

Beehive (Poem- 9): - The Snake Trying (IX)

- W.W.E. ROSS (1894 - 1966)

INTRODUCTION

A very short and simple poem, 'The Snake Trying', from your textbook 'Beehive' has been written by **W.W.E Ross**. You may refer to **slide no. 2** for more details on his life and works.

The poem is very simple and silly but conveys a deep message to the readers. In the poem the poet is trying to say that all snakes are not poisonous; some of them are quite harmless; they will not come by themselves to you to bite you. If they are undisturbed snakes will not bite us; they bite us only in self-protection. They are poor creature like any other creatures.

On the other hand, human is always driven by his instinctual fear of snake and runs after any snake in his sight to kill it. Man thinks that snake means danger/life-threat, and so it has to be killed by at any cost. But that is not true.

Therefore, the poet, through this poem is trying to convey a message that all snakes are not poisonous; they will not bite us unless and until harmed or disturbed. If at all they bite us, they will do so only in self-defense. But, most of them are non-poisonous.

However, there are some poisonous snakes which bite humans and other animals on being harmed/disturbed and lives are lost. You may look at the **slide number - 3** and identify some of the poisonous and non-poisonous snakes.

EXPLANATION OF THE POEM

The snake trying

to escape the pursuing stick,

with sudden curvings of thin

long body. How beautiful

and graceful are his shapes!

*He glides through the water away
from the stroke.*

Explanation - In the first six lines, the poet says that a snake - a harmless green - coloured snake tries to escape from a man with a stick, who is chasing it to kill it. The snake, in order to escape, makes sudden curves in its body and moves quickly. This movement creates beautiful and graceful shapes and this fascinates the poet. Moreover, the snake moves through the water in order to save itself from the hit.

There is a phrase ‘**pursuing stick**’ in line two. What does that mean? **Pursuing stick** – Can a stick pursue/chase a snake? No. So, here a literary device called ‘**Transferred epithet**’ is used to give effect to the poem. Pursuing is an adjective used before a noun ‘stick’, but it is not used for ‘stick’ here. But, it is referring to ‘**a man** who is holding a stick’. For better understanding of it, you may refer to **slide no. 6**

*O let him go
over the water
into the reeds to hide
without hurt. Small and green
he is harmless even to children.*

Explanation - In these five lines, when the snake is already moving through the water in order to save itself, the poet seems to be pleading the man chasing the snake, not to harm it and let it escape and hide behind the thick marshy plants because this small green-coloured snake is harmless to everyone, even to children.

Alliteration – A literary device where there is a repetition of a consonant sound into a more closely placed words. Eg. **he is harmless...**

*Along the sand
he lay until observed
and chased away, and now
he vanishes in the ripples
among the green slim reeds.*

Explanation - In the last part of the poem the poet says that until the snake was spotted and chased away by the person holding a stick, it lay quietly in the sand. But, now when the pursuer is behind it, in order to save itself, the snake disappears in the ripples of the water and hides in the camouflaging green bushes of the thin marshy plants.

CONCLUSION

The poet, W.W.E Ross, through the poem ‘The Snake Trying’ reflects the evil tendency of human beings to hurt creatures that are harmless and innocent. Thus, human must think before hurting any creature.

VOCABULARY

Pursuing- Chasing, following

Curvings- Twisting/bends

Graceful - attractive

Stroke - hit with a stick

Glides- Moves

Reeds- Water or marsh plants with thick stems

Ripples – A small wave on the surface of water

Vanishes- Disappears
