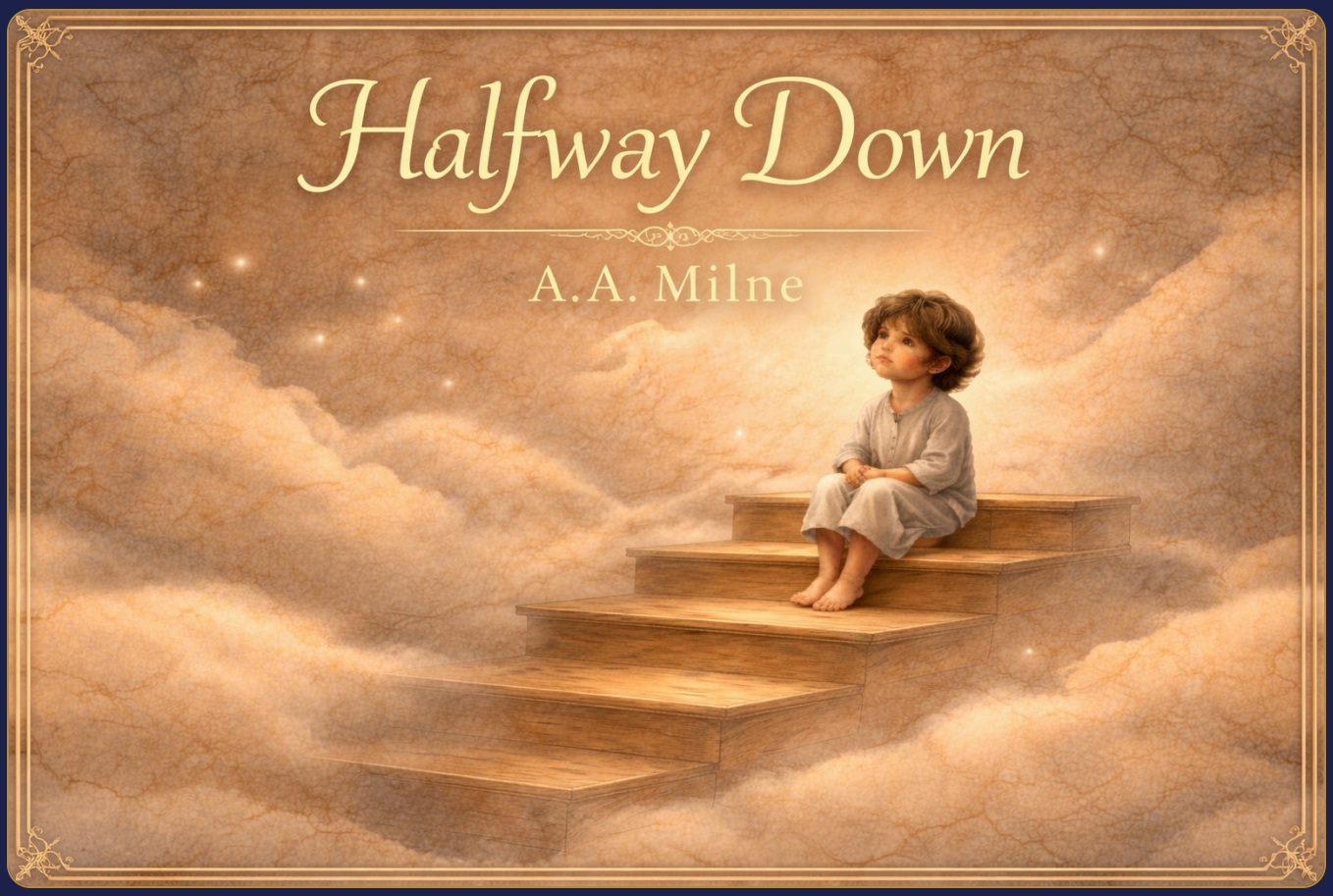
Storyland Classics

FREE POEM GUIDE

From When We Were Very Young (1924)



- ✦ The Poem
- ✦ Try It
- ✦ Missing Words
- ✦ Put It in Order
- ✦ Handwriting
- ✦ Meet the Poet
- ✦ Word Match & Sort
- ✦ Yes or No & ABC Order
- ✦ Read It With Voices
- ✦ Answer Key
- ✦ Let's Talk
- ✦ Word Search
- ✦ Rhyme Hunt & Syllables
- ✦ Learn It by Heart
- ✦ Standards

Ages 4–8 ✦ Pre-K to Grade 2 ✦ Aligned to Common Core

This cover is for your screen. Print from page 2 to save ink.

FOR GROWN-UPS

How to Use This Guide

This free guide goes with the Storyland Classics read-aloud of “Halfway Down” by A. A. Milne. Every page is ready to print, and no sign-up is needed. Pick the pages that suit your child or class.

ABOUT THE POEM

A small child has a favorite thinking spot: the stair right in the middle, not at the top and not at the bottom. It isn’t up or down, it isn’t in the nursery or in the town, so it feels like a secret place that isn’t really anywhere at all.

SKILL FOCUS

Point of view: a favorite in-between place

A simple routine

1. **Day 1.** Watch the read-aloud together (scan the QR code on the poem page), then read the poem aloud.
2. **Day 2.** Read it again. Meet the poet, then use Let’s Talk and Try It.
3. **Day 3.** Learn the words with the word match, word sort, word search and missing words.
4. **Day 4.** Listen for rhymes and syllables, put the poem in order, and perform it with voices.

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Standards

Every activity is aligned to the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten to grade 2. Codes appear at the bottom of each page, and the full table is on the last page.

Younger children

Children who aren’t writing yet can answer out loud or tell a grown-up what to write.

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THE POEM

Halfway Down



Halfway down the stairs
Is a stair
Where I sit.
There isn't any
Other stair
Quite like
It.
I'm not at the bottom,
I'm not at the top;
So this is the stair
Where
I always
Stop.

Halfway up the stairs
Isn't up,
And isn't down.
It isn't in the nursery,
It isn't in the town.
And all sorts of funny thoughts
Run round my head:
"It isn't really
Anywhere!
It's somewhere else
Instead!"

▸ Watch the read-aloud

Scan the code to watch "Halfway Down" read aloud, or visit storylandclassics.com/halfway.

A. A. Milne, When We Were Very Young (1924). Public domain.

Name _____ Date _____

MEET THE POET

A. A. Milne

1882–1956 ✦ The poet who wrote Winnie-the-Pooh

A. A. Milne was born in London, England, in 1882. He wrote plays, stories and funny pieces for magazines. When his son, Christopher Robin, was little, Milne began writing poems about the things a small child sees, wonders about and plays. They were collected in *When We Were Very Young* in 1924, and children have loved them ever since. A few years later he wrote *Winnie-the-Pooh*, about Christopher Robin and his toy bear.

Questions About the Poet

1. In what city was A. A. Milne born?

2. Who was Christopher Robin?

3. What famous bear did Milne write about?

Who Is Talking?

This poem is told by one person. Read it again, then answer.

1. Who is telling this poem, a grown-up or a child? Which words tell you?

2. Where is the person telling the poem when they are thinking?

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Name _____ Date _____

LET'S TALK

Halfway Down

Young children can answer out loud. Older children can write their answers.

REMEMBER

1. Where does the child always stop?

2. Why is this stair different from the others?

3. What funny thought runs round the child's head?

THINK

4. Why do you think the child likes to sit halfway down?

5. What does the child mean by "It's somewhere else instead"?

CONNECT

6. Do you have a special place where you like to sit and think? Where is it?

NARRATION

Close the book and tell the poem back in your own words. Where does the child sit, and what does the child think about there?

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Name _____ Date _____

TRY IT

Halfway Down

SKILL FOCUS

Point of view: a favorite in-between place

Where is your favorite place to sit and think? Write about it and tell why it is special.

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Name _____ Date _____

WORDS TO KNOW

Word Match

Draw a line from each word to what it means.

halfway	the highest part
stair	in the middle, between two ends
bottom	in place of something else
top	one step on a staircase
nursery	a place you can't quite name
funny thoughts	the lowest part
instead	a room for young children
somewhere	strange or surprising ideas

Word Sort: Opposites: Up or Down?

Write each word in the right box.

top · bottom · up · down · high · low · above · below

Up words	Down words

Name _____ Date _____

WORD SEARCH

Halfway Down

Find the words from the poem. Words go across (left to right) and down (top to bottom). Circle each word, then check it off.

V	E	N	T	O	W	N	M	T	N
E	B	O	T	T	O	M	J	K	S
U	R	G	M	E	A	H	D	P	T
H	E	B	C	H	M	E	E	V	A
A	H	H	N	M	L	A	Y	D	I
F	J	T	O	P	N	D	H	B	R
A	V	G	R	S	V	S	J	I	S
U	S	T	A	I	R	T	L	P	E
H	S	I	T	B	S	O	D	P	P
K	N	G	V	A	A	P	N	B	C

WORD BANK

- ☐ STAIRS
- ☐ STAIR
- ☐ TOP
- ☐ BOTTOM
- ☐ SIT
- ☐ STOP
- ☐ TOWN
- ☐ HEAD

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Name _____ Date _____

MISSING WORDS

Halfway Down

Read each line from the poem. Choose the missing word from the word bank and write it on the line. Then read the whole line aloud.

bottom | sit | stair | stairs | top | town

1. Halfway down the _____
2. Is a _____
3. Where I _____ .
4. I'm not at the _____ ,
5. I'm not at the _____ ;
6. It isn't in the _____ .

Make New Rhymes

Write a new word that rhymes with each word from the poem. Silly words count too!

stairs _____ _____ stair _____ _____

sit _____ _____ bottom _____ _____

DID YOU NOTICE?

Read each line with the word you chose. Does it sound right? Check the poem to see if you were right!

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Name _____ Date _____

CHECK YOUR READING

Yes or No?

Read each sentence about the poem. Circle **Yes** if it is true. Circle **No** if it is not.

1. The child sits halfway down the stairs. Yes No
2. The child likes the top stair best. Yes No
3. No other stair is quite like this one. Yes No
4. Halfway up the stairs is in the nursery. Yes No
5. Funny thoughts run round the child's head. Yes No
6. The child says the stair isn't really anywhere. Yes No

ABC Order

Write these words from the poem in ABC order. Look at the first letter of each word.

stairs · top · bottom · head · nursery

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

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Name _____ Date _____

SOUNDS OF THE POEM

Rhyme Hunt

Find each word's rhyming partner in the word bank and write it on the line.

instead | it | stop | town

sit _____ top _____

down _____ head _____

LISTEN

Some lines are only one word long, like "It." and "Stop." Read them slowly and pause, as if you are stopping on a stair.

Clap the Syllables

Say each word and clap for every part. Write the number of claps.

halfway claps: ___	stairs claps: ___	bottom claps: ___
nursery claps: ___	anywhere claps: ___	instead claps: ___

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Name _____ Date _____

PUT IT IN ORDER

What Happens First?

Read each sentence. Write 1 in the circle next to what happens first, 2 next to what happens next, and so on up to 6.

- ◯ It isn't in the nursery, and it isn't in the town.
- ◯ Halfway down the stairs is a stair where the child sits.
- ◯ Funny thoughts run round: "It isn't really anywhere!"
- ◯ It's not at the bottom, and it's not at the top.
- ◯ Halfway up the stairs isn't up and isn't down.
- ◯ There isn't any other stair quite like it.

Retell the Poem

Use the order words to tell the poem in your own words. Say it out loud, or write it.

First, _____

Next, _____

Then, _____

Last, _____

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Name _____ Date _____

PERFORM IT

Read It With Voices

Grown-up reader | Child (the echo)

Try **echo reading**. The grown-up reads one line, and the child repeats it in the same way. Whisper the one-word lines, like “It.” and “Stop.” For the last lines, read in a dreamy, wondering voice.

TIPS FOR READING ALOUD

Sit on a real stair to read it if you can! Read slowly, take a breath at each short line, and let your voice go up a little on “Anywhere!”

Read It Three Times

Read the poem aloud three times. Color a star each time. Your reading gets smoother every time!



My Favorite Part

Write about your favorite part of the poem.

My favorite part is _____

because _____

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LEARN IT BY HEART

Say It From Memory

Learn this verse by heart. Check off each step as you go.

Halfway down the stairs
Is a stair
Where I sit.
There isn't any
Other stair
Quite like
It.

- [ ] Listen to the verse on the read-aloud video.
- [ ] Read it aloud three times with the book.
- [ ] Say it with a grown-up, one line at a time.
- [ ] Say it with the book closed. Peek if you need to!
- [ ] Say it to someone at home or in class.

✦ CERTIFICATE ✦

I can say "Halfway Down" by heart!

by A. A. Milne

Name _____ Date _____

Heard by _____

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CCSS RF.1.4b · SL.K.6 · SL.1.6

Name _____ Date _____

HANDWRITING PRACTICE

Halfway Down

Trace the gray words, then write them on your own on the empty lines. Tall letters touch the top line; small letters reach the dotted line.

Halfway down the stairs is a stair where I sit.

Halfway down the stairs
is a stair where I sit.

I'm not at the bottom, I'm not at the top;

I'm not at the bottom,
I'm not at the top;

☐ I started with a capital letter. ☐ I left spaces between words. ☐ I copied the end mark.

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FOR GROWN-UPS

Answer Key & Ideas

Who Is Talking?

A child is telling the poem (they sit on the stairs and the nursery is their room). The child is sitting on the stair halfway down.

Let's Talk

1. Halfway down the stairs. 2. It isn't at the bottom or the top, and there isn't any other stair quite like it. 3. "It isn't really anywhere! It's somewhere else instead!" 4–6. Answers will vary.

Word Sort

Up words: top, up, high, above. Down words: bottom, down, low, below.

Word Search

V	E	N	**T**	**O**	**W**	**N**	M	T	N
E	**B**	**O**	**T**	**T**	**O**	**M**	J	K	**S**
U	R	G	M	E	A	**H**	D	P	**T**
H	E	B	C	H	M	**E**	E	V	**A**
A	H	H	N	M	L	**A**	Y	D	**I**
F	J	**T**	**O**	**P**	N	**D**	H	B	**R**
A	V	G	R	S	V	**S**	J	I	**S**
U	**S**	**T**	**A**	**I**	**R**	**T**	L	P	E
H	**S**	**I**	**T**	B	S	**O**	D	P	P
K	N	G	V	A	A	**P**	N	B	C

Word Match

halfway: in the middle, between two ends · stair: one step on a staircase · bottom: the lowest part · top: the highest part · nursery: a room for young children · funny thoughts: strange or surprising ideas · instead: in place of something else · somewhere: a place you can't quite name

Yes or No? & ABC Order

1. Yes · 2. No · 3. Yes · 4. No · 5. Yes · 6. Yes. ABC order: bottom, head, nursery, stairs, top.

Missing Words

stairs, stair, sit, bottom, top, town

Rhyme Hunt & Syllables

sit: it · top: stop · down: town · head: instead. Claps: halfway 2, stairs 1, bottom 2, nursery 3, anywhere 3, instead 2.

Put It in Order

the stair where the child sits → no other stair quite like it → not at the bottom, not at the top → halfway up isn't up or down → not in the nursery or the town → "It isn't really anywhere!"

Ideas to extend the lesson

- Count the stairs in your home or school. Which one is halfway? Sit on it and share a thought.
- Make a "My Thinking Spot" page: draw your special place and write one thought you have there.
- Read it with Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Swing" and talk about favorite places to be.

MORE FROM STORYLAND CLASSICS

Find more A. A. Milne poems with free guides at storylandclassics.com and on YouTube at @StorylandClassics.

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FOR TEACHERS

Standards Alignment

Halfway Down ✦ Common Core State Standards, kindergarten to grade 2

STANDARDS	WHAT CHILDREN PRACTICE	WHERE IN THIS GUIDE
RL.K.1 RL.1.1 RL.2.1	Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.	Let's Talk and Yes or No?; Let's Talk
RL.K.2 RL.1.2	Retell stories and poems, including key details, and show understanding of their message.	Put It in Order and Retell
RL.K.3 RL.1.3	Identify and describe characters, settings and major events.	Let's Talk and Put It in Order
RL.K.4 RL.2.4	Understand words and phrases, including rhyme, rhythm and words that appeal to the senses.	Word Match; Rhyme Hunt (rhyme and repeated lines)
RL.2.5	Recognize types of texts and describe the overall structure (beginning, middle and end).	Put It in Order: beginning, middle and end
RL.1.6 RL.2.6	Identify who is speaking and use a different voice for each character when reading aloud.	Who Is Talking?; Read It With Voices
RL.K.10 RL.1.10	Engage in group reading of poems and stories with purpose and understanding.	The Poem and Missing Words; The Poem (reading together)
RF.K.1b RF.K.1d	Understand the organization of print (left to right, top to bottom).	Word Search; ABC Order (letters of the alphabet)
RF.K.2a RF.K.2b	Hear and work with spoken words, rhymes and syllables.	Rhyme Hunt and Make New Rhymes; Clap the Syllables
RF.K.3c RF.1.3	Read common high-frequency words by sight.	Word Search and Missing Words; Word Search
RF.1.4a RF.1.4b RF.2.4b	Read aloud with accuracy, appropriate rate and expression.	Missing Words (read with purpose); Read It With Voices and Read It Three Times
SL.K.1 SL.1.1	Take part in conversations about the text with classmates and adults.	Let's Talk and Meet the Poet (discussion); Let's Talk (discussion)
SL.K.2	Ask and answer questions about a text read aloud or presented through media.	Read-aloud video (QR code)
SL.K.6 SL.1.6	Speak audibly and express ideas clearly.	Read It With Voices and Learn It by Heart; Learn It by Heart (recite)
L.K.1a L.1.1 L.1.1a	Print upper- and lowercase letters and use common position words.	Handwriting Practice; ABC Order (alphabetize words)
L.K.2a L.1.2b	Use capital letters and end punctuation.	Handwriting checklist
L.K.4 L.1.4	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words and phrases.	Word Match
L.K.5b	Sort words into categories, connect words to real life and act out shades of meaning.	Word Sort
W.K.1 W.1.1	Use drawing and writing to share an opinion and give a reason.	My Favorite Part
W.K.2	Use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to compose informative texts.	Try It
W.1.8	With guidance and support, recall information from experiences or gather information to answer a question.	Try It

Codes are Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. Find free read-alouds and guides at storylandclassics.com.

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