

# To See the Rabbit

( after Prévert )

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We are going to see the rabbit.  
We are going to see the rabbit.  
Which rabbit, people say?  
Which rabbit, ask the children?  
WHICH rabbit?  
The only rabbit,  
The only rabbit in England,  
Sitting behind a barbed-wire fence  
Under the floodlights, neon lights,  
Sodium lights,  
Nibbling grass  
On the only patch of grass  
In England, in England  
(Except the grass by the hoardings  
Which doesn't count ).  
We are going to see the rabbit  
And we must be there on time.  
First we shall go by escalator,  
Then we shall go by underground,  
And then we shall go by motorway,  
And then by helicopter way,  
And the last ten yards we shall have to go on foot.

And now we are going  
All the way to see the rabbit,  
We are nearly there,  
We are longing to see it,  
And so is the crowd

Which is here in thousands

With mounted policemen

And big loudspeakers

And bands and banners,

And everyone has come a long way.

But soon we shall see it

Sitting and nibbling

The blades of grass

In – but something has gone wrong !

Why is everyone so angry,

Why is everyone jostling

And slanging and complaining?

The rabbit has gone,

Yes, the rabbit has gone.

He has actually burrowed down into the earth

And made himself a warren, under the earth

Despite all these people.

And what shall we do?

What CAN we do?

It is all a pity, you must be disappointed,

Go home and do something else for today,

Go home again, go home for today.

For you cannot hear the rabbit, under the earth,

Remarking rather sadly to himself, by himself,

As he rests in his warren, under the earth:

“It won’t be long, they are bound to come,

They are bound to come and find me, even here.”

Vocabulary Guide

Barbed wire = wire with short, sharp points.

Floodlights= powerful lights, often used in sports stadiums

Nibbling= a way of eating, with small bites

Patch = piece or area of something

Hoarding = a large board where advertisements are displayed

Underground= train system which goes under the ground

Longing = hoping, desiring

Crowd = large amount of people

Loudspeaker = apparatus for making sounds louder

Banner= long piece of cloth between two poles. Often used in demonstrations.

Blade = individual leaf of grass

Jostling = come into physical contact with, in a rough way

Slanging= using bad language, insulting.

Burrow = dig

Warren = series of tunnels where rabbits live below the ground

Pity = shame

Disappointed = unhappy

Sadly = not happily

Bound to = likely to, almost certainly

## Activities

1 Listen carefully to the rhythm of the poem. Where, do you think, the poet wrote it? a) in a car b) on a train c) on a plane. Give your reasons why you think this?

2 Do people have to travel far in order to see the rabbit? What lines in the poem tell us the answer?

3 What kind of world is this poem set in ?

4 Will the rabbit be found ? How do you know ?

5 Underline the word which is different:

Bite nibble watch chew

Rabbit hamster guinea-pig snake

Motorway underground bus heliport

House bungalow warren city

Sing jostle complain slang

6 Write ONE of the following short dialogues/ monologues:

- A) A conversation between one of the mounted policeman and someone in the crowd.
- B) A conversation between the Chief of Police and the mounted policemen.
- C) The rabbit and someone interviewing him / her for a television report.
- D) A newsreader telling the viewers about the rabbit story.

Before you begin writing, try to think about HOW the people/ rabbit will be feeling in the situation the poem relates.