

The Triantiwontigongolope

C J Dennis

There's a very funny insect that you do not often spy,
And it isn't quite a spider, and it isn't quite a fly;
It is something like a beetle, and a little like a bee,
But nothing like a wooly grub that climbs upon a tree.
Its name is quite a hard one, but you'll learn it soon, I hope.
So try:

Tri-
Tri-anti-wonti-
Triantiwontigongolope.

It lives on weeds and wattle-gum, and has a funny face;
Its appetite is hearty, and its manners a disgrace.
When first you come upon it, it will give you quite a scare,
But when you look for it again, you find it isn't there.
And unless you call it softly it will stay away and mope.
So try:

Tri-
Tri-anti-wonti-
Triantiwontigongolope.

It trembles if you tickle it or tread upon its toes;
It is not an early riser, but it has a snubbish nose.
If you sneer at it, or scold it, it will scuttle off in shame,
But it purrs and purrs quite proudly if you call it by its name,
And offer it some sandwiches of sealing-wax and soap.
So try:

Tri-
Tri-anti-wonti-
Triantiwontigongolope .

But of course you haven't seen it; and I truthfully confess
That I haven't seen it either, and I don't know its address.
For there isn't such an insect, though there really might have been
If the trees and grass were purple, and the sky was bottle green.
It's just a little joke of mine, which you'll forgive, I hope.
Oh, try!

Tri-
Tri-anti-wonti-
Triantiwontigongolope.

1. Comprehensive Glossary

Word	Meaning
-------------	----------------

spy	To notice or see something
-----	----------------------------

beetle	An insect with a hard shell
--------	-----------------------------

woolly grub	A furry caterpillar
-------------	---------------------

wattle-gum	Australian trees with yellow flowers
------------	--------------------------------------

manners	The way someone behaves towards others
---------	--

disgrace	Bad behaviour
----------	---------------

mope	To act sad or miserable
------	-------------------------

trembles	Shakes slightly
----------	-----------------

tread	Step on
-------	---------

snubbish	Small and short (like a nose)
----------	-------------------------------

sneer	To smile or speak in an unkind way
-------	------------------------------------

scuttle	To move quickly with short steps
---------	----------------------------------

sealing-wax	A wax used to seal letters
-------------	----------------------------

confess	To admit something
---------	--------------------

bottle green	A dark green colour
--------------	---------------------

2. Line-by-Line Explanation of Meaning

Stanza 1

- The poet describes a strange, imaginary insect — not quite like any real insect.
- It's given a very long and funny name: *Triantiwontigongolope*.

Stanza 2

- It eats weeds and gum leaves, looks odd, and behaves badly.
- It's hard to find — it hides unless you call it softly by name.

Stanza 3

- It's sensitive if touched or insulted, but enjoys being treated kindly.
- Its favourite food is a silly, impossible combination: sealing-wax and soap.

Stanza 4

- The poet admits the insect doesn't exist — it's just a playful invention.
- The poem is a joke, inviting the reader to imagine a world where such creatures could exist.

3. Line-by-Line Annotation of Language Techniques

Stanza 1

- “very funny insect” — descriptive language (tone: playful)
- “not quite a spider... not quite a fly” — repetition + contrast
- Invented name — neologism for humour and rhythm

Stanza 2

- “funny face” — descriptive imagery
- “manners a disgrace” — personification (giving human manners to an insect)
- “call it softly” — personification, humour

Stanza 3

- “trembles if you tickle” — personification
- “snubbish nose” — descriptive imagery
- “purrs and purrs” — onomatopoeia + repetition
- “sandwiches of sealing-wax and soap” — nonsense imagery for comic effect

Stanza 4

- “truthfully confess” — conversational tone
- “trees and grass... purple, sky... bottle green” — colour imagery + absurdity
- “little joke of mine” — breaking the fourth wall (direct address to reader)

4. Multiple Choice Questions

1. What type of insect is the Triantiwontigongolope?
 - a) A type of beetle
 - b) An imaginary insect
 - c) A type of spider
 - d) A moth
2. Which two creatures is it compared to in stanza 1?
 - a) Fly and bee
 - b) Beetle and bee
 - c) Spider and moth
 - d) Caterpillar and moth
3. What does the insect eat?
 - a) Grass and flowers
 - b) Weeds and wattle-gum
 - c) Bread and honey
 - d) Soap and jam
4. How does it behave when insulted?
 - a) It laughs
 - b) It scuttles off in shame
 - c) It attacks
 - d) It hides in a tree
5. What sound does it make when happy?
 - a) Chirp
 - b) Purr
 - c) Buzz
 - d) Squeak
6. What does the poet confess in the last stanza?
 - a) The insect is dangerous
 - b) The insect does not exist
 - c) The insect is real but rare
 - d) The insect lives in the forest
7. What unusual colours are suggested for the imaginary world?
 - a) Pink trees and orange sky
 - b) Purple grass and bottle green sky
 - c) Red grass and black sky
 - d) Blue trees and yellow sky

8. The poem's tone is best described as:
- a) Serious
 - b) Humorous
 - c) Angry
 - d) Sad
9. What makes the name "Triantiwontigongolope" special?
- a) It is a real Aboriginal word
 - b) It is made up and rhythmic
 - c) It means "bug" in Greek
 - d) It is the name of a flower
10. Why does the poet repeat the insect's name in each stanza?
- a) To make it easier to spell
 - b) To make it funny and memorable
 - c) To make it sound serious
 - d) To make the poem longer

5. Comprehension Questions

1. What does the poet compare the Triantiwontigongolope to?

2. Why is it difficult to find the insect?

3. How does it react when called softly?

4. What happens if you tickle it?

5. How does the poet make the insect seem human-like?

6. What unusual “food” does the insect like?

7. What does the poet admit in the last stanza?

8. Why might the poet have invented this insect?

9. How does the repetition of the name affect the reader?

10. What words or phrases show the poem is meant to be humorous?

6. Analytical Cloze Passage

Word Bank: *imaginary, humour, repetition, personification, colours, invented, playful, purrs, nonsense, friendly*

The poem *The Triantiwontigongolope* is a (1) _____ description of an (2) _____ insect with a long, (3) _____ name. The poet uses (4) _____ to make the insect seem human, describing how it trembles, scuttles, and even (5) _____ when happy. There is also plenty of (6) _____ imagery, such as “sandwiches of sealing-wax and soap,” which is pure (7) _____. The use of (8) _____ of the name makes it funny and memorable. The poem’s absurd (9) _____ — purple grass and bottle green sky — help create a world where such an insect could exist. Overall, the tone is light and (10) _____, inviting the reader to imagine the impossible.