Chapter 5: The Bear Story

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Exercise 5.1 — Answer the following questions

Q1 Where did the lady find the bear cub? How did she bring it up?

SOLUTION

The lady found the bear cub in the big forest near her manor-house.
It was half dead of hunger, so small and helpless.
She and the old cook brought it up on the bottle — hand-feeding it like an infant — until it grew into a large, strong bear.

Answer: The lady found the bear cub in the forest near her manor-house, half dead of hunger and very small. She and the old cook brought it up on the bottle.

Q2 The bear grew up but "he was a most amiable bear". Give three examples to prove this.

SOLUTION

The text provides many examples of the bear's gentle, friendly nature:
1. The three dogs played all sorts of games with him — pulling his ears and his stump of a tail — and he did not mind it in the least.
2. The children used to ride on his back and had more than once been found asleep in his kennel between his two paws.
3. The three mountain ponies in the stable knew him well and did not mind at all when he shuffled in with his mistress.

Answer: Three examples: (i) He let the dogs pull his ears and tail without minding. (ii) Children rode on his back and even slept in his kennel between his paws. (iii) The stable ponies were not afraid of him and let him walk in with his mistress.

Q3 What did the bear eat? There were two things he was not allowed to do. What were they?

SOLUTION

The bear ate the same food as the dogs and often from the same plate: bread, porridge, potato, cabbage, and turnip. He also loved fruit, especially apples.
Two things he was not allowed to do:
1. He was not allowed to climb the apple trees to help himself to apples.
2. He was not allowed to raid the beehives (he had been punished with two days on the chain and a bleeding nose for this).

Answer: He ate bread, porridge, potato, cabbage, and turnip — the same food as the dogs. He was not allowed to climb the apple trees to take apples, and he was not allowed to raid the beehives.

Q4 When was the bear tied up with a chain? Why?

SOLUTION

The bear was chained at night, every night, because a bear (like a dog) is apt to become ill-tempered if kept on the chain, so it was safer to restrict him only when necessary.

He was also chained on Sundays when his mistress went to visit her married sister who lived on the other side of the mountain-lake.

The reason on Sundays was that the forest had many temptations for him and it was not thought good for him to wander there freely. He was also a bad sailor and had once upset the boat during a gust of wind.

Answer: The bear was chained at night (as a precaution, since bears become ill-tempered on a chain) and on Sundays when his mistress visited her sister, to keep him from wandering through the temptation-filled forest and because he was a bad sailor who had once upset the boat.

Q5 What happened one Sunday when the lady was going to her sister's house? What did the lady do? What was the bear's reaction?

SOLUTION

One Sunday, when the lady was about halfway through the forest, she heard a branch crack behind her and turned to see the bear following her at full speed. He had broken free from his chain.

The lady was very angry. She scolded him severely and told him in her sternest voice to go back at once, threatening him with her parasol. When he did not obey, she hit him hard on the nose with the parasol, breaking it in two.

The bear stopped, shook his head, and opened his big mouth several times as if trying to say something. Then he turned around and shuffled back the way he had come, stopping occasionally to look back at the lady until she lost sight of him.

Answer: The bear had broken his chain and followed the lady through the forest. She scolded him, threatened him with her parasol, and hit him on the nose so hard the parasol broke in two. The bear stopped, shook his head, then turned and shuffled back home, pausing to look at her until she lost sight of him.

Q6 Why was the bear looking sorry for himself in the evening? Why did the cook get angry with her mistress?

SOLUTION

When the lady came home in the evening, the bear was sitting outside his kennel looking very sorry for himself because he had been scolded and hit by his mistress.

The cook got angry because she knew the bear had stayed chained and well-behaved the whole day — 'as good as gold', sitting quietly on his haunches looking towards the gate waiting for the mistress to return.

This reveals the twist: the bear that followed the lady in the forest was NOT her pet bear but a wild bear from the forest. Her own bear had been obediently on his chain all along.

Answer: The bear was looking sorry because he had been hit and scolded. The cook got angry because she knew the pet bear had been chained and perfectly well-behaved all day — he had never left his kennel. The bear in the forest was a different, wild bear.

Exercise 5.2 — Discuss the following topics in groups

Q1 Most people keep dogs and cats as pets. Can you think of some unusual pets that people keep?

SOLUTION

This is a discussion topic; the story itself shows that a bear can be an unusual but affectionate pet.

Other examples of unusual pets people keep include parrots, rabbits, turtles, snakes, hedgehogs, and even small monkeys.

What makes a pet suitable is its ability to live safely alongside humans and form a bond of trust, as the bear in the story did.

Answer: Unusual pets people keep include parrots, rabbits, turtles, snakes, hedgehogs, and monkeys. The story itself shows that a bear can be a gentle, loving pet when raised carefully from infancy, as long as it is treated with patience and affection.

Q2 The second bear did not attack the lady because he was afraid of her. Do you agree?

SOLUTION

The story does not clearly explain why the wild bear did not attack the lady.

One view is that the bear was indeed startled or scared off by the lady's angry voice and the hard blow on his nose — he opened his mouth as if to respond, then retreated.

Another view is that the wild bear, not being her pet, had no intention of harm; he may have simply been following her out of curiosity, and when she hit him he chose to move away rather than fight.

The blow on his nose (a sensitive spot for bears) would have been enough to deter him.

Answer: Possibly. The wild bear may have been startled by the lady's fierce scolding and the sharp blow on his nose. A bear's nose is very sensitive, so the pain could have driven him away. He also may have followed her out of curiosity, not aggression, and chose to retreat once she resisted.