

Comprehension Check

- * soldiers
- * the second speaker
- * The second speaker leaves/escapes.
- * break into the house

1. Answers will vary, but might include surprise, a sense of fear for the speaker who remains, disappointment that this speaker didn't escape.

2. The speakers may be husband and wife or a pair of lovers. One or the other may be a deserter, spy, or political outcast.

3. Possible Responses: As two people in a house hear the approach of soldiers, one questions the other about what is happening. The first speaker is agitated, possibly from worry or guilt, while the second is calm, possibly from ignorance, innocence, or duplicity. Eventually, the second speaker flees, leaving the first to face the soldiers as they burst through the door. Possible reasons for actions—one of the speakers may be a deserter, spy, or political outcast; the speaker who leaves could be someone less committed to “the cause,” an informer who turned in the other speaker, or simply the one who recognizes the danger first.

4. Possible Response (acted out): The first speaker is put on the alert by the sound, and grows increasingly nervous as the soldiers get closer; the first speaker feels betrayed/deceived as the second speaker prepares to depart; the second speaker is calm at first, then panics and runs away (or perhaps knows what is happening and has planned escape all along).

5. **Comparing Texts** Both poems owe much to traditional British ballads. Longfellow stays slightly closer to the four-line ballad stanza form: rhyming *abcb*, the first and third lines having four accented syllables and the second and fourth having three, with variation in the unstressed syllables. Auden's stanza is patterned after the same form, but the rhyme scheme is *abab* and the fourth line is pared down to two accented syllables. Rhythmically, Auden also differs in making greater use of trochaic patterns, repeating words like *drumming*, *morning*, *wheeling*. The author's purpose in both cases is to tell an exciting story, with Auden leaving more to the reader's imagination. Both follow traditional ballads in the strong use of dialogue to advance the story. Auden sustains this technique more strictly. Longfellow makes greater use of incremental repetition and seems to stay closer to the diction of the folk ballads.

6. **Connect to Life** Acceptable--all reasonable, well-supported responses. Some might cite situations where people have hidden themselves from civil or military authority and have been discovered.