



CLASS – 10

ENGLISH

First Flight

Poem : The Tale of Custard the Dragon

Part – 1

Explanation

Komal Jetwani

1. The Dragon: Custard

2. People's Perception on His Appearance

3. His Unexpected Heroism

Ballad → poem
↓
folklore
↓
narrative
story





Ogden Nash wrote over four hundred pieces of comic verse. The best of his work was published in 14 volumes between 1931⁴¹ and 1972. His work is perhaps best described in this poetic tribute by Anthony Burgess.

SETTING

Belinda The setting of The Tale of Custard the
Ink (cat) Dragon is a cozy, domestic home where
Blink (mouse) Belinda lives with her pets. The poem
mentions things like a little white house,
Mustard (dog) realio trulio little pet dragon, and
Custard (dragon) household animals like a kitten, mouse,
and dog, which create a safe and
familiar environment.

This ordinary setting contrasts humorously with the sudden arrival of a pirate and a brave battle, adding to the poem's whimsical and ironic tone.

mg

unconventional

1. pet dragon
2. sudden arrival of pirate

THEME

Custard
↓
Cowardly

The theme of The Tale of Custard the Dragon revolves around the true meaning of bravery and the irony of appearances. While Belinda and her pets boast about their courage, they all run away in fear when real danger arrives.

It is Custard, the timid and often mocked dragon, who bravely fights and defeats the pirate. This highlights that true courage lies not in words or appearances but in actions. The poem humorously shows that those who appear bold may falter, while the quiet and humble may turn out to be the real heroes.

TONE

emotion
The tone of The Tale of Custard the Dragon is light-hearted, humorous, and ironic. Ogden Nash uses playful language and a sing-song rhyme scheme to create a fun, almost childlike mood.

At the same time, the poet employs irony to gently mock the boastful characters and highlight the unexpected bravery of Custard. The poem maintains a whimsical and entertaining tone while delivering a subtle message about true courage.

playful

BEFORE YOU READ

This poem ^{moral} is written in the style of a ballad - a song or poem that tells a story.

You must be familiar with ballads that narrate tales of courage or heroism. This poem is a humor-ous ballad close to a parody.

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,

poetic licence

And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

realio : really

trulio : truly

wagon : cart

Now the name of the little black kitten

was Ink, *black*

And the little grey mouse, she called him

Blink, *movement*

And the little yellow dog was sharp as

Mustard, *yellow*

But the dragon was a coward and she

called him Custard.



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.

scales underneath : body scales

daggers

sharp knife



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.

rage : anger

cage : cell

Belinda tickled him, she tickled him

Percival unmerciful, (dragon hurt)

↓
King Arthur
(Knight)

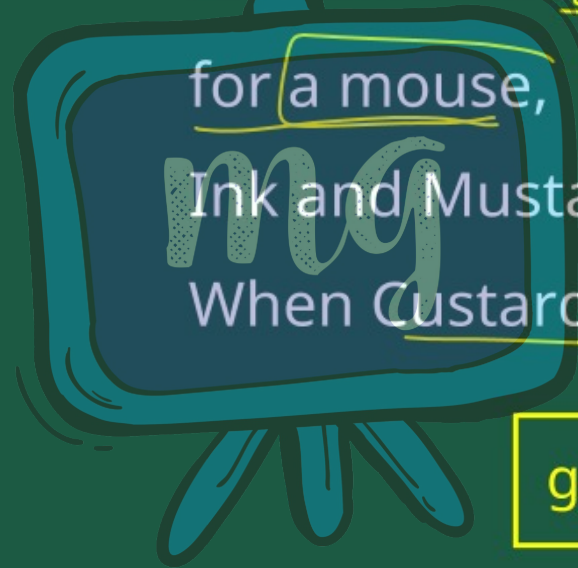
Ink, Blink and Mustard, they rudely called
him Percival → *verbal irony*

They all sat laughing in the little red
wagon B | B | M

At the realio, trulio, cowardly dragon.

- unmerciful : without mercy
- cowardly : without courage

Belinda giggled till she shook the house,
And Blink said Weeek! which is giggling
for a mouse,
Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age,
When Custard cried for a nice safe cage.



giggle : laugh

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.

nasty : very bad

growled : to make sound in anger

pirate : sea raider

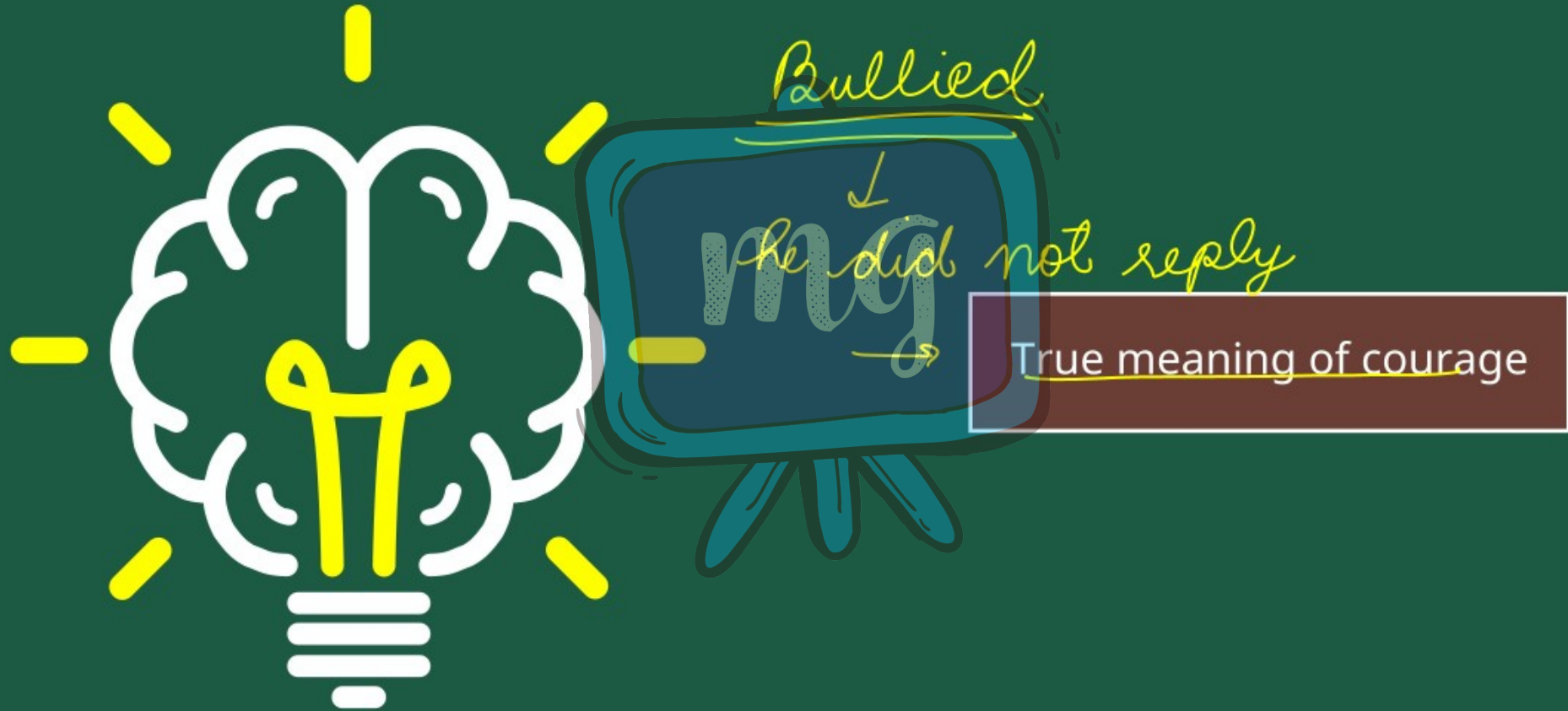


Pistol in his left hand, pistol in his right,
And he held in his teeth a **cutlass** bright,
His beard was black, one leg was wood;

It was clear that the pirate meant no
good.

cutlass : small sword

LEARNING OUTCOME



1

Which of Belinda's pets always sought a safe cage?

A

~~Ink~~

B

~~Blink~~

C

~~Mustard~~

D

Custard



2

Who was Blink?

movement

A

~~Kitten~~

B

Mouse

C

Dog

D

Dragon