

POEM

MACAVITY: THE MYSTERY CAT



ABOUT THE POET

Thomas Stearns Eliot OM was an American-British poet, essayist, publisher, playwright, literary critic and editor. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, to a prominent Boston Brahmin family, he moved to England in 1914 at the age of 25 and went on to settle, work and marry there.

Born: 26 September 1888, [St. Louis, Missouri, United States](#)

Died: 4 January 1965, [Kensington](#)

Poems

The Waste Land

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

The Hollow Men

Preludes

SUMMARY

Macavity is a mystery cat because no crime agency was ever able to arrest this criminal mastermind during or after his a crime. He is too clever and does not leave any evidence of his crime. He is a puzzle for every detective agency in the world including Scotland Yard. Whenever the police reach the scene of crime-Macavity is not found there. Macavity is too clever and he is nowhere near at the crime spot. Not only does he breaks the human law but also breaks the law of gravity. His brows are deep lining as a result of continuous planning of crime. Macavity has deep set eyes and his head is like a dome. He never combs his whiskers. His head movements resemble that of a snake. When you think he is sleeping, he is wide awake in fact. Macavity is a devil in cat's shape. He is morally corrupt. You may meet and see him everywhere. But whenever his crime is discovered you will not find him there also there is no clue of him. These agencies never found any sign of Macavity. Therefore, he outwitted the world's top investigation agencies.

Terms and Meanings from Chapter

- Defy – Disobey
- Bafflement – To confuse
- Scotland Yard - the headquarters of the London police force
- Flying Squad - a group of police or soldiers ready to move into action quickly
- Levitation - floating in the air without support
- Fiend – Devil
- Feline – a cat

- Depravity – moral corruption

Page No: 51

Working with Poem

1. Read the first stanza and think.

(i) Is Macavity a cat really?

(ii) If not, who can Macavity be?

Answer (i) No, Macavity is not a cat really.

(ii) Macavity is just a fictional character created by the poet whose actions resemble those of criminal.

2. Complete the following sentences.

Answer

(i) A master criminal is one who can defy the law.

(ii) The Scotland Yard is baffled because whenever they reach the scene of crime, they cannot catch Macavity.

(iii) The Flying Squad is in despair because Macavity moves much faster than them.

3. "A cat, I am sure, could walk on a cloud without coming through".
(Jules Verne)

Which law is Macavity breaking in the light of the comment above?

Answer In the light of the above comment, Macavity is breaking the law of gravity.

4. Read stanza 3, and then, describe Macavity in two or three sentences of your own.

Answer Macavity is a ginger cat who is very tall and thin with sunken eyes and brow deeply lined with thoughts. While its head is highly domed, its coat is dusty and whiskers are uncombed. It sways its head from side to side like a snake. He is too much alert.

5. Say 'false' or 'True'.

- (i) Macavity is not an ordinary cat.
- (ii) Macavity cannot do what a fakir can easily do.
- (iii) Macavity has supernatural powers.
- (iv) Macavity is well-dressed, smart and bright.
- (v) Macavity is a spy, a trickster and a criminal, all rolled in one.

Answer

(i) True

(ii) False

(iii) True

(iv) False

(v) True

6. Having read the poem, try to guess whether the poet is fond of cats. If so, why does he call Macavity a fiend and monster?

Answer -Yes, it seems like the poet is fond of cats. He calls Macavity a 'fiend' and a 'monster' because he might have wanted to portray an evil side. He might have used a cat in order to create a negative character who is a criminal and escapes easily from police. The quick movements of a cat and mysterious eyes might have influenced him to create this evil character in the form of a cat.

7. Has the poet used exaggeration for special effect? Find a few examples of it and read those aloud.

Answer- Yes, the poet has used exaggerations such as the cat's defiance of gravity and it being called 'monster of depravity' and a 'fiend' in order to enhance the mystery surrounding the cat. Since cat is shown to be super fast as nobody from the Scotland Yard to the flying squad can catch the scene of crime, these exaggerations have been used by Eliot to lay stress on the surprising and mysterious nature of Macavity.

Examples: (i) 'He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair'. (ii) 'He breaks the law of gravity'. (iii) 'His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare.'

Extra questions

What is the most remarkable thing about Macavity?

Macavity, known as the Mystery Cat has defied all laws. He even defies the law of gravity. He possesses supernatural powers which allow him to levitate up in the air. He is so quick that whenever the crime is discovered, Macavity disappears without leaving a single proof behind.

Describe Macavity.

Macavity is a tall and thin ginger cat whose eyebrows are deep with lines. He has sunken eyes which gives him a devil look. His coat is untidy and his whiskers are uncombed. He moves his head from side to side and his body movement is like that of a snake.

POETIC DEVICES

Eliot uses many literary techniques to make the poem appear humorous to the readers. Instead of using a human as the main character, he uses a cat and attributes human qualities to it. The list of literary devices used in the poem is analyzed below.

1. Simile: A simile is a figure of speech in which two dissimilar objects are compared and the comparison is made clear by the use of terms like 'like', 'such as'

"He sways his head from side to side, with movements like a snake" is a fine example of simile in the poem.

2. Repetition: The lines 'Macavity's not there' has been repeated a number of times in the poem to emphasize on the fact that the cat is too clever to be caught.

'Macavity, Macavity there's no one like Macavity' is another line which is repeated in the poem to highlight the fact that there is only one criminal mastermind and that is Macavity alone.

3. Rhyme Scheme:

The rhyme scheme of the poem, Macavity:

The Mystery Cat" is AABB.

4. **Alliteration**: It is the repetition of consonant sound in the line.

e.g. "**Macavity's Mystery**", "**head is highly**", "**side to side**" etc.

5. **Symbolism**: The poet uses various symbols in the poem.

e.g. his appearance symbolises his villainous character.

Central idea of this poem

The nature of Macavity a mysterious . The poet explains how he commits each and every crime, yet remains free and is never caught though police is always behind him.