

## Bill Bryson-Notes on a Small Island

Read the text. Highlight quotes to support each question and then answer them into your book.

1. What atmosphere is created in the opening sentence?

My first sight of England was on a foggy, dark night in 1973 when I arrived on the midnight ferry from Calais.

For twenty minutes, the terminal area was aswarm with activity as cars and lorries poured forth, customs people did their duties, and everyone made for the London road.

Then abruptly all was silence and I wandered through sleeping, low-lit streets threaded with fog, just like in a Bulldog Drummond movie. It was rather wonderful having an English town all to myself. The only mildly dismaying thing was that all the hotels and guesthouses appeared to be shut up for the night. I walked as far as the rail station, thinking I'd catch a train to London, but the station, too, was dark and shuttered. I was standing wondering what to do when I noticed a grey light of television filling an upstairs window of a guesthouse across the road.

Hooray, I thought, someone awake, and hastened across, planning humble apologies to the kindly owner for the lateness of my arrival and imagining a cheery conversation which included the line, 'Oh, but I couldn't possibly ask you to feed me at this hour. No, honestly well, if you're quite sure it's no trouble, then perhaps just a roast beef sandwich and a large dill pickle with perhaps some potato salad and a bottle of beer.' The front path was pitch dark and in my eagerness and unfamiliarity with British doorways, I tripped on a step, crashing face first into the door and sending half a dozen empty milk bottles clattering.

Almost immediately the upstairs window opened. 'Who's that?' came a sharp voice. I stepped back, rubbing my nose, and peered up at a silhouette with hair curlers. 'Hello, I'm looking for a room,' I said. 'We're shut.' 'Oh.' But what about my supper? Try the Churchill. On the front.' 'On the front of what?' I asked, but the window was already banging closed.

2. How does the writer change this atmosphere?

3. Describe the town where the writer is.

Identify adjectives that add to the description.

4. Find evidence that the writer is not British.

Explain how this influences how you see the writer.

6. Why do you think the writer want to document this travel story?

5. What is the attitude of the owner of the guest house to the writer?