

The Tale of Custard the Dragon by Ogden Nash(Handout)

Themes of The Tale of Custard the Dragon :

Do not judge a book by its cover: Custard is always mocked for being cowardly, whereas the others are quite brave. However, when a pirate breaks into Belinda's house, she and Ink and Blink and Mustard are all very frightened. It is Custard who charges at the pirate and eats him alive all at once. The one who had seemed to be the biggest coward is the one who saves the day in the end. On the other hand, the pirate had been full of bravado when he was entering the house, but he loses all of that as soon as he sees Custard approaching him. He can only stare at Custard and have a drink to prepare himself for the unavoidable fate of being gobbled up. Thus, neither Custard nor the pirate are what they seem to be. **Therefore, we should never judge someone without fully getting to know them.** When the situation demands it, they are bound to show their true colours and these may surprise us.

The Tale of Custard the Dragon Summary by Ogden Nash

The poem consists of 14 stanzas. Each of these stanzas is again made up of 4 lines. Hence, the entire poem consists of 56 lines in total.

1st stanza:

*Belinda lived in a little white house,
With a little black kitten and a little grey mouse,
And a little yellow dog and a little red wagon,
And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon.*

In this stanza, a little girl Belinda lives with her pets in a white house. These pets are a black kitten, a grey mouse, a yellow dog and a dragon. They all use a red wagon when they want to go out somewhere.

2nd stanza:

*Now the name of the little black kitten was Ink,
And the little grey mouse, she called her Blink,
And the little yellow dog was sharp as Mustard,
But the dragon was a coward, and she called him Custard.*

In this stanza, The name of the kitten is Ink because the colour of the kitten is black like ink, the name of the mouse is Blink because the mouse is tiny (*very small*), the name of the dog is Mustard because the dog colour is yellow like mustard, and the name of the dragon is Custard because the dragon is coward and sweet like custard (*a sweet dish*).



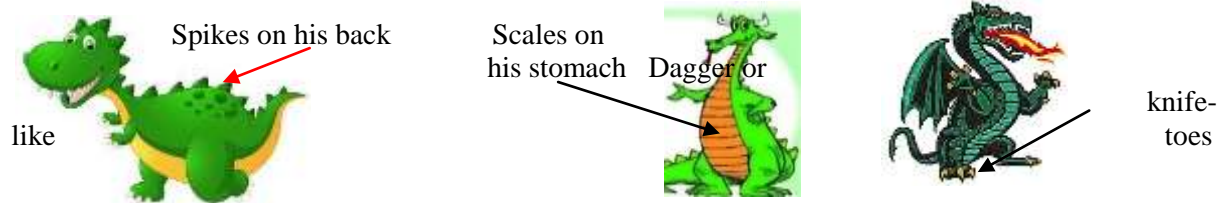
3rd stanza:

*Custard the dragon had big sharp teeth,
And spikes on top of him and scales underneath,
Mouth like a fireplace, chimney for a nose, And
realio, trulio, daggers on his toes.*



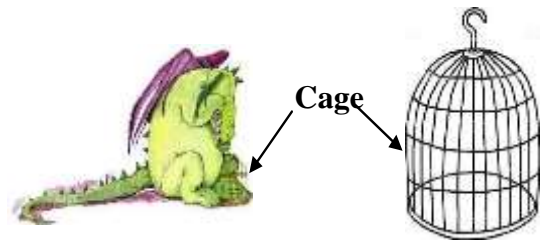
In this stanza, we see that Custard is a big dragon.

Custard has big sharp teeth, spikes on his back, scales on his stomach and dagger-like toes. Custard can also give out fire from his mouth.



4th stanza:

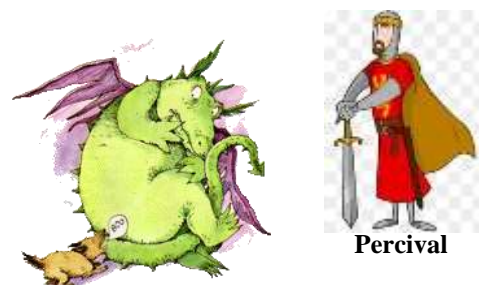
*Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears,
And Ink and Blink chased lions down the stairs,
Mustard was as brave as a tiger in a rage,
But Custard cried for a nice safe cage.*



In this stanza, we are told that Belinda, Ink, Blink and Mustard were all brave, even though they were much smaller in size than Custard, but Custard was so cowardly that he always wanted to hide in cage to be safe.

5th stanza:

*Belinda tickled him, she tickled him unmerciful,
Ink, Blink and Mustard, they rudely called him
Percival, They all sat laughing in the little red
wagon At the realio, trulio, cowardly dragon.*



In this stanza, Belinda and all the pets made fun of coward Custard. Belinda tickled him. Blink and Mustard mocked Custard and called him the brave knight Percival (Blink and Mustard ironically compared Custard with the brave knight called Percival, who had been in the service of King Arthur to show him how unlike Percival he really was)

6th stanza:

*Belinda giggled till she shook the house,
And Blink said Week!, which is giggling for a mouse,*



*Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age,
When Custard cried for a nice safe cage.*

In this stanza, when Custard wanted to be put in a cage because of fear, Belinda and Blink laughed so much at him. Ink and Mustard asked him his age because like a child he was scared of every little thing.

7th stanza:

*Suddenly, suddenly they heard a nasty sound,
And Mustard growled, and they all looked
around. Meowch! cried Ink, and Ooh! cried
Belinda, For there was a pirate, climbing in the
winda.*



pirate

In this stanza, suddenly, Belinda and her pets heard an unpleasant sound and were scared. Mustard started growling. Ink and Belinda cried out in fear, and finally they saw that a pirate was climbing into their house through a window.

8th stanza:

*Pistol in his left hand, pistol in his right,
And he held in his teeth a cutlass bright,
His beard was black, one leg was wood;
It was clear that the pirate meant no
good.*



cutlass

In this stanza, we see that the pirate had one pistol in left hand and one pistol in his right hand and a cutlass, (a small sword) between his teeth. He also had a beard and a wooden leg. It was clear that the pirate was dangerous

9th stanza:

*Belinda paled, and she cried, Help! Help!
But Mustard fled with a terrified yelp,
Ink trickled down to the bottom of the household, And
little mouse Blink strategically mouseholed.*



In this stanza, we see that Belinda became pale with fear. She started to cry for help, Mustard ran away in fear, Ink hid in the basement, and Blink went into his mouse hole.

10th stanza:

*But up jumped Custard, snorting like an engine,
Clashed his tail like irons in a dungeon,
With a clatter and a clank and a jangling squirm
He went at the pirate like a robin at a worm.*



In this stanza, we are told that Custard surprised everyone with his actions. He jumped up and started snorting in anger like an engine. Then Custard beat his tail against the floor, and that made the sound like the metal chains in a dungeon being clashed against one another. Finally, he ran towards the pirate and attacked him in the same way that a robin bird pounces on a worm.

Dungeon



Robin



11th stanza:

*The pirate gaped at Belinda's dragon,
And gulped some grog from his pocket flagon,
He fired two bullets but they didn't hit, And
Custard gobbled him, every bit.*

In this stanza, the pirate reacted to Custard. He stared at Custard, the dragon, helplessly and drank alcohol from his flagon. He fired two bullets at Custard with his pistol but missed. Finally, Custard ate him up in one bite.



flagon

12th stanza:

*Belinda embraced him, Mustard licked him,
No one mourned for his pirate victim
Ink and Blink in glee did gyrate Around
the dragon that ate the pyrate.*



In this stanza, Belinda hug Custard and Mustard licked him. So both Belinda and Mustard

appreciated Custard. Nobody was sad for the pirate who had been eaten. Instead, Ink and Blink started dancing in a happy mood around Custard.

13th stanza:

*Belinda still lives in her little white house,
With her little black kitten and her little grey mouse,
And her little yellow dog and her little red wagon,
And her realio, trulio, little pet dragon.*



In this stanza, we are told that everything has gone back to normal again. Belinda is living once again in peace with her pets in her white house.



14th stanza:

*Belinda is as brave as a barrel full of bears,
And Ink and Blink chase lions down the
stairs, Mustard is as brave as a tiger in a rage,
But Custard keeps crying for a nice safe cage.*



In this stanza, we are told that Belinda, Ink, Blink and Mustard are still brave despite knowing that the pirate could have easily killed them all. On the other hand, Custard is still a coward and still longs for a safe cage.

a barrel full of bears = A person without fear

Literary Devices:

Rhyme scheme: aabb (house-mouse, wagon-dragon) (ink-blink, mustard-custard)
(teeth-underneath, nose-toes) (bears-stairs, rage-cage)

Repetition: use of the word 'little', Custard cried for a nice safe cage

oxymoron: use of two words with opposite meanings ' "pet dragon"

Anaphora: repeated use of word at the start of two consecutive lines. (And a little
....And a realio) (And the little grey...And the little yellow)

Refrain: Repetition of a sentence again and again (And a realio, trulio,)

poetic license: realio, trulio for real, true. The spellings have been changed to create a musical effect, window is written as 'winda' to create rhyme.

Simile: dog compared to mustard "And the little yellow dog was sharp as Mustard,"
Dragon's mouth is compared with fireplace (mouth like a fireplace), Belinda's bravery is compared to that of a barrel full of bears (as a barrel full of bears), Mustard's

bravery is compared to that of an angry tiger (Mustard was as brave as a tiger in a rage)

Alliteration: “coward, and she called him Custard” - “c” sound

Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears “b” sound is repeated

beard was black “b”, he held his “h”

Metaphor: “chimney for a nose”. The nose is like a chimney.

Assonance: use of vowel sound ‘a’ (Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears)

Allusion: reference to any person or place (Percival)

Personification: Ink, Blink and Mustard, they rudely called him Percival

Onomatopoeia: usage of sound words to create a dramatic effect (giggled, weeck), (Mustard growled, Meowch, cried ink), (clatter, clank, jangling)

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