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# Why the Princess Has a Story about Her



There was once a little princess whose father was king over a great country full of mountains and valleys. His grand and beautiful palace was built upon one of the mountains. The princess, whose name was Irene, was born there, but she was sent soon after her birth, because her mother was not very strong, to be brought up by country people in a large house, half castle, half farmhouse, on the side of another mountain.

The princess, at the time, was about eight years old, I think, but she got older

very fast. Her face was fair and prett with eyes like two bits of night sky each with a star dissolved in the blue. Those eyes must have known they came from there, so often were they turned up in that direction. The ceiling of her nursery was blue, with stars in it, like the sky. But I doubt if ever she saw the real sky, for a reason which I had better mention at once.

These mountains were full of hollow places underneath; huge caverns, and winding ways, some with water running

**farmhouse:** the main house on a farm, where the farmer lives; **caverns:** large caves; **winding:** having a curving and twisting shape

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through them, and some shining with all colours of the rainbow when a light was taken in. There would not have been much known about them, had there not been mines there, which had been dug to get at the ore of which the mountains were full. In the course of digging, the miners came upon many of these natural caverns.

Now in these subterranean caverns lived a strange race of beings, called by some gnomes, by some goblins. There was a legend current in the country that at one time they lived above ground, and were very like other people. But for some reason, they had all disappeared from the face of the country. Instead of

going to some other country, they had all taken refuge in the subterranean caverns, and they came out only at night. It was only in the least frequented and most difficult parts of the mountains that they were said to gather.

In the process of time they had got a king and a government of their own, whose chief business was to devise trouble for their neighbours. It will now be pretty evident why the little princess had never seen the sky at night. They were much too afraid of the goblins to let her out of the house then, even in company with ever so many attendants.

GEORGE MACDONALD

Adapted from *The Princess and the Goblin*

### A. Comprehension

1. Why was Princess Irene sent away from her home to be brought up by others?

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2. How old was she when the story begins?

a. 10       b. 9       c. 12       d. 8

3. Why is it mentioned that she got 'older fast'?

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4. Why were the mountains dug and what was found in them?

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5. What was the legend about the gnomes and goblins living in the caverns?

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