

UNIT 4

The Spider and the Fly

Mary Howitt (1799 - 1888)

Students Learning Outcomes:

On the completion of this unit, the students will be able to:

- skim text to infer theme / main idea.
- comprehend text by applying critical thinking.
- recognize genres of literature e.g. poetry etc.
- recognize personification and alliteration.
- write an extended narrative incident.
- illustrate the use of gerund and gerund phrases.
- create and deliver group / class presentation.

Pre-reading:

- Do you like flattery?
- What are the drawbacks of flattery?

“Will you walk into my parlour?” said the spider to the fly,
“Tis the prettiest little parlour that ever you did spy.
The way into my parlour is up a winding stair,
And I’ve a many pretty things to show when you are there.”
“Oh no, no,” said the little fly, “to ask me is in vain,
For who goes up your winding stair can ne’er come down again.”

“I’m sure you must be weary, dear, with soaring up so high;
Will you rest upon my little bed?” said the spider to the fly.
“There are pretty curtains drawn around/ the sheets are fine and thin,
And if you like to rest awhile, I’ll snugly tuck you in.”
“Oh no, no,” said the little fly, “for I’ve often heard it said,
They never, never wake again, who sleep upon your bed.”

Said the cunning spider to the fly, “Dear friend what shall I do,
To prove the warm affection I’ve always felt for you?”

I have within my pantry, good store of all that's nice;
I'm sure you're very welcome; will you please to take a slice?"
"Oh no, no," said the little fly, "kind Sir, that cannot be,
I've heard what's in your pantry, and I do not wish to see."
"Sweet creature!" said the Spider, "you're witty and you're wise!
How handsome are your gauzy wings, how brilliant are your eyes!
I've a little looking-glass upon my parlour shelf,
If you'll step in one moment, dear, you shall behold yourself."
"I thank you, gentle sir," she said, "for what you're pleased to say,
And bidding you good morning now, I'll call another day."

The spider turned him round about, and went into his den,
For well he knew the silly fly would soon come back again:
So he wove a subtle web, in a little corner sly,
And set his table ready to dine upon the fly.
Then he came out to his door again, and merrily did sing,
"Come hither, hither, pretty fly, with the pearl and silver wing:
Your robes are green and purple; there's a crest upon your head;
Your eyes are like the diamond bright, but mine are dull as lead."

Alas, alas! how very soon this silly little fly,
Hearing his wily flattering words, came slowly flitting by;
With buzzing wings she hung aloft, then near and nearer drew,
Thinking only of her brilliant eyes, and green and purple hue --
Thinking only of her crested head -- poor foolish thing! At last,
Up jumped the cunning spider, and fiercely held her fast.
He dragged her up his winding stair, into his dismal den,
Within his little parlour -- but she ne'er came out again!

And now, dear little children, who may this story read,
To idle, silly, flattering words, I pray you ne'er give heed:

Unto an evil counselor close heart, and ear, and eye,
And take a lesson from this tale of the Spider and the Fly.



About the Poetess

Mary Howitt (1799 - 1888)

She was an English poetess, quaker and reformer. Her father, Samuel Botham was quaker and surveyor. She was tutored at home. Although Mary Howitt was famous for writing the "Spider and the Fly", she was also reputed to have written the poem. "Hush a bye Baby" better known now as a Nursery Rhyme for children.

Reading and Thinking Skills

1. Answer the following questions.

- i) Who are the characters of the poem?
- ii) Whom is the spider inviting to be a guest?
- iii) What is the reply of the fly in the beginning?
- iv) Why does the fly not want to be the guest of spider?
- v) Which things are worth seeing in the house of the spider?
- vi) What kind of curtains is drawn in the house of spider?
- vii) What happened if any one slept on the soft beds?
- viii) How did the spider trap the clever fly at last?
- ix) What are the people betrayed by in the world?
- x) What did the spider do with the fly when it entered the spider's home?

2. Choose the correct answer.

- i) If you decide to step in,
 - a) a winding stair is before you.
 - b) a lift is before you.
 - c) a rope is before you.
 - d) an iron rod is before you.

- ii) The fly said to the spider,
 - a) I do not wish to see your pantry.
 - b) I wish to see your pantry.
 - c) I desire to see your home.
 - d) I want to see you.
- iii) The spider said,
 - a) "You have ugly eyes."
 - b) "You have brown eyes."
 - c) "You have brilliant eyes."
 - d) "You do not have brilliant eyes."
- iv) At last the fly was,
 - a) invited by the spider.
 - b) entertained by the spider.
 - c) trapped by the spider
 - d) spared by the spider.
- v) The spider only wanted to,
 - a) entertain the fly
 - b) eat the fly
 - c) catch the fly
 - d) see the fly

3. Mark the sentences as true or false.

- i) The poem is about a spider and a fly.
- ii) The spider is trying to trap the fly.
- iii) The fly is easily trapped by the spider.
- iv) Whoever climbed the spider's net, could easily come out.
- v) "Resting for a while in spider's house would not harm the fly", said the spider.
- vi) Many people are trapped by flattery in the world.
- vii) There are soft beds in spider's pantry.
- viii) The fly was easily trapped with flattery by the spider.

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- ix) When the fly got close, the spider left it.
x) The spider at last got a good meal.

Genres and Conventions

Genre means a type of art, literature, or music characterized by a specific form, content and style. In other words, we can say, genres of literature mean different text types.

Genre can be categorised as:

- 1- **Fiction:** Drama, fable, fairytales, short stories, legends, poetry and science fiction.
- 2- **Non-fiction:** Autobiographies, biographies, essays informational texts, narrative non-fiction and speech.

Literary Conventions

Conventions are linguistic and non-linguistic features that identify a certain genre. Genres are identified by their own conventions. Each genre has specific conventions that identify it and make it unique in delivering its message.

The following are important features of a poem.

Poem	
Experiences	The author's life, thoughts and feelings.
Images	Words that make pictures in your mind.
Structure	Sections called “stanzas”, stanzas are not always complete sentences.

Personification

Personification is a literary technique in which human qualities or activities are given to an object or animal. It is a literary tool that adds interest and fun to a poem or story. When writers bring a non-human object to life, it can help us understand better what they are trying to say.

For example: Marry Hewitt has mentioned spider and fly as they are talking to each other like human beings.

Alliteration

It is a figure of speech and a stylistic literary device, which occurs when words that start with the same sound are used close together in a phrase or sentence.

For example: “oh, no, no”, said the little fly.
“They never, never wake again.”

Activity

Work in groups of five to ten. Analyze and discuss the genre (Poetry), its conventions (format, style and expression) with reference to the above details, and also analyze the poem “The Spider and the Fly” in terms of personification.

Critical Thinking

Why can people be easily trapped with flattery in the world?

Writing Skills

Narrative Essay

A narrative essay is one that tells a story. It can be first person (I, we), second person (you) or third person (he, she, it) narrative. The author uses sensory details and description in the narrative essay. It captures the reader's imagination by creating imaginary scenes. The reader feels as if he / she were present in the story.

Activity

Read the poem “The Spider and the Fly” and write it in the form of a narrative essay.

(Note: Use third person pronouns)

Research Project and Class Presentation

Work in groups of five to ten students.

Read some poems of Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal. Write down their main ideas and find out universal themes in them. Prepare a class presentation and present it in the class.

Grammar

Gerund

Gerund is the –ing form (base form + ing) of a verb, works as a noun.

The uses of gerund are:

i) As a subject:

Example: Teaching is a good profession.

ii) As an object of verbs and prepositions.

Examples: i) He enjoys doing his homework.

ii) She was worried about missing her test.

iii) As subject complements

Examples: i) My hobby is reading storybooks.

ii) His problem is not coming to office on time.

Gerund Phrase: A gerund phrase is an –ing form of a verb including other modifiers and / or objects and functions as a noun.

Examples:

i) Blowing bubbles on a windy day is a great fun for children. (as a subject)

ii) The kids were excited about eating birthday cake. (as an object of preposition)

iii) My ambition is taking part in a debate contest. (as a complement)

Activity

Use the following gerunds and gerund phrases in your sentences.

taking exams, breathing loudly, parking the car, playing, cooking, helping the needy people, borrowing, taking exercise, going for a morning walk, eating hurriedly.