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Onomatopoeia and Alliteration

Some writers use words that act like sounds. Words such as *zoom*, *clang*, and *woof*, are examples of **onomatopoeia** (ah•no•mat•uh•PEE•uh).

Another use of sound is **alliteration**. This is when words repeat the same beginning sound. "Simple Simon," "Jack and Jill," and "Sing a Song of Sixpence" are examples of alliteration.

Read the passage. Then answer the questions that follow.

Full Fathom Five

by William Shakespeare

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange:
Sea nymphs hourly ring his knell: Ding-dong!
Hark! Now I hear them, Ding-dong, bell.

Which of these lines in the poem uses onomatopoeia?

- A Full fathom five thy father lies;
- B Those are pearls that were his eyes:
- C Into something rich and strange:
- D Sea nymphs hourly ring his knell: Ding-dong!

Onomatopoeia
and Alliteration

The answer that includes a sound word is choice D. "Ding-dong!" is the sound a bell might make.

Write a line from the poem that contains alliteration.

Alliteration can be found in the first line. The poet writes, "Full fathom five thy father lies." The repeating /f/ sound makes this an example of alliteration.

PART II

Practice Exercises

Read each selection. Then answer the questions about analyzing language.

Blue Jackal

an Indian folktale

Once, in a faraway forest in India, Jackal was bored with being a jackal. "I wish I were different," he said, kicking up dust on the road.

One night, as he was snooping about in a nearby village, Jackal fell head first into a big, deep tub. It was filled with gallons of dark blue dye. "This is just great! How am I going to get out of here?" said Jackal. He tried hard to climb up the slippery walls of the tub. But he could not get out. "Brrrrr," said Jackal. "It's cold in here."

Jackal spent the night in the tub, soaking wet and shivering with cold.

As the sun spread its fingers of gold into the sky, Jackal woke up. The owner of the tub saw the jackal. He yanked him out and said, "Go home, you ugly, blue beast!"

Jackal, now dripping with blue dye, hung his head and slunk back into the forest. "I hope I don't run into anyone I know."

By and by, he saw two lions. When the lions noticed Blue Jackal, they began whispering. "I've never seen a creature like that before!" said one. "I wonder if he comes from a royal line of animals?" said the other. And the lions backed away slowly. They bowed down to Blue Jackal as if he were a king.

This gave Blue Jackal an idea. He made a wreath of leaves and put it on his head for a crown. Soon he ran into a napping tiger. "Hey! You there!" cried Blue Jackal. "Why don't you bow before your king?"

"Pardon me," said the tiger, sitting up quickly. "I didn't know we had a king."

"Don't you see my crown?" Blue Jackal pointed to the wreath on his head. "Don't you see my throne?" Blue Jackal pointed to the tree stump. "Don't you see my fine blue fur? It is the fur of royal animals, my ancestors. I have returned to my kingdom. Now you must do what I command."



“Of course, your highness,” said the tiger, trembling.

Blue Jackal ordered the tiger to run through the forest and announce the news of the new king. Over the next few weeks, all the animals did everything Blue Jackal commanded. They prepared his food, fluffed leaves for his bed, and combed his fur. Even the jackals did what they were told.

Blue Jackal was fearful that the other jackals would recognize him. So he sent them away. “Jackals—be gone! You are of no use to me. In fact you bore me. Be gone and never return!” The jackals hurried away. But when they reached the edge of the forest, they had a meeting.

“That king sure looks a lot like a jackal even though he is blue,” said the wisest among them. “I have a plan.” And he whispered it to the others.

The next evening, the group of jackals gathered on a hilltop near the edge of the forest. As soon as the full moon rose, they stretched up their long snouts and began to howl. “Aaaaaaaaooooooh!” they howled. “Aaaaaaaaooooooh! Aaaaaaaaooooooh!”

Blue Jackal, who hadn’t had a good howl since he had become king, could not resist. From his tree stump throne, he threw back his head and howled loudly in response. “Aaaaaaaaooooooh! Aaaaaaaaooooooh!”

“What an awful noise!” cried the tiger, clawing at the ground. “A true king would never do that! You are just a nobody!” And the tiger sprang forward to catch him. Realizing that his secret had been discovered, Blue Jackal raced out of the forest. And he was never heard from again.

1 What does the metaphor “the sun spread its fingers of gold into the sky” mean?

2 Blue Jackal says “Brrrrr” when he is in the tub. This is an example of—

- A personification
- B onomatopoeia
- C alliteration
- D an idiom

3 Blue Jackal hung his head and hoped he didn’t see anyone. Then he was spotted by two tigers who thought he was a king. Explain the irony in this situation.

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Language

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