

THE TALE OF CUSTARD THE DRAGON

Explanation of the Poem:

Stanza 1

Belinda lived in a little white house,
With a little black kitten and a little grey mouse,
And a little yellow dog and a little red wagon,
And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

Explanation: Belinda dwelled in a small white house with four pets - a black kitten, a grey mouse, a yellow dog, and a little dragon. The poet uses 'realio' and 'trulio' in the last line as playful expressions for 'really' and 'truly' regarding the little dragon.

Stanza 2

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

Explanation: The black kitten was named Ink, the grey mouse was Blink, and the lively yellow dog was called Mustard for its sharp mustard-colored fur. Belinda referred to the timid dragon as Custard.

Stanza 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 realis, trulio, daggers on his toes

Explanation: The dragon has a short tail, scales covering his stomach, and a mouth poised for breathing fire. Smoke billows from his chimney-like nose. His sharp, clawed toes can cut through the air like a dagger.

Stanza 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

Explanation: Belinda is compared to a group of brave bears, while the small Ink and Blink can defy lions. Mustard's courage is likened to an angry tiger, but Custard is the opposite - a coward always seeking refuge in a tight cage.

Stanza 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.

Explanation: Mustard mocked Custard for lacking courage, while Percival, known for bravery, and the others laughed together in the woods at Custard's lack of boldness.

Stanza 6

Belinda giggled till she shook the house,
And Blink sad Weeek, which is giggling for a mouse,
Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age,
When Custard cried for a nice de cage.

Explanation: Belinda laughed heartily at the dragon, shaking the house with her laughter. Birik, the mouse, chuckled and made a "Weeek" sound. Ink and Mustard teased the dragon about his age, and in response, the dragon sought solace in a snug cage.

Stanza 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.

Explanation: While teasing the dragon, they heard an unpleasant sound. Mustard grew alarmed, and as they looked around, Ink cried 'Meowch,' and Belinda exclaimed 'Ootosh.' They spotted a pirate climbing through the window of the house.

Stanza 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.

Explanation: The pirate's menacing appearance was evident with pistols in both hands and a small sword clenched between his teeth. A black beard adorned his face, and a wooden leg heightened the sense of danger. It was clear to the housemates that the pirate intended harm to the residents, both human and pets alike.

Stanza 9

Belinda puled, 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

Explanation: Belinda turned pale with fear at the sight of the pirate, crying out for help. Despite her brave companions, everyone scattered in fear. Mustard let out a loud cry and fled, Ink rushed downstairs, and Blink cleverly sought refuge in his hole.

Stanza 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.

Explanation: While teasing the dragon, they heard an unpleasant sound. Mustard grew alarmed, and as they looked around, Ink cried 'Meowch,' and Belinda exclaimed 'Ootosh.' They spotted a pirate climbing through the window of the house.

Stanza 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.

Explanation: Custard surprised the pirate by bravely facing him. The pirate took a drink and shot at Custard, but missed. In the end, Custard swallowed the pirate whole.

Stanza 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

Explanation: Everyone celebrated the pirate's defeat. Belinda hugged Custard, and Mustard licked him affectionately. No one felt sorry for the pirate's demise. Ink and Blink danced joyfully around Custard, who had devoured the intruder.

Stanza 13

But presently up spoke little dog, Mustard,
I'd have been twice as brave if I hadn't been
flustered.
And up spoke Ink and up spoke Blink,
We'd have been three times as brave, we think,
And Custard said, I quite agree
We'd have been three times as brave, we think,
That everybody is braver than me

Explanation: The incident clarified bravery and cowardice. Mustard claimed he'd be twice as brave as Custard if not nervous, while Ink and Blink declared they'd be thrice as brave. Custard agreed, admitting everyone there was braver than him.

Stanza 14-15

Belinda still lives in her little white house, with
her little black kitten and her little grey mouse,
And her little yellow dog and her little red wagon.
And her realio, trulio little pet dragon.
Belinda is as brave as a barrel full of bears,
And Ink and Blink chase lions down the stairs,
Mustard is as brave as a tiger in a rage,
But Custard keeps crying for a nice safe cage

Explanation: Stanzas 14 and 15 repeat the theme of stanzas 1 and 4, with a slight difference. While stanzas 1 and 4 describe the housemates' past, stanzas 14 and 15 depict their condition after the pirate incident. Despite the event, everything has returned to normal, with Belinda and her three clever pets making fun of the "cowardly" dragon.

Extract Based Questions:

1. Now the name of the litte 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 is 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 frequency in quick succession.*

2. 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 'unmerciful'

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 'unmerciful' is 'merciless'.*

Top 10 PYQs:

Short Answer Questions (40-50 words each)

1. Why do you think Custard, the dragon was called a coward? How was Custard able to save all his housemates from the pirate? What values should Belinda have possessed, so that Custard too could have been among her favourites?

Answer: The dragon appeared to be a coward as he always cried for a safe cage, so he was called a cowardly dragon. Later, when the pirate entered the house with pistols in his left and right hand, everyone was scared and ran away and disappeared, except Custard who faced him boldly and attacked him, hit him hard with his forceful tail, and gobbled every bit of him. Belinda should have been nice to him. She should have made him feel comfortable and safe in the house, instead of laughing and making fun of him with other pets. Belinda should have been protective towards him.

2. Describe the fight between the dragon and the pirate.

Answer: The dragon had big sharp teeth, and spikes on top of him and scales underneath, but everyone laughed at him as he always cried for a safe cage, whereas everyone boasted about their bravery. But when the pirate entered, all were scared and ran away, except Custard who faced him boldly, attacked him, hit him hard with his forceful tail and gobbled every bit of him. All of them later felt obliged to Custard for saving their lives.

3. How did they say their admiration for the dragon after the death of the pirate?

Answer: They became very happy. Belinda embraced him. Mustard licked him. Ink and Blink jumped round surrounding him. They expressed their joy in this way. No one mourned for the pirate.

4. What did they say about their bravery after the pirate's death?

Answer: Mustard, reflecting on the pirate incident, expressed a yearning for greater bravery, lamenting that nervousness held him back. In contrast, Ink and Blink boldly claimed they were three times as brave as him. Surprisingly, Custard concurred, acknowledging their courage surpassed his own.

This insightful exchange revealed not just the diverse perceptions of courage among the little companions but also Custard's humility in acknowledging the bravery of his friends despite his initial portrayal as a cowardly dragon.

5. How is 'The Tale of Custard the Dragon' a ballad?

Answer: This poem seamlessly weaves the elements of a traditional ballad—adventure, bravery, and romance—with a witty parody, creating a harmonious blend of storytelling and humor. Through its rhythmic and rhyming structure, the poem embraces the musicality inherent in ballads, delivering a delightful cadence. The narrative unfolds around Belinda and her pets, introducing unexpected humor in Custard, the initially timid dragon who surprises with an act of bravery. Mustard's humorous regret and playful banter between Ink and Blink further elevate the parody. This unique fusion of classic ballad themes and comedic innovation transforms the poem into a captivating and entertaining literary experience.

6. How did Custard prove to be brave when the pirate came?

Answer: In a sudden burst of surprising bravery, Custard, the dragon, propelled himself into action with a powerful leap, emitting snorts reminiscent of a roaring engine. His tail wielded like a formidable weapon, struck the pirate with a resounding force, echoing sounds of clatter, clank, and jangle. Each strike seemed orchestrated, creating a symphony of metallic noises that reverberated through the air. How Custard attacked the pirate was reminiscent of a robin diving after a worm, showcasing an unexpected agility and fierceness. This dramatic sequence not only underscored Custard's newfound courage but also painted a vivid, almost cinematic image of the fearless confrontation between the dragon and pirate.

7. How did the pirate react when the dragon attacked him?

Answer: The pirate, taken aback by the dragon's boldness, gazed at Custard with his mouth agape in sheer disbelief. Seeking solace, he reached into his pocket and quenched his nerves with a swig of liquor from a flagon. Determined to reclaim control, the pirate unsheathed his pistol and fired two bullets in rapid succession, but to his dismay, they missed their mark, evading the dragon's swift movements.

8. Everyone believed that the Custard was a coward, but when an opportunity came he showed exemplary courage. Based on your reading of the poem, write a paragraph on the topic: 'Courage is a Mind, not of Muscle'.

Answer: Mark Twain once said that 'Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear-not absence of fear'. Courage is not merely a show of power but the ability to overcome fear and not allow it to paralyze our minds. Most of us tend to generalize and call people who shy away from a physical show of power as being cowards. But the truth lies in the fact that those who indulge in physical aggression are the ones who are the most insecure. David was barely one-fourth of Goliath, the giant. Yet David succeeded, in killing him. He had used his presence of mind and stood successfully over an entire army. Thus, we must remember that courage is a matter of mind, not muscle.

9. 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 whimsical and almost parodic poem featuring Belinda's amusingly rhyming pets. Belinda likened to a barrel of bears, owns a kitten and mouse capable of chasing lions. The little yellow dog exhibits tiger-like bravery, contrasting with the cowardly dragon, subject to constant teasing. Surprisingly, when a pirate threatens, Custard jumps into action, swallowing the intruder whole. Despite Custard's heroism, the pets revert to claiming they could be braver. Ultimately, the poem humorously circles back to the dragon's perceived cowardice, providing a lighthearted twist to the narrative.

10. Why do you think Custard, the dragon was called a coward? How was Custard able to save all his housemates from the pirate? What values should Belinda have possessed, so that Custard too could have been among her favourites?

Answer: Initially labeled a coward, Custard bravely faces a pirate while others flee. Defeating the intruder with forceful determination, Custard reveals hidden courage. Belinda, instead of mocking, should have offered comfort, highlighting the importance of understanding and support in unexpected situations.