

# Lions in the Garden

We had lions in our garden last night.  
We watched them pad through the open gates  
And lap the water from the pool.  
Amber bodies covered the grass,  
Some at rest, some at play.  
Billy and I watched awestruck  
As the might of the African plain  
Graced our backyard.



The park rangers kept watch all night.  
We could not sleep.  
We could not move.  
Only thin glass and brick walls protected us  
From giant paws and savage jaws,  
Fierce in hunt, gentle in play.

The big male roars.  
The pride rise.  
Something crashes past in the undergrowth.  
A lioness pads forwards. Her sisters follow.  
Bodies tense, ears alert. Then suddenly,  
The darkness explodes with a golden flood.  
Paws flash past, gravel flies  
And, like the wind they are gone.

The pool is still, the garden bare.  
But there are paw prints beside my garden chair.  
We had lions in our garden last night.

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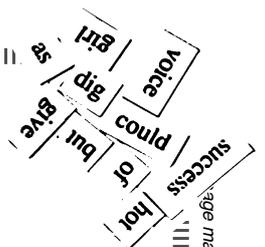
# Questions

Answer the following questions with a full sentence:

1. How did the lions enter the garden?
2. What was the first thing the lions did when they arrived? Why do you suppose they did that?
3. What protected the watchers from the lions?
4. Which line do you think best describes the strength of the lions?
5. In verse three, why do you think the pride rose up?
6. What evidence remains to show that lions have been in the garden?
7. In your own words, comment on the language of the poem. Which words or phrases make it evocative?
8. The final lines may be considered 'dreamlike'. Why do you think this might be?

# Word work

1. Give the meaning of the following words:  
*pride (of lions)*  
*awestruck*  
*amber*  
*savage*
2. 'The darkness explodes with a golden flood.'  
Explain what this means in your own words.



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# Extension work

1. The mention of 'park rangers' tells us that the story is set in a national park, where animals roam free. What job do you suppose the park rangers do?
2. Which part of the poem appeals to you the most and why?
3. The poem is set in Africa. But suppose this event took place in Britain, in an ordinary garden. How might a child feel if they looked out of the window and saw they had lions in their garden?
4. List all the verbs in the poem. Substitute other verbs. What difference do they make to the poem?
5. List all the adjectives. Substitute other adjectives. What difference do they make to the poem?
6. Invent a conversation between the watchers, Billy and the poem's author. How old do you think they are? What do you think they might say to one another?