

Merry Meerkats: Life in the Meerkat Colony

By Sheri Skelton



Cast of Characters

Michael Meerkat

Katy Meerkat

Mary Meerkat

Thomas Meerkat

Harley Meerkat

Hazel Meerkat

Samuel Meerkat

Fred Meerkat

Mark Meerkat

All the Meerkats: We live in the Kalahari Desert in Africa. Our home is a burrow in the ground, lined with grass. We live in a group called a colony.

Michael Meerkat: In the morning, I stick my head out of the burrow. If the sun is shining, I'll come out and soak up some of the sun's warmth. If it's raining, I'll stay underground.

Harley and Hazel Meerkat: The day is bright and beautiful, just right for wrestling and playing around.

Thomas Meerkat: Time to search for food, to look for insects, lizards, snakes, and other tasty treats to eat.

Samuel Meerkat: Today, I'll be the sentry, keeping watch for predators. I'll stand on my hind legs and scan the sky for eagles, or climb a tree to spot a jackal or hyena sneaking up on us. My eyes are like binoculars, and the dark rings around my eyes are like built-in sunglasses.

Katy Meerkat: I'll be the kit sitter today. I'll stay close to the burrow and watch over the young meerkats while the hunters are out looking for food. I'll keep an eye on Harley and Hazel as they play around.

Fred Meerkat: Today, I'll be a teacher. Mark is six months old, old enough to learn to hunt. I'll stay by his side and show him how to find food.

Mark Meerkat: Now that I'm old enough, I can no longer spend my days playing in and around the burrow with the other little meerkats. Not only will I be a hunter, but some days I'll be a sentry or a kit sitter or someone fixing the burrow or making it bigger. I will be able to do whatever needs to be done.

Mary Meerkat: Today, I'll do some digging. The burrow needs some repairs. With my claws, I can dig as much dirt as my body weight in only a few seconds.

Michael Meerkat: I'll stand behind Mary and help remove the extra dirt from the burrow. Maybe we'll create a new entrance hole or a bolt hole where we can hide if danger comes.

Samuel Meerkat: If I see a predator approaching, I'll sound an alarm call. We meerkats have 20 different sounds that we use to communicate with each other.

Katy Meerkat: I'll use one of the other calls when it's time for the kits to eat.

Fred Meerkat and Mark Meerkat: If we get separated from each other while we're hunting, we'll use a special call that signals where we are.

Thomas Meerkat: If a predator threatens, I can make myself look big and scary by stretching

my legs.

Fred Meerkat and Mark Meerkat: We'll help create a dust screen by digging as fast as we can, so that the predator loses sight of us.

Thomas Meerkat: But if the predator still threatens us, we'll become a mob by packing ourselves tightly together. We'll start jumping up and down and growling. We'll scare the predator.

Michael Meerkat: Before the sun sets, all the meerkats come back to the burrow.

Mary Meerkat: We have had a busy day, and now it's time for us to help each other clean up.

Katy Meerkat: We'll also give each other some hugs.

All the Meerkats: And then we'll fall asleep, all huddled together, snug in our burrow.



1. What is it About? Come Closer!

Student Name _____ Date _____

Look at the impressionist painting from the first activity and answer the following sets of questions.

Part I

1. Who is depicted in this image?

2. How many figures?

3. What are the genders of the figures?

4. How are they dressed?

5. What action(s) are occurring in this image? By whom? Between whom?

6. What is the setting of this image- where does it take place?

7. What time of day is it? (Day, evening, night?)

8. What is the subject of this image?

Part II

1. Is there anything in the image that indicates to students the time of year depicted in this image?

2. What is the evidence that tells the viewer in what season this image takes place?

3. What do the plants and trees in this image tell you about the season?

4. What about the clothing the people are wearing?

5. What about the activities that are being depicted?



2. What is it About? Come a Little Closer!

Student Name _____ Date _____

Look at the impressionist painting from the first activity and answer the following sets of questions.

Part I

1. Who is depicted in this image?

2. How many figures?

3. What are the genders of the figures?

4. How are they dressed?

5. What action(s) are occurring in this image? By whom? Between whom?

6. What is the setting of this image- where does it take place?

7. What time of day is it? (Day, evening, night?)

8. What is the subject of this image?

Part II

1. Is there anything in the image that indicates to students the time of year depicted in this image?

2. What is the evidence that tells the viewer in what season this image takes place?

3. What do the plants and trees in this image tell you about the season?

4. What about the clothing the people are wearing?

5. What about the activities that are being depicted?



3. What is it About? A Little Closer Still

Student Name _____ Date _____

Look at the impressionist painting from the first activity and answer the following sets of questions.

Part I

1. Who is depicted in this image?

2. How many figures?

3. What are the genders of the figures?

4. How are they dressed?

5. What action(s) are occurring in this image? By whom? Between whom?

6. What is the setting of this image- where does it take place?

7. What time of day is it? (Day, evening, night?)

8. What is the subject of this image?

Part II

1. What do they think is the relationship between the figures in this image?

2. Where is the attention of each of these figures directed? Students should note the direction of each figure's eyes.

3. What are the woman on the far left and the woman in the center doing?

4. What does the body language of the young man indicate to you? Does he seem aware of what is going on?

5. What does the way he is dressed tell you about him?

Part III

1. Which figure is the fortune teller?

2. How are the women in this painting related to each other?

3. Who is the young man?

Part IV

1. Is this a direct depiction of the parable? Why or why not?

2. Does this specific scene take place in the narrative of the story?

3. Why do you think this picture is often connected to this parable?

4. How does this painting *allude* to the parable of the Prodigal Son?

5. What are the details of the painting which might have reminded viewers familiar with the story of the parable?

6. Why do you think that the painter created an image that *alluded* to the parable instead of depicting it?

7. Does this image emphasize both of these messages? Just one? Explain your answer.

8. Why do you think the painter has chosen to show the young man in the process of losing his money rather than returning home (a common theme in Western visual art)?

9. The symbolic meaning or message of a work of art is also thought of as one of its subjects. How many kinds of subjects have you found in this painting? What are they? Explain your answer.
