

1 A Puma at Large

Pumas are large, cat-like animals which are found in America. When reports came into London Zoo that a wild puma had been spotted forty-five miles south of London, they were not taken seriously. However, as the evidence began to accumulate, experts from the Zoo felt obliged to investigate, for the descriptions given by people who claimed to have seen the puma were extraordinarily similar.

The hunt for the puma began in a small village where a woman picking blackberries saw 'a large cat' only five yards away from her. It immediately ran away when she saw it, and experts confirmed that a puma will not attack a human being unless it is cornered. The search proved difficult, for the puma was often observed at one place in the morning and at another place twenty miles away in the evening. Wherever it went, it left behind it a trail of dead deer and small animals like rabbits. Paw prints were seen in a number of places and puma fur was found clinging to bushes. Several people complained of 'cat-like noises' at night and a businessman on a fishing trip saw the puma up a tree. The experts were now fully convinced that the animal *was* a puma, but where had it come from? As no pumas had been reported missing from any zoo in the country, this one must have been in the possession of a private collector and somehow managed to escape. The hunt went on for several weeks, but the puma was not caught. It is disturbing to think that a dangerous wild animal is still at large in the quiet countryside.



Comprehension and Précis

In not more than 80 words describe how experts came to the conclusion that the animal seen by many people really was a puma. Do not include anything that is not in the passage.

Answer these questions in note form to get your points:

1. What sort of reports were received by London Zoo?
2. Were the reports similar in nature or not?
3. Who saw it first?
4. Did it stay in one place, or did it move from place to place?
5. What did it leave behind it?
6. Were paw-prints and puma fur found as well or not?
7. What was heard at night?
8. Was the animal seen up a tree or not?
9. Were experts now sure that the animal really was a puma or not?

Vocabulary

Give another word or phrase to replace the following words as they are used in the passage: spotted (l. 4); accumulate (l. 7); obliged to (l. 8); claimed (l. 9); extraordinarily similar (ll. 10-11); immediately (l. 15); convinced (l. 24).

Composition

Describe the occasion when the woman picking blackberries saw the puma. Expand the following into a paragraph of about 150 words.

Mrs Stone had spent the whole morning . . . It was nearly lunch time, so she decided . . . She was just . . . when she heard a noise in . . . Then she saw an animal which . . . She knew it was not a cat because . . . The animal suddenly . . . and she thought it was going to . . . She dropped her basket and . . . Hearing the sound, the animal . . . after which, Mrs Stone . . . and ran all the way home. She told her neighbours that . . . but they did not believe her. She also telephoned the police but they . . . (86 words.)

Letter-writing

On a full page, show the exact position of each of the following:

The address and date; the beginning of the letter; the Introduction; the Purpose; the Conclusion; the letter-ending; the signature; the postscript. Supply all necessary full stops and commas.

Key Structures

Simple, Compound and Complex Statements. (1 KS 186)

Exercise

Underline all the joining words in the passage. Note carefully how simple statements have been joined to make compound or complex statements.

Special Difficulties

Where had it come from? (l. 24)

Instead of saying:

About whom are you talking?

That is the film about which I told you.

It is better to say:

Who(m) are you talking about?

That is the film I told you about. Compare i SD 78.

Exercises

A. Complete these sentences by adding a suitable word to the end of each one:

1. What are you looking . . . ?
2. Where is your mother going . . . ?
3. Whom has the letter been sent . . . ?
4. This is the house I was born . . .
5. What does your decision depend . . . ?

B. Write these sentences again changing the position of the words in italics. Where possible, omit the words *whom* or *which*.

1. He is the man *about* whom we have heard so much.
2. The shelf *on* which you put those books has collapsed.
3. *From* whom did you receive a letter?
4. This is the road *by* which we came.
5. Where is the pencil *with* which you were playing?