

The Halloween Shadow Set, ages 5 - 18

Poem – My Shadow Cape (Ages 5–7)

I was washing my shadow for Halloween,
But the silly thing would not come out clean,
My mama's best flower soap was right there,
The one with gold sparkles for old folk care.

So in it went with a glug and gurgle,
Water robbing each little soap bubble,
Splish, splash, sploosh! I was scrubbing my shadow,
How it did giggle, wiggle and swirl-flow.

Then out it did pop as dry as can be,
Fitter than a circus acrobat's flea,
"A super-hero cape," it said it could be,
A Halloween shadow protecting me.

Story Starter – My Shadow Cape (Ages 5–7)

I was washing my shadow for Halloween. I wanted a superhero cape, one that was bright, one that would glow. So I tried every kind of soap and shampoo. I even tried the conditioner. Nothing seemed to work. My shadow remained the same, enjoying the water and always grey.

It is a good thing to think. So I did. I thought and thought. Then, "Voilà! Eureka!" I shouted. I had an idea! What if only the best soap could do it? The soap in the gold sparkle label, with the bottle that probably belongs to the queen. Yes. That would work.

So in it went, every last drop. Splish! Splash! Sploosh! Yet once again it was grey. Then to me it laughed and sprang, to wrap around my shoulders as a flowing cape, a protective shield, like a real superhero cape.

Writing prompts (Ages 5–7)

- What colour is your shadow cape and what can it do?
- Draw your shadow cape, then write one or two sentences about how it protects you.
- The shadow giggles in the bath. What makes it laugh the most?
- Your shadow turns into a different costume (not a cape). What does it become?

Poem – The Shadow Road of Toads (Ages 7–9)

Upon a cold night of shadow smile,
Along a cold road's twilight-cloaked mile,
Halloween toads did hunker squat and low,
Basking in the last breaths of daylight's glow.

This Halloween night was a spooky fright,
The wind was a spidery cobweb kite,
As coldness made into cotton wool ghosts,
Ghosts fast flossing as frosty party hosts.

Crowds of toads dozed as dreaming lumpy rocks,
Croaking silly hymns about cheesy socks,
Croaking toady giggles, gossip, and jokes,
About a strange shadow who boxed with smoke.

The Shadow Road of Toads – Story Starter (Ages 7–9)

Halloween night crawled in like a slimy toad. Then to the Halloween road came actual toads. None hopped as a sweet frog would do, yet all they did was crawl and croak. Imagine a field of sweet flowers that grow in the spring. Imagine their petals. Imagine their scent and how it sings. Now flip it to the opposite and this is what you've got – a toad road, a stink that could steal the sense from a saint, and a coldness that learned how to cling. Then to my side came a shadow, one shaped just the same as me. "Don't worry," it said. "I've got this covered. Walk the road. Ignore each toad. This Halloween we are hunting a magical treasure together."

Writing prompts (Ages 7–9)

- Describe the "toad road" using your own similes and sound words. What does it look, smell and sound like?
- The shadow says you are hunting a magical treasure. What is the treasure and do you have a magical helper?
- One of the toads starts talking to you. What warning or secret does it share?
- If toads could giggle, what would they sound like?

Age 9-11 Poem: The Fury Lute and The Shadow Boxer

There once was a lute, a sort of flute,
Its Halloween fury-rage never mute,
Each All Hallows Eve was a battle night,
No fright, just fight, lute and shadow blight.

Max effort the Shadow boxing silly,
Max volume the lute blasts willy-nilly,
A shadow boxing a music score is dumb,
Halloween ghosts watch to laugh themselves numb.

And so it goes every last October eve,
Nano-watt brain bulbs so hard to believe,
Silliness strands with max daft cotton weaves,
Both roll up imaginary shirt sleeves.

The shadow lands a wrestling star leap-blow,
Knee right in with a sharply struck elbow,
Fury lute sends its sonic thunder boom,
And ghostly laughter lifts the sense of gloom.

Age 9-11 Story Starter: The Shadow verses the Fury Lute

The foolish folly of the fury lute is tough to refute, even with its soft, silvery glow, it's a real beaut. The shadow of Halloween night is double daft, and so the ghouls figured they'd have a night of spectator fun. Spectral spectators, flaming phantoms, giggling ghosts and anxious apparitions – they all took their seats along a road of toads, a mile of vile slime. Odd perhaps, yet very in vogue. They say it features on the front cover of the annual edition of The Sensible Spook, a magazine for monsters of refined taste.

The sight of a sound battling a shadow was community comedy, a brain-less bliss none would ever be willing to miss. Even the snakes slithered near to see hiss-tory made each and every year. Not a ghost left without a mirthful tear, non-existent ribs shaking at the epic shadow boxing of the dim versus a full-service halitosis hymn. This year was just starting. The spirits were reverse-departing, and the shadow was warming up with jumping jacks.

Writing prompts (Ages 9–11)

- Describe the fury lute. What does it look like, sound like and feel like when it plays?
- The ghosts are watching the battle. Write what they say to each other as they watch.
- The shadow boxer suddenly realises it has been wrong about something. What is it, and what does it do next?
- Invent a new Halloween instrument (like the fury lute). What is it called and what strange power does its music have?

Poem – A Halloween Door in the Road (Ages 11–14)

A Halloween door grew on Shadow's Road,
Haunted house peeling paint, feathers of crows,
Crackling with frost that whispered in cold code,
Below lurked a fortress that darkness sowed.

Then in gasps heaving span, my thoughts stutter,
A grim house grows melting road and gutter,
Melting it as snow, then freezing as grim-gloss,
Blackest ice as Shadow's lip balm and floss.

Not a house of two simple stories sits and stares,
Yet a mountain of a million dirty panes foul-glare,
Jagged with thunderous glower, this dark tower,
Blinked in the glare of a non-existent ray-shower.

Halloween's traveller washes to grey,
Disbelief, dismay, darkness not today,
Trembling in its halitosis smile-vile,
Even as it smugly smirked ghoul style.

From a pocket with well kept poker-face,
A disc of stone, a granite-grace penny ace,
I flashed as the heroes Heaven token,
Stating in stone that the good have spoken.

The good gave me placement in their own ark,
As a heroic soul escaping dark,
At that, the foul mansion-mountain shattered,
Black mirror sand then tsunami scattered.

Only to seep into each crack, melt-seal,
Evermore ends Shadow Mile's happy-steal,
Jack-o-lanterns flame hushed to smokeless-cold,
Christmas calls with Halloween's tale full-told.

Story Starter – A Halloween Door in the Road (Ages 11–14)

Shadows tripped along, there and then gone, as an iron-wool wind numbed even rock-solid ice. Mid-autumn it seemed had taken an arctic turn and for one night it was subzero, a Siberian chill that could freeze even ghouls still. The Shadow, however, was singing a ghostly pop song, about something or other that can't be translated into the minds of man. Every year it seemed the Shadow grew dimmer, a little slimmer and not a whit brighter. This year it had figured out how to conjure a door in the road, a door to the haunted evermore. Happy with its work, it lurked, it watched, until a shivering traveller came with a face of ruddy chilblains. Would they knock? Would they run? Was the grey flicker about to have fun? Tick tock. Tick tock. All Hallow's Eve was on its annual clock...

Writing prompts (Ages 11–14)

- The traveller has just revealed their hero token. Write the next scene: what does the house do, and what choice must the traveller make?
- Describe the haunted house as if it were a living creature. How does it move, breathe and "speak"?
- The hero token was given to the traveller by someone important in their past. Write the memory of that moment.
- Rewrite a short part of the poem or starter from the point of view of the Shadow itself.

Age 14–16 Poem: A Traveller on Shadow's Road

Shadow's twilight mile, twilight crooked smile,
Stealthily drained joy with jubilation-vile,
Cracks with tarmac teeth munch courage-kibble,
Crunching with brittle gnashers sharp-nibble.

Even Fury's lute hurry-hushed full-mute,
As it stealth-stole each traveller's soul-loot,
Antipathy entrenched, it mean-muttered,
No heartbeat fluttered, Hope's sigh sank-stuttered.

Fury's lute rolled notes as tumbleweed rot,
With sickest mirth merging with Merry's lot,
Halloween's clouds bruised full girth, cruise-glowered,
Ebbing lower, the coal darkness flowered.

To erase Star's song, magnify woe-wrong,
In barren lazy-hazy putrid pong,
The traveller's chances were whittled thin,
The traveller's options were etched slim-grim.

Jack-o-lanterns' flames whim-leapt, smoke fade-wept,
Precious motes of real love scattered unkept,
The cold shadow mile cracked a creeping smile,
A jagged gap-tooth grin so monstrous-vile.

Morose stones blossomed on Halloween's road,
Each one lumpy, slick, slimy as a toad,
Hunched squat-low, arachnid air, wind and sleet,
Mobbing as pin-thin sole-less spider feet.

In Twilight's shadow zone, vile-mile crook'd smile,
Compassion consumed to full-ration bile,
Glutton gut growling, ever cold scowling,
Evermore darkness howling, stealth prowling.

Flashing sky-fangs as Storm's piano score,
Ivories not tickling, yet biting more,
Notes of chaos only hushing to pounce,
Obsessing to rob every courage ounce.

Shadow as Ghost of Night in phantom-float,
Encircles the traveller as overcoat,
Memorising Wind's heart-scars as runes-rote,
Lyrics loop as Love's cruelest anti-dote.

Sketchy ashtray road to graphite abode,
Wind a limping lyrical zombie ode,
Smog, as sooty scabs, mobs scary-shameless,
Ghouls surf Shadow's wake, the ever nameless.

The tarmac rip-peels to reveal a door,
Troubled, the traveller quakes, blinks – "The road tore?"
Blistered paint, rotten wood, cobweb blotches,
Festering as mould-spore sample swatches.

A copper door knocker of captured crows,
Feathers the darkness with sharp-tipped arrows,
Thence in a gasp-heaving span, thoughts stutter,
A grim house grows melting road and gutter.

Melting it as snow, thence freezing as gloss,
Blackest ice as Shadow's lip balm and floss.
Not a house of two simple stories stares,
Yet a mountain of murky panes glint-glaires.

Halloween's traveller washes to grey,
Disbelief, dismay, darkness not today,
Trembling in its halitosis smile-vile,
Even as it smugly smirks with ghoul style.

From a pocket with ironed poker-face,
A disc comes, a granite-grace penny ace,
Flashing as the heroes' Heaven token,
Stating in stone that the good have spoken.

The good have given placement in their ark,
For each hero's soul to escape the dark,
At that the foul mansion-mountain shattered,
Fell as black mirror sand, desert-scattered.

Only to seep into each crack, melt-seal,
Evermore ends Shadow Mile's merry-steal,
Jack-o-lanterns' flame hushed to smokeless-cold,
Christmas calls with Halloween's tale full-told.

Age 14–16 Story Starter - A Traveller on Shadow's Road

If a savage story could devour all hope and glory, could rob each soul of their sweetness and love, it could be the story of the traveller on the Shadow's road. For you see it was no ordinary road, not at all. Some say it was not a road yet the darkness invading as a full form apparition. Yet the traveller did not know, to them it was a mile that curved into the night, curved as a shadow smile. The only sounds were one set of footsteps, one heartbeat, one pair of lungs in heaving breaths. Fog clung cold. Slimy toads crawled from the gutters with a sewer stink. Ice covered the road as an arctic skin. Then silence bowed to a thunderous rumble. The road grew a door in cracking rubble. If ever there was a Halloween door this was it...

Writing prompts (Ages 14–16)

- "If a savage story could devour all hope and glory..." – write this "savage story" as if it were a living narrator telling its own tale.
- The traveller reaches the Halloween door. Write a monologue (inner thoughts) as they decide whether to knock, run, or destroy it.
- Use the idea of a "shadow road" as a metaphor for a real-world challenge (for example grief, anxiety or injustice). Write a short story or poem that keeps the Halloween imagery but hints at the real issue.
- Choose one stanza from the 14–16 poem and "translate" it into plain prose, then extend it into a full scene.

Age 16 –18 Poem: A Traveller on Shadow's Road

Shadow's twilight mile, subterfuge crook-smile,
Stealth syphons soul-sparks with jubilance-vile,
Cracks with tarmac fangs punctures courage holes,
Perforating, celebrating cold goals.

Thence Fury's lute self-silences full-mute,
As it stealth-steals each travellers love-loot,
Entrenched in malignancy, it mutters,
No heartbeat flutters, hope febrile stutters.

Fury's lute rolls notes as tumbleweed rot,
Gleeful ghouls marauding to burn Love's lot,
Halloween's clouds bruise full girth, cruise-glower,
Ebbing lower crepuscular-flower.

Erasing Star's song, magnifying wrong,
Barren haze-maze cloaking with putrid pong,
Our traveller's chances do whittle thin,
Our traveller's options do etch slim-grim.

Jack-o-Lanterns flames whim-leap, smoke fade-weep,
Precious motes of love scatter beyond keep,
Callous shadow mile then cracks a slick smile,
A jag gap-tooth grin so monstrously vile.

Morose stones blossom on Halloween's road,
Each one lumpy, slick, slimy, sewer toad,
Hunched squat-low, arachnid air, wind and sleet,
Mobbing as pin-thin sole-less spider feet.

In Twilight's shadow zone, vile-mile crook'd smile,
Compassion consumed to full-ration bile,
Glutton gut growling, ever sneer-scowling,
Evermore darkness howling, creep prowling.

Flashing sky-fangs as Storm's piano score,
Ivories not tickling yet striking more,
Notes of chaos only calming to pounce,
Obsessively stealing each courage ounce.

Shadow as Ghost of Night in phantom-float,
Wraps the traveller as Fog's own overcoat,
Memorising Wind's heart-scars as runes-rote,
Lyrics loop as Love's cruelest anti-dote.

Sketchy ashtray road to graphite abode,
Wind wheezing a brain-rotting zombie ode,
Smog as sooty scabs mobs scary-shameless,
Ghouls surf Shadow's wake, Dark's ever nameless.

Tarmac rip-peels to reveal Haunt's own door,
Troubled, the traveller quakes, blinks – "The road tore?"
Blistered paint, rotten wood, cobweb blotches,
Festering as mould-spore sample swatches.

A copper door knocker of captured crows,
Feathers the darkness with sharp-tipped arrows,
Thence panic permeates every stutter,
Grim's House grows melting asphalt and gutter.

Melting road as snow, then freezing as gloss,
Blackest ice as Shadow's lip balm and floss
Not a house of two simple stories stares,
Yet a mountain of murky panes glint-glaires.

How Halloween's traveller pales to grey,
Disbelief, dismay, darkness not today,
Trembling in its halitosis hymn-vile,
Even as it smugly smirks so ghoul style.

From a pocket with ironed poker-face,
A disc comes, a granite-grace penny ace,
The heroes Heaven given mark-token,
Stating in stone that the good have spoken.

For refuge goodness grants within its ark,
For each hero-soul to escape the dark,
Thence the foul mansion mountain did shatter,
Falling to black-mirror desert-scatter.

Anon seeping, welding each crack to seal,
Ever stopping Shadow Mile's merry-steal,
Jack-o-lanterns flame hushed to smokeless-cold,
Christmas calls with Halloween's tale full-told.

Age 16–18 Story Starter - A Traveller on The Shadow Road

Darkness wove itself to black yarn to knit a shadow road, woollen on All Hallows Eve, silently lurking at the junction...

Writing prompts (Ages 16–18)

- “Darkness wove itself to black yarn to knit a shadow road...” – continue this extended metaphor. What else is knitted into the road, and what does each thread represent?
- Write a dual-narrative opening: one voice is the traveller, the other is the Shadow Road itself. Let them disagree about what is really happening.
- Reimagine the hero token as something entirely non-supernatural (a memory, a promise, a relationship). How does that still shatter the mansion?
- Take one image from the poem (for example “Storm’s piano score” or “black mirror sand”) and build a micro-story or prose poem around just that image.

