

Macavity: The Mystery Cat

Date

Page

14

INTRODUCTION TO THE POET

Thomas Stearns Eliot (26 September 1888 - 4 January 1965) was a poet, essayist, publisher, playwright, literary critic and editor. Considered one of 20th century major poets, he is a central figure in English-language modernist poetry.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri to a prominent Boston Brahmin family he ~~was~~ moved to England in 1914 at the age of 25 and went on to settle work and marry there. He became a British citizen in 1927 at the age of 39, subsequently renouncing his American citizenship.

Eliot first attracted widespread attention for his poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in 1915, which was received as modernist masterpiece. It was followed by some of the best known poems in English language ~~and~~

"The Waste Land" (1922), "The hollow Men" (1925), "Ash Wednesday" (1930) and "Four Quarters" (1943). He was also known for his seven plays, particularly "Murder in the Cathedral" (1935) and "The Cocktail Party" (1949). He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1948, "for his outstanding pioneer contribution to present-day poetry."

THEME OF THE POEM

Macavity is a mystery cat. He is the master criminal. He can defy and break any law. Even the police force and flying squad of England have failed to arrest him. He gives a slip to them. When the police reach the scene of crime, it is too late. The criminal by that time is gone.

Macavity is matchless in his field. He can do any impossible task. He can disappear. He can break Newton's law of gravity and float in the air without

support. Even the fakir and the magician and surprised to see his feats. He will outwit you. You may look for him in the basement and in the air you will have no access to him.

Macavity is tall and thin cat. His eyes are sunken and his head is lined. His head is round like a dome. His coat is soiled and his hair is in disorder. He moves like a snake. When you think he is sleeping, he is in fact wide awake.

Macavity is a devil in cat's shape. He is morally corrupt. You can meet him in a lane and in open grounds. But you will not find him where the crime has been committed.

Macavity's a mystery cat: he's called
the hidden Paw

For he's the master criminal who can defy
the Law.

He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, The
Flying Squad's despair;

For when they reach the scene of Crime
Macavity's not there.

Context: The poet highlights how Macavity
is responsible for the bewilderment
faced by the police.

Explanation: Macavity is called the myste-
-ry cat. It is believed that he has a
'hidden paw' or a hidden ~~paw~~ foot which
helps him in escaping the crime ~~see~~
scene in no time. He is called master
criminal who has baffled the police
Scotland yard and the Flying Squad.
No matter when the police reaches the
crime scene, Macavity has already fled.

Get Going

A. Let us find the answers from the poem.

1. Which of these names has the speaker not given to Macavity?

a) Hidden Paw

b) ~~Monster of Depravity~~

c) Middle Bone

d) ~~Napoleon of Crime~~

2. Which of these organisations has not ~~space~~ been affected by Macavity?

a) The Secret Service

b) ~~The flying Squad~~

c) The Foreign office

d) ~~The united Nation~~

3. Write a brief description of Macavity based on your understanding of the third stanza.

A) Macavity is a ginger coloured cat. He is very tall and thin. He can be recognised from his eyes which are deeply sunken. He has lines on his forehead, steeped with thoughts. He has a highly domed head his coat is untidy and his whiskers are

uncombed. Macavity moves like a snake and even when he is mistakenly to be asleep he is wide awake.

4. Make a list of the crimes that Macavity has committed.

A) Macavity has looted food from the larder, rifled the jewel case consumed all the milk. He has stifled peking ~~and~~ geese dogs he has broken the greenhouse glass and destroyed the tree lili. Whenever, the foreign office has found that a treaty that has gone astray or the Admiralty has lost some plans and drawings they believed that Macavity is the culprit.

5. Who are Mungojerrie and Griddlebone? How are they related to Macavity?

A) Mungojerrie and Griddlebone are wicked cats but their deceitfulness is ~~not~~ nothing in comparison to Macavity. The poet compares Macavity to Napoleon, who is helped by his agents Mungojerrie and

• Riddlebone in controlling operations.

B1 Why is it useless to investigate Macavity?

A) It is useless to investigate Macavity as he never leaves any evidence at the scene of the crime. It always appears as if he was never present at the scene. Also, he always has spare alibi to prove his innocence.

2. What phrase is repeated in almost every stanza? What is the significance of this repetition?

A) The phrase has been repeated throughout the poem. It signifies Macavity manages to commit crimes everywhere but never leaves any evidence behind.

3. The speaker has exaggerated in some place for effect. Point out a few such instances. Write a line of your own adding to description of Macavity, using the same effect.

A) The speaker has used exaggeration in many places. For example, Macavity can defy the law of gravity as he can move so fast that even the Scotland Yard is not able to catch him. The speaker also mentions that Macavity knows to answer to a question even before one has asked it.

Q1. Why do you think Macavity ~~is~~ steals and commits crimes?

A) I think Macavity intentionally commits the crime. Activities that are regular to him might be considered criminal offence by others as they comprise minor destruction of property or disturbance to people.

2. Do you think the speaker is really talking about a cat in the poem?

A) I don't think the poet is thinking talking about a cat in the poem as the acts presented in the poem are too peculiar

to be termed a criminal offence by a person. The poet makes them offences of an imaginary cat.

P. Sign
K. Swaen