

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 4: HOW TO TELL WILD ANIMALS



HOW TO TELL WILD ANIMALS

~Summary~

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Stanza- 1

If ever you should go by chance
To jungles in the east;
And if there should to you advance
A large and tawny beast,
If he roars at you as you're dyin'
You'll know it is the Asian Lion...

Explanation: The poet here cautions the readers against the wild beasts found in the jungle. He says that if by chance you happen to go to any forest in the East, you are likely to encounter a huge and terrible animal moving forward towards you. You will notice that it is brownish-yellow in colour. And if that beast roars loudly at you and you feel that you are going to die due to fear then you will come to know that it is the Asian Lion.

Stanza- 2

Or if some time when roaming round,
A noble wild beast greets you,
With black stripes on a yellow ground,
Just notice if he eats you.
This simple rule may help you learn
The Bengal Tiger to discern.

Explanation: The poet says that it is very likely that while roaming in the forest, you are greeted by a wild beast. This wild animal is very impressive in size and his majestic body is covered with black stripes on a yellow hide. The poet cautions that if the readers notice this beast and that if he eats them, then this simple rule will teach them that it is a 'Bengal Tiger'.

Stanza- 3

If strolling forth, a beast you view,
Whose hide with spots is peppered,
As soon as he has leapt on you,
You'll know it is the Leopard.
Twill do no good to roar with pain,
He'll only leap and leap again.

Explanation: The poet here helps the readers to identify a leopard. He says that if you happen to walk in the forest, you might encounter a beast with spots on his skin. When this wild beast will jump at you, you will understand that it is a leopard as he will keep jumping on you and will tear you apart. Moreover, it will be of no use then to shout or cry with pain because he will continue pouncing on you. So, be careful and don't allow it to leap on you.

Stanza- 4

If when you're walking round your yard
You meet a creature there,
Who hugs you very, very hard,
Be sure it is a Bear.
If you have any doubts, I guess
He'll give you just one more caress.

Explanation: The poet says that while you are walking in your yard, you may encounter a creature there. When this creature hugs you very very tightly, then believe that it is a bear. Bears are thought to be good wrestlers and can give a really tight hug. Although a friendly hug is referred to as bear hug, if a real bear hugs you, then it may not feel friendly at all. The bear hugs a man to kill him. The poet further says that in case of any doubt you will find that the bear will embrace you once again till death.

Stanza- 5

Though to distinguish beasts of prey
A novice might nonplus,
The Crocodile you always may
Tell from the Hyena thus:
Hyenas come with merry smiles;
But if they weep they're Crocodiles.

Explanation: The poet here says that a novice (a beginner) may be puzzled and confused and thus might not be able to distinguish between the different wild animals. Hence, the poet helps to differentiate the crocodile from the hyena. He says that a hyena always laughs as it swallows its victim. A laughing hyena's voice resembles human's laughing sound. A crocodile on the other hand, is said to shed tears while eating its prey. The poet, thus, warns the readers to not wait for a hyena to laugh or for a crocodile to weep.

Stanza- 6

The true Chameleon is small,
A lizard sort of things;
He hasn't any ears at all,
And not a single wing.

If there is nothing on the tree,
Tis the Chameleon you see.

Explanation: The poet describes a chameleon in this stanza. He says a chameleon is a small garden lizard. It doesn't have ears or wings. The poet, further, says that if you are unable to see a thing on the tree, then chances are that a chameleon is sitting there. A chameleon is an expert at camouflage. It changes colour as per its surroundings and is therefore difficult to see. This capacity of camouflage helps the lizard in saving it from hunters.

Conclusion of How to Tell Wild Animals

This poem is beautifully introducing the wild animals in a different way analogous to the hidden human beings.

NCERT SOLUTION

Questions (Page No. 45)

(THINKING ABOUT THE POEM)

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, the word 'rest' is used often to rhyme with the word 'best'. Then, the word 'ten' is used to rhyme with 'pen'.

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.