

# Fantasy

Ruby, Level 27, 710L

Origin of Text: UK

**Summary:** Bug Muldoon, a beetle detective, has to get past a toad to reach the House. Bug knows the still, quiet toad is more dangerous than it looks . . .

**Themes:** humour, courage, observing, predator, prey

**Text Features:** introduction, title, paragraphs

**Literature Focus:** simile, personification, anthropomorphism

## Spelling:

- 'ea' digraph (short 'e'): death, deadly, ready, threads, weapon
- using 'c' in place of 's': practice (noun); practise (verb)

## Vocabulary/Grammar/Punctuation:

- '-ive' suffix : active, digestive (adjectives, meaning 'having the nature of')
- capitalised nouns: Death, Garden (used like proper nouns)
- em dash used to mark break in a sentence, or long pause

## Advanced Grammar:

- informal structures: Yeah, right; Nice, huh?

# Bug Muldoon and the Killer in the Rain



**Focus Question:** What makes a good detective?

## PREPARE & READ

- Read the title and introduction. Besides being a fantasy, what genre (style of story) do you think this one is based on? (detective story crime fiction) 1
- Invite students to describe the creatures that are illustrated and imagine how they might see the world.
- Point out that the ellipsis shows text is left out. Ask students to read the card. 9

## READ CLOSELY

### Literature Focus: Personification

How is Death like a person or character at the start of the story? How would you describe the character of Death? 3

. . . The word *Death* starts with a capital letter, as if it is a character's name. *Death* also has qualities that could describe a person, like not being fussy and having no pride. *Death* could be described as a scary shape-shifter that strikes you all of a sudden.

### Point of View

Who narrates the story? (main character, Bug Muldoon; refers to himself as 'I' and to reader as 'you') What does the toad look like from Bug's point of view? (sitting still with only nostrils moving, waiting to attack) 4-8

### Key Ideas and Details

How does Bug's past experience with toads help him escape? 4-7 11-13

. . . Bug knows that toads stay very still to catch their prey. So, he is alert and is able to duck and roll out of the way when the toad tries to catch him.

### Vocabulary: Idioms

Read the last paragraph again. What might the phrase 'played it like the sucker it was' mean when you read it with the beginning of the sentence? (treated the toad as silly, gullible) What do you think 'inched forward' might mean? (crept slowly forward) What might 'braced myself' mean? ('brace yourself' means prepare or get ready for something that is going to happen) 12 13

### Make Inferences

Do you think this part of the story is from the beginning/middle/end of the original work? (beginning) Why? (Bug mentions his name, job and where he lives) Why do you think the story begins with a description of death? (unusual start; hooks reader even before they can figure out who is telling the story) 3 8 9

### Make Predictions

Bug tackles danger successfully in the Garden. Would he be similarly successful inside the House? Why/Why not? (yes: smart, brave/no: might not be familiar with dangers inside the House) 3-13

# BUG MULDOON

## AND THE KILLER IN THE RAIN

**1** **2** Bug Muldoon is a beetle detective and he's on a mission. He's determined to track down the killer in the rain, even if it means a trip to the dreaded House where the Humans live. But he has to get across the Garden first—preferably alive.

**3** Death isn't fussy. It comes in lots of shapes and sizes in a Garden like this. Sometimes it's the beak of a hungry bird, sometimes the boot that descends from the skies. Sometimes it wears the delicate threads of a lurking spider. And sometimes good old Death has no pride and rolls up in the shape of a big, warty old toad.

**4** That's how it was today, just crouching over there in the shade.

The toad's golden eyes didn't blink. It was acting cool, as if it hadn't noticed me. Only its pinprick nostrils moved. It seemed unaware of everything.

Yeah, right.

**5** I wasn't fooled. Its bulgy eyes were tracking me. That deadly tongue was just biding its time inside a mouth that stretched right across the toad's ugly mug. Just waiting for yours truly to move into range. Then that lethal weapon of a tongue would flick out and scoop me up with its sticky coating. It would whip me back into that pit of a mouth. And then all the toad had to do was swallow.

**6** Well, it could try. Call me a dreamer, but I had other plans for how the exchange would go.

**7** Right now I just concentrated on playing my part—acted like I was the tastiest beetle in the Garden. It wasn't hard. I've had plenty of practice dodging things that want to eat me. That's the way life is in this Garden of ours—you deal with it, or you end up as a light snack for something nasty.

**8** Me, I'm nobody's light snack—not if I can help it. The name is Bug—Bug Muldoon. I'm a private investigator, and this nightmare of a Garden is the place I call home.

...

**9** I'll tell you something about garden toads. They eat any kind of insect or worm they can get their tongues on, and they feed up to four times on a summer night. It gets worse—they have no teeth, which means they just swallow their prey whole. Nice, huh?

**10** So you'd still be alive 'n' kicking as you slid down that pitch-black gullet. You'd just be sittin' in that belly as the digestive juices began to rain down on you. Thanks, but no thanks.

**11** I stopped. This was close enough. Now it was all a matter of timing. If I got it wrong, then I'd be relaxing in that nice warm acid bath in the thing's gut.

**12** I didn't need to worry. The toad wasn't lighting up the Garden with its blazing intelligence, and I played it like the sucker it was.

**13** I inched forward and braced myself. An instant later the toad's tongue snaked out towards me like a bolt of pink lightning. I was ready. I ducked and rolled left.



**5**

**8**

**9**

**6**

**10**

**11**

**12**

**13**

Illustration of a toad.

**1**

Extract from a novel by Paul Shipton

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**2**

## DISCUSS

These questions can be used for paired discussion. Ask students to use the text to support their reasoning. Then, ask them to share their conclusions with the group.

- Which parts of the story did you find funny? (idea of a beetle detective; way Bug talks about scary things; images: bolt of pink lightning, Death is a toad) Why might an author use humour in a scary story? (make it less scary; make it interesting; attract wider variety of readers—those who like mystery and those who like humour)
- Why is suspense (excitement/uncertainty about what comes next) important in a detective story? (arouses desire to keep reading; work out clues or think of solutions; fires imagination)
- What might a toad be scared of in a garden? (humans; birds; lizards; snakes) How could a toad escape/fight a predator? (hopping under a rock or into water; releasing poison; using camouflage)

## WRITE

Have students choose either one of the following options for writing, or do both.

- Rewrite the final part of the story from the point of view of the toad. What would he think of Bug? (things to consider: use 'I' for the toad, 'he' for Bug; build suspense; describe Bug; describe looking forward to eating Bug; remember that the toad is not very clever) **(Information/Explanation)**
- Do you think the idea of a beetle detective is funny? Why/Why not? Give examples from the text to back up your reasons. **(Opinion)**