# SNAKE D. H. Lawrence

DAVID HERBERT LAWRENCE (1885-1930), poet, novelist, short story writer and essayist, grew up amid the strife between his genteel and educated mother and his

coarse miner father. As a youth in the Nottinghamshire mining village of Eastwood, Lawrence resented the rough ways of his drunken father and adopted his mother's refined values as his own. However, as he grew in maturity as a writer, he rejected the gentility his mother represented and began to see his father earthiness as a virtue. He wrote of primitive and natural passions, trying to show instinctive forces in man that might bring happiness. In his writings he emerged as the champion of instinct. His important works include A Collection of Poems



(1909), The White Peacock (1911), The Trespasser (1912), Sons and Lovers (1913), The Rainbow (1915), Plumed Serpent (1926), Lady Chatterley's Lover (1926). In the present poem 'Snake', Lawrence exalts the values of primitive life and denounces the shams and artificialities of modern civilized life.

- A. Work in small groups and discuss the following:
- 1. When and where did you see a snake last time?
- 2. Why do we find a snake both attractive and frightful?
- 3. Are we justified in killing animals or insects or causing harm to them simply because we consider them to be dangerous?

#### SNAKE

A snake came to my water-trough: On a hot, hot day, and I in Pyjamas for the heat, To drink there. In the deep, strange scented shade of the great dark **carobtree**I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.

He reached down from a **fissure** in the earth-wall in the **gloom**And **trailed** his yellow brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough

And rested his throat upon the stone bottom.

And where the water had **dripped** from the tap, in a small clearness,

He **sipped** with his straight mouth,

Softly drank though his straight gums, into his slack long body,

Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough, And I, like a second comer, waiting.

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- B.1. 1. Read the following sentences and write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statements:
  - a) It was a hot day when the thirsty snake came to drink water.
  - b) The speaker was in a haste to drink water.
  - c) The colour of the snake was yellow-black.
  - d) The speaker considered himself a second comer to the trough.
- B.1. 2. Answer the following questions briefly:
  - 1) Where did the speaker meet the snake?
  - 2) Why had it come out of its hole near the trough?
  - 3) Why did the speaker decide to wait?

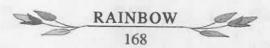
He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do, And looked at me **vaguely**, as drinking cattle do,

And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,

And stooped and drank a little more,

Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth On the day of Sicilian July with Etna smoking.

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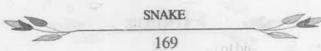
The voice of my education said to me			
He must be killed,			Quores
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocer	nt, the gol		
ides and it	311	HWI. II	Har
And voices in me said, If you were a man			25
You would take a stick and break him now, and f	inish him	off.	
But must I confess how I liked him,			
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quie	t to drink	at my water t	rough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,	i, to dilli	de Iny water-t	lough
Into the burning bowels of this earth?			30
			30
Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?			
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?	15-		
Was it humility, to feel so honoured?	381		
I felt so honoured.	251		
A = d =+ sh = :	lij;		
And yet those voices:			35
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!	(C)		
And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,			
But even so, honoured still more	- Div		
That he should seek my hospitality			
From out the dark door of the secret earth.			40
The second secon		ental talibase qu	40
B.2. 1. Read the following sentence	s and w	rite 'T' for t	rue and 'F'
for false statements:	09 -	192 91	a de dila 1
<ul> <li>a) The snake looked at the speaker</li> </ul>	vaguely		
<li>b) The day mentioned in the poem i</li>	s that of	June.	
<ul> <li>c) There was a superstitious belief</li> </ul>	in Sicily	to kill black	snake.
<ul> <li>a) The speaker was glad playing ho</li> </ul>	st to a s	nake.	
e) The snake departed in an obliger	d way.	- Total	
f) The speaker had a desire to talk	to the s	nake.	
B.2. 2. Answer the following questi			

2) What is the meaning of 'Sicilian July, with Etna smoking'?

3) What is the belief prevailing in Sicily about a snake?

1) How did the snake drink water?

4) Why did the speaker like the snake?5) Do you think he had a conflict in mind?



SNAKE	
169 and bit	
He drank enough	
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,	
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,	
Seeming to lick his lips,	
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air, And slowly turned his head,	45
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,	
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round	
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.	
And as he put his head into that dreadful hole, And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther,	50
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid b	lack noie.
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after.	
Overcame me now his back was turned.	
I looked round, I put down my pitcher,	55
I picked up a clumsy log	
And threw it at the water trough with a clatter.	
I think it did not hit him,	
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste.	erienzacu enemă ulti

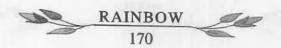
Writhed like lightening, and was gone Into the black hole, the earth lipped fissure in the wall front, At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it. I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act! I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross, And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king, Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld, Now due to be crowned again.





And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords Of life.

And I have something to expiate:

A pettiness.

- B.2. 1. Read the following sentences and write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statements:
  - a) The speaker found the slow movement of the snake quite impressive.
  - b) The speaker did not like the snake going back to the dark hole.
  - c) He threw the pitcher at the snake.
  - d) He later regretted for having hit it.
  - e) He compares it to a sea-bird, albatross.
  - f) The snake appeared like king in exile.
- B.2. 2. Answer the following questions briefly:
  - 1) What thing about the snake did appeal him most?
  - 2) Why did he not like it going back to the dark hole?
  - 3) What was his reaction after hitting the snake?
  - 4) Why did the speaker consider it 'a king in exile'?

### **GLOSSARY AND NOTES**

water-through (n): a container for animals to eat and drink from carobtree (n): a southern European tree with dark brown fruit

fissure (n): a long deep crack, gap

gloom(n): feeling of being sad and without hope

trailed (v): pulled behind vaguely (adv): not clearly

flickered (v): kept going on and off as it shone

mused (v): thought

Sicilian July ... Etna smoking: extreme heat like the one caused when Etna erupted

venomous (adj): poisonous, full of venom

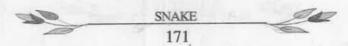
bowels(n): the tube in the stomach along which the food passes

cowardice (n): lack of courage

perversity (n): wrong or immoral thinking

longed(v): wanted eagerly

humility (n): the quality of being humble



hospitality (n): receiving with warmth

horrid (adi): horrible

clumsy log(n.phr): awkward/ not proper piece of wood

clatter(n): a loud noise

convulsed(v): caused a sudden shaking movement

writhed (v): twisted or moved body out of pain

fascination (n): strong attraction paltry (ad): meagre, two small

vulgar (adj): not decent despised(v): hated strongly

accursed(adi): having a curse, a bad magic spell

albatross (n): a large white sea-bird, it is sportingly killed in Coleridge's the Ancient Mariner

resulting in psychological and spiritual crisis

expiate (v): to accept punishment for sin pettiness (n): small and unimportant

### C. 1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. The speaker was fascinated by the snake. Do you think the time mentioned and the place it belonged to has anything to do with this fascination?

2. What does he mean by 'the voice of my education'?

3. There was a conflict in the mind of the poet. How did he analyse this conflict?

4. In what roles did he find the snake and himself? Describe.

5. The snake seemed like 'a king in exile'. What are the qualities that make the snake so majestic?

What makes you think that hitting the snake was quite against the sensibility of the

speaker?

7. What is the 'sin' committed by the speaker that he wanted to 'expiate'?

## C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

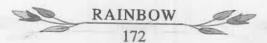
Discuss the following in groups or pairs:

- 1. Negative impact of customs and belief on our way of thinking
- 2. Animals and birds, too, have a right to live

### C. 3. COMPOSITION

Write a short essay in about 150 words on the following:

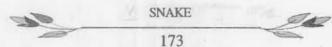
- a. Human greed and environmental degradation
- b. Religion teaches tolerance and humility



			172	6	Deb.
D. Wo	ORD STUDY		172		
	ictionary Use	disting in			The second second
	. Correct the spe	elling of the follo	owing words:		tation
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	delibarately	convalsed	wreethed	muzed fassination	parvarsity
	- and arctiony	CONTAISCU	wicetied	iassiriation	uncrouned
D.2. V	Vord-formation				
R	ead the following	g lines from the	poem carefully	and the	
В	ut suddenly that	part of him that	was left behind	convulsed in un	dinnified haste
Li	ke a king in exile	, uncrowned in	the underworld		aiginiou riasic
	The Marie				
In	the above lines	'undignified'	and 'uncrowne	d have prefix 'ui	n-' which make ther
n	egative in mear	ning.			
A	dd prefixes 'un	-', 'in-', 'im-,' 'i	il-', 'ir-', 'dis-' to	the following	words and fill in the
bl	anks to comple	te the sentence	es given below:	The spinor of the same	
			1 1/1		
		logical	responsi		
		mortal	known	abili	ty
i.	Progra could	not not need	24-2-1-1	465 - 5161	
1.	fast.	not get good m	arks in writing	test' because of	her —— to write
ii			bode	se of his action.	
iii.	His	hoho	viour is not like	se of his action.	
	You cannot wi	n the case by	Mont is not like	d by us.	
	7 OG COMMOT W	if the case by	your —		arguments.
٧.	There are still	many	a suite and the same	planete and sta	rs in the universe.
vi.	His blunt refus	al to come was	a cian of	- planets and sta	rs in the universe.
7.00	- no blank rolad	ar to come was	a sign or —	and the latest	
D.3. W	ord-meaning				
		carefully to find	out where the f	following phenon	s have been used.
	Looked at	looke	ed around	dans dans	s have been used.
	put down		chind		
		ICIL DI	AHIO .	thought of	
Fil	ll in the blank	with annror	riste phress	listed shaw	
i	Varsha —	——— her n	aners on the tal	ole and went out	
ï.	We could not	nei p	— a better pla	ne and went out	and they make the
***	77 7 1		a oction pla	ш.	

- all other runners.

iii. He ran slowly and soon was -



		· Aniette o
iv.	We-	——— the paintings in admiration.
V.	The acrobat —	himself before jumping over the rope
vi.	The thirsty man —	in search of water.

#### E. GRAMMAR

Ex. 1. Go through the poem carefully and underline the lines where the following words/

	iodilo ildio booli dood				
	slackness	clearness	cowardice	perversity	
	hospitality	blackness	pettiness	humility	
Ch	ange the above words	into adjectives	and use them i	n the following	sentences:
i.	Mr John has very	ideas on t	the success of d	emocracy in Ind	ia.
ii.	men die severa	il times.			
iii.	Films should not glor	ify sex	- behaviours.		
iv.	The sky suddenly tur	ned			
٧.	He often perturbs his	parents with	demands		12 P.S.M. 12
vi.	Though he occupies	a high post, he	is quite	*******	
vii.	His app	roach aggravate	ed the problem.		

### F. ACTIVITIES

Ex.1. In different religions, a snake has been represented in different ways. Find out how a snake has been represented in the Hindu and Christian mythologies, and write a report on it.

viii. Mrs Juber was quite ..... with her guests.

- Ex.2. There are over 500 varieties of snakes and not all of them are venomous. Draw a picture of a snake and label the arts of its body. Write in red ink and immediate steps to be taken after a snake bite.
- Ex.3. Find out a poem in Hindi or in any language you know on snake and read that poem in the class.

