

Note: The transactional processes suggested in CISCE curriculum are highlighted in grey.

Learning Outcomes

- To instil a realisation that we share the earth with other creatures
- To understand the threat to wildlife
- To learn summarising and interpretation techniques

Summary: This straightforward and thought-provoking poem is about endangered species and how people are the biggest threat to the environment. The poem highlights the threats that human beings and uncontrolled development can be to all other living things. The poet builds a hard-hitting case with his long list of creatures—across land and sea, across continents, from tiny insects to huge hippos—that are endangered by people’s thoughtless or criminal activities. He makes a strong appeal for people to come together, correct the situation and save our planet.

Pre-reading

Whole Class Activity

Write the title on the board.

Ask students:

Allow free response as opinions may vary. List the answers on the board.

What do you think this poem is about? Who else do we share this earth with? Do we, as human beings, harm the earth and our fellow creatures for our own development? What are ways in which humans harm the earth and other living creatures? Name some endangered species you can think of?

READING

Students predict, comprehend and paraphrase

Divide the class into groups. Let the class recite the poem aloud group-wise. Pause after each stanza to check comprehension/ discuss the content. Paraphrase each paragraph of the poem in your own words.

Stanza 1:

Paraphrasing: The golden mole’s habitat is harmed by mining activity. The pine marten, polecat and cheetah are almost extinct. Illegal hunters are wiping out hippos.

Stanza 2:

Paraphrasing: Global warming is melting icecaps, which is killing polar bears. Human

development is threatening wolves. Huge fishing boats are a danger to sharks. Mpingo trees are being felled.

Stanza 3:

Paraphrasing: Polluted waters are harming manta rays and newts. Mountain wild cats and jaguars are being hunted down.

Stanza 4:

Paraphrasing: Clearing of forests and indiscriminate building of roads and parking lots are eating into the natural habitat of snakes, frogs and koalas. The poet wonders whether there is any point estimating the huge damage done.

Stanza 5:

Ask students:

Why are these living things important? What action can we take to protect them?

Paraphrasing: The poet questions why people do not understand that they share this planet with all other living things. He wonders why we cannot respect and value the role all creatures play in maintaining nature's balance. He urges people to prevent this eradication of fellow-inhabitants. He asks everyone to work together, to respect and restore everything's place in the environment.

Ask students:

- *What is the tone of the poem?* (The poem's tone in the beginning is informative and relentless, like a grim warning. It turns despondent and defeated in the middle, but ends on a note of ardent faith and hope.)
- *What is the rhyme scheme?* aabb

- *What are the poetic devices?*

- a. **Imagery:** (*hunters chasing animals, cheetahs watching their final sunset, melting icecaps, the last tree of a forest falling, roads and parking lots being laid.* It uses **personification**, calling pursuit cold, logging ruthless and animals our best friends.)
- b. **Alliteration:** (*setting suns, tree takes and final fall*)
- c. **Idioms:** (*live on borrowed time and metaphors like setting suns and final fall to describe the rapid extinction of various species*)

Post-reading

Group work

- A. *What are the themes revealed in the poem?* (We should respect our fellow beings and restore their rightful place in our environment.)

STUDENTS' BOOK ANSWER KEY

Whose Place is it Anyway?

Comprehension

- A.
 1. pine marten, polecat, cheetahs, wolves
 2. hippos, whitetip shark, angel shark, cats of the Andes, jaguar
 3. mining, water pollution, making of roads and parking lots, logging
 4. Mpingo tree and ponds
 5. In the last stanza of the poem, the speaker urges us to remember that we share the Earth with numerous other creatures as well as plants. We should give them the importance and respect that they deserve; we cannot simply go on with our activities without thinking how it affects other species. We cannot let them suffer and die because of our actions or lack of action. We have to find ways to do what we need to do for ourselves without harming other animals and plant life.
- B.
 1.
 - a. The Arctic ice is dissolving because of global warming—the slow increase of the Earth's temperature as carbon dioxide is released into the air because of different human activities.
 - b. As Arctic ice dissolves, the places where polar bears can live and find food most naturally and comfortably are getting smaller. So, there is a decline of polar bears.
 2. 'Final fall' here means the cutting down of the last Mpingo trees. After that, there will be no more Mpingo trees left.

3. *Suggested answers (accept any logical answer):*

- a. The poem is trying to make us more aware of the effect of different human activities on animals and plants in different parts of the world. It wants us to find out which of our actions affect other species adversely so that we can try to control those actions and adverse effects.
- b. It could be 'just too much slogging' because many people do not want to take the trouble to find out the indirect results of their actions. They are not willing to change their ways or decisions to make things easier for plants and animals—they think it is not really necessary.
- c. This line is a question rather than a statement because the speaker is wondering what will happen in the future—will we become more aware, thoughtful and careful and try to save our fellow-creatures, or will we continue with our activities without any care or consideration for our fellow-creatures, thinking that our needs and wants come first? He hopes we will become more careful, but he cannot be sure of that.

C. *Suggested answer (accept any logical answer):* Human beings—their decisions and activities—are responsible for the decline in the numbers of plants and animals. For example, the cutting down of forests, the running of factories that release harmful gases into the air and so on. Yes, this is a serious concern, because already this has led to numerous problems for numerous plants and creatures. Trees are cut down in large numbers. Animals lose their natural homes and food; they are also killed for different reasons. If these activities go on unchecked, we will face a dark future.

Appreciating the Poem

1. threatened, live on borrowed time, poachers' guns, last setting suns, decline, final fall, pollution, slaughter, hunter's cold pursuit, ruthless logging, vanish without trace
2. Anxious uncertainty. The speaker is not simply curious—he wonders anxiously whether these different creatures will be able to save themselves, will even remain alive in the future, or will some or other human activity continue to make them suffer, until perhaps they die out altogether. He wonders whether a positive change or solution will be found because he wants these animals and plants to continue being a part of this world and of our lives.
3. The last line of the poem is a suggestion. The poem ends in this manner because the speaker makes a suggestion to all of us to become more careful and work together to make sure that every animal and plant can enjoy its rightful place on this planet. He makes this suggestion to us because we—every one of us in our own ways—can do something or the other to push for a positive change and to take better care of our fellow-creatures. And we really need to become more careful and take the right actions—there is no time to lose.

4. *Free response*

Vocabulary

1. workings 2. pollution 3. pursuit 4. lairs 5. worth 6. trace

Going Further

Free response

QUESTION BANK

Whose Place Is It Anyway

A. Answer in brief.

What has happened to the golden moles, pine martens, polecats, hippos and cheetahs?

Ans: The golden mole's habitat has been harmed by mining activity while the pine marten, polecat and cheetah are almost extinct. Illegal hunters are wiping out the hippos.

B. Answer in detail.

According to the poet, in what ways have human activity brought harm to the life of other living things on our planet?

Ans: Uncontrolled development can be of harm to all other living things. The poet builds a hard-hitting case with his long list of creatures – across land and sea, across continents, from tiny insects to huge hippos – that are endangered by people's thoughtless or criminal activities. Mining activities have destroyed habitats of animals; illegal hunters have poached animals resulting in extinction or near extinction. Inconsiderate use of natural resources has led to global warming and melting of icecaps to the killing of polar bears.

C. Choose the correct answer.

What is the poem, 'Whose place is it Anyway' about?

- The effect of uncontrolled development to all other living things in this world
- A call for people to come together, restore the environment and save our planet
- An awareness that people are responsible for endangered species

Ans: b

D. Read the lines and answer the questions.

Will snakes find their lairs as habitat turns to road?

Does a parking lot come first or the Puerto Rican toad?

Will koalas in their hollows survive the ruthless logging?

Shall we bother to find out or is that just too much slogging?

- What happens to the homes of snakes, toads and koalas?
- What is the ruthless logging referred to here?
- Why does the poet wonder whether there is any point in estimating the huge damage done?

Ans: a. Indiscriminate building of roads and parking lots have led to clearing of forests.

This has resulted in destroying the natural habitat of snakes, frogs and koalas.

- The ruthless logging is the thoughtless manner in which trees are felled down.
- The poet wonders whether there is any point in taking an estimate of the damage done to the animal and plant kingdom because people have thoughtlessly and ruthlessly been destroying nature for their own selfish, uncontrollable needs.

E. Answer in brief. (Think and Answer)

- How is the sea life affected by human activities?

Ans: The waters have become so polluted that they are harmful to manta rays, newts and other sea creatures. Sharks are in danger because fishing trawls will capture them.

2. What is the tone of the poem?

Ans: The poem's tone in the beginning is informative and relentless, like a grim warning. It turns despondent and defeated in the middle, but ends on a note of ardent faith and hope with the lines: *So let's work together and restore their rightful place.*

F. Answer in detail. (Think and Answer)

What is the message the poet conveys in the poem, '*Whose Place Is It Anyway?*'

Ans: The poet questions why people do not understand that they share this planet with all other living things. He asks why we cannot respect and value the role all creatures play in maintaining nature's balance. He urges people to prevent this eradication of fellow-inhabitants. He asks everyone to work together, to respect and restore everything's place in the environment.