

Chapter Review

- "The Tale of Custard the Dragon" is a humorous ballad by Ogden Nash. It tells the story of Belinda and her pets.
- Belinda lives in a little white house with a little black kitten (Ink), a little grey mouse (Blink), a little yellow dog (Mustard) and a little pet dragon (Custard).
- Belinda, Ink, Blink and Mustard are very brave. Custard is a coward and always cries for a nice safe cage. Everyone laughs at him.
- Custard has big sharp teeth, spikes on top and scales underneath, a mouth like a fireplace, a chimney-like nose and sharp toes like daggers.
- One day a pirate climbs in through the window with a pistol. Belinda cries, Ink and Blink run and hide, and Mustard drops his tail and runs away.
- Custard rushes at the pirate, snorting like an engine, with his tail clashing like iron. He gobbles the pirate up in a single gulp.
- At the end, all are safe. Belinda hugs the dragon, the others are ashamed, but Custard still cries for a safe cage. The brave pets are cowards and the 'coward' is the real hero.

Key Terms

Ballad – A poem that tells a story.

Dungeon – A dark underground prison.

Gaped – Stared with mouth open.

Grog – A strong drink for sailors.

Pirate – A sea robber.

Coward – A person who is easily scared.

Unmerciful – Without mercy.

Dramatic irony – When the outcome is the opposite of what is expected.

Diagrams / Flowcharts

Characters and Names

Pet and Name

- Kitten: Ink
- Mouse: Blink
- Dog: Mustard
- Dragon: Custard
- Girl: Belinda

Nature

- Belinda: brave as a barrel of bears
- Ink, Blink: could chase lions
- Mustard: brave as a tiger in a rage
- Custard: cowardly, wants a cage

Story of the Poem

Belinda and pets live happily



Custard is teased as a coward



Pirate attacks the house



Others run away



Custard eats the pirate and saves all

About the Poet

- Ogden Nash (1902-1971) was an American poet famous for humorous verse with unusual rhymes.

Poetic Devices

- Simile: 'mouth like a fireplace', 'went at the pirate like a robin at a worm', 'snorting like an engine'.
- Repetition: the word 'little' in stanza 1 stresses how small everything is.

- Alliteration: 'clashed his tail', 'clatter and a clank'.
- Poetic licence: 'winda' for window to rhyme with Belinda; 'realio, trulio'.
- Rhyme scheme: aabb. Irony: the coward turns out to be the bravest.

Theme / Message

- Courage is shown in action, not words. The one who is made fun of may be the bravest.
- Don't judge people by their appearance or reputation.

Textbook Exercise Questions

Q.1 Who are the characters? List them with their pet names.

Ans. Belinda (a little girl), a little black kitten (Ink), a little grey mouse (Blink), a little yellow dog (Mustard), a little pet dragon (Custard) and a pirate.

Q.2 Why did Custard cry for a nice safe cage? Why is he called 'cowardly'?

Ans. He was scared easily and wanted safety. Everyone else was brave: Belinda like a barrel full of bears, Ink and Blink could chase lions down the stairs, Mustard like a tiger in a rage. So Custard was called cowardly.

Q.3 "Belinda tickled him, she tickled him unmerciful..." Why?

Ans. Because he was always afraid and cried for a safe cage. They made fun of his cowardice, and tickling was a way of teasing him.

Q.4 List some poetic devices used in the poem.

Ans. Simile ('mouth like a fireplace'), repetition of 'little', incorrect spelling ('winda') for rhyme, alliteration ('clashed his tail', 'clatter and a clank'), and phrases like 'the pirate gaped' and 'gulped some grog'.

Q.5 How does the poet describe the dragon?

Ans. He has big sharp teeth, spikes on top and scales underneath. His mouth is like a fireplace, his nose like a chimney and his toes are sharp like daggers.

Q.6 What is the rhyme scheme of two or three stanzas?

Ans. aabb (couplets).

Q.7 Trace some images used in the poem.

Ans. 'mouth like a fireplace', 'chimney for a nose', 'brave as a barrel full of bears', 'brave as a tiger in a rage', 'went at the pirate like a robin at a worm'.

Q.8 Is the poem serious or light-hearted? Give reasons.

Ans. It is light-hearted and funny. It has a fixed rhyme scheme, wrong spellings for fun, comic descriptions of the pets, and the ironic ending where the cowardly dragon saves everyone and the brave ones run away.

Board Exam Questions (Important)

Q.1 Why is the ending of the poem ironic? (4 lines)

Ans. Everyone laughed at Custard for being a coward, yet when the pirate came the 'brave' ones ran away and Custard alone fought and ate the pirate. The result is the opposite of what is expected.

Q.2 Reference to context: "Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears." (a) What figure of speech is this? (b) What does it show?

Ans. (a) A simile. (b) It shows that Belinda was extremely brave and fearless, which is in contrast to Custard, the coward.

Q.3 Write a character sketch of Custard.

Ans. Custard is a pet dragon with a fearsome look but a timid heart. He is teased by everyone and cries for a safe cage. But in a crisis he shows great bravery and saves the household. He proves that outward show is not courage.

Q.4 Value-based: What does the poem teach us about bravery?

Ans. True bravery appears when needed. We should not laugh at others or judge them, since a shy person may show the greatest courage.

