

The Iron Man by Ted Hughes - Beginning of Chapter 5

LO: Shared Reading

There was no time to be wasted. The Iron Man allowed himself to be taken to pieces, arms, legs, body, head, all separate, so each part could be flown to Australia on a different airliner. He was too big to be flown out in one piece.

At the same time a ship sailed from China, loaded with great iron girders, and another ship sailed from Japan loaded with fuel oil. The Iron Man had ordered these. The girders and the oil and a team of engineers were unloaded on the beach of Northern Australia, near the space-bat-angel-dragon's neck. Then the Iron Man's parts were landed at the same spot, and the engineers fitted him together. He stood up on the beach and shouted his challenge.

"Sit up," he roared. "Sit up and take notice, you great space-lizard."

The space-bat-angel-dragon sat up slowly. He had never noticed the fussing of the boats and aeroplanes down there on the beach near his neck. Now he gazed in surprise at the Iron Man, who seemed very tiny to him, though his voice was big enough.

The Iron Man spoke again.

"I challenge you," he shouted, "to a test of strength."

A test of strength? The space-bat-angel-dragon couldn't believe his ears. A tiny little creature like the Iron Man challenging him to a test of strength? He simply laughed. Loud and long. Then he peered down again at the Iron Man, while the echo of his laugh was still rolling round the earth. He peered down out of the sky at this odd little thing on the beach, with the even tinier men scuttling around it.

"And if I can prove myself stronger than you are, then you must promise to become my slave," cried the Iron Man.

The dragon smiled. Aircraft flew around, watching this amazing conversation between the space-bat-angel-dragon and the Iron Man. Ships out at sea watched through telescopes.

"And if you don't accept my challenge," shouted the Iron Man, "then you're a miserable cowardly reptile, not fit to bother with."

Retrieval

- 1) Why was the Iron Man taken to pieces to be flown to Australia?
- 2) Find and copy one of the names Iron Man uses to address the space-bat-angel-dragon.

Words in Context

- 3) The Iron Man describes the space-bat-angel-dragon as 'miserable cowardly reptile'.
What is the meaning of cowardly? Use cowardly in a sentence.
- 4) Find and copy 3 verbs from the text.

Inference

- 5) Why did the space-bat-angel-dragon laugh when Iron Man challenged him to a test of strength?
- 6) 'Ships out at sea watched through telescopes.' Why would people keep their distance?

cowardly

lacking courage

