

LPF Reading Exemplar

For a Five-year-old

Task Description

Students read the poem “For a Five-year-old”, which is about the influence of a mother on her child. They then responded to questions related to the poem.

Preparation

Before the reading activity, students discussed the following questions:

- What words can be put after the preposition “for”? What kind of words are they?
- With reference to the title of the poem, who does “a Five-year-old” refer to?
- Who could have written this poem? What could it be about?

Learning Outcomes: ATMs 6-7

ATM 6

Understanding and inferring information, ideas, feelings and opinions in a range of texts with some degree of complexity, using and integrating a range of reading strategies as appropriate

ATM 7

Understanding, inferring and interpreting information, ideas, feelings and opinions in a range of texts with some degree of complexity, using and integrating a range of reading strategies as appropriate

Questions	When students respond to the questions appropriately, they can:				
<p>1. In the form of a table, illustrate the things that the mother says about / did to animals in both stanzas 1 and 2.</p> <table><tr><td><i>Says about animals (Stanza 1)</i></td><td><i>Did to animals (Stanza 2)</i></td></tr><tr><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>to take care of the snail</i>• <i>not to squash the snail</i>• <i>to bring the snail outside carefully</i></td><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>trapped mice</i>• <i>shot wild birds</i>• <i>drowned a kitten</i></td></tr></table>	<i>Says about animals (Stanza 1)</i>	<i>Did to animals (Stanza 2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>to take care of the snail</i>• <i>not to squash the snail</i>• <i>to bring the snail outside carefully</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>trapped mice</i>• <i>shot wild birds</i>• <i>drowned a kitten</i>	<p>ATM 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• compare what the mother says about how animals should be treated and what she did to animals in the poem and present the ideas in the form of a table
<i>Says about animals (Stanza 1)</i>	<i>Did to animals (Stanza 2)</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>to take care of the snail</i>• <i>not to squash the snail</i>• <i>to bring the snail outside carefully</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>trapped mice</i>• <i>shot wild birds</i>• <i>drowned a kitten</i>				
<p>2. Based on your answer to Q.1), what can you tell about the mother?</p> <p><i>(Accept any reasonable answers.)</i> <i>What the mother says contradicts what she did.</i></p>	<p>ATM 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• interpret ideas from the table in Q.1 and draw conclusion that what the mother says contradicts what she did.				

<p>3. Why does the poet present the two sides of the mother?</p> <p><i>(Accept any reasonable answers.)</i> <i>No matter what kind of person the mother is, as a mother, it is important to convey the right message to the child.</i></p>	<p>ATM 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deduce the theme of the poem based on the contradiction between what the mother says about how animals should be treated and what she did to animals.
<p>4. By using the word “moulded”, what does the poet want to say about the child’s ‘gentleness’? Fill in the blank with ONE word.</p> <p><i>(Accept any reasonable answers.)</i> The child’s gentleness can be <u>developed</u>.</p>	<p>ATM 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work out the meaning of the figurative use of the word “moulded” by using <ul style="list-style-type: none"> syntactic clues, e.g. the passive construction indicates that ‘words’ can influence a child’s gentleness and that the influence occurs over a period of time semantic clues, e.g. the word ‘moulded’ comes from the noun “mould”, which means a hollow container used for shaping purposes
<p>5. In your own words, explain what this poem might say about the job of bringing up children?</p> <p><i>(Accept any reasonable answers.)</i> <i>It should be taken very seriously as it is parents’ responsibility to teach their child the right things and to mould them.</i></p>	<p>ATM 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse the poem for the theme by reviewing what the mother says about animals should be treated and what she did to them, and the intention behind
<p>6. What possibly explain the reason for the use of the pronoun ‘we’ in Line 5 and the last line of the poem?</p> <p><i>(Accept any reasonable answers.)</i> <i>The mother acts as a role model for the child to follow and they are doing the same things.</i></p>	<p>ATM 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the use of the pronoun ‘we’ in the poem to show the close relationship between the mother and the child

Text

For a Five-year-old

Fleur Adcock

A snail is climbing up the window-sill 1
Into your room, after a night of rain.
You call me in to see, and I explain
That it would be unkind to leave it there:
It might crawl to the floor; we must take care 5
That no one squashes it. You understand,
And carry it outside, with careful hand,
To eat a daffodil.

I see, then, that a kind of faith prevails:
Your gentleness is moulded still by words 10
From me, who have trapped mice and shot wild birds,
From me, who drowned your kittens, who betrayed
Your closest relatives, and who purveyed¹
The hardest kind of truth to many another,
But that is how things are: I am your mother 15
And we are kind to snails.

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(Permission to use the poem “For a Five-year-old ” by Fleur Adcock was given by Bloodaxe Books.)

¹ “Purvey” means tell