

Read the following poem very carefully and then answer the questions below as fully as possible.

A donkey

His face is what I like.

And his head, much too big for his body- a toy head,

A great, rabbit-eared, pantomime head,

And his friendly rabbit face,

His big, friendly, humorous eyes-which can turn wicked, 5

Long and devilish, when he lays his ears back.

But mostly he's comical- and that's what I like.

I like the joke he seems

Always just about to tell me. And the laugh,

The rusty, pump-house engine that cranks up laughter 10

From some long-ago, far off, laughter-less desert-

The dry, hideous guffaw

That makes his great teeth nearly fall out.

Ted Hughes

1. What does the speaker of the poem feel are the two most likeable aspects of the donkey?
2. Describe in as much detail as possible, what the phrases “toy head” and “friendly rabbit face” tell us about the appearance of the donkey.
3. In the first verse of the poem the poet makes it clear that the donkey's face can have two moods.
 - a) What are these moods ?
 - b) How does the donkey achieve them?
4. The poet spends a lot of time in the second verse describing the donkey's “laugh”. What comparison is used to describe the creation of the laughter and how does this help us understand what the laughter sounds like?
5. What do you think the reference to the “desert” in line 11 is about? Why is the desert “laughter –less”?
6. Is the donkey's laughter a pleasant sound? Give a clear reason for your answer.
7. If you had to choose an animal to be the subject of a poem which would you choose? Explain **in detail** why your chosen animal would be such a good subject.