

Throwing a Tree

by Thomas Hardy

The two executioners stalk along over the knolls,
Bearing two axes with heavy heads shining and wide,
And a long limp two-handled saw toothed for cutting great boles,
And so they approach the proud tree that bears the death-mark
on its side.

Jackets doffed they swing axes and chop away just above ground,
And the chips fly about and lie white on the moss and fallen
leaves;
Till a broad deep gash in the bark is hewn all the way round,
And one of them tries to hook upward a rope, which at last he
achieves.

The saw then begins, till the top of the tall giant shivers:
The shivers are seen to grow greater with each cut than before:
They edge out the saw, tug the rope; but the tree only quivers,
And kneeling and sawing again, they step back to try pulling
once more.

Then, lastly, the living mast sways, further sways: with a shout
Job and Ike rush aside. Readied the end of its long staying powers

The tree crashes downward: it shakes all its neighbours
throughout,

And two hundred years' steady growth has been ended in less
than two hours.

Questions

1. Which of these tools are carried by the 'executioners'? Tick **two**.

- two axes
- two hampers
- a long limp two-handled saw
- a chainsaw

2. Join the boxes to match each date to the important event that happened on it.

second stanza
third stanza
fourth stanza

The tree falls to the floor.
A rope is looped high up in the tree.
The men saw into the tree.

3. List **two** things that lie on the ground around the tree.

1. _____
2. _____

4. How old is the tree?

5. Find and copy a word or phrase from the first stanza which implies that the tree is going to die.

6. Why do you think that **Job and Ike rush aside**?

7. Explain why the tree **shakes all its neighbours throughout**.

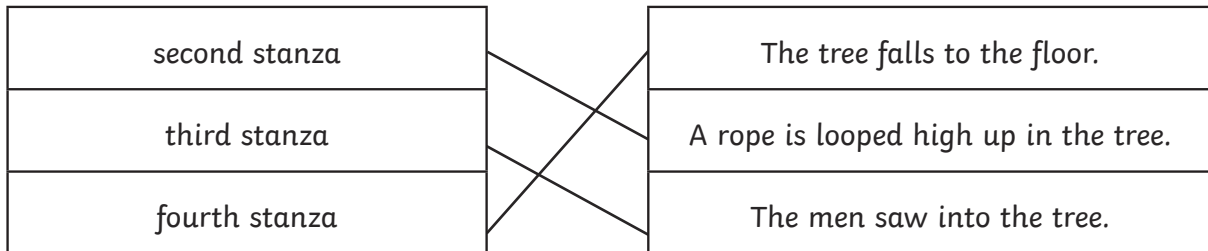
8. How do you feel about the tree being cut down? Explain your answer.

Answers

1. Which of these tools are carried by the 'executioners'? Tick **two**.

- two axes**
- two hampers
- a long limp two-handled saw**
- a chainsaw

2. Join the boxes to match each date to the important event that happened on it.



3. List **two** things that lie on the ground around the tree.

Accept any two of the following: the chips; the moss; fallen leaves.

4. How old is the tree?

The tree is 200 years old.

5. Find and copy a word or phrase from the first stanza which implies that the tree is going to die.

Accept either of the following: executioners; (bears the) death-mark (on its side).

6. Why do you think that **Job and Ike rush aside**?

Pupils' own responses, such as: Job and Ike rush aside because the tree is about to fall and they don't want to get hurt.

7. Explain why the tree **shakes all its neighbours throughout**.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Due to its size, the tree is heavy and causes the ground (and other trees) to shake as it falls.

8. How do you feel about the tree being cut down? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I feel sad that such an old tree has been cut down – it seemed determined to stay standing for as long as possible.

Questions

1. How is the tree described in the first stanza? Tick one.

- heavy
- wide
- great
- proud

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order in which they happen in the poem.

	Job and Ike saw the tree.
	A rope is looped high in the tree.
	Job and Ike go towards the tree.
	The tree falls to the ground.

3. **Find** and **copy one** words from the second stanza that means the same as **cut**.

1. _____
2. _____

4. What tools are used in this poem?

5. How long did the tree felling take?

6. Give **two** pieces of evidence from the text which show that chopping down the tree is difficult.

1. _____
2. _____

7. Why do you think the tree had to be cut down?

8. How do you think the poet feels about the tree being felled? Explain your answer.

9. Are Job and Ike portrayed as good or bad people in the poem? Explain your answer.

Answers

1. How is the tree described in the first stanza? Tick one.

- heavy
- wide
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2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order in which they happen in the poem.

3	Job and Ike saw the tree.
2	A rope is looped high in the tree.
1	Job and Ike go towards the tree.
4	The tree falls to the ground.

3. **Find and copy one** words from the second stanza that means the same as **cut**.

Accept any two of the following: chop; gash; hewn.

4. What tools are used in this poem?

In this poem, two axes (with heavy heads shining and wide) and a long limp two-handed saw (toothed for cutting great boles) are used.

5. How long did the tree felling take?

It took less than two hours to cut down the tree.

6. Give **two** pieces of evidence from the text which show that chopping down the tree is difficult.

Accept any two of the following: it requires strong tools (axes and a two-handed saw); actions such as 'swing axes' and 'chop away'; it doesn't come down easily – they have to tug the rope then pull some more; it takes nearly two hours; there are several stages involved, such as chopping, sawing and pulling.

7. Why do you think the tree had to be cut down?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the tree had to be cut down because it was very old so it might have become dangerous.

8. How do you think the poet feels about the tree being felled? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the poet is upset and disappointed because he describes the tree fellers as executioners, which has negative connotations, and he describes the tree as proud which is a positive thing.

9. Are Job and Ike portrayed as good or bad people in the poem? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Job and Ike are portrayed as bad people in the poem because they are referred to as 'executioners', which has negative connotations.

Questions

1. **...Till a broad deep gash in the bark is hewn all the way round...**

What do the words **gash** and **hewn** mean? Tick one.

- hole
- cut
- wound
- tie

2. How is the tree described? Tick all that apply.

- shining and wide
- proud
- tall giant
- living mast

3. **Jackets doffed...**

What does **doffed** mean in this phrase?

4. List **three** things that are done to the tree.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

5. Find and copy **two** words from the third stanza which show that the tree only moves slightly.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

6. How does the poet try to make the reader feel sorry for the tree? Give at least **two** examples from the text.

7. Describe the stages of the tree felling process in your own words.

8. How do you think Job and Ike feel about their task? Explain your answer.

9. Find an example of personification in the poem. How does this make you feel about the tree?

10. Why do you think that the tree is being chopped down? Explain your answer.

Answers

1. **...Till a broad deep gash in the bark is hewn all the way round...**

What do the words **gash** and **hewn** mean? Tick one.

- hole
 cut
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2. How is the tree described? Tick all that apply.

- shining and wide
 proud
 tall giant
 living mast

3. **Jackets doffed...**

What does **doffed** mean in this phrase?

In this phrase, 'doffed' means to removed or taken off.

4. List **three** things that are done to the tree.

Accept any three of the following: it is given the death-mark; it is chopped with axes; a rope is thrown over its branches; it is sawn/sawed; it is pulled.

5. Find and copy **two** words from the third stanza which show that the tree only moves slightly.

shivers
quivers

6. How does the poet try to make the reader feel sorry for the tree? Give at least **two** examples from the text.

Accept reference to any two of the following points: the tree is referred to as a living thing ('death-mark', 'shivers'); use of personification/giving the tree feelings ('proud', 'tall giant', 'living mast'); it is as if the tree tries to resist ('only quivers') but to no avail ('end of its long staying powers'); the tree fellers are made to sound bad ('executioners'); it sounds as if the tree is in pain ('broad deep gash', 'shivers are seen to grow'); it is very old but cut down very quickly ('two hundred years steady growth', 'ended in less than two hours').

7. Describe the stages of the tree felling process in your own words.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The tree is initially given the 'death-mark' before the tree fellers arrive and chop into the base with axes. Then, they saw into the tree before throwing a rope over the high branches and pulling. The tree appears to resist so they saw some more and finally pull the rope to fell the tree.

8. How do you think Job and Ike feel about their task? Explain your answer.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that Job and Ike might be emotionless about their task because it seems that they are focused on their getting their task done as 'executioners' and it seems to be something they do every day.

9. Find an example of personification in the poem. How does this make you feel about the tree?
Pupils' own responses, such as: An example of personification is when the tree is described as 'proud'. This makes me feel that the tree is like an elderly man who has seen many different things in his life and is satisfied with everything he has achieved.

10. Why do you think that the tree is being chopped down? Explain your answer.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the tree might have become unsafe due to its age so it is being chopped down to avoid an accident occurring.