

Chapter 9: The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Thinking about the Poem

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.

Characters	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 was scared very easily. It is called “cowardly dragon” because everyone else in the house is very brave while the dragon is the only one, who fears a lot and looks for a nice safe cage for himself. Belinda is as brave as a barrel full of bears, Ink and Blink can chase lions and Mustard is as brave as an angry tiger.

Question: 3

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

Answer:

Tickling always works on people, who are a little softer. So, Belinda tickled the dragon unmerciful as it worked a lot on him. Despite being a dragon, a tickling could disturb him and this showed his cowardice on which everyone laughed.

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:

In the poem, ‘The tale of Custard, the Dragon’, the poet has used a lot of poetic devices. Following are the devices used

1. Simile: mouth like a fireplace
2. Repetition: the repetitive use of the word ‘little’ in stanza 1.

Question: 5

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

Answer:

Do it yourself.

Question: 6

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

Answer:

The rhyme scheme 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 always use such phrases and words that do not tell us directly about what they mean but always gives us an indication of the meaning. Such words or phrases are used to trigger our own imagination in painting the picture that they mean. Use of such images in the poem is the following: '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 and funny poem meant to be enjoyed by everyone. The way the poem has been written with a fix rhyme scheme, makes it very easy and enjoyable to read. The poet has even used wrong spelling to maintain the rhyme scheme. The features of Belinda and her pets described in the poem make it quite funny. Belinda's bravery has been compared to a barrel full of bears, a liquid substance. All the tiny creatures such as the kitten and the mouse have been shown so brave that they can scare a lion and the dog's bravery is like a tiger's rage. The biggest of them all, the dragon is the only one, who has been shown as a coward and soft being, who looks for a cage for himself, which is very ironic, hence making the poem funny.

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:

Do it yourself