

Grade VII

Poetry : 1 The Squirrel

Poetry

Soul of the Poem

The Short poem gives a description of the squirrel, its movement, the food it likes, the way it plays and so on.

Stanzawise Explanation of The Poem

Stanza 1

He wore a question mark for tail,
An overcoat of gray,
He sat up straight to eat a nut,
He liked to tease and play.
And if we ran around his tree,
He went the other way

Reference :

The above lines have been taken from Mildred Bowers Armstrong's Composition, " The Squirrel "

Context

In these lines, the poet describes the unique characteristics of the squirrel.

Explanation

The stanza begins with a physical description of the squirrel. The squirrel is grey coloured and therefore the poet says that he wears "an overcoat of gray," his tail is twisted like a question mark. Further, the post describes the food that the squirrel

mostly enjoys. He loves to eat nuts. The poet loves the game of hide and seek between him and the squirrel, the squirrel would go and hide in the other direction.

NCERT Corner

Working with the Poem

1. **Why does the poet say the squirrel “wore a question mark for tail”? Draw a Squirrel, or find a picture of a squirrel sitting on the ground. How would you describe its tail?**

The poet said that the squirrel “wore a question mark for a tail” because its tail is twisted appearing like a question mark

2. **Do we usually say that an animal ‘wears’ a tail ? What do we say? (Think: Does an animal wear a coat? Consult a dictionary if you like, and find out how ‘wear’ is used in different ways.)**

We usually say that an animal ‘has’ a set of given characteristics rather than saying ‘wear’ to indicate the external characteristics of the squirrel. The dictionary meaning of ‘wear’ suggests something of an outer covering, for instance clothes.

3. **“He liked to tease and play”. Who is teasing whom? How?**

The poet liked to tease and play with the squirrel. Whenever the poet went a little close to the squirrel, the squirrel would run away in the other direction.

Chapter Practice

Very Short Answer Type Questions

1. **What is being compared to a gray overcoat?**

The squirrel's body is being compared to a gray overcoat

2. **Discuss the posture of the squirrel as discussed in line 3 of the poem**

The squirrel's 'sat up straight' to eat a nut. Else, the squirrel usually sits and runs with a blended back.

3. What did the squirrel do if someone came too close to his tree?

The squirrel would run away in the opposite direction if someone came too close to his tree.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Having observed the squirrels around us, can we say that a squirrel is a fast paced animal?

Yes, based on our observation of the squirrels around us, we can say that a squirrel is a fast paced animal, We rarely come across squirrels sitting still, except when they are biting into the nuts. Usually we see the squirrels running from one place to another with great energy.

2. What does the poem say about the poet's choice of subject?

The poem is a reflection of the poet's desire to compose poetry on most mundane elements that we come across in our day to day surrounding. A squirrel is the most commonly found animal that we see around us. Yet very few of us would have thought of it as a potent subject matter for a writer's pen. The poet very simplistically discusses the various aspects of the squirrel, which each one of us must have observed closely.

Extract based Questions

Directions (Q.No.s 1- 6) Read the extract given below and answer the following questions

" He liked to tease and play.
And if we ran around his tree,
He went the other way."

1. Give a synonym for 'like' in the context of the poem

Relish

2. Teasing is the poet's way ofwith the squirrel

Playing

3. Use the word, 'run' in a sentence of your own

It is a joy to see children running in various directions while playing in the garden.

4. Choose a befitting adjective to describe the nature of squirrel

- a) Playful
- b) Scornful
- c) Introvert
- d) Jealous

a) Playful

5 Identify the 'he' in the first line

- a) The poet
- b) The squirrel
- c) The onlooker
- d) The gardener

a) The poet

6. Who went the other way?

- a) The poet
- b) The squirrel
- c) The onlooker
- d) The gardener

a) The squirrel



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