

Learn**English** Teens

Literature UK: Cold Knap Lake - poem

Cold Knap Lake

by Gillian Clark

We once watched a crowd pull a drowned child from the lake. Blue lipped and dressed in water's long green silk she lay for dead.

Then kneeling on the earth, a heroine, her red head bowed, her wartime cotton frock soaked, my mother gave a stranger's child her breath. The crowd stood silent, drawn by the dread of it.

The child breathed, bleating and rosy in my mother's hands.

My father took her home to a poor house and watched her thrashed for almost drowning.

Was I there?

Or is that troubled surface something else shadowy under the dipped fingers of willows where satiny mud blooms in cloudiness after the treading, heavy webs of swans as their wings beat and whistle on the air?

All lost things lie under closing water in that lake with the poor man's daughter.

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