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The plaint of the camel

→ Theme of the Poem

It is a complaint of a camel. First, it complains about the food given to it by comparing with others. Then, it complains about the place it sleeps. Then it complains about the home given to it. Furthermore, it complains about people riding on it and at last it complains about it looks. This is the very nature of humans, we never learn to appreciate what we have but we will always keep complaining ourselves with others. In this poem, Carroll pays a witty & tribute to the hardworking camel, which lives and works in hot and uncomfortable places like desert.

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The plaint of the camel
Exercise

→ Reading

1) Answer the following questions

1) What are the five things according to the camel with?

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Ans) According to the camel, no one cares about where it rests, eats, lives, how much load it carries or its shape.

2) Which are the things that human beings can help the camel with?

Ans) Human beings can help get the camel better food, more comfortable place to live and rest. They can also help to reduce the load that the camel carries. The look, shape, size and features of the camel can't be changed.

3) How do human beings look after the living arrangements of other animals?

Ans) Human beings let the cats rest on chairs, chickens roost upon rails and kittens stay in warm houses. They build stable for puppies, enclosures for lambs, coops for hens and pens for sheep.

4) Which animals does the camel compare itself to?

Ans) The camel compares itself to canary birds, parrots, poodles, chickens, puppies, sisters, lambs, hens, kittens, pigs, giraffes, oxen, rabbits, foxes, snakes, weasels, alligators and lizards.

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Q) How are the last line of every stanza similar?
What is the meaning of the word 'does' in this context?

Ans) The last line of every stanza are similar as they all begin with 'But' ... and say how no one cares very much about the camel. The last line of each stanza is written the style of 'anything / anyplace / anywhere / any load / any shape does for me'. In all these lines, the camel is saying that no one cares about how it flies, rests or looks. The word 'does' means work here.

B) Think and Answer

1) How does the camel sound - unhappy, grateful, jealous or something else? Could it be proud? Give examples to support your answers.

Ans) The camel may sound unhappy and jealous when it compares itself with other animals and describes how they have better places to live, better things to eat, even better shapes than the camel. It even calls itself a 'poor camel' because it is not cared for in the same way as other animals. The poem is also titled 'The plaint' of the camel.

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However, the camel could also be proud that it can adjust so well to different conditions. No matter what the place, food or load, the camel can take care of itself.

2) What does this poem say about how helpful the camel is to human beings?

Ans) The poem mentions that the camel is sometimes ridden by entire families. This tells us how the camel is useful to human beings. Also, people do not bother much about what the camel eats or where it stays. This tells us that the camel can live and work without any special arrangements. People use camels without having to worry too much about its food or shelter.

➔ Appreciating the poem

1) Which two lines in each stanza have rhyming words within them? What are those rhyming words.

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Ans) The first and third lines of each stanza have rhyming words within them. These are feed/seed, puddles/noodles, aware/chair, able/stable, enclosed/expound, treated/heatd, laugh/giraffe, habit/rabbit, round/ground, alligator/straighter.

2) What makes this poem funny? Would it be funny if it was narrated by a person rather than a camel? Why or why not?

Ans) The fact that the poem is ~~was~~ narrated by a camel makes it funny. The camel compares itself to other animals in a funny way. The poem would not be so funny if it were narrated by a person because even if a person talked about the camel's complaints, they would not be able to talk about it exactly as the camel can. Only the camel can talk about its problems and yet sound funny.