

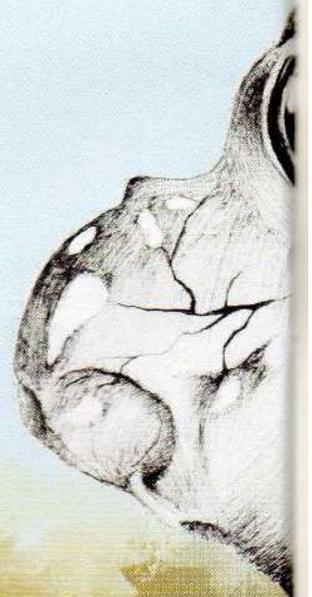
The mudskipper

With an air of regal propriety
The mudskipper stands guard
On the exposed mudflats at low tide
Surveying his transient empire of primeval ooze—
5 A kingdom trapped between sea and land.

Bulbous eyes swivel independently
Wary of winged or clawed predators—or both.
With deft warnings and occasional skirmishes
The mudskipper defends his territory against usurpers
10 As he oars across the mud on rudimentary fin arms
Strategically manoeuvring with practised grace
And grazing nonchalantly on rich detritus.
Neighbouring soldier crabs salute him
With their single gigantic claws
15 While a rabble army of shellfish
Scribble their concerns
All around him.

A dagger-sharp shadow slices the mud
Signalling the kingfisher's swoop.
20 In an instant
Scrambling crabs disappear
Leaving bubbles, ripples, panic.
The mudskipper flicks his muscular tail
skipping ... skimming ... sliding ... slapping
25 An undignified retreat.
The king of ooze
Defers to the aerial king
And lives to rule another day.

Greg Reid



27. In the second stanza, the mudskipper is likened to
- (A) a hunter.
 - (B) a traveller.
 - (C) a warrior.
 - (D) a messenger.
28. What is the main purpose of the points of ellipsis (...) in the third stanza?
- (A) to suggest the omission of some of the mudskipper's movements
 - (B) to highlight the increasing urgency of the mudskipper's movements
 - (C) to indicate a deliberate pause between the mudskipper's movements
 - (D) to emphasise the skilfulness of the mudskipper's movements
29. Which quotation suggests that the mudskipper moves with poise?
- (A) 'occasional skirmishes' (line 8)
 - (B) 'As he oars across the mud' (line 10)
 - (C) 'manoeuvring with practised grace' (line 11)
 - (D) 'flicks his muscular tail' (line 23)
30. Which word best replaces 'Defers' in line 27?
- (A) Yields
 - (B) Delivers
 - (C) Panders
 - (D) Responds
31. Which statement best captures the mudskipper's actions at the end of the poem?
- (A) He who is brave is free.
 - (B) The better part of valour is discretion.
 - (C) Courage is found in unlikely places.
 - (D) Some have been thought brave because they were afraid to run away.
32. What is a theme of the poem?
- (A) Respect for others is the key to building a community.
 - (B) Each individual has to be aware of their limitations.
 - (C) You know who your true friends are when trouble starts.
 - (D) You have to be willing to exploit weaknesses to gain power.

