

Name:

Date:

Period:

This seventeenth-century rhyme is about the enclosures (the closing of the commons) in England. Read the rhyme, then answer the questions.

The Goose and the Common

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
But leaves the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from off the goose.

The law demands that we atone
When we take things we do not own
But leaves the lords and ladies fine
Who take things that are yours and mine.

The poor and wretched don't escape
If they conspire the law to break.
This must be so but they endure
Those who conspire to make the law.

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common,
And geese will still a common lack
Till they go and steal it back.

Questions

1. According to this rhyme, it was unlawful to steal a goose from the common.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. According to this rhyme, who is a "greater villain" than the person who would steal a goose from the common?

3. According to this rhyme, who makes the laws which the poor endure?

4. According to this rhyme, how will the people get the commons back?

5. Imagine that you are a member of the wealthy aristocracy at this time.
 - a. What would be your motivation(s) for taking the commons?

 - b. How would you react to this rhyme?

6. Imagine that you are a member of the poor peasant class (the overwhelming majority of people) at this time. How might you react to the closing of the commons?

