



Hi, my name's Ellen and I'm a third-year student, currently on my year abroad at the University of Strasbourg. I study French and English, but also have a passion for creative writing which is why I chose to take part in the 'Tell Us A Story' project. I wrote my piece when lockdown was starting to ease, and so the prospect of being able to go out and feel more alive again greatly influenced my writing. The setting for my short story is a particular street in Yvoire, a French town that I visited in 2018. I vividly remember the shops and flowers there, and the harbour at the end of the path was beautiful, which provided a perfect backdrop to write a short story about the gradual buildup of hopeful anticipation.

## 5. The Splendour of Yvoire (KS2-5)

*Ellen Bell*

A step on the cobblestones, feet a little shaky, but they get used to the new terrain. The stones stretch along the street, a great river that leads to small shops, whose weathered wooden doors tell their stories. The sun yawns and stretches its rays over the tips of the roofs; the heat does not yet permeate the air around me, but the cool breeze brings the caresses of anticipation of the summer season.

Under these spring shadows, the shopkeepers are busy with preparations before opening their little world to willing shoppers. The postcards stand upright, ready to twirl for the clapping and smiling onlookers. Meanwhile, the waiters arrange the tables and chairs where the sun has just dripped

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its rays. In a few hours, these proprietors will nod to each other and stand to attention to start their day.

I sway a little as I cross this Yvoire street and breathe in the sweet air that leads me to the large building at the end of the path. Fresh green leaves hang from the top of the wall and cascade down - bignonia - with little flowers that are ready to bloom. When they have bloomed, they will sound their trumpets and everyone will delight in their fragrance. The vines on the wall reach the shop on the street that sells glass objects: animals and jewellery, but above all vibrantly coloured glass flowers. The shopkeeper has planted them outside his window and the street is in full bloom with little wreaths.

It is as if the sun is encouraging the plants to grow: as I pass them, they reach out to me - their petals like outstretched hands. The little harbour I arrive at is home to boats of all colours - some entirely white, except for two thin lines of blue that encircle them - others are yellow with a tinge of gold as the water meets the boat's hull. Other boats are battered, but there are also those that have just come out of the shipyard. All of them dance on the water of this harbour which shelters them before they go to sea.

I bask in the warmth that radiates along the street and enjoy the lively setting. I think about how it is not always so easy to savour this simple, complex and subtle experience. I dip my toes into the water and a wave of pleasure grips me. The water feels like liquefied glass: clear, unblemished and thick as refined molasses. Now all my feet are immersed in the water, down to my shins, and I swish it around a bit with my hands, ending up spraying my burnt nose with droplets.

*Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version) (adapted)*

**QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Which season is the author describing in this short story? How do we know?
- 2) Would you like to visit Yvoire, the town in the story? If so, why?
- 3) Find out more about the town. Which part of France is it in? Can you find it on a map?
- 4) Why, in your view, does the author say that 'it is not always so easy to savour this simple, complex and subtle experience.' Isn't this a rather contradictory image?
- 5) Write an account of what you think might happen next in the story.