

How to Tell Wild Animals

Thinking about the Poem (Page 45)

Question 1:

Does 'dyin' really rhyme with 'lion'? Can you say it in such a way that it does?

Answer:

No, 'dyin' does not rhyme with 'lion'. If we pronounce the word 'lion' as 'lying', then probably it would rhyme with the word 'dyin'.

Question 2:

How does the poet suggest that you identify the lion and the tiger? When can you do so, according to him?

Answer:

The poet suggests that if a large and tawny beast roams in the jungle in the east and roars towards us, then it is the Asian Lion. On the contrary, if a noble wild beast with black stripes on a yellow coat roams about the jungle freely, it must be the Bengal Tiger. Besides, the poet also mentions that a lion usually roars loudly when it attacks its prey, while a tiger attacks its prey silently.

Question 3:

Do you think the words 'lept' and 'lep' in the third stanza are spelt correctly? Why does the poet spell them like this?

Answer:

The words 'lept' and 'lep' are spelt incorrectly in the poem. The poet has spelt them in such a way to maintain the rhythm of the poem. The correct spelling of the words, 'lept' is leapt and 'lep' is leap. The poet has deliberately spelt them incorrectly to create an element of humour therefore, emphasizing the word 'leopard' in every line.

Question 4:

Do you know what a 'bearhug' is? It's a friendly and strong hug — such as bears are thought to give, as they attack you! Again, hyenas are thought to laugh, and crocodiles to weep ('crocodile tears') as they swallow their victims. Are there similar expressions and popular ideas about wild animals in your own language(s)?

Answer:

A 'bearhug' refers to a bear's close and tight embrace with both hands as it attacks its victims. Other animals also have similar expressions such as a hyena never laughs but its face looks like that, crocodiles never weep but they burst into tears when they swallow their prey or victims.

Question 5:

Look at the line "A novice might nonplus". How would you write this 'correctly'? Why is the poet's 'incorrect' line better in the poem?

Answer:

The line "A novice might nonplus" can be correctly written as "A novice might be nonplussed". However, the usage of incorrect line is in sync with the poem as it helps in maintaining the rhyme scheme of the poem. By using the incorrect word 'nonplus', it rhymes with 'thus'.

Question 6:

Can you find other examples of poets taking liberties with language, either in English or in your own language(s)? Can you find examples of humorous poems in your own language(s)?

Answer:

Yes, there are several instances where poets take liberties with the language to create proper rhyming of the poem. This is often referred to as 'poetic license'. For example in the poem 'Tale of Custard the Dragon' by Ogden Nash, the spellings have been changed to create a rhythmic effect – realio, trulio instead of really and truly. The lines are given below:

Belinda lived in a little white house,
With a little black kitten and a little grey mouse,
And a little yellow dog and a little red wagon,
And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

Question 7:

Much of the humour in the poem arises from the way language is used, although the ideas are funny as well. If there are particular lines in the poem that you especially like, share these with the class, speaking briefly about what it is about the ideas or the language that you like or find funny.

Answer:

The poet has kept the language of the poem very simple and humorous. Some of the lines that appear funny in the poem are "A noble wild beast greets you". Although the sentence appears that the wild beast might greet you, but it is quite funny and unlikely that a ferocious animal like a tiger would do that. In another context, the line, "He'll only lep and lep again" is also very humorous. The word 'lep' is used to maintain the rhyme scheme of the word 'leopard' and is used to create humour in the poem.