

The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Thinking about the Poem (Page 132)

Question 1:

Who are the characters in this poem? List them with their pet names.

Answer:

The characters in this poem are Belinda, a little girl and her pets: a little black kitten, a little grey mouse, a little yellow dog, a little pet dragon and a pirate.

The names of the pets are listed below:

Character	Pet Name
Kitten	Ink
Mouse	Blink
Dog	Mustard
Dragon	Custard

Question 2:

Why did Custard cry for a nice safe cage? Why is the dragon called “cowardly dragon”?

Answer:

Custard cried for a nice safe cage because it was a coward and used to get scared easily. It is called a “cowardly dragon” because everyone in the house was very brave. Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears, Ink and Blink could chase lions down the stairs, Mustard was as brave as a raging tiger, but Custard always cried for a nice safe cage as it feared a lot and wanted to stay safe from any danger.

Question 3:

“Belinda tickled him, she tickled him unmerciful...” Why?

Answer:

Belinda tickled Custard, the dragon unmercifully because it was always very scared and cried for a nice safe cage. She rubbed her fingers creating a tingling sensation that would disturb the dragon and everyone would laugh at its cowardice.

Question 4:

The poet has employed many poetic devices in the poem. For example: “Clashed his tail like iron in a dungeon” — the poetic device here is a simile. Can you, with your partner, list some more such poetic devices used in the poem?

Answer:

The poet has extensively used similes across the poem. One such simile was “mouth like a fireplace”. Also he has repetitively used the word ‘little’ in the first stanza to emphasize that everything in Belinda’s house including her pets were little in size. In the seventh stanza, the poet used an incorrect spelling as a poetic device such as ‘winda’ instead of ‘window’ that rhymes with Belinda’s name in the previous line. Furthermore, the poet has also used alliteration in the tenth stanza in the sentences “Clashed his tail” and “With a clatter and a clank”. In the eleventh stanza, the poet used the terms, “The pirate gaped” and “gulped some grog” as some of the poetic devices in the poem.

Question 5:

Read stanza three again to know how the poet describes the appearance of the dragon.

Answer:

The poet describes the appearance of the dragon, Custard as one which had big sharp teeth and spikes on top of its body and scales underneath. Its mouth was like a fireplace with a chimney-like nose and sharp dagger-like toes.

Question 6:

Can you find out the rhyme scheme of two or three stanzas of the poem?

Answer:

The rhyme scheme of two or three stanzas of the poem is ‘aabb’.

Question 7:

Writers use words to give us a picture or image without actually saying what they mean. Can you trace some images used in the poem?

Answer:

Writers often use words and phrases that do not exactly convey a meaning but they are indicative of their related meanings. Such words or phrases are basically used to trigger our imagination into thinking and visualizing them like a painting with a hidden meaning. The poet has used some images in the poem such as: ‘mouth like a fireplace’, ‘chimney for a nose’, ‘brave as a barrel full of bears’, ‘brave as a tiger in a rage’, ‘went at the pirate like a robin at a worm’, etc.

Question 8:

Do you find The Tale of Custard the Dragon to be a serious or a light-hearted poem? Give reasons to support your answer.

Answer:

‘The Tale of Custard the Dragon’ is a very light-hearted and funny poem which was written in such a way so that everyone enjoys it. The poem was composed with a fixed rhyme scheme that makes it interesting and enjoyable to read. The poet has also used wrong spelling ‘winda’ instead of ‘window’ to maintain the rhyme scheme with ‘Belinda’ in the seventh stanza. The poet also described the features of Belinda and her pets in a humorous manner. He compared Belinda’s bravery to a barrel full of bears, her kitten, Ink and mouse, Blink to be so brave that they could scare a lion down the stairs and her dog, Mustard was brave enough like a raging tiger. On the contrary, her dragon Custard was the only one who has been projected to be a coward who looks for a cage for itself and was made fun of often by others for its cowardice. However, when the pirate attacked the little house and everyone was scared, it was the same ‘cowardly’ dragon who saved everyone and jumped snorting like an engine on the pirate. It clashed its tail

and charged towards the pirate like a robin at a worm and ate him. Although everyone made fun of the little dragon, it proved to be the bravest of all. Hence, the poem is dramatically ironic which is funny and reflects the fun and humorous side of the poet.

Question 9:

This poem, in ballad form, tells a story. Have you come across any such modern song or lyric that tells a story? If you know one, tell it to the class. Collect such songs as a project.

Answer:

Activity to be done by yourself.

Writing (Page 132)**Question 1:**

Have fun writing your ballad. Gather information (choose/decide an idea/theme), organise your materials under characters and story and then write. Revise and edit your ballad to make it entertaining. Use the following guidelines to write your ballad.

- Purpose of writing the ballad: to entertain and interest
- To whom I am writing: decide for whom you are writing
- How should I structure features? :
 - Tell a simple narrative
 - A few major characters
 - A strong rhythm and rhyme
 - May have a refrain (single or two line(s) repeated often)
 - Divide into verses

Answer:

Activity to be done by yourself.