

Improving Your Reading with Arlo the Author: Silken City



Catanna ran through the darkness of the White Desert night. She rarely ventured to the Silken City, and never alone. Despite its soft-sounding name, it was a cut-throat place.

Katka's thumb ached from pressing the forward button as hard as she could. It wouldn't make Catanna move any faster – Katka knew that – but her thumbs wouldn't listen to reason right now. She had to find Xandon and discover what the Gutvines were up to, before they tricked her into destroying her own guild.

The hazy light of the distant city grew brighter by degrees. Catanna didn't look to the left or right; she just ran – over dunes, through tented encampments, under the shadows of enemy strongholds. She even splashed through an oasis without swerving; her eyes never left that hazy light.

That was how the bandits got her.

Suddenly, flaming arrows rained down from the sky. Her vision flashed red and she staggered as her health bar dropped. She'd been hit. Unfamiliar voices jumbled on her headset.

“Taste it!”

“One more hit.”

“Grab the bag.”

Too late, Catanna readied her spear. But Katka couldn't see who to aim at, and the spear flew, glittering, into the night, landing uselessly in the sand ahead. Catanna tried to follow it, but she was knocked to the ground by another blow. Her health was critical.

“She's out.”

“Taste it!”

“Shut up and search the bag.”

“Topaz, nice.”

“Who uses spears anyway?”

All Katka could see was black. She pressed every button on the controller, but Catanna just lay there, her health bar blinking a warning. She was helpless as her lootbag was snatched away and the unseen assailants emptied its contents and flung it onto the sand. She heard every thud as they ran away across the desert.

Eventually, her health bar climbed above the danger zone and stopped blinking. Katka let out a breath that she didn't know she'd been holding. Catanna stood, picked up her lootbag, and looked at the contents. Just some useless armour, precision gloves, and something called an ice cloak.

Great.

Catanna shouldered the bag. All that Gutvine loot, gone in seconds because of Katka's own stupidity. Fantastic.

Catanna limped in circles, searching for her topaz spear. She remembered the exact spot it had landed in, but it wasn't there. The further that Catanna limped, the deeper her heart sank until it dropped right into her stomach. Her spear was gone.

As the bustling chatter and hanging silks of the city came into focus, Catanna was snatched to the side by a guard. The guard's animated face loomed down at her, grinning. His teeth were black.



1. *Suddenly, flaming arrows rained down from the sky.*
a. Why do you think the author chose to use the verb rained?

- b. What impression does this give about the arrows?

2. *the spear flew, glittering, into the night*
Discuss **two** impressions this gives you of the spear.

1. _____

2. _____

3. *it was a cut-throat place*
What does this description suggest about the Silken City?

4. *Look at the paragraph beginning Suddenly, flaming arrows rained...*
What atmosphere does the author create in this paragraph? Explain how they do this.

5. *Look at the paragraph beginning All Katka could see...*
Find and **copy two** words or phrases which build a sense of uncertainty in this paragraph.

1. _____

2. _____

6. *She heard every thud as they ran away across the desert.*

Why do you think the author chose to use the word *thud* in this sentence?

7. *The further that Catanna limped, the deeper her heart sank until it dropped right into her stomach.*

How does this sentence help the reader to understand Catanna's feelings?

8. Why do you think this chapter was named 'Silken City'?

9. *As the bustling chatter and hanging silks of the city came into focus*

What does the phrase *came into focus* imply about Catanna's previous position?

1. _____

2. _____

10. *Look at the last paragraph of the extract.*

Find and copy two different words from the extract which suggest danger.

1. _____

2. _____

Answers

1. *Suddenly, flaming arrows rained down from the sky.*
 - a. Why do you think the author chose to use the verb *rained*?
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author chose *rained* because rain comes from the sky and the arrows are falling from the sky just like rain.
 - b. What impression does this give about the arrows?
Pupils' own responses, such as: This gives the impression that there are lots of arrows falling quickly from the sky like raindrops.

2. *the spear flew, glittering, into the night*
Discuss **two** impressions this gives you of the spear.
Accept any two of the following points: The spear flew far away from Catanna; The spear disappeared into the darkness; The spear reflected light as it flew; The spear flew quickly.

3. *it was a cut-throat place*
What does this description suggest about the Silken City?
This description suggests that the Silken City is a dangerous place where someone could get hurt.

4. *Look at the paragraph beginning Suddenly, flaming arrows rained...*
What atmosphere does the author create in this paragraph? Explain how they do this.
Pupils' own responses, such as: The author creates an atmosphere of fear and confusion. They do this by making Catanna's vision flash red – which is a colour associated with danger – and by making the things she hears jumbled, confusing her.

5. *Look at the paragraph beginning All Katka could see...*
Find and copy two words or phrases which build a sense of uncertainty in this paragraph. **Accept any two of the following points: all Katka could see was black; Catanna just lay there; health bar blinking a warning; helpless; unseen assailants.**

Answers

6. *She heard every thud as they ran away across the desert.*

Why do you think the author chose to use the word *thud* in this sentence?

The author chose to use the word thud because it is like the sound that the assailants' feet would make as they ran across the sand.

7. *The further that Catanna limped, the deeper her heart sank until it dropped right into her stomach.*

How does this sentence help the reader to understand Catanna's feelings?

Pupils' own responses, such as: This sentence helps the reader to understand that Catanna became more and more disappointed as more time passed, until it was not possible for her to be more disappointed.

8. Why do you think this chapter was named 'Silken City'?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think it was named Silken City because the focus of the chapter is Catanna's journey to the Silken City.

9. *As the bustling chatter and hanging silks of the city came into focus*

What does the phrase *came into focus* imply about Catanna's previous position?

Came into focus implies that the city had previously been out of focus because Catanna was so far away from it.

10. **Look at the last paragraph of the extract.**

Find and copy two different words from this paragraph which suggest danger.

Accept 'snatched' and 'loomed'.