

How to Tell Wild Animals (Poem)

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Thinking about the Poem

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

Answer: No, 'dying' does not rhyme with 'lion'. It is for this reason that the poet has used 'dyin' so that when we pronounce it, it rhymes with 'lion'.

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 in the jungle in the east advances towards us, then it is an Asian lion. We can identify it when it roars at us while we are dying with fear. When while roaming we come across a wild beast that is yellow in colour with black stripes, it is a Bengal tiger. We can identify it when it eats us.

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: No, the words 'lept' and 'lep' are spelt incorrectly. The poet has spelled them like this in order to maintain the rhythm of the poem. When spelled this way, they rhyme with the first part of 'leopard', thus giving emphasis to 'leopard' in each line.

4. Do you know what a 'bear hug' 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 'bear hug' is the bear's tight embrace. Hyenas never laugh. But their faces look like that. Crocodiles do not weep but tears come when they swallow their victims.

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". The poet's incorrect line is better in the poem as it maintains the rhyme scheme of the poem. By writing it incorrectly, 'nonplus' rhymes with 'thus'.