

How to Tell Wild Animals

This humorous poem suggests some dangerous ways to identify (or 'tell') wild animals! Read it aloud, keeping to a strong and regular rhythm.

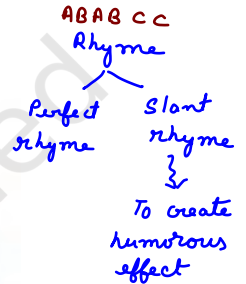
If ever you should go by chance

To jungles in the east; → Asiatic Lions (India, Iran, Iraq, etc)

And if there should to you advance

A large and tawny beast, → yellowish-brown color → fur of lion

Irony } If he roars at you as you're dyin' } Slant rhyme
 } You'll know it is the Asian Lion... }



Life threatening situation survival } Identification of lion

* Playful exaggeration
 * light-hearted language → Though serious situation
 Hyperbole or Tone



Or if some time when roaming round, * Dark Humour

A noble wild beast greets you,

With black stripes on a yellow ground,

Just notice if he eats you. Ridiculous exaggeration

This simple rule may help you learn

The Bengal Tiger to discern: → make out/identify

Casual encounter

If strolling forth, a beast you view,

Whose hide with spots is peppered, animal skin

As soon as he has leapt on you,

You'll know it is the Leopard.

'Twill do no good to roar with pain,

He'll only lep and lep again.

↓ Playful way to describe



* Hyperbole → poet exaggerates an image to make it comical

leap
lep

leapt
lept

leapt

* Poetic license → poets can bend the rules of grammar, spelling or even logic for artistic effect
 * leapt and lep → creates a playful, childish sound that reinforces the lighthearted and exaggerated tone of the poem

* The poet downplays the seriousness with playful language

Sense of Surprise



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.

Sarcasm If you have any doubts, I guess

Irony

He'll give you just one more caress.
gentle loving touch

A novice might be nonplused



Though to distinguish beasts of prey
A novice might nonplus, → *Puzzled, Confused, surprised*
The Crocodile you always may
Tell from the Hyena thus: *Metaphor (loud laughs)*
Hyenas come with merry smiles;
But if they weep they're Crocodiles.

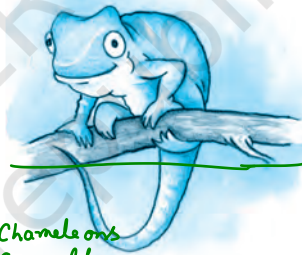


* Juxtaposition

* Irony (identifying crocodiles by tears)

First Flight

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.



Paradox

*Chameleons
* Camouflage
perfectly*

CAROLYN WELLS

* *Misleading*

* *Humorously unreliable advice*

* *ridiculous, non-sensical advice*

* *primarily for entertainment (humor)*

Glossary

ground: background

discern: make out; identify

hide: animal skin

peppered: here, covered with spots

caress: a gentle, loving touch

novice: someone new to a job

(be) nonplus (sed) (usually only in the passive): (be) puzzle(d), confuse(d), surprise(d)

Thinking about the Poem

1. Does 'dyin' really rhyme with 'lion'? Can you say it in such a way that it does?
2. How does the poet suggest that you identify the lion and the tiger? When can you do so, according to him?
3. Do you think the words 'lept' and 'lep' in the third stanza are spelt correctly? Why does the poet spell them like this?
4. Do you know what a 'bearhug' 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)?
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?
6. Can you find other examples of poets taking liberties with language, either in English or in your own language(s)? Can you find examples of humorous poems in your own language(s)?
7. 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.

English is funny, because...

We have noses that run and feet that smell