How Much Can a Bare Bear Bear?

What Are Homonyms and Homophones?

by Brian P. Cleary

illustrated by Brian Gable
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What Are Homonyms and Homophones?
Homonyms:
Two or more words that are pronounced the same and spelled the same but have different meanings

Homophones:
Two or more words that are pronounced the same but have different spellings and different meanings

To my sister Mary, who was merry on the day she was to marry
—B.P.C.
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Homonyms are words that sound and also look alike.
But they have different meanings, as in "Can you pass that can, Mike?"
These words are a blast if you say them quite fast.
like

"Why don't we toast with some toast?"
A light may be light, like a small paper kite.

A trunk can be found in a trunk.
An inchworm or snail could scale a scale.

A lean cat could lean on a skunk.
But punch cannot punch, and at breakfast or lunch, your jam cannot jam on a trumpet.
A bowl cannot bowl, but a roll might just roll if it's not made as flat as a crumpet.
Now, some words sound identical but are spelled in different ways. These words are known as homophones, like praise.
and preys

and prays.
Though homophones have matching sounds, their meanings aren’t the same.
And there isn’t any question, they’re as fun as any game.
A bee can be.

A flea can flee.

A burro can burrow a hole.
A horse can get hoarse from talking, of course.

A ewe could take you on a stroll.
A fowl can be foul.
A toad can be towed.
An heir mustn’t err in the air.
A whale can wail.

A male can mail.
A pair might just pare a big pear.
A bust can be bused by a driver you trust, and Barry can bury a berry.
A band could be banned if they get out of hand,

and Mary (who’s merry) can marry.
But the sea cannot see, and it's clear as can be that a ball will not bawl when it's rolled.
A moose has no use for a bottle of mousse, and a creek doesn't creak when it's old.
But a bear should be bare,

and it wouldn’t be rare

if wood would be kept in a shed.
A Sioux might not sue if he knew that the gnu that he bought wasn't new like you said.
My niece could see *Grease* both in *Greece* and in *Nice*.

A Czech could be writing a check.
A maid could be made to be very afraid when she heard a big herd on the deck.
You could search the Whole World
while it spun and it whirled
in each inn
and beneath every stone.
And you’d find no more pleasures than these great verbal treasures—the homonym and homophone!
So, what are homonyms and homophones?
Do you know?