

A Curious Creature, the Whiffle-Pooffle

by Patricia Lauber



1 A whiffle-pooffle is a very shy creature. It is happiest when hiding at the bottom of a bottomless lake. In the United States, whiffle-pooffles are found in Texas—if they are found at all.

2 Many people have tried fishing for whiffle-pooffles. However, whiffle-pooffles are not fish. So there is not much point in fishing for them. A whiffle-pooffle is more like a cross between an eel and a giant lizard.

3 The only person who ever caught a whiffle-pooffle was Pecos Bill. He got tired of hearing people say there was no such animal as a whiffle-pooffle. Bill said there was such an animal and that he'd catch one. So Bill got a boat, a can of oil, and the kind of long drill that is used for making postholes. Then he hunted up the funniest storyteller around and took him along.

4 Bill rowed out on the lake to where the water was very deep. He took the drill and bored a hole through the water, right down to the bottom. He made the hole so that the whiffle-pooffle could come up to the top. Then he made the storyteller get to work. The man began to tell funny stories.

5 Pretty soon the whiffle-pooffle started to stir. Bill could tell it was interested. "Get funnier," Bill said to the storyteller. The storyteller started to tell funnier stories. By that time the whiffle-pooffle

was amused. It came up the hole. Then it stuck out its head in order to hear better. The storyteller got funnier and funnier. The whiffle-pooffle came out on top of the water.

6 Softly and slowly Bill began to row. The whiffle-pooffle didn't want to miss any of the jokes. It followed the boat. The storyteller grew funnier and funnier. Bill rowed faster and faster. The whiffle-pooffle swam along behind.

7 Just before he reached shore, Bill poured the oil onto the water. He swung the boat to the left. The whiffle-pooffle was going so fast on the oily water that it couldn't stop. It slid right out of the water onto the shore. Bill told it a few more jokes, and they introduced themselves. The whiffle-pooffle's name was Dudley. They became very, very good friends.

8 Pecos Bill was the first and last man to catch a whiffle-pooffle. However, if you're down in Texas, there's no reason why you shouldn't try. Just get a boat, a can of oil, a long drill, and someone to tell funny stories. Then you're all set to go whiffle-pooffling. Even if you don't catch a thing, you'll have a good time.

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COMPREHENSION

A Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 1 This story was written to make you
 - a** think about a strange creature that might hide in lakes.
 - b** laugh at things that couldn't really happen.
 - c** believe in creatures such as the whiffle-pooffle.
- 2 Pecos Bill decided to catch a whiffle-pooffle because he
 - a** liked to go boating with whiffle-pooffles.
 - b** wanted to find a new friend.
 - c** wanted to prove that there was such an animal.

3 In this story Bill proved that

- a** there was at least one whiffle-pooffle.
- b** Texas lakes are full of whiffle-pooffles.
- c** he could handle a boat well.

4 Pecos Bill was a

- a** real Texas cowboy.
- b** make-believe cowboy.
- c** world-famous fisherman.

5 If you try to catch a whiffle-pooffle the way Bill did, you will probably

- a** catch a whiffle-pooffle.
- b** have a lot of laughs.
- c** slide right out of the water.

LEARN ABOUT WORDS

B Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words in the story give you clues.

Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.)

Write the word.

- 1 bashful; timid (1)
- 2 animal; living being (1)
- 3 tool for making holes (3)
- 4 move (5)
- 5 having fun; enjoying itself (5)
- 6 land at the edge of the water (7)
- 7 told their names (7)

C A word may have more than one meaning. Its meaning will depend on how it is used.

The *fly* buzzed around the room.
The bird will *fly* to its nest.

Look at each word in **bold type** below. Note the paragraph number. Look back at the paragraph. Which meaning does the word have there? Write *a* or *b*.

8 **cross** (2)

- a** a mark like an X
- b** mixture; half and half

9 **stir** (5)

- a** mix up with a spoon
- b** change position; move

10 **miss** (6)

- a** fail to hear
- b** feel sad about the absence of

THINK ABOUT IT

- D** A story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A story has a problem. A story is about how someone tries to solve the problem.

Parts of a Story

Beginning tells
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who• Where• The problem
Middle tells
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How someone tries to solve the problem
End tells
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How the problem is solved

Read each sentence. Does it tell about the beginning, the middle, or the end of the story? Write *beginning*, *middle*, or *end*.

- 1 Bill went out on the lake and drilled a hole.
- 2 Pecos Bill wanted to prove that there were whiffle-pooffles.
- 3 Bill and the whiffle-pooffle became friends.
- 4 The funny stories made the whiffle-pooffle poke his head out of the water.
- 5 Whiffle-pooffles are said to live in Texas.

- E** Most verbs add *-ed* to show that something happened in the past.

ask + **ed** = asked

When a word ends in *e*, you drop that *e* before adding *-ed*.

lik~~e~~ + **ed** = liked

When a word ends in *y*, you usually change the *y* to *i* before adding *-ed*.

carry + **ed** = carried

Each sentence below has a verb that is in the past tense. Rewrite the underlined verb in the present tense by dropping the *-ed* ending. If you read *shared*, you would write *share*.

- 6 Pecos Bill rowed a boat.
- 7 Bill bored a hole.
- 8 The man started to tell stories.
- 9 It laughed so hard that it cried.
- 10 They introduced themselves.