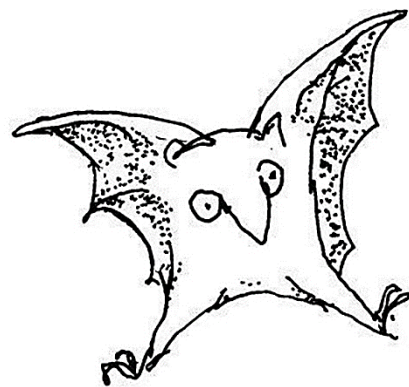


Name: _____

A Bat is Born *by Randall Jarrell*

A bat is born
Naked and blind and pale.
His mother makes a pocket of her tail
and catches him.
5 He clings to her long fur
By his thumbs and toes and teeth.
And then the mother dances through the night
Doubling and looping, soaring, somersaulting—
Her baby hangs on underneath.
10 All night, in happiness, she hunts and flies.
Her high sharp cries
Like shining needlepoints of sound
Go out into the night, and echoing back,
Tell her what they have touched.
15 She hears how far it is, how big it is,
Which way it's going:
She lives by hearing.
The mother eats the moths and gnats she catches
In full flight; in full flight
20 The mother drinks the water of the pond
She skims across. Her baby hangs on tight.
Her baby drinks the milk she makes him
In moonlight or starlight, in mid-air.
Their single shadow, printed on the moon
25 Or fluttering across the stars,
Whirls on all night; at daybreak
The tired mother flaps home to her rafter.
The others all are there.



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30 They hang themselves up by their toes,
 They wrap themselves in their brown wings.
 Bunched upside-down, they sleep in air.
 Their sharp ears, their sharp teeth, their quick sharp faces
 Are dull and slow and mild.
 All the bright day, as the mother sleeps,
35 She folds her wings about her sleeping child.

THE END

The poem is *not* divided into stanzas (paragraphs). Why is that?

The poet doesn't want you to pause while reading the poem. He wants you to read it all the way through—without a break—right up to the end. He wants you to feel as if you are moving along with the mother bat—just as her baby is—continuously, all night long until daybreak.

Notice the line-numbering in the margin. Every fifth line is numbered.

1. Instinctive behavior is something that an animal knows to do without being told or taught. In lines 5-6, what does the baby bat do *instinctively*?
2. All night, the mother bat hunts and flies. The poet tells us that her sharp cries are "*like shining needlepoints of sound*." What type of figurative speech is he using here?
3. In lines 11-17, the poet is describing a special adaptation that bats have. What is it?
4. *Where* does the mother bat catch her food?

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5. What does the mother bat drink? Where does she get it?

How does she get it? (Does she land or keep flying while she drinks?)

6. What does the baby bat eat/drink? Where does he get it?

7. The poet says that the bats' single shadow is "*printed on the moon.*"
What type of figurative speech is he using here (line 24)?

8. What does mother bat do when she gets home to her rafter (roosting spot)?

9. Notice that the poem does not have a regular rhyme pattern. But the poet does use some rhyming words within the poem. In lines 1-9, which word rhymes with "*pale*" (line 2)?

Which word rhymes with "*teeth*" (line 6)?

10. In lines 10-14, which word rhymes with "*flies*" (line 10)?

11. In lines 15-25, which word rhymes with "*flight*" (line 19)?

12. In lines 30-35, which word rhymes with "*mild*" (line 33)?