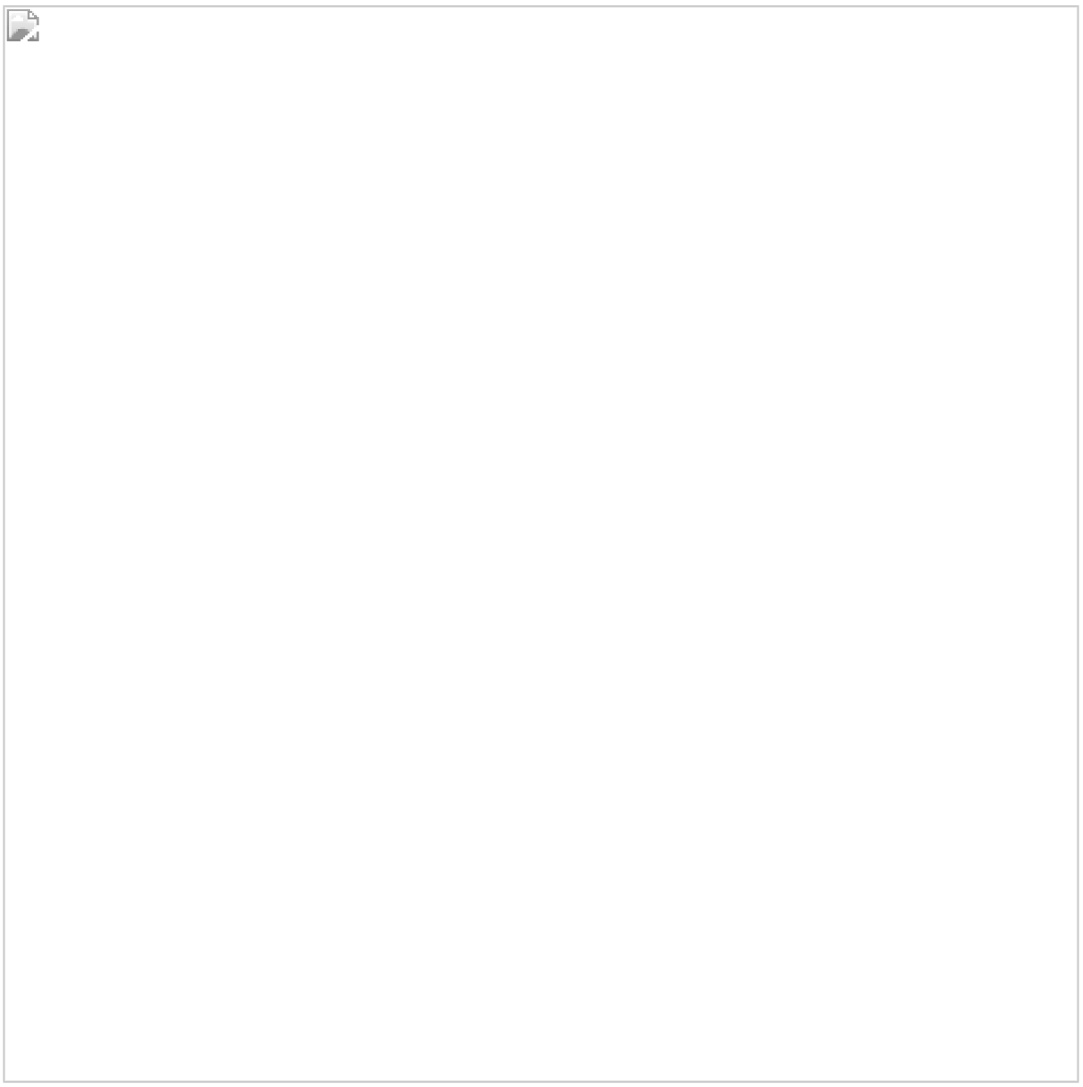
All along the old street, fires blazed behind the windows. He heard laughing and happy shouts. Children skipped out of their houses to join their friends for Christmas games.

All of this was “gall and wormwood” to Gabriel, which is a way of saying it tasted bitter to him. When neighbours said hello, he only growled back.

TALK ABOUT IT

Everyone around Gabriel was getting ready for Christmas. What did he do instead?

Christmas Eve · another picture



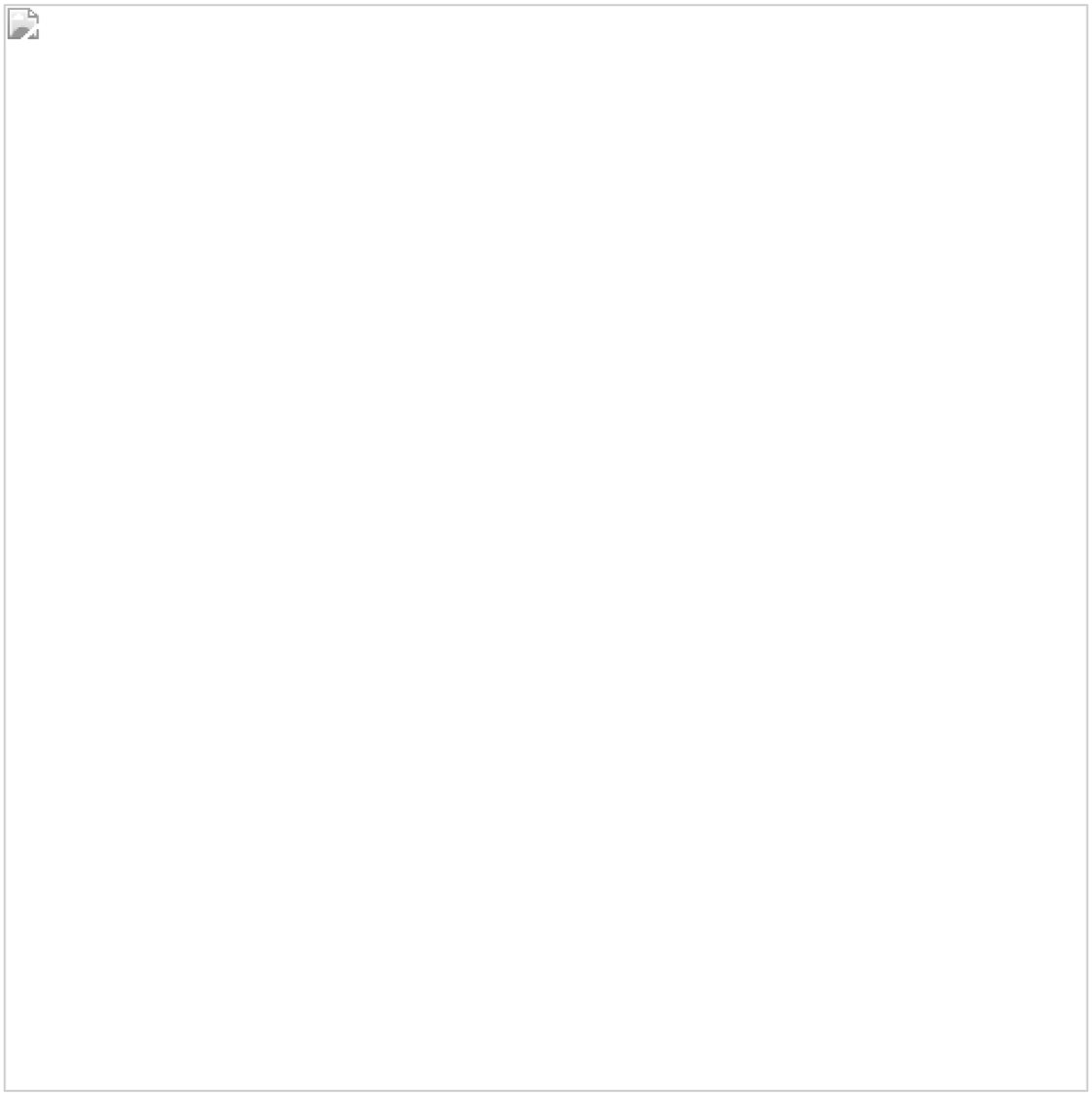
Think about it

1. What did Gabriel have to finish by the next morning?

- ○ A cake
- ○ A grave
- ○ A song

2. How do you think the neighbours felt when Gabriel only growled at them?

Coffin Lane



Gabriel turned into a dark lane that led to the churchyard. It was called Coffin Lane, and he liked how gloomy it was.

But a small boy was coming along, singing a jolly song about a merry Christmas at the top of his voice, on his way to join a party.

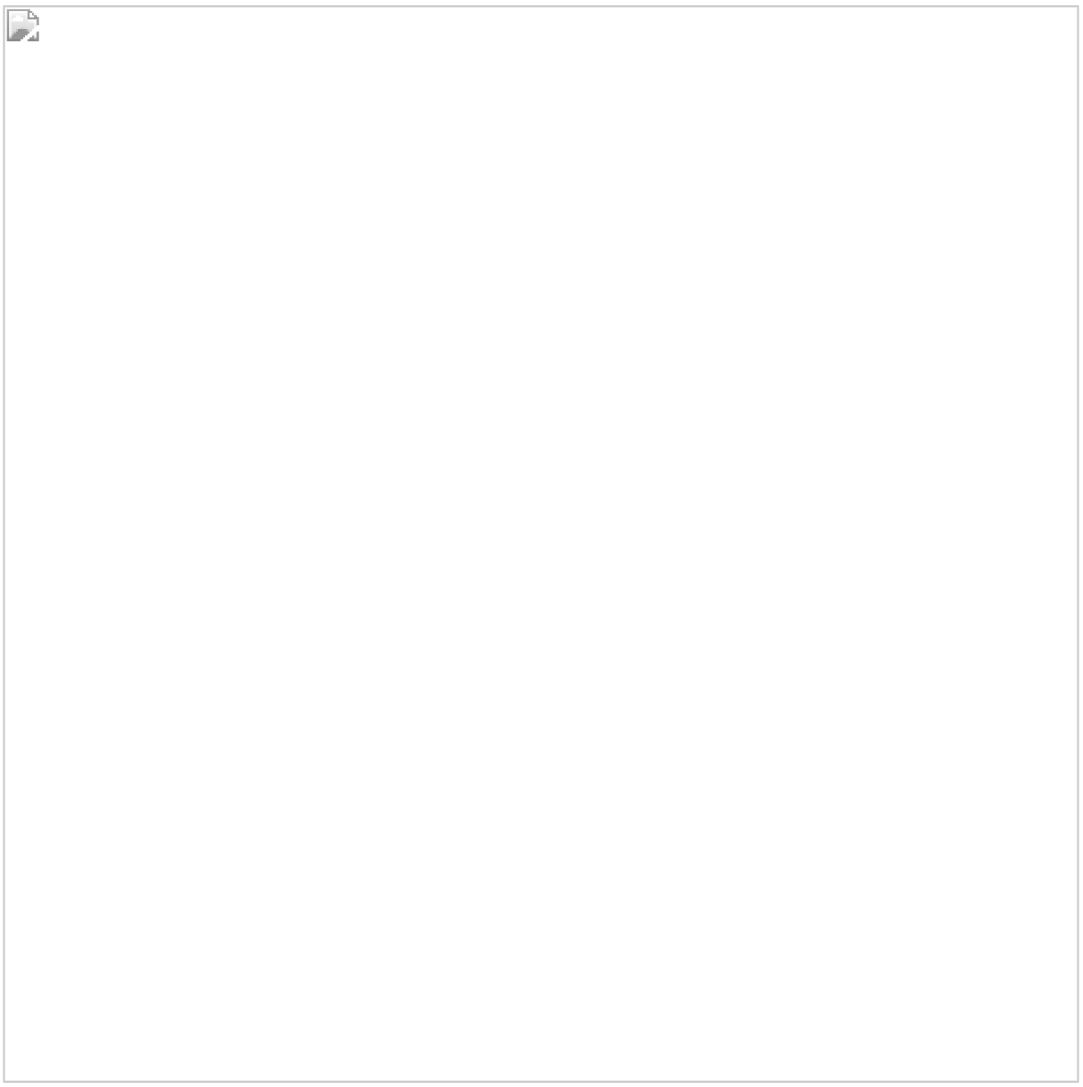
Gabriel waited. When the boy came near, he rapped him on the head with his lantern, five or six times. The boy hurried away, holding his head, singing a very different tune.

Gabriel chuckled to himself. Then he went into the churchyard and locked the gate behind him.

TALK ABOUT IT

Gabriel hurt a boy just because the boy was happy. How do you think the boy felt?

Coffin Lane · another picture



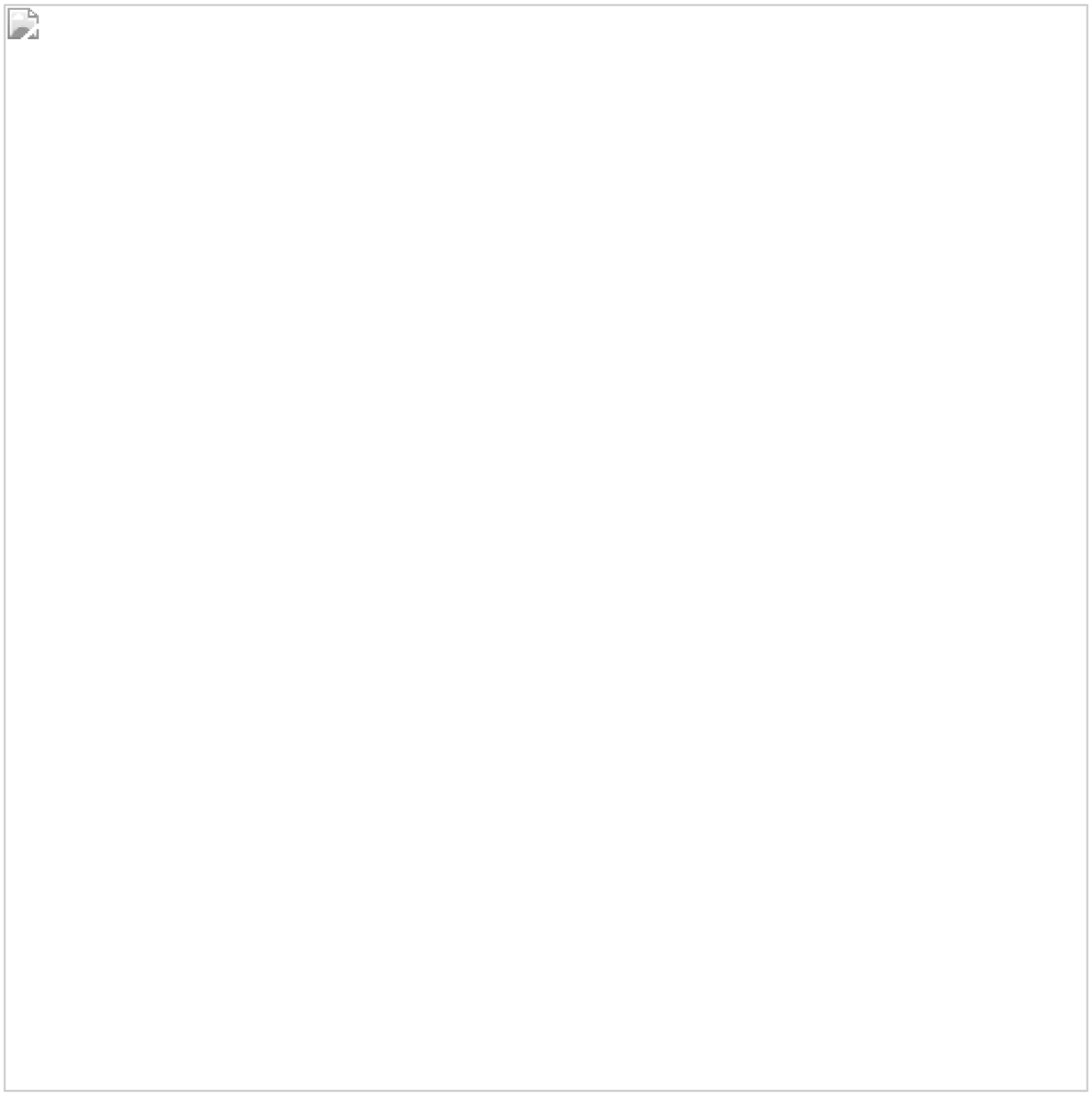
Think about it

1. Why did Gabriel hit the boy?

- ○ The boy broke his spade
- ○ The boy was singing a happy song
- ○ The boy was lost

2. What would you want to say to the boy afterward?

A Coffin at Christmas



Gabriel took off his coat and climbed into the unfinished grave. The ground was frozen hard, and the moon was too young to give much light. But he was so pleased with himself that he hardly minded.

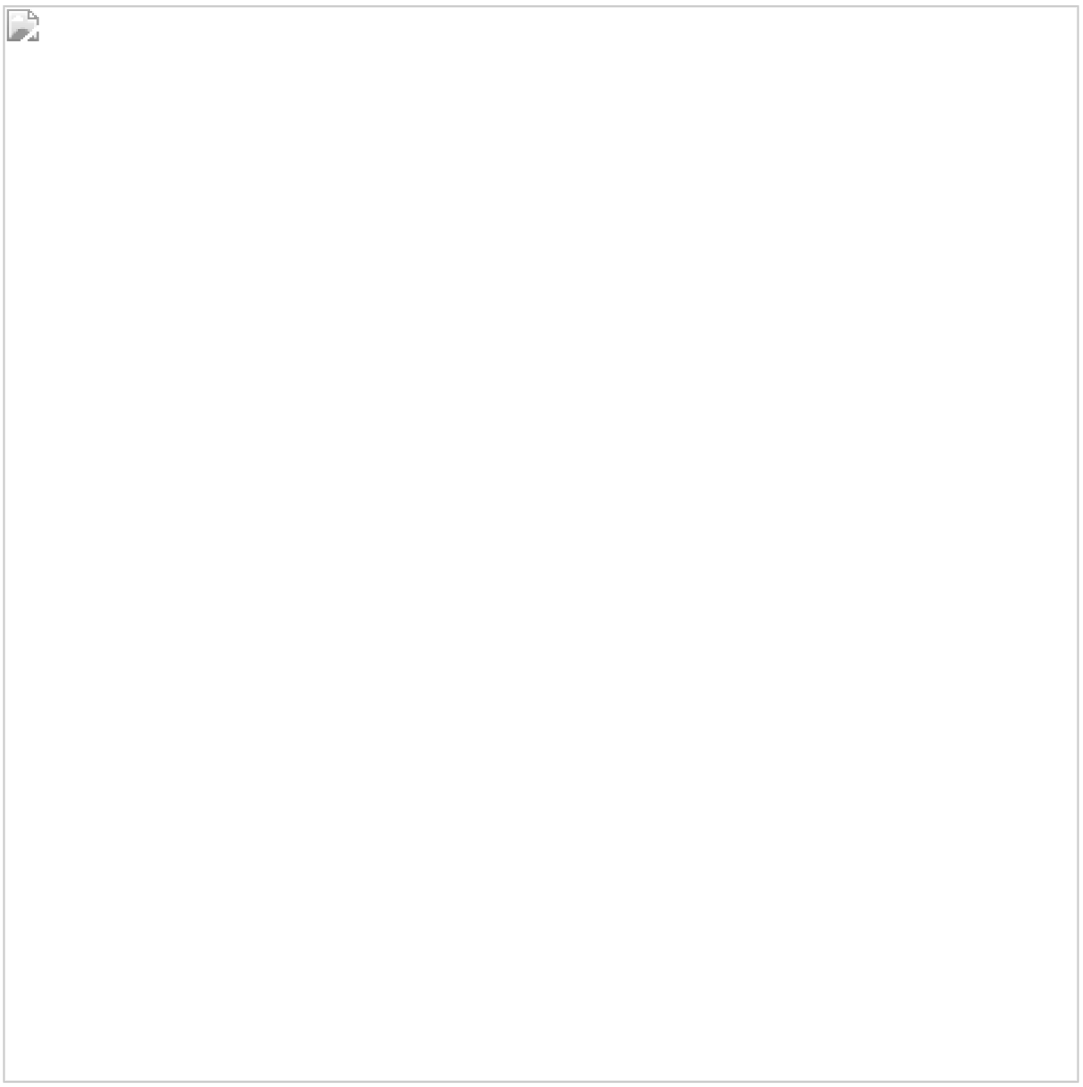
When he stopped work, he looked into the grave and muttered a rhyme: “Brave lodgings for one, brave lodgings for one.”

He sat down on a flat tombstone, which was his favourite resting place, and took out his wicker bottle. “A coffin at Christmas! A Christmas box! Ho! ho! ho!” he laughed.

“Ho! ho! ho!” said a voice, right behind him.

TALK ABOUT IT

Gabriel laughed all alone in the dark. What do you think he was hoping to feel?

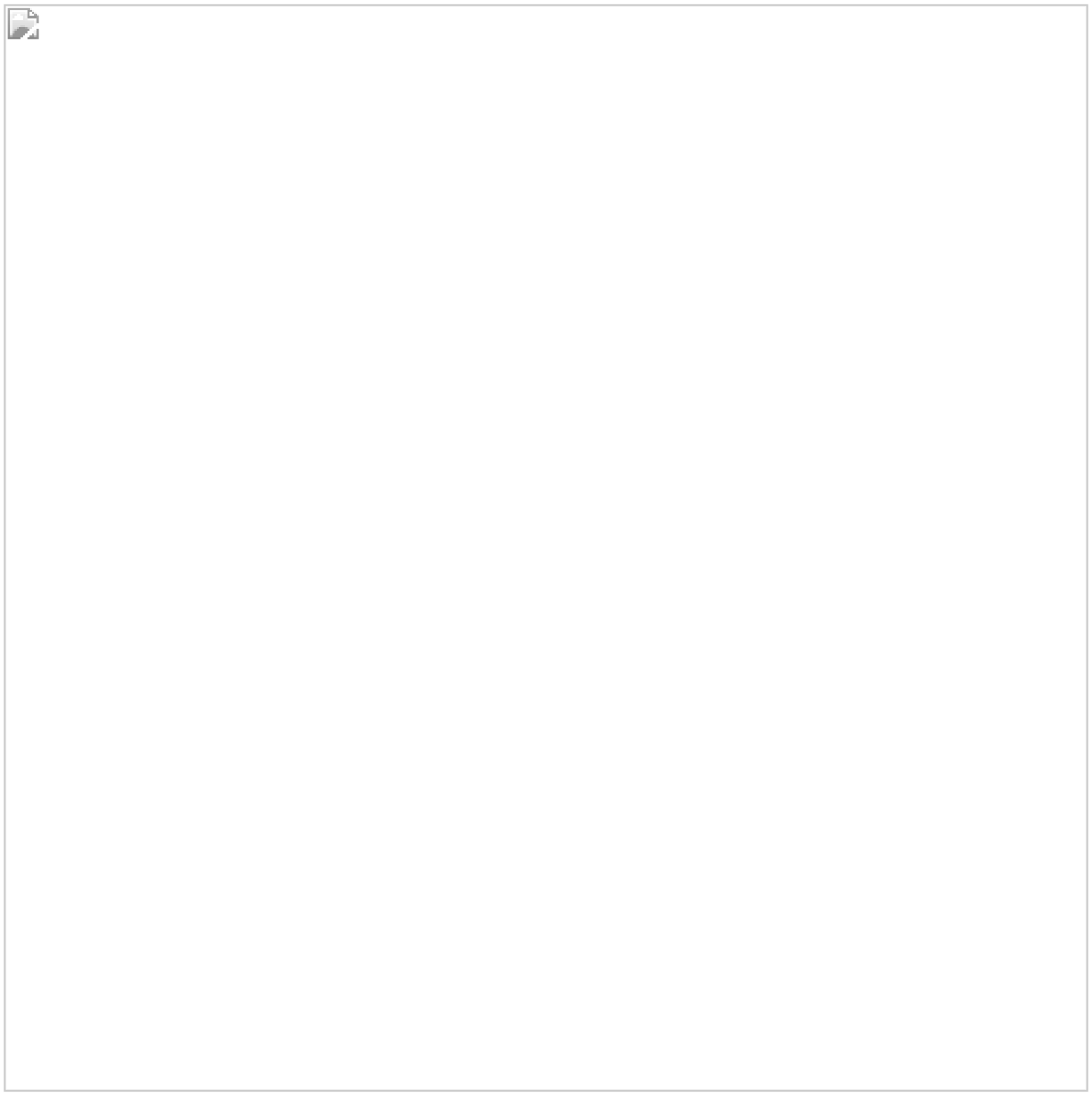


Think about it

1. Who laughed back at Gabriel?

- ○ A voice behind him
- ○ The boy from the lane
- ○ The church bell

The Goblin on the Tombstone



Gabriel looked round. The churchyard was still and silent. Frost sparkled on the stones, and the snow lay smooth and white. “It was the echoes,” he told himself.

“It was not,” said a deep voice.

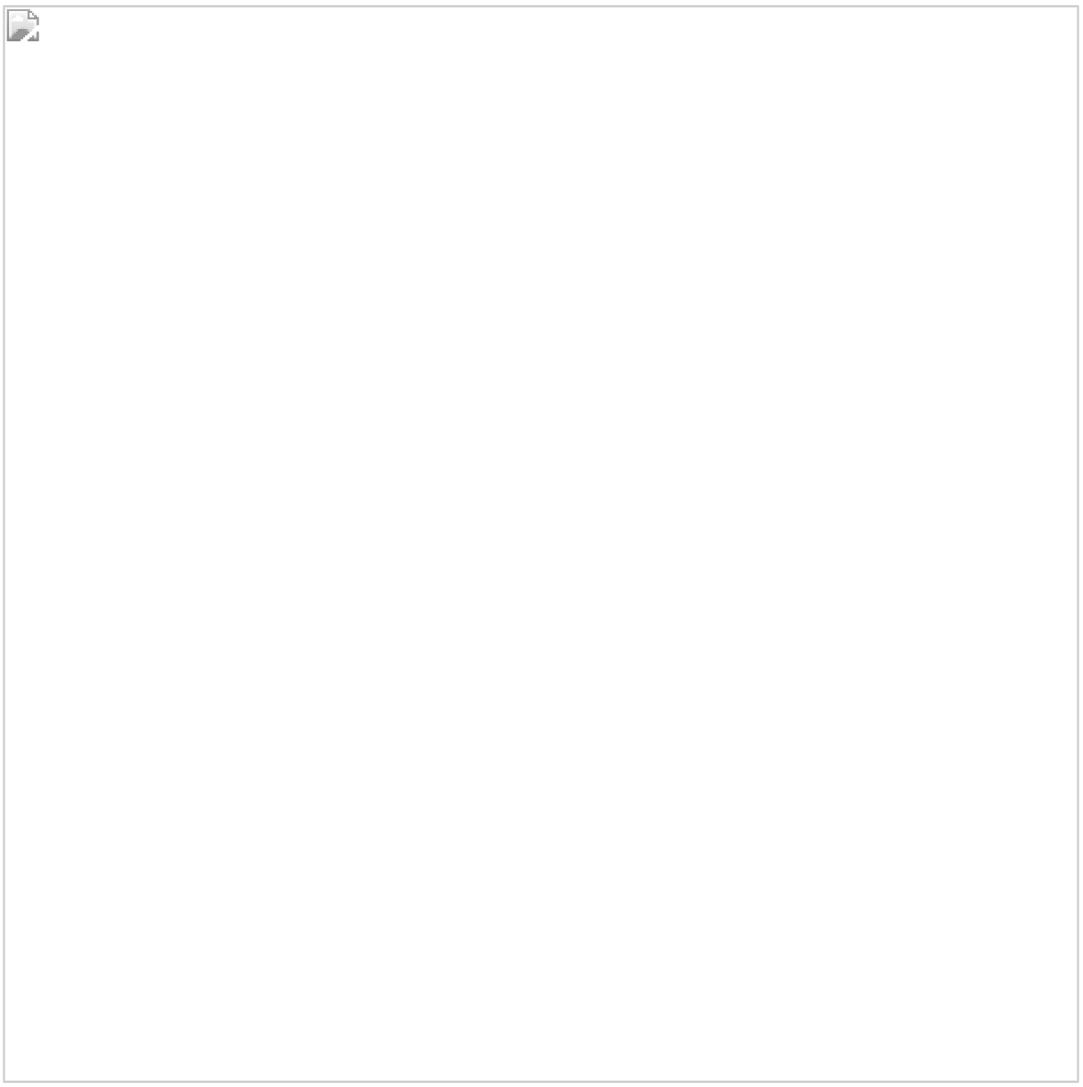
On a tall tombstone sat a strange, unearthly figure. He had long, bendy legs crossed in a funny way, shoes that curled up at the toes, and a tall, pointed hat with one feather. Frost covered the hat, as if he had sat there for two or three hundred years.

He was a goblin, and he was grinning at Gabriel with a grin that only a goblin could make.

TALK ABOUT IT

Gabriel felt his blood run cold. What would you do if you saw the goblin?

The Goblin on the Tombstone · another picture

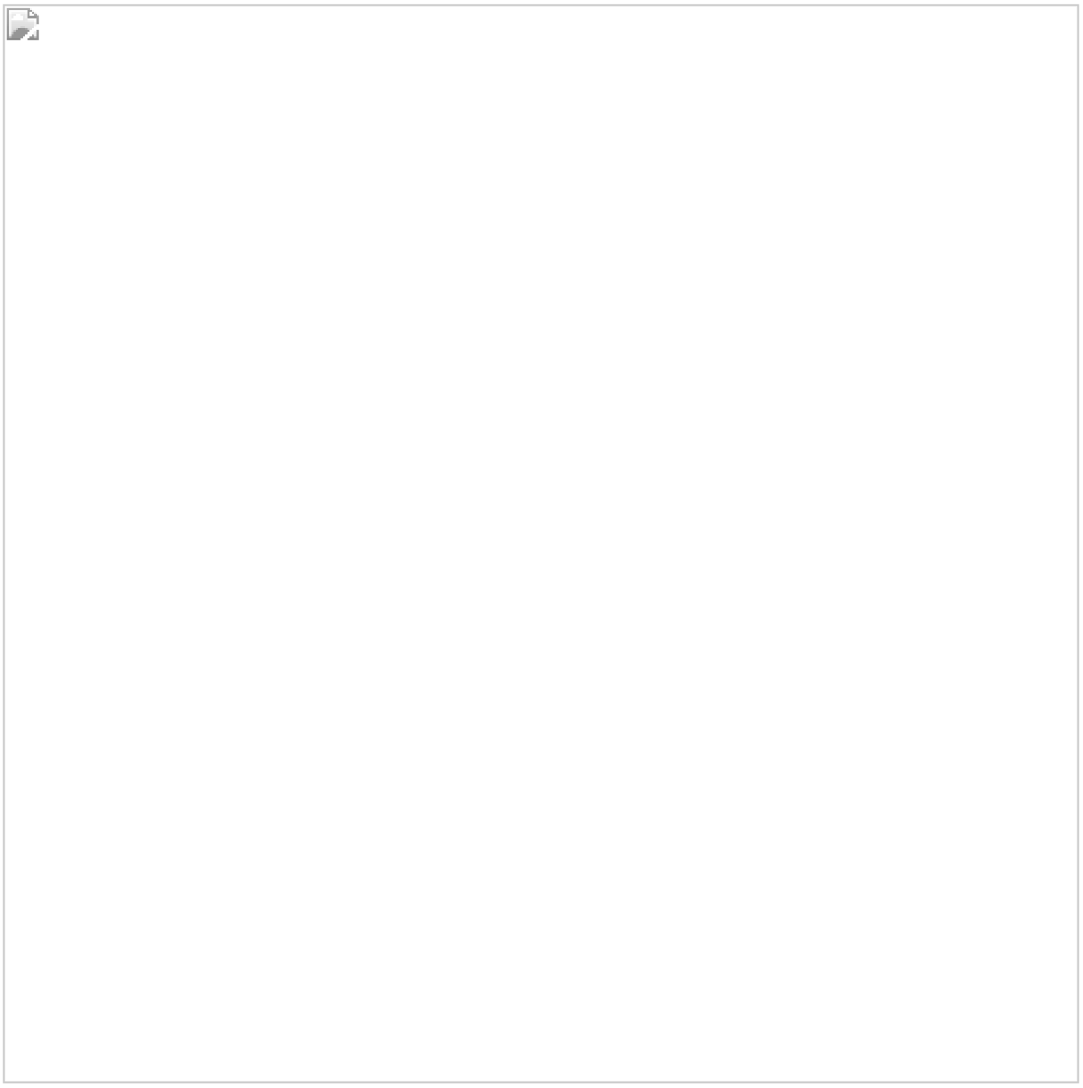


Think about it

1. What was on the goblin's head?

- ○ A crown of gold
- ○ A tall pointed hat with a feather
- ○ Nothing at all

Our Fair and Lawful Prize



“What do you do here on Christmas Eve?” asked the goblin sternly.

“I came to dig a grave, Sir,” said Gabriel, shaking. Then wild voices rang through the churchyard. “Gabriel Grub! Gabriel Grub!” But nobody could be seen.

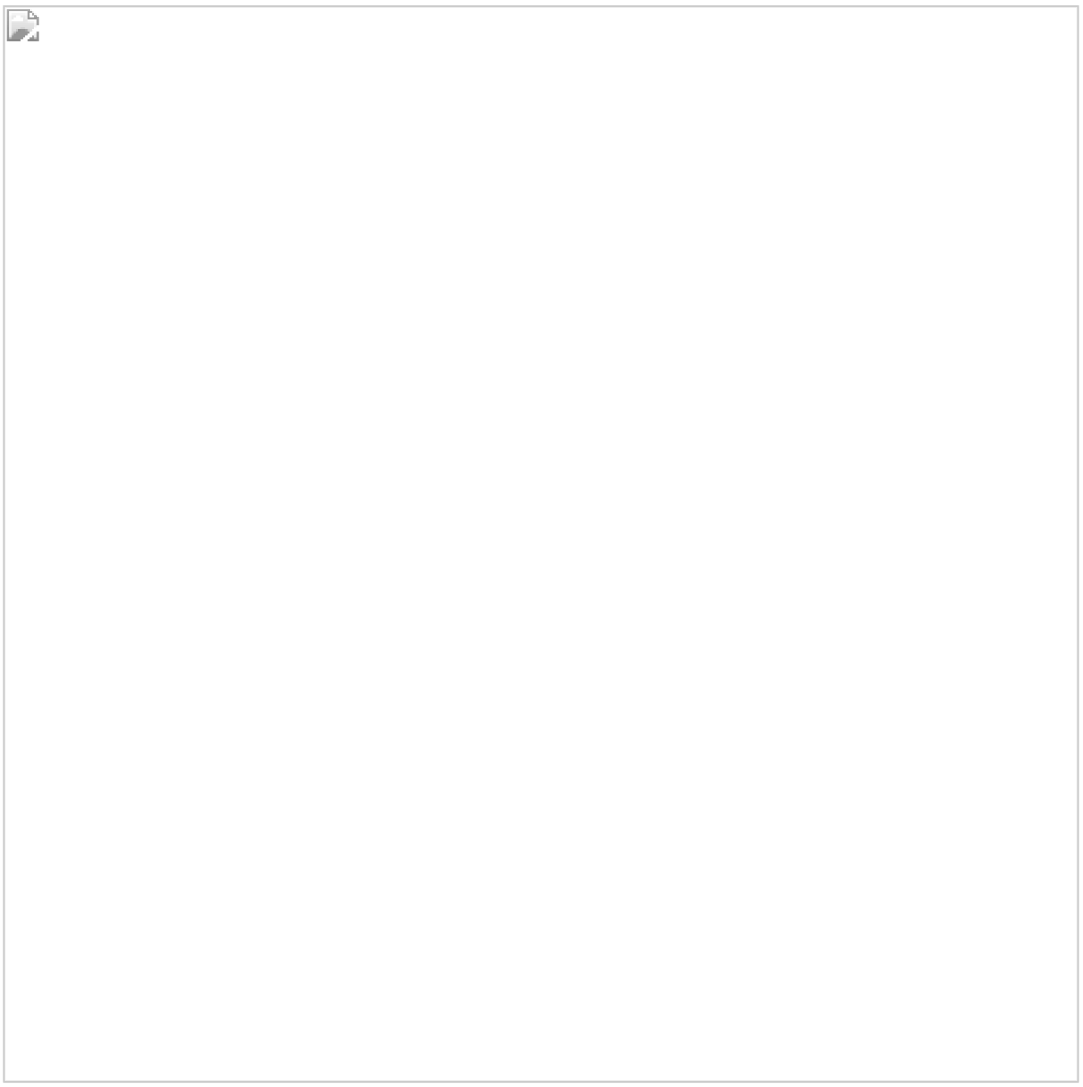
The goblin asked, “And who, then, is our fair and lawful prize?” And the voices sang back, “Gabriel Grub! Gabriel Grub!”

Gabriel said that surely the goblins had never seen him. “Oh, yes, they have,” said the goblin. They knew the man who came down the street scowling at children, and the man who struck the boy because the boy could be merry and he could not.

TALK ABOUT IT

The goblins knew everything Gabriel had done that night. How do you think that felt for him?

Our Fair and Lawful Prize · another picture



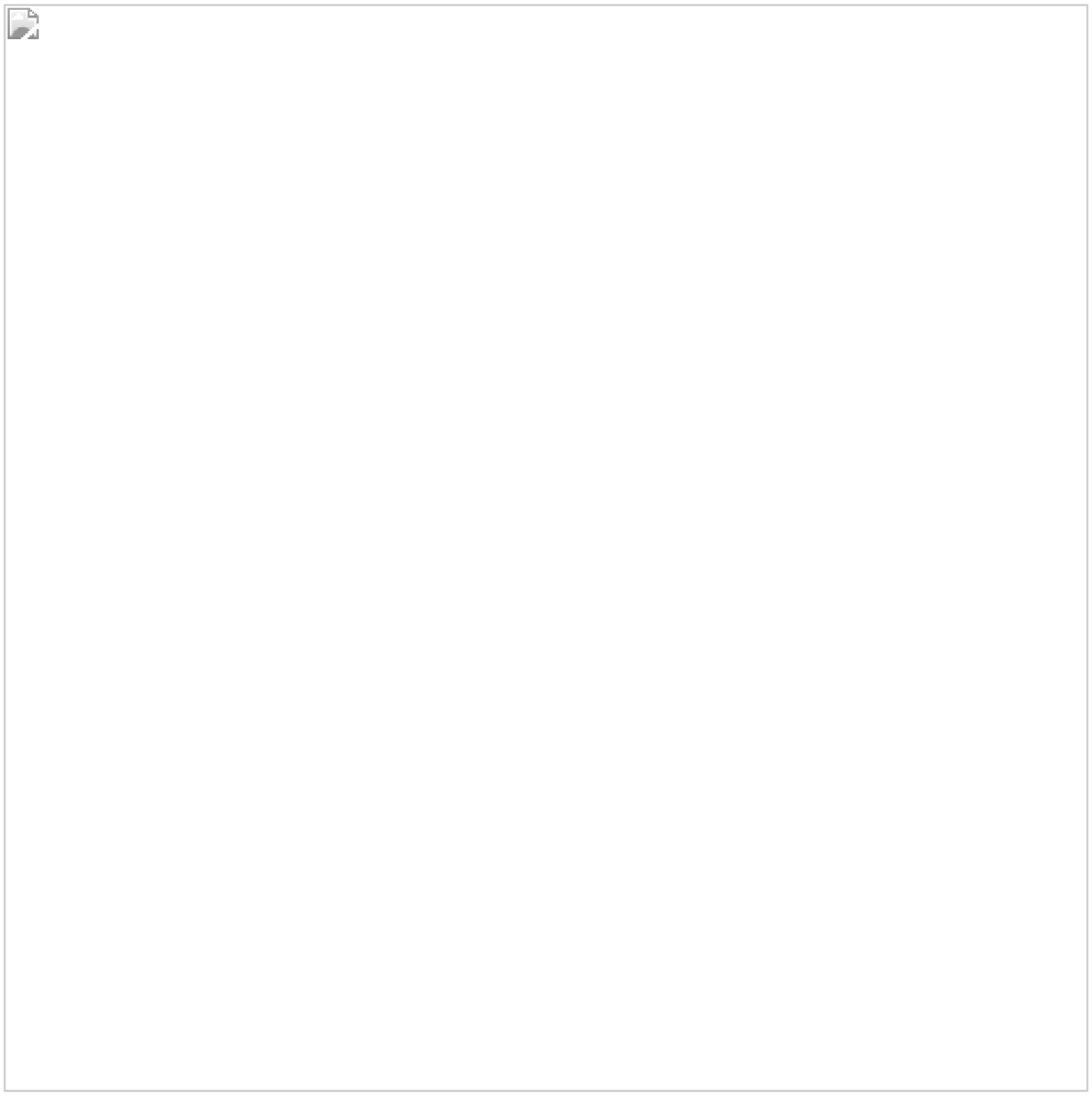
Think about it

1. What did the goblins say they knew about Gabriel?

- ○ That he had hit a boy for being merry
- ○ That he was lost
- ○ That he had a secret treasure

2. Have you ever done something unkind and hoped nobody saw? What helped you feel better?

Leap-Frog with the Tombstones



The goblin laughed, stood on his head on the tombstone, and tumbled right to Gabriel's feet.

Then the church windows blazed with light and the organ played a lively tune. Whole troops of goblins poured into the churchyard and played leap-frog over the tombstones, faster and faster.

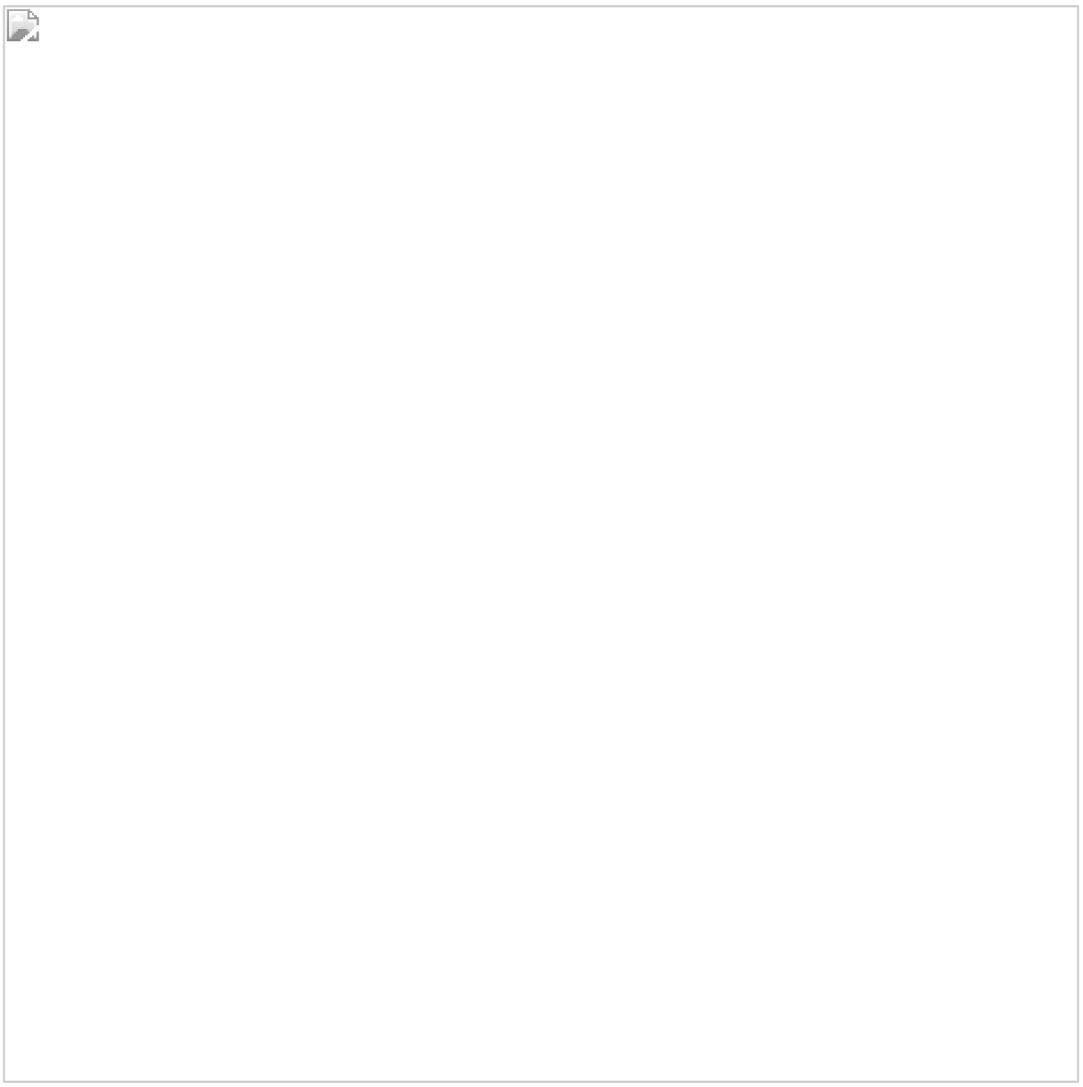
The first goblin was the best jumper of all. He leaped over whole family vaults as if they were street-posts. He was the king of the goblins.

Gabriel's head spun. The goblin king grabbed his collar, and the two of them sank down through the earth.

TALK ABOUT IT

That was a lot of leaping and laughing! What do you think the goblins wanted with Gabriel?

Leap-Frog with the Tombstones · another picture

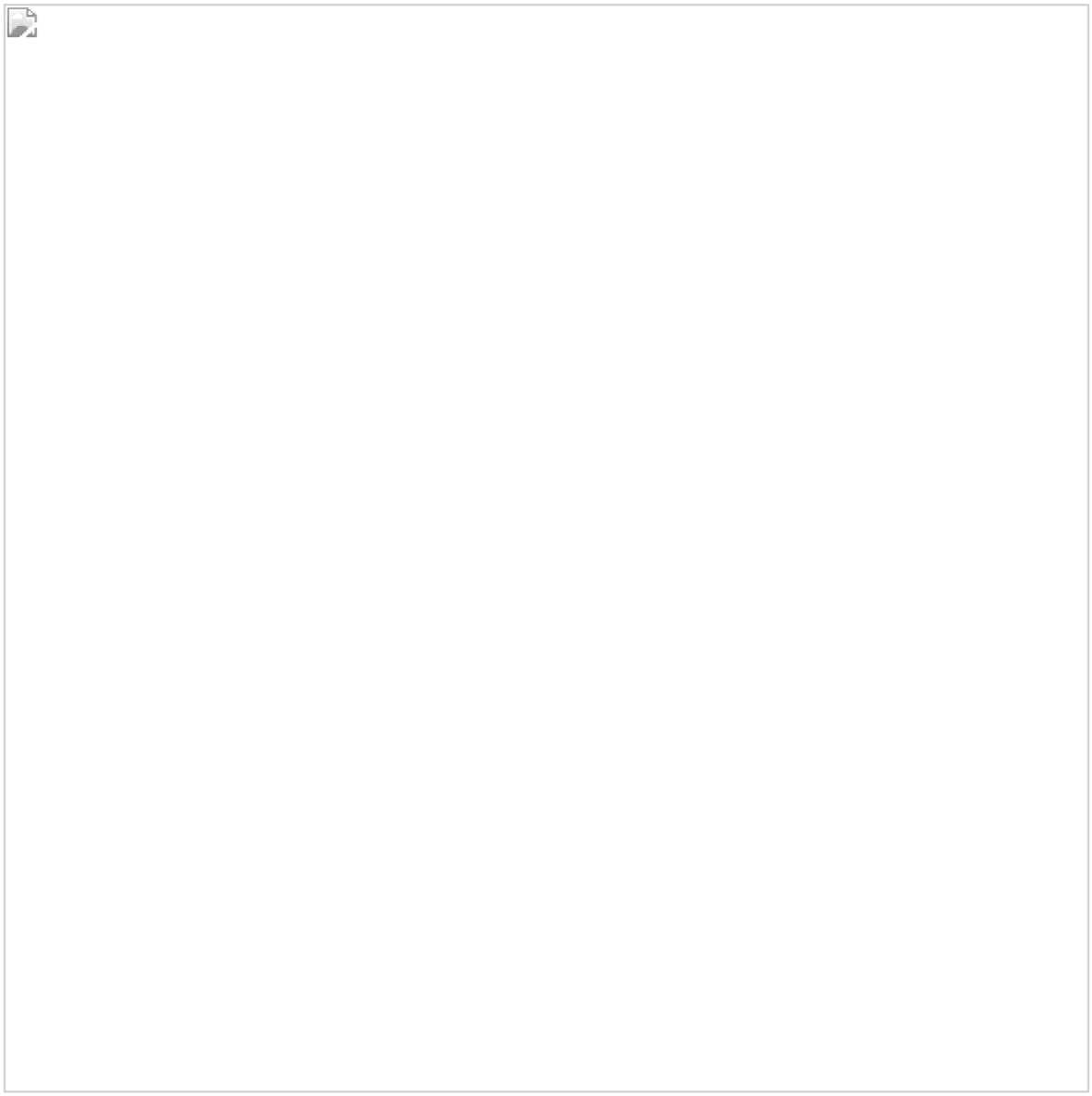


Think about it

1. What game did the goblins play in the churchyard?

- ○ Hide and seek
- ○ Leap-frog over the tombstones
- ○ Tag around the church

The Goblin Cavern



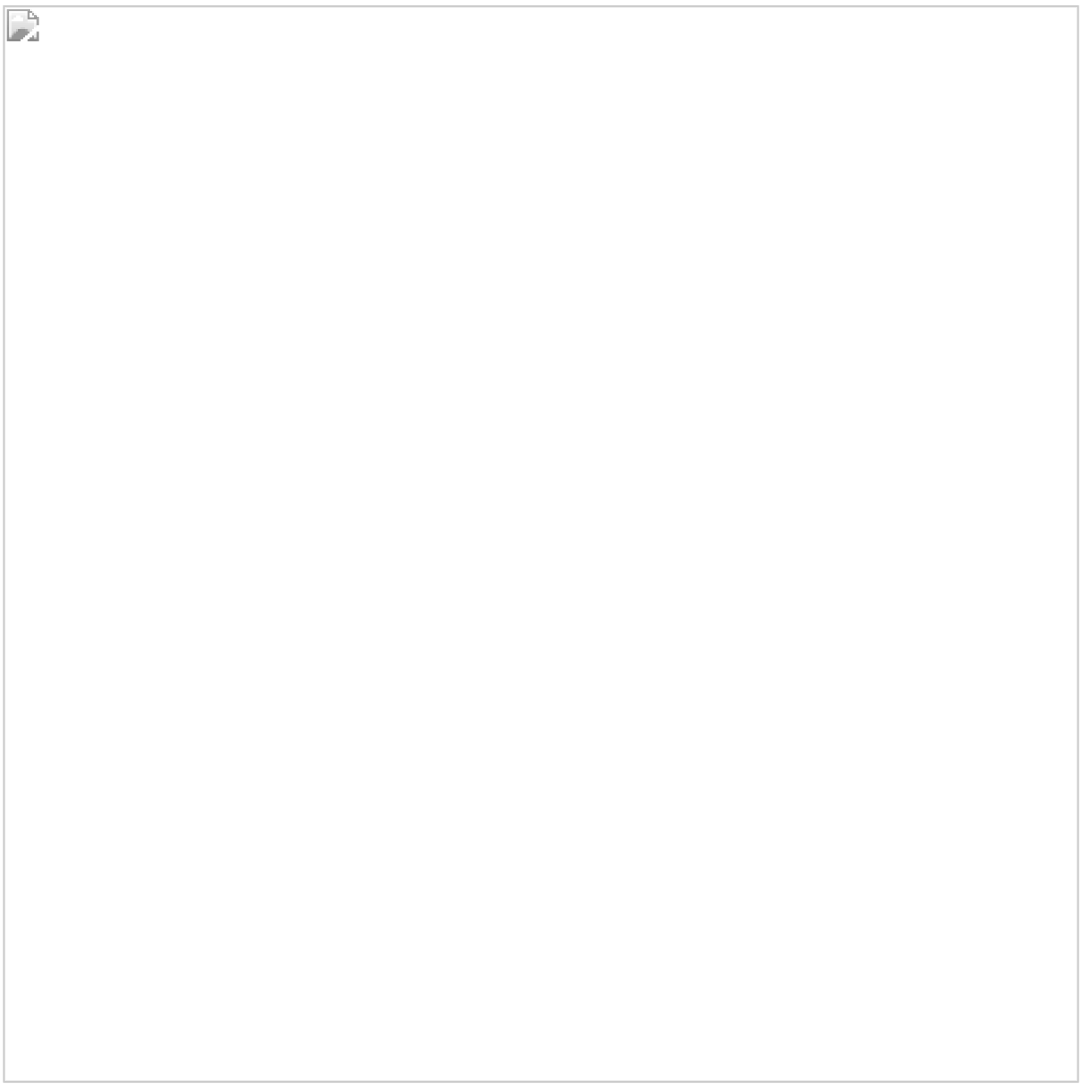
Gabriel found himself in a huge cavern, crowded with ugly, grim goblins. The goblin king sat on a high seat. Gabriel stood close behind him, unable to move.

“Cold to-night,” said the king, “very cold. A glass of something warm here!” The goblins brought him a goblet of liquid fire, and then they made Gabriel drink some too. It was hot and burning, and it made him cough and choke until tears ran down his face. All the goblins screeched with laughter.

Then the king said, “Show the man of misery and gloom, a few of the pictures from our own great storehouse!”

TALK ABOUT IT

What do you think the goblin king wanted Gabriel to learn from the pictures?

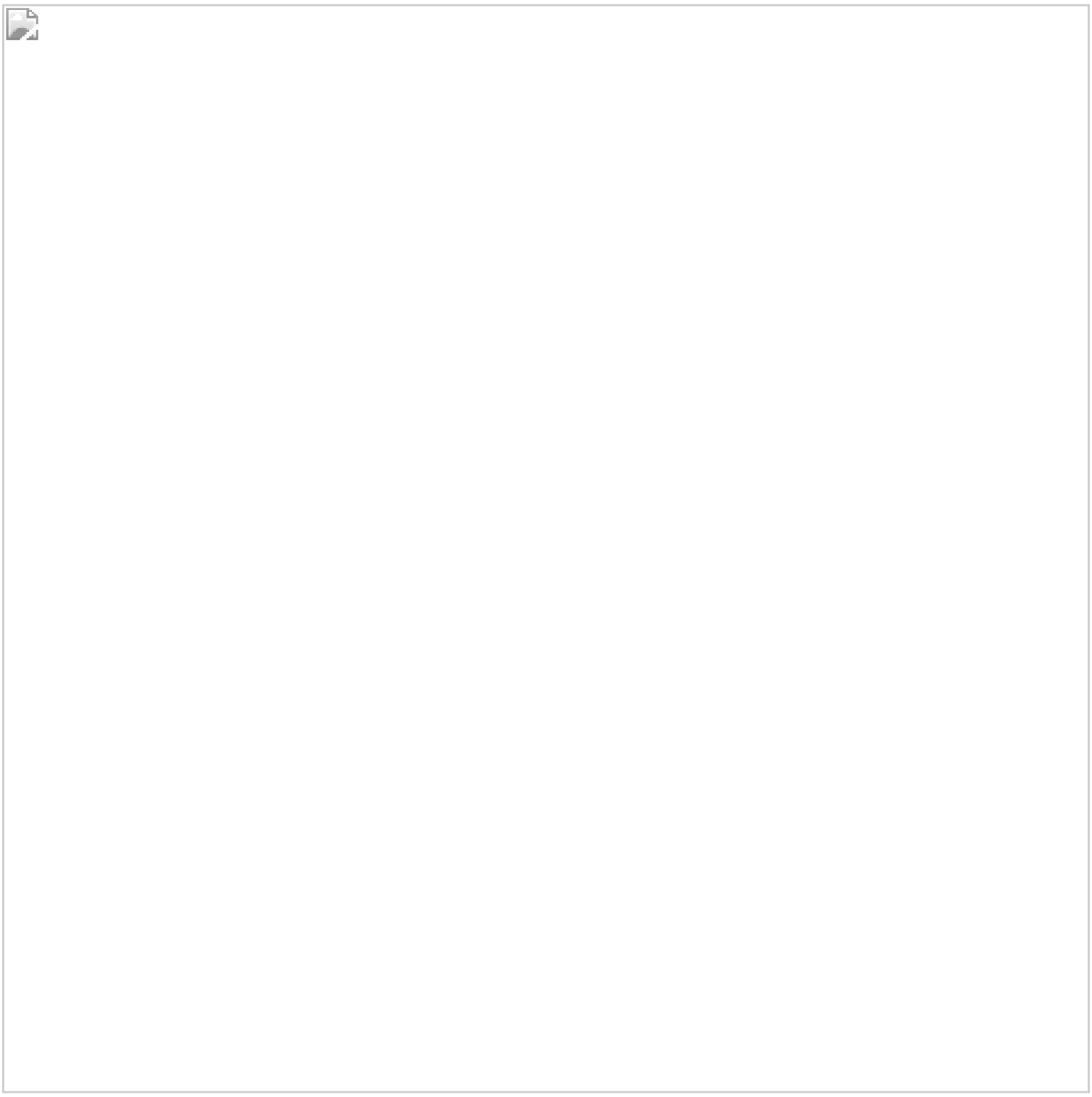


Think about it

1. What did the goblin king want to show Gabriel?

- ○ Gold and jewels
- ○ Pictures from the goblins' storehouse
- ○ A map of the town

The Pictures in the Cloud



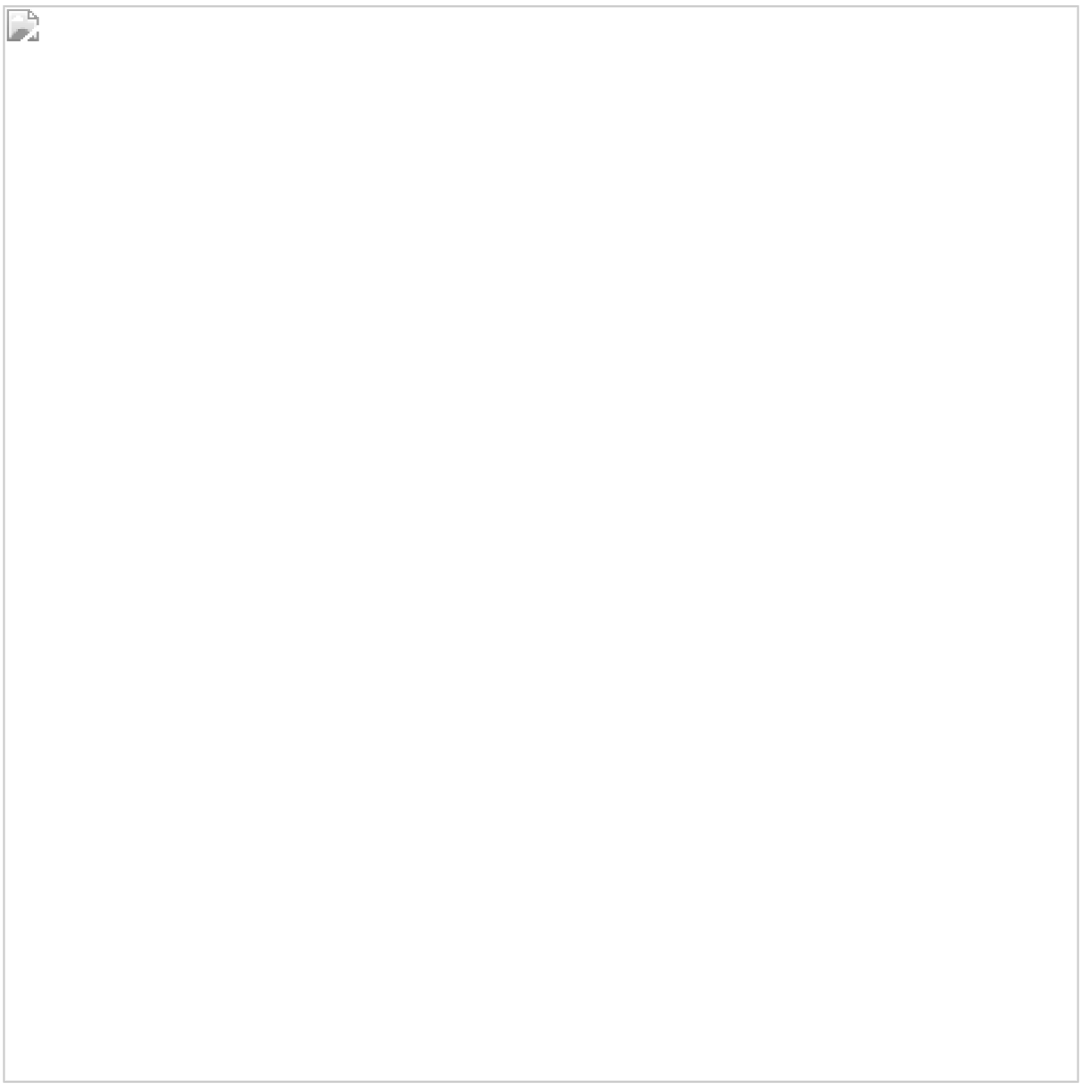
In the first picture, a mother and her children waited by a bright fire. Their father came in, wet and weary, and the children ran to hug him. The room was plain, but everyone was happy.

The scene changed. The youngest child grew ill and died. Gabriel watched with a feeling he had never had before. The others held the cold little hand, knowing the child was an angel now.

The cloud passed. The parents grew old and were laid to rest, and their children wept by the grave, but not bitterly, “for they knew that they should one day meet again.”

TALK ABOUT IT

In the picture, the family loved each other even when things were sad. What do you notice about how they cared for one another?



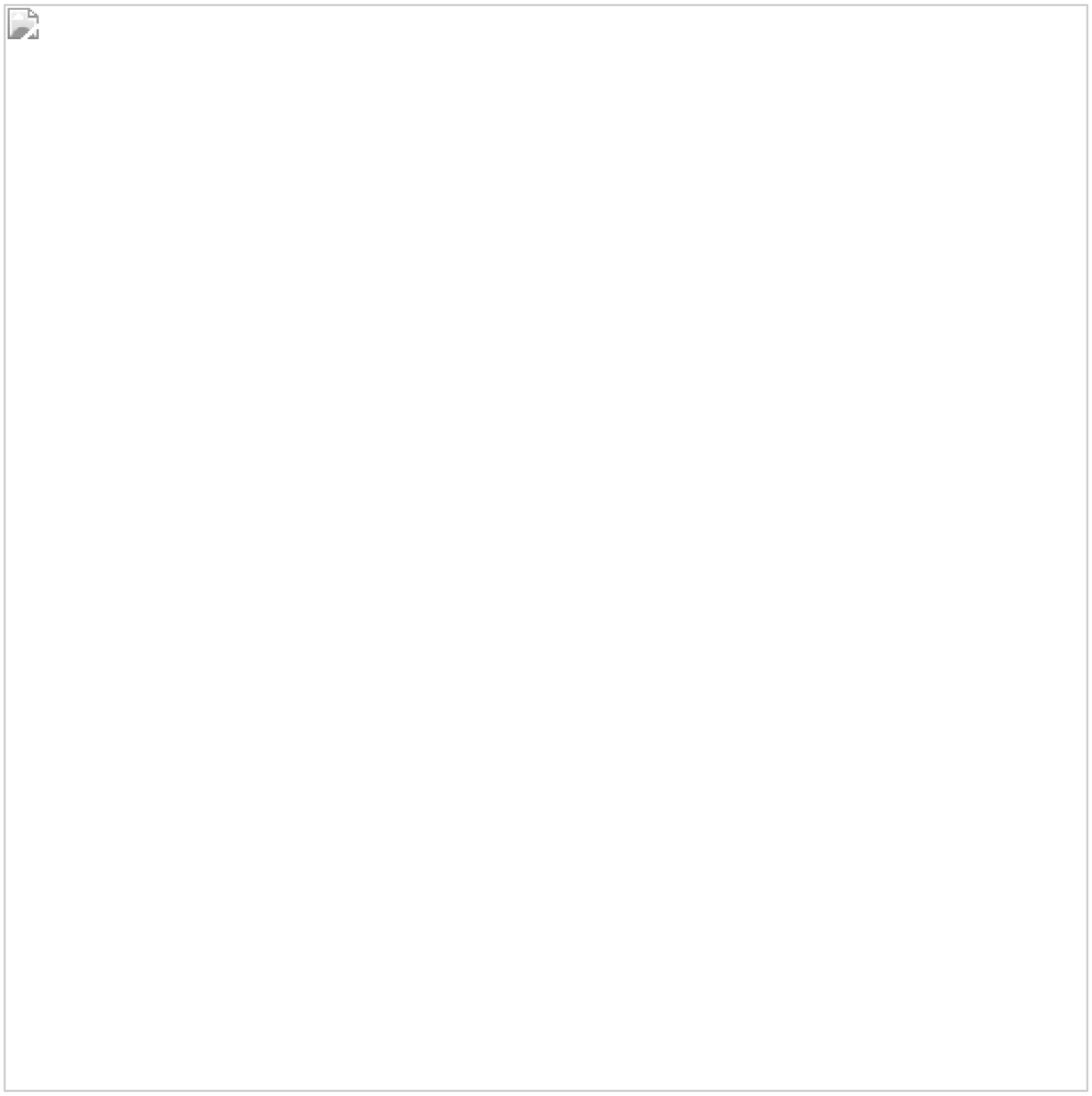
Think about it

1. What did the family do together in the first picture?

- ○ They shared a warm fire and a meal and hugged
- ○ They played leap-frog
- ○ They fought

2. Whom do you love so much that you would want to be near them forever?

A Very Decent Sort of World



“What do you think of that?” asked the goblin king. Gabriel mumbled that it was pretty. “You a miserable man!” said the king with scorn, and all the goblins kicked him. “Show him some more!”

Next came a bright summer morning of sparkling water and singing birds, and another kick.

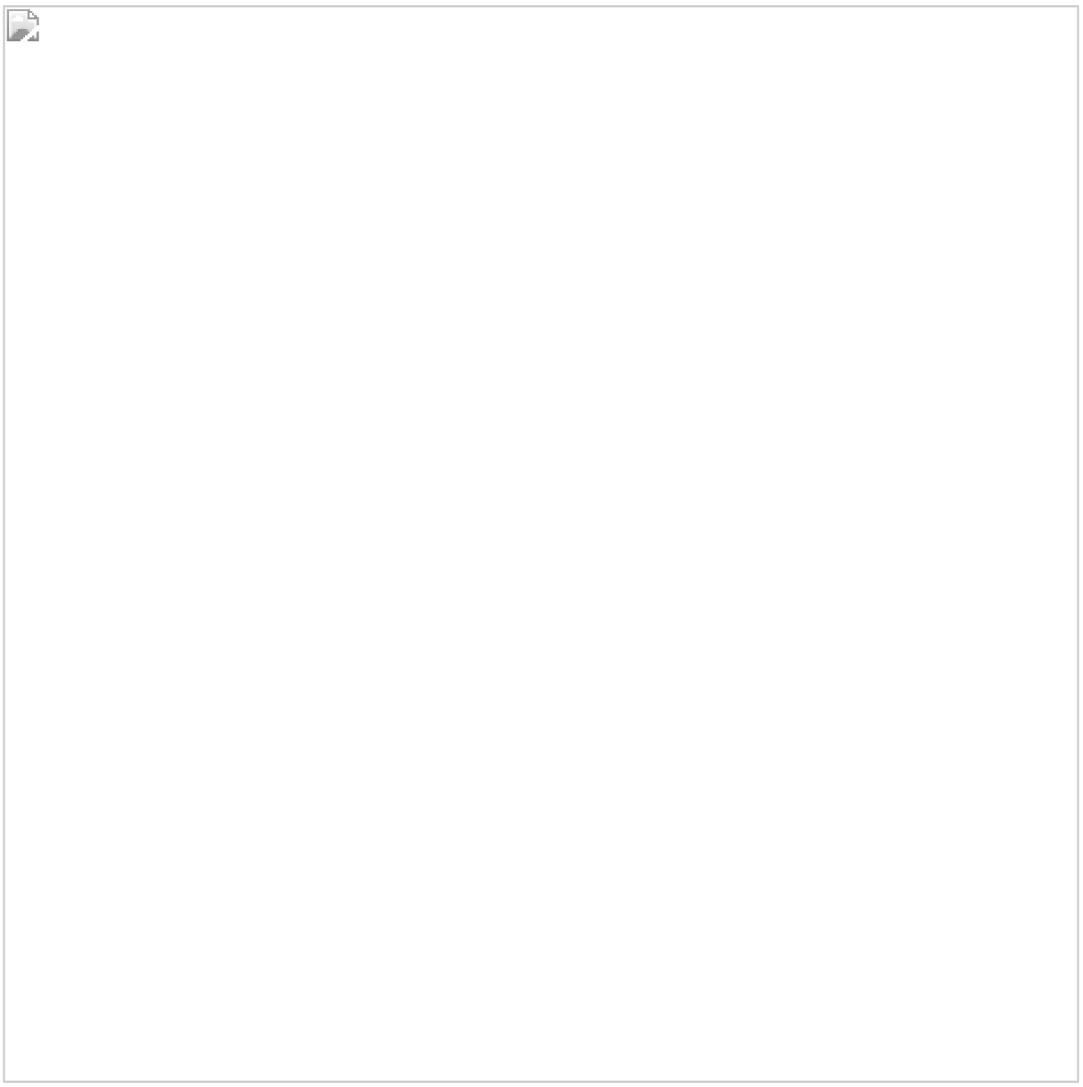
Many times the cloud came and went. Gabriel saw people who worked hard for little yet stayed cheerful, and people who lost much yet kept love and hope.

At last he decided it was “a very decent and respectable sort of world after all.” Then the cloud settled over his eyes, and he fell asleep.

TALK ABOUT IT

What do you think changed inside Gabriel as he watched the pictures?

A Very Decent Sort of World · another picture



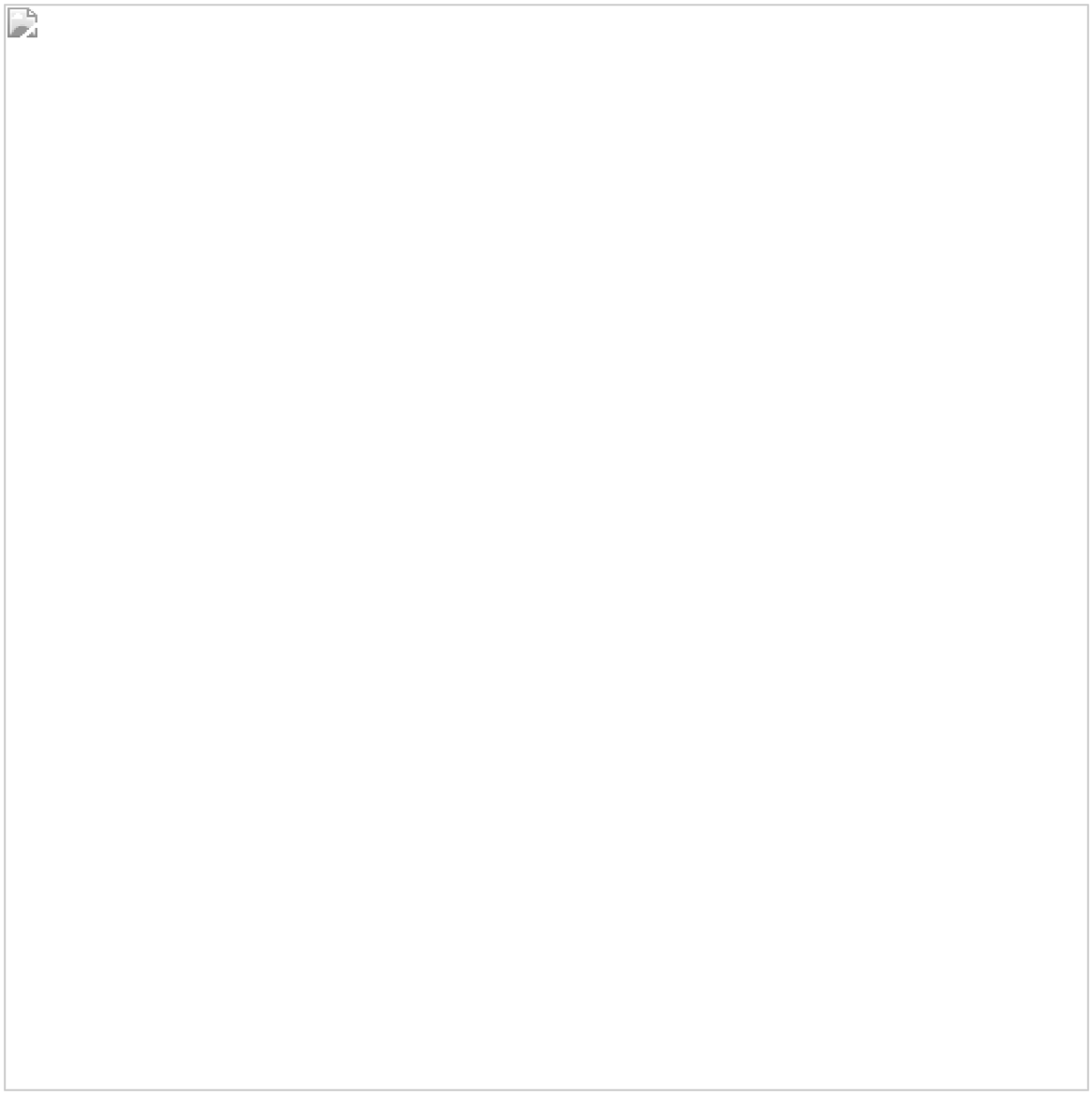
Think about it

1. What did Gabriel decide about the world?

- ○ That it was a decent and respectable place after all
- ○ That it was a bad place
- ○ That it was boring

2. What is something good in your world that you would show Gabriel?

Morning in the Churchyard



When Gabriel woke, it was morning. He lay on the flat tombstone, the wicker bottle empty beside him, his coat, spade and lantern white with frost.

His shoulders hurt where the goblins had kicked him, so it was no dream.

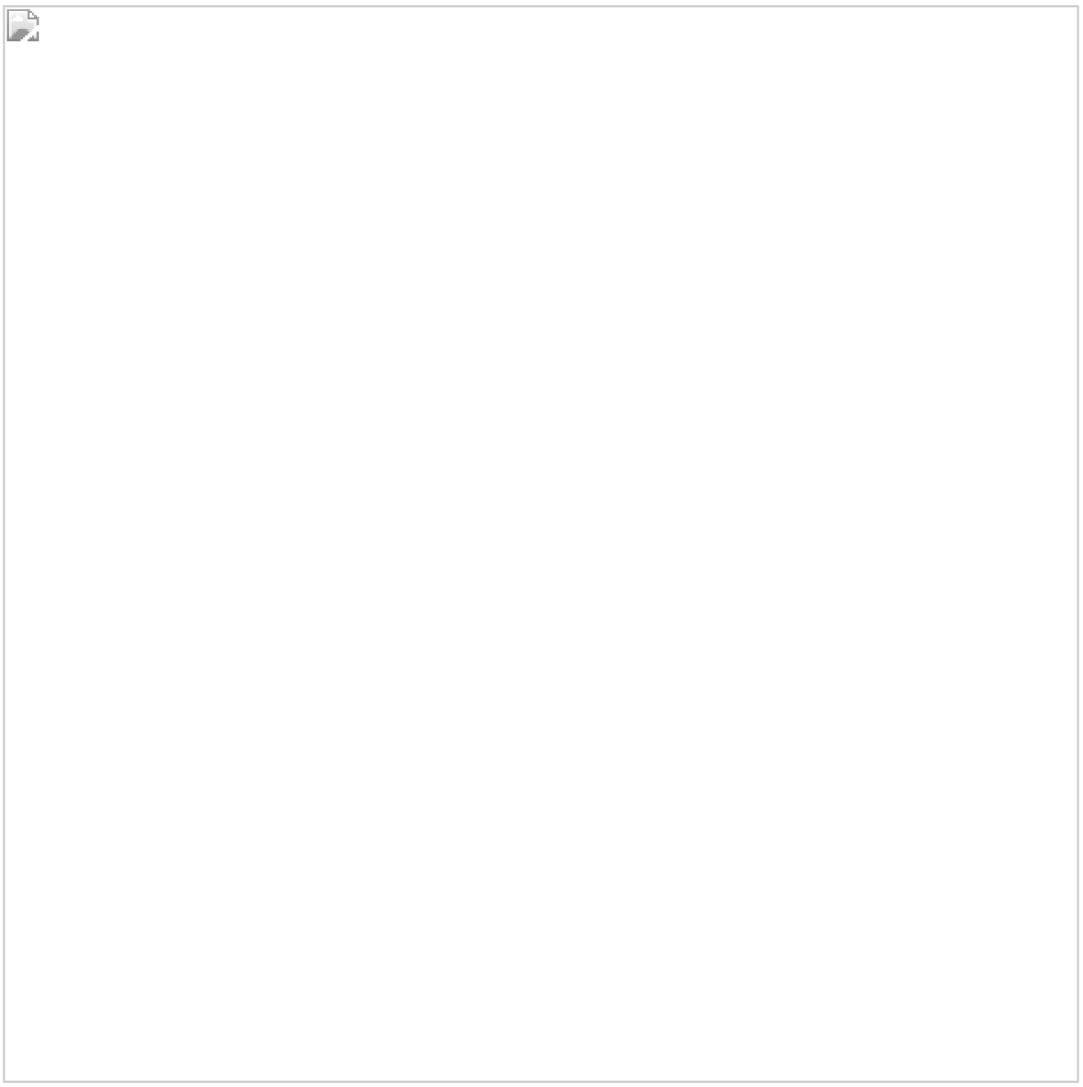
Gabriel was “an altered man.” He could not bear to go back to a town that would laugh at his sorrow and not believe he had changed, so he wandered away to work somewhere else.

Finding his lantern, spade and bottle, the townspeople guessed the goblins had carried him off. Some said they saw him fly away on a strange horse.

TALK ABOUT IT

Gabriel was afraid people would not believe he had changed. Why might that be hard?

Morning in the Churchyard · another picture

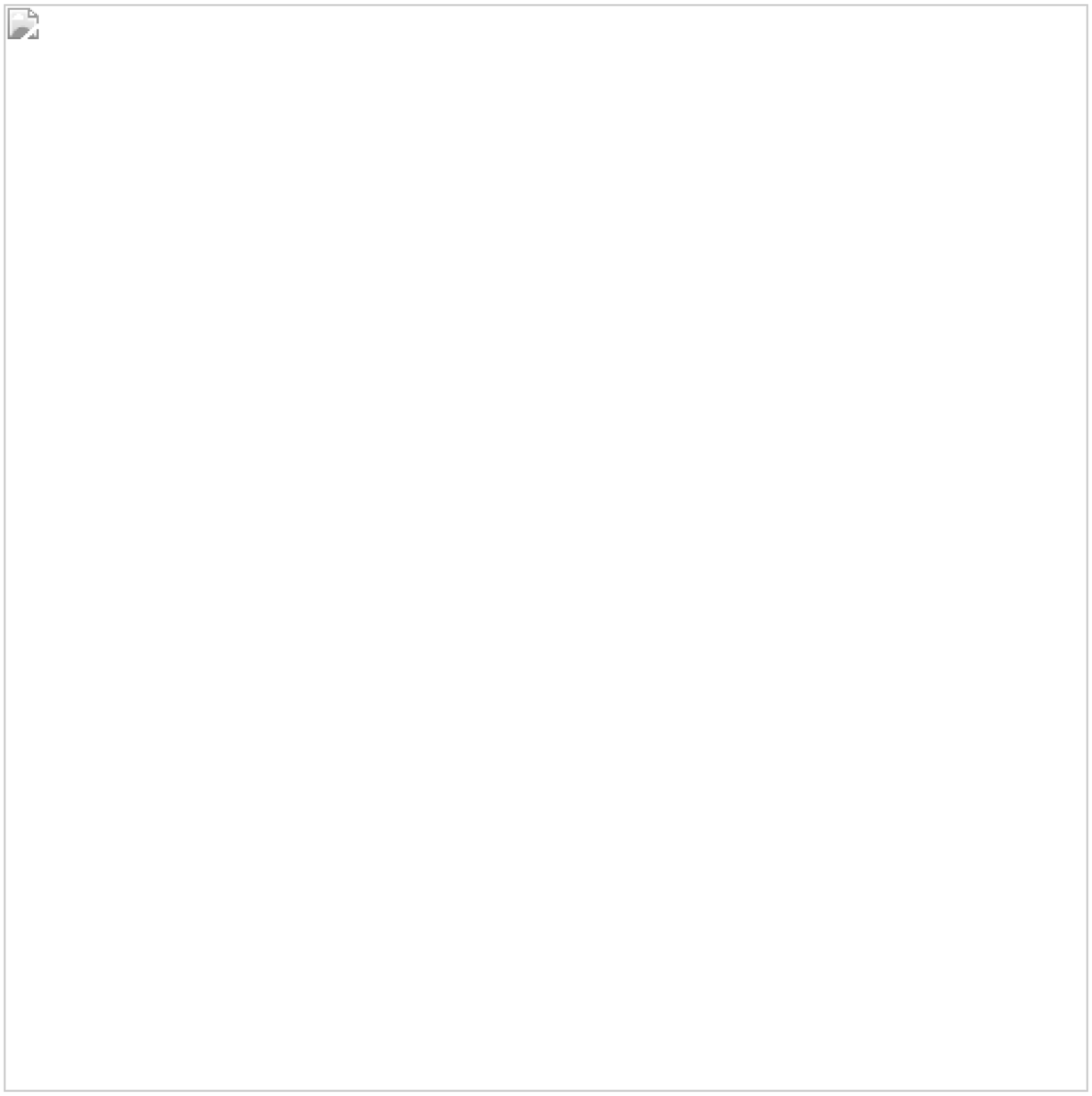


Think about it

1. What did Gabriel do after he woke up?

- ○ He went back to growling at everyone
- ○ He wandered away to start a new life
- ○ He dug another grave

Gabriel Comes Home



About ten years later, Gabriel Grub came back to the old abbey town, “a ragged, contented, rheumatic old man.”

He told his story to the clergyman and the mayor, and in time the town believed it.

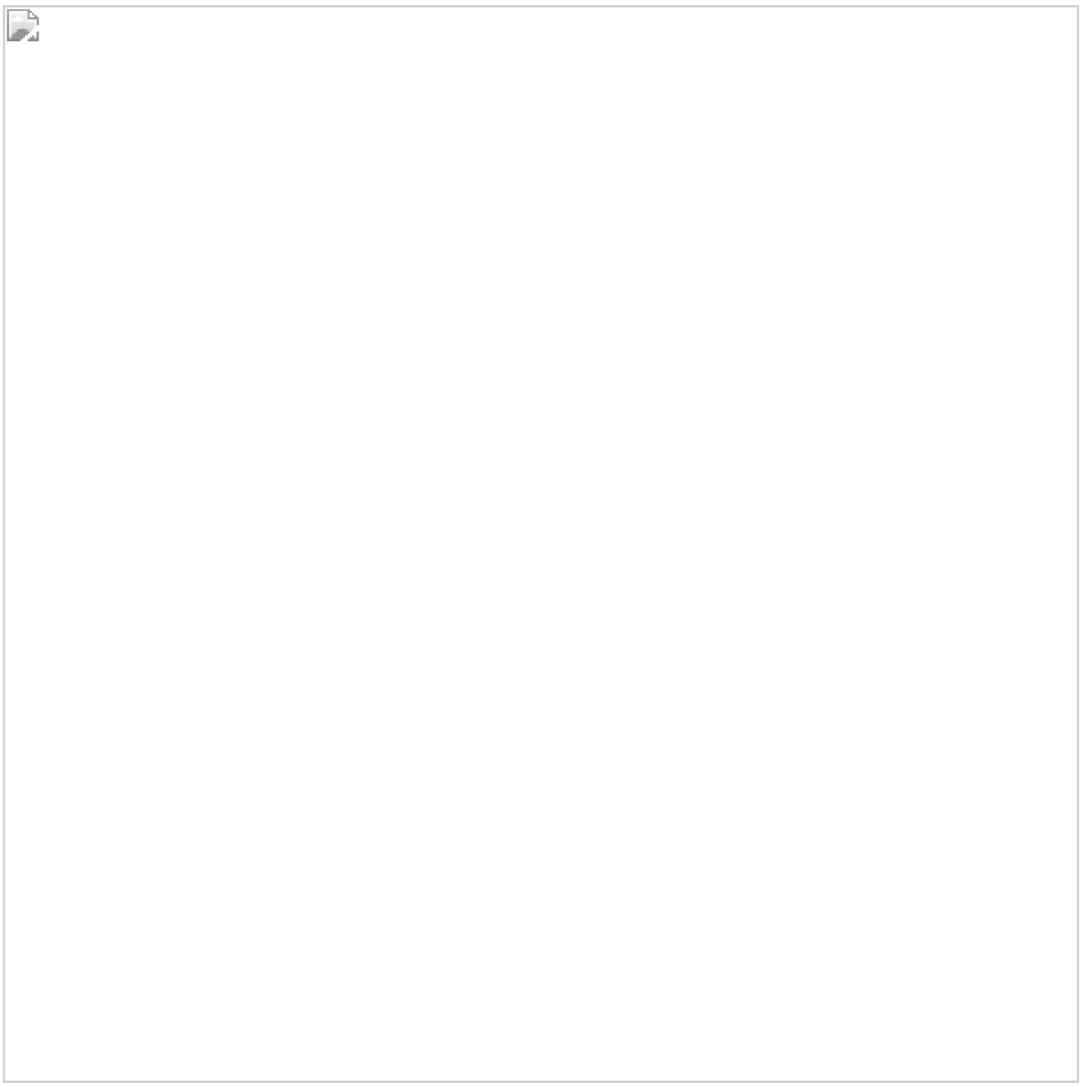
A few said he had only drunk too much and fallen asleep, and had just “seen the world, and grown wiser.” But that idea died away.

Gabriel's joints ached ever after. And Dickens says the story has at least one lesson: “that if a man turn sulky and drink by himself at Christmas time, he may make up his mind to be not a bit the better for it.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Gabriel came back after ten years, poor but content. What do you think made him content?

Gabriel Comes Home · another picture



Think about it

1. How did Dickens describe Gabriel when he returned?

- ○ Ragged, contented and rheumatic
- ○ Rich and proud
- ○ Young and strong

2. Gabriel changed after the goblins showed him what mattered. What do you think can help a person change?

“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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