

Grade VII

Lesson 9. Garden Snake

POETRY

SOUL OF THE POEM

The poem, 'Garden Snake' is a simplistic description of a harmless snake. The young child narrator encounters a snake in the garden and runs away from it out of fear. However, his mother informs him that certain kinds of snakes are not dangerous at all. They feed merely on insects. The young child narrator loses his fear, thereafter and begins to watch the snake pass through the garden.

STANZAWISE EXPLANATION OF THE POEM

Stanza 1

I saw a snake and ran away...
Some snakes are dangerous, they say;
But mother says that kind is good,
And eats up insects for his food.
So when he wiggles in the grass
I'll stand aside and watch him pass,
And tell myself, "There's no mistake,
It's just a harmless garden snake!"

Reference The above lines have been taken from Muriel L. Sonnet's poem 'Garden Snake.'

Context The poet describes how the child's fear gets replaced and he is able to watch the snake with delight.

Explanation The young child narrator sees a snake and runs away thinking the snake to be dangerous. His mother, however, tells him that some particular kinds of snakes are not dangerous but good. They eat nothing but insects. Thereafter, the narrator no longer afraid used to stand aside and see the snake wiggle in the grass. Every time the narrator sees the garden snake, he reminds himself that there is nothing wrong as this is just a "harmless garden snake."

NCERT Folder

Working with the poem

1. **Answer the following questions.**

(i) **Pick out the line that suggests that the child is afraid of snakes.**

"I saw a snake and ran away."

(ii) **Which line shows a complete change of the child's attitude towards snakes?**

Read it aloud

"I'll stand and watch him pass."

(iii) **"But mother says that kind is good..." What is mother referring to?**

The mother is referring to the garden snake.

2. **Find the word that refers to the snake's movements in the grass.**

Wiggle

3. **There are four pairs of rhyming words in the poem. Say them aloud.**

(a) Good, food (b) Pass, grass (c) Away, say (d) Mistake, snake

4. **A snake has no legs or feet, but it moves very fast. Can you guess how? Discuss in the groups.**

A snake has no legs or feet. It wiggles on the surface.

5. **Can you recall the word used for cobra's long sharp teeth? Where did you come across this word first?**

A cobra's long teeth are called fangs. I first came across this word on National Geographic Channel.



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Chapter Practice

Very short answer type questions

1. Why did the narrator run away seeing the garden snake?

The narrator thought the snake to be dangerous and out of fear ran away.

2. What does a garden snake eat?

A garden snake survives on insects.

Short answer type questions

1. What makes the child comfortable the next time he sees the garden snake?

The first time the child sees the snake, he is overcome with fear.

However, on being told by his mother that this particular snake is not dangerous, the child becomes comfortable the next time he encounters the garden snake.

2. What lesson does the young child narrator learn from his mother?

The young child narrator, in his ignorance, had assumed all kinds of snakes to be dangerous. However, from his mother he learnt that not every kind of snake is dangerous some are, most are not.

This makes him peacefully admire the garden snake whenever he saw it next. Also, the narrator learnt that is important to gather knowledge about any new object or creature one encounters before making one's opinion.

Extract based questions

Directions (Q. Nos. 1-6) Read the extract given below and answer the following questions.

I saw a snake and ran away ____ Some snakes are
dangerous, they say;

But mother says that kind is good,

And eats up insects for his food.



1. Why do you think the child ran away on seeing the snake?

Because the snake is a very dangerous creature and its fear is generally instilled in everybody from his very childhood.

2. What does the child's mother say about snakes?

The child's mother tells him that the kind of the snake that he saw was not so dangerous. It lived on insects only and did not harm others.

3. Is it good play with snakes which are not very dangerous?

No, one should not at all do the courage of playing with the snakes because one cannot recognise which snakes are poisonous and which are not.

4. Why are snakes dangerous, according to you?

- (a) Because they look very dangerous
- (b) Because their venom is poisonous
- (c) Because they make terrible sounds
- (d) Both 'a' and 'b'

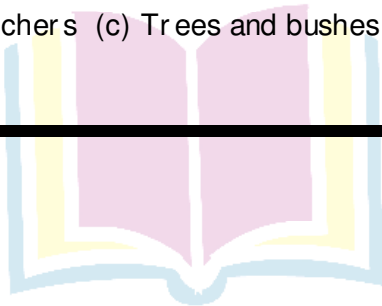
(d) Both 'a' and 'b'

5. Why does the snake kill insects?

- (a) Because he does not like them
 - (b) Because he wants to rule the forest
 - (c) Because he wants to eat them as a food
 - (d) Because he wants to save human beings
- (c) Because he wants to eat them as a food

6. What does the poet refer to as 'they' in the above stanza?

- (a) Snakes (b) Snake catchers (c) Trees and bushes (d) General people
- (d) General people



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