

Class 10, English

POEM 4 - HOW TO TELL WILD ANIMALS

By Carolyn Wells

About the Poet

Carolyn Wells (1862-1942) was an American writer who was famous for books based on mystery. Her famous works are at the sign of the Sphinx (1896), The Jingle book (1899), the story of Betty (1899) etc.

Introduction to the Poem

In the poem, the poet has explained the characteristics of various wild animals in a very funny way. She has used language in a way that it generates humour. She is introducing the reader to various kinds of wild animals like Asian lion, Bengal tiger, bear, etc. explaining each of the animals in a very humorous way.

Summary of the poem

The poet is describing the various wild animals. These animals are very dangerous and she has introduced them one by one in a very funny way. First of all she tells us about an Asian lion. She says that if you are visiting the jungles of the east and there you see an animal which has tawny skin and he roars so loudly that you will die out of fear. This means that you have seen an Asian lion. Next in the line is the Bengal tiger that she has explained to be a royal animal that at once attacks and kills a man. She says by adding humour that if this beautiful black striped animal kills you and eats you, then you have surely met a Bengal tiger. After this, she says that if the reader met an animal that has black spotted skin and it at once jumps on him, then it means that the reader has met a leopard. Moreover, she says that if one will cry out in pain, it maybe of no use as the leopard will not stop attacking him. Then she moves on to the bear that she says will hug very tightly. This is the way to recognize a bear as it kills a person by hugging him very tightly. So, she says that the bear will continue to hug us tightly and that is the only way to recognize him. After this, she asks a question to the readers that do they know how to recognize beasts that hunt their prey. Here she explains about hyenas which she thinks have a smiling face and the crocodiles that have tears in their eyes. This can be seen when they are killing their prey. The last one in the list is the Chameleon. She says that it is a lizard - like creature which doesn't have ears and wings just like a lizard. Only this can help you differentiate between a lizard and chameleon. She further says that the chameleon has a quality

of changing its color according to the colour of the surface. So, to explain this she says that if the reader looks at the tree and if he can only see the tree, this means that there is a chameleon sitting on it which has already turned its color to brown just like the branch of the tree.

How to Tell Wild Animals -Poem and Explanation

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...

Tawny: yellowish brown color

The poet is telling the readers that how they can recognize various animals in the jungles of the east. So, in first stanza she says that if the reader comes across an animal whose skin is yellowish brown in colour and if it roars at him so strongly that he can die out of fear, it means that he has encountered an Asian Lion. She has humorously explained the Asian Lion which could kill a person with its roar.

Literary Devices

Rhyme: Rhyme scheme ababcc is followed (chance-advance, east-beast, dyin-lion)

Enjambment: Continuation of a sentence to the next line (and if there.....tawny beast)

Inversion: Change in the format of a sentence (if there should to you advance)

Assonance: use of vowel sound 'o' (you should go, should to you, roars,)

Allusion: Reference to a famous thing, place, species of animal, etc (Asian Lion)



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.

Noble: high born, aristocratic

Discern: recognize

She explains an animal that roams in the jungle and belongs to a royal clan. The colour of its skin is yellowish with black stripes. She says that if you notice that he kills you and eats you up, then this means that you have surely seen a Bengal Tiger. This time also she has used dark humour to explain how a tiger looks like because once a person has been eaten up by a wild animal, there is no use in determining which wild animal it is.

Literary Devices

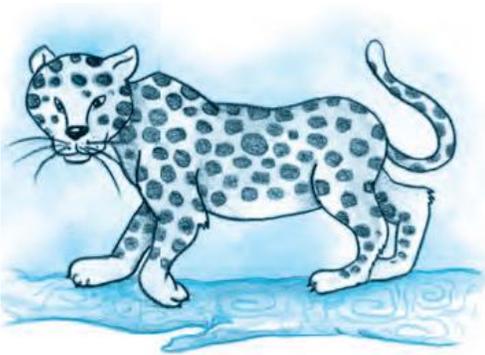
Rhyme: Rhyme scheme ababcc is followed (round-ground, you-you learn-discern)

Alliteration: repetition of consonant sound 'r' at start of two or more closely connected words (roaming round)

Inversion: Change in the format of a sentence (The Bengal Tiger to discern)

Allusion: Reference to a famous thing, place, species of animal, etc (Bengal Tiger)

Assonance: Use of vowel sound 'o' (or if some time when roaming round)



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

Strolling: walking casually

Forth: forward

Hide: skin of animal

Peppered: Here it means the spots

Lept (Leapt): jump towards someone

The poet says that if you are casually walking in a jungle, you will meet an animal who has a skin with spots on it. This animal is so fast that it will leap on you at once which means that it will jump on you. This jumping is an indication that it is none other than the Leopard. Moreover, she adds that if you will cry out in pain, it is not going to be of any use as it will keep on jumping on you. So, in this stanza the poet has explained the characteristic of a leopard.

Literary Devices

Rhyme: Rhyme scheme ababcc is followed (view- you, peppered- Leopard, pain-again)

Alliteration: use of consonant sound 'h' in the beginning of two words (he has)

Poetic license: A liberty to the poet to change the spellings in order to create rhyme or rhythm in a poem (use of lept instead of leapt)

Repetition: use of 'lep' word in the last line.

Assonance: use of vowel sound 'o' (strolling-forth-you, whose-spot, do no good to roar)

Consonance: use of 'l' sound (he'll only lep lep)



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.

Yard: backyard or the lawn area of a house

Caress: A gentle touch

If you are walking in the lawn area of your house and you meet a creature which hugs you

tightly, it is a bear. She further adds that if you are still in doubt regarding the animal, the easiest way is that he will keep hugging and touching you very gently. This act of his will make you sure about its identity. You will come to know that it is a bear.

Literary Devices

Rhyme: Rhyme scheme ababcc is followed (yard-hard, there- bear, guess-caress)

Enjambment: Continuation of a sentence to the next line (if you were walking...creature there)

Alliteration: use of 'w' sound (when-walking), use of 'h' sound (who- hugs), use of 'b' sound (be-bear)

Assonance: use of vowel 'e' (meet a creature there)



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

Distinguish: Differentiate

Beast of Prey: Any animals that hunts other animals for food

Novice: Someone new to a job

Nonplus: be confused

The poet says that for someone who is new to the job of recognizing animals, it will be like a puzzle to recognize animals that hunt other animals for their food. So here the poet tries to help out the readers by telling the difference between two animals. He says that Hyenas will be smiling whereas if it is a crocodile, it is always in tears. Both of these animals are dangerous.

Literary Devices

Rhyme: Rhyme scheme ababcc is followed (prey-may, nonplus-thus, smiles-crocodiles)

Alliteration: use of consonant sound 'n' (novice-nonplus), use of 'th' sound (the-thus)

Enjambment: continuation of sentence to the next line (though to distinguish....might nonplus,
The crocodile.....hyena thus)



The true Chameleon is small,
A lizard sort of thing;
He hasn't any ears at all,
And not a single wing.
If there is nothing on the tree,
'Tis the chameleon you see.

The poet says that the next is Chameleon which is a small creature. It looks like a lizard but the difference between the two is that chameleon does not have ears and wings. Moreover she says that chameleon has the ability to change its color according to the surface on which it is sitting. Therefore, if you see a tree and find nothing else on it, then it must be a chameleon sitting on it. It has changed its colour into the color of tree.

Literary Devices

Rhyme: Rhyme scheme ababcc is followed (small-all, thing-wing, tree-see)

Alliteration: use of 'h' sound (he hasn't)

Consonance: use of 'g' sound (single wing)

Question and Answers

Q1-Does 'dyin' really rhyme with 'lion'? Can you say it in such a way that it does?

A1-The actual word is dying which does not rhyme with lion. In order to create rhyme, it is written as 'dyin' in the poem.

Q2- How does the poet suggest that you identify the lion and the tiger? When can you do so, according to him?

A2-The poet differentiates between the two in the following manner-

He says that if the beast is of yellow- brown colour that is tawny colour and it roars out so fiercely that you may die out of fear, then this is an Asian lion. Whereas, if the animal has black stripes on yellow background of hthe skin and he attacks to kill you, then it is a Bengal tiger.

Q3- Do you think the words ‘lept’ and ‘lep’ in the third stanza are spelt correctly? Why does the poet spell them like this?

A3-The words ‘lept’ and ‘lep’ have not been spelled correctly. It is a poetic device known as poetic license which is used by the poet to lay emphasis on the actions of the leopard.

Q4- 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?

A4-The correct order of the sentence is ‘a novice might be nonplussed’. The poet wrote it in order to bring rhyme to her poem. nonplus rhymes with thus.

Q5- 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?

A5- Yes, it is true that the poet has used the language in a way that it arises humour. The poet has used many lines that are funny. One such is ‘If he roars at you as you’re dyin’.You’ll know it is the Asian Lion...’ or the other one is ‘A noble wild beast greets you’. So his idea of explaining the characteristics of the wild animals is quite funny.

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