

CLASS – 10,
ENGLISH LIT & LANG.

The Tale of Custard the Dragon BY Ogden Nash

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1. With a little black kitten and a little gray mouse, And a little yellow dog and a little red wagon, And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

- (a) Where did Belinda live?
- (b) How many pets did she have?
- (c) Which word in the stanza means “carriage”?
- (d) Whose young one known as a ‘kitten’?

Answer:

- (a) Belinda lived in a little white house.
- (b) She had four pets, a kitten, a mouse, a dog and a dragon.
- (c) The word is ‘Wagon’.
- (d) A cat’s young one is known as a kitten.

2. Now the name of the litde black kitten was Ink, And the little gray mouse, she called her Blink, And the little yellow dog was sharp as Mustard, But the dragon was a coward, and she called him Custard.

- (a) What is the colour of Belinda’s dog?
- (b) What were the kitten and the mouse called?
- (c) Which word in the stanza means “fear easily”?
- (d) ‘Blink’ here is the name of a mouse but what actually the word means?

Answer:

- (a) Belinda’s dog is yellow as mustard.
- (b) The Kitten was called Ink and the mouse was called Blink by Belinda.
- (c) The word is ‘Coward’.
- (d) The word ‘blink’ means to shut and open eyes frequently in quick succession.

3. Custard the dragon had big sharp teeth, And spikes on top of him and scales underneath, Mouth like a fireplace, chimney for a nose, And realio, trulio, daggers on his toes.

- (a) What did the dragon look like?
- (b) Why is the dragon’s mouth called a chimney?
- (c) Which word in the stanza means the same as “a small sword”?
- (d) Find from the passage a word which means a structure through which smoke or steam is carried up away from a fire.

Answer:

- (a) The Dragon had spikes on top and scale underneath. His mouth was like a fireplace and nose was like a chimney. He looked dangerous as his toes looked like daggers.
- (b) Dragons can spit fire, therefore Custard’s mouth has been called a fireplace.
- (c) The word is ‘Dagger’.
- (d) The word is ‘Chimney’.

4. Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears, And Ink and Blink chased lions down the stairs, Mustard was as brave as a tiger in a rage, But Custard cried for a nice safe

cage.

- (a) How brave were the Kitten and the mouse?
- (b) Why did Custard cry for a nice safe cage?
- (c) Which word is similar to “anger”?
- (d) Which figure of speech has been used in the first and the third line of the passage.

Answer:

- (a) The kitten and the mouse were so brave that they could scare away lions.
- (b) Custard cried for a nice safe cage because he was a coward.
- (c) The word is ‘Rage’.
- (d) Figure of speech used in first and third line is Simile.

5. Belinda tickled him, she tickled him unmerciful, Ink, Blink and Mustard, they rudely called him Percival, They all sat laughing in the little red wagon At the realio, trulio, cowardly dragon.

- (a) Why did everyone laugh?
- (b) What did the other three pet call the dragon?
- (c) What does realio, trulio mean?
- (d) Give the synonym of ‘un merciful’.

Answer:

- (a) Everyone laughed at the Dragon because Belinda tickled him unmerciful.
- (b) The other three pet, Ink, Blink and Mustard rudely called Custard Percival.
- (c) Realio, trulio actually mean really and truly. The words have been changed by the poet so as to give rhythm to the poem.
- (d) The synonym of ‘un merciful’ is ‘merciless’.

6. Belinda giggled till she shook the house, And Blink said Week!, which is giggling for a mouse, Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age, When Custard cried for a nice safe cage.

- (a) What did shake the house?
- (b) How did the mouse giggle?
- (c) Write the antonym for giggle.
- (d) Find the antonym of the word ‘insecure’ from the passage.

Answer:

- (a) Belinda giggled so hard that it shook the house.
- (b) The giggling sound of mouse is ‘week’.
- (c) The word is ‘Cry’.
- (d) The antonym of insecure is ‘Safe’.

7. Suddenly, suddenly they heard a nasty sound, And Mustard growled, and they all looked around. Meowch! cried Ink, and Ooh! cried Belinda, For there was a pirate, climbing in the winda.

- (a) Which poetic device is used in these lines?
- (b) Why was everyone frightened?
- (c) Which word in the stanza means “unpleasant”?
- (d) What does a ‘nasty sound’ refer to?

Answer:

- (a) In the first line, the poet has used repetition in ‘Suddenly, suddenly’.
- (b) Everyone was frightened because a pirate was climbing up the window.

- (c) The word is 'Nasty'.
- (d) A nasty sound refers to the entry of a pirate into the house.

8.. Pistol in his left hand, pistol in his right, And he held in his teeth a cutlass bright, His beard was black, one leg was wood; It was clear that the pirate meant no good.

- (a) How many weapons was the pirate carrying?
- (b) Describe the physical appearance of the pirate.
- (c) What does cutlass mean?
- (d) What is the rhyming scheme adopted in the stanza?

Answer:

- (a) The pirate was carrying two pistols in each hand and a cutlass in his teeth.
- (b) The pirate's beard was black and he had one wooded leg. He looked very frightening.
- (c) Cutlass is a small sword like weapon with a very sharp blade.
- (d) The rhyme scheme adopted is aabb.

9. Belinda paled, and she cried, Help! Help! But Mustard fled with a terrified yelp, Ink trickled down to the bottom of the household, And little mouse Blink strategically mouseholed.

- (a) How did the people in the house react on seeing the pirate?
- (b) Why did everyone cry for help?
- (c) What does 'mouseholed' mean?
- (d) Write the antonym of 'bottom'.

Answer:

- (a) Belinda became pale with fear and the Mustard fled the scene. Ink went to the bottom of the house and Blink vanished in a mouse hole. They all cried for help.
- (b) Everyone cried for help because they all got frightened of the pirate.
- (c) Mouseholed has been used by the poet to mean the hole made by the mouse in which it disappeared.
- (d) The antonym of bottom is 'brim'.

10. But up jumped Custard, snorting like an engine, Clashed his tail like irons in a dungeon, With a clatter and a clank and a jangling squirm He went at the pirate like a robin at a worm.

- (a) Why did Custard jump?
- (b) What sounds did Custard's body make?
- (c) What does dungeon mean?
- (d) Find at least two words from the passage which are examples of onomatopaea (a figure of speech).

Answer:

- (a) Custard jumped to fight the pirate.
- (b) Custard's tail clashed like irons in a dungeon and he moved with a clatter and a clank and a jangling squirm.
- (c) Dungeon means an underground prison cell.
- (d) Words are clatter, clank, jangling.

11. The pirate gaped at Belinda's dragon, And gulped some grog from his pocket flagon, He fired two bullets but they didn't hit, And Custard gobbled him, every bit.

- (a) What did the pirate do on seeing the dragon?

- (b) What did Custard do to the pirate?
- (c) Which word means the same as “swallow”?
- (d) Find from the passage a word which means a large bottle or similar container with a handle in which wine etc is sold or served.

Answer:

- (a) The pirate gulped some wine from his bottle.
- (b) Custard swallowed the pirate and left no trace of him.
- (c) The word is ‘Gobble’.
- (d) The word is ‘flagon’.

12. Belinda embraced him, Mustard licked him, No one mourned for his pirate victim Ink and Blink in glee did gyrate Around the dragon that ate the pirate.

- (a) What was everyone’s reaction after Custard gobbled the pirate?
- (b) Why is the pirate called a victim here?
- (c) What does gyrate mean?
- (d) Give a synonym of the word ‘mourn’.

Answer:

- (a) Everyone became happy and hugged Custard. Ink and Blink started to dance around him.
- (b) The pirate is called a victim because he suffered death at the hands of Custard as he ate him up.
- (c) Gyrate stands for circular movements.
- (d) A synonym of the word mourn is ‘Lament’.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:-

1. Where did Belinda live and with whom?

Answer:

Belinda lived in a little white house with her four pets and a wagon. She had a black kitten named Ink, a grey mouse named Blink, a yellow dog named Mustard and a coward dragon named Custard.

2. What did Custard look like?

Answer:

Custard looked really dangerous with spikes on his top and scales underneath. His mouth was like a fireplace and nose like a chimney. His toes looked like daggers.

3. Did Custard match his physical appearance?

Answer:

No. Custard barely matched his appearance as he looked ferocious but he actually was a coward. He always cried for a nice and safe cage and everyone laughed at him for his cowardice.

4. Describe the bravery of everyone in the house.

Answer:

Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears. Ink and Blink were brave enough to chase lions away. Mustard’s bravery was like a tiger’s rage. It was only Custard, who was a coward, everyone else was very brave.

5. Was everyone really as brave as they claimed?

Answer:

Belinda and her three pets, excluding Custard, were very proud of their bravery but they were not really brave. It was only Custard, who had the courage to face the pirate so he was the real brave.

6. What did everyone do when the pirate came?

Answer:

When the pirate came, Belinda cried for help and became pale with fear. Mustard ran away with a terrified cry and Ink trickled to the bottom of the house while Blink disappeared in his mouse hole. Custard jumped in front of the Pirate to fight him.

7. How did Custard face the pirate?

Answer:

Custard jumped in front of the pirate to fight him. The pirate fired two bullets at him but missed both of them. Then Custard gobbled whole of the pirate and left no trace of him.

8. 'But Custard cried for a nice safe cage.' Who is Custard? Why did he cry for a 'nice safe cage'?

Answer:

Custard is Belinda's pet Dragon. He cried for a nice safe cage because he was a coward, who feared easily and looked for comfort and safety of himself.

9. How did everyone react after Custard ate the pirate?

Answer:

Belinda embraced Custard because he had saved everyone by killing the pirate. Mustard licked him to show his affection while Ink and Blink started dancing around Custard out of happiness.

10. How did the other three pet boast of their bravery?

Answer:

After Mustard, Ink and Blink fled on seeing the pirate, it was Custard, who fought him and killed him. The other pets soon made excuses for their cowardice and said that they would have been twice and thrice as brave as Custard.

11. Did Custard accept his cowardice and their bravery?

Answer:

Yes, Custard seemed like a really humble animal as even after killing the pirate he accepted that he is a coward and everyone else is braver than him