

I'd Rather be Common

The Aracauna sat up, flustered again.
(She was a rather disturbed little hen.)

“I'm a rare bird,
my eggs green and blue,
tell me, Cream* horse,
What's rare about you?”

“Dear Aracauna, answered the mare,
I think the point is, we're all really rare.
If you want to compare who is rare among breeds
You'll find my new colt is the rarest of steeds.”

Up popped the comb of the Iowa Blue,
“Horse, I know your numbers are few.
But, are they as low as just one or two?
As chickens, we're almost extinct - are you?”

The Cream nodded sadly and said, “To be fair,
As I mentioned before, we're all very rare.”

Just then, the Tamworth entered his stall.
“I don't know the pint of debating, you all.
Unless people out there want what we give,
There is simply no way we'll hope to live.”

“I give green eggs!” said Aracauna with pride.
Horse shyly added, “I give them a ride.”
“The Iowa Blue** can raise a fine brood.”
Pig grinned: “And bacon's their favorite food!”

“But,” he went on “when farms get so big
that they can raise thousands of one kind of pig,
we're simply outnumbered and people don't know
that if they don't buy rare meat, rare pigs will go.

It's the same way with chickens.
People just choose
to raise one kind of egg-layer,
and that's all they use.

Those millions of leghorns won't go extinct
Meanwhile, other breeds hang on the brink!

“Tamworth?”,asked the American Cream.
“What would you want if you had your dream?”

The pig looked over at his friend the horse,
“That people would know we are special, of course.
They’d value the gifts each of us brings,
From grasshopper eating to beautiful wings.
They’d shop from small farmers to buy all their meat;
they’d realize rare breeds are delicious to eat.

And farmers would learn what a help we can be
When working together, allowed to run free.
We eat all the bugs and clear out the weeds.
They’d be thrilled at our skills - how we meet their needs.

Farm after farm would raise more of our kind.
We’d just be common, but we wouldn’t mind!
I’d rather my family live on through the ages
than end up a picture on history pages.
I’d rather be common than exceedingly rare.
I’d rather see diversity everywhere.

The Tamworth finished with a snort and a shake,
“I say extinction is one big mistake.”

The horse stood there quietly, chewing her hay,
thinking about what he had to say.

His message is simple, but subtle to learn.
It’s not about saving one animal, or farm.
Use rare breed products, is what Tamworth pleads,
So we’ll longer have such a thing as rare breeds.

*The Aracauna chicken calls the horse ”Cream”as a nickname. The full name of the horse’s breed is American Cream.

**The Iowa Blue is another breed of chicken, and this breed is listed as critically endangered.

READING COMPREHENSION:

1. Find ten facts you learned while reading this poem. Write them down in full sentences.

2. Who are the characters? List them by name, species and breed. (Hint: Be sure to read the footnote!)
3. Animals are often given characteristics they do not have as a way of helping the reader relate to the story. This is called “anthropomorphizing”. An example might be, “The frog was jealous of the mouse.” It is hardly scientific to call a frog jealous. Name three emotions that the animals in this poem supposedly feel, and write the line that shows those emotions.
4. What is the problem the pig identifies with large-scale farms (“when farms get so big”)?
5. At the end of the poem, the author summarizes the message of the poem as spoken by the Tamworth pig. What is the Tamworth’s message? Use complete sentences in your answer and put it in your own words. Try to say it as simply as possible.