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# CIE IGCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE 0486

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NOTES ON POEMS FROM “SONGS OF OURSELVES” [PART 1]

# HORSES

- **Summary:**

- A horse lover (for their majesty and strength) recalls his childhood (*'childish hour'* and *'it fades'*) and his experience through the industrial revolution.
- Setting: on a farm; *'plough'*, *'mill'*, *'bare field'*

- **Split into three parts according to time**

- Part 1 = *Stanza 1 to 4* (Day time)
- Part 2 = *Stanza 5 to 6* (Dusk falls and emotions change)
- Part 3 = *Stanza 7* (Persona pulls away from memory and returns to reality)

- **Edwin Muir:**

- Edwin Muir was an Orcadian poet.
- Remembered for his deeply felt and vivid poetry in plain language with few stylistic devices.
- Significant modern poet.

# HORSES

- **Language:**

- Few and reiterating stylistic devices however very powerful and impactful
- Oxymoron, '*great hulks were seraphim of gold*' & '*bright and fearful*'
- Simile, '*like struggling snake*' & '*as brilliant and as wide as night*'
- Hyperbole, '*gigantic in the gloam*'
- Horses metaphorized as:
  - Steam train: '*pistons*', '*steaming nostrils*', '*warm and glowing*', '*smouldering*'
  - Soldiers: '*conquering*', '*marched broad-breasted*', '*struggling snakes*'
  - Magical creatures: '*magic power*', '*seraphim of gold*', '*cruel apocalyptic light*'

- **Structure:**

- Consistent rhyme pattern of AABB, however slightly lost in the second last stanza when a half rhyme is used instead of a full one
- Enjambment begins in 5<sup>th</sup> stanza, '*nostrils home They came*'

# HORSES

- **Sound devices:**

- Constant rhyme pattern similar to the trot of hooves of the horses
- Sibilance for weaker (weak sound): *'struggling snakes'* & *'flowed off ... in flakes'*
- Strong alliteration when describing horse: *'broad-breasted'* & *'gigantic ... gloam'*

- **Attitudes/feelings:**

- Threatened by horses: *'terrible'*, *'wild and strange'*, *'watched fearful'*
- Strong and deceiving: *'hooves like piston'*, *'yet seem as standing still'*
- Impression changes to *'rapture, when, one furrow done'*
- Admiring strength/beauty: *'marched broad-breasted'*, *'light flowed off their bossy sides'*, *'gigantic in the gloam'*, *'warm and glowing'*
- Fears intensely: *'brilliant and as wide as night'*, *'cruel apocalyptic light'*, *'leaping ire of the wind'*, *'rage invisible and blind'*
- Conclusive, back to reality: *'Ah now, it fades! It fades!,' pine again'*.

# HORSES

- **Linking poems:**

- 'Hunting Snake' and 'Pike' shares the fear for subject
- 'Pike', 'Cockroach', 'Hunting Snake' all poems focus on just one animal
- 'Pike' and 'Hunting Snake' as they are memories
- 'Summer Farm' and 'Pied Beauty', all on the same setting; farm
- 'Pike' which has distinct parts with many diverse emotions

**NOTES**

# PIKE

- **Summary:**

- About pike, and the poet's feelings about them, fishing, about the brutality of some little ones he had as pets, which later grew out of control.
- Setting: on a farm; *'plough', 'mill', 'bare field'*

- **Split into three parts according to story**

- Part 1 = *Stanza 1 to 4* (Factual and informative)
- Part 2 = *Stanza 5 to 7* (Anecdote about pike kept behind glass)
- Part 3 = *Stanza 8 to 11* (Final story about pike in a pond)

- **Ted Hughes:**

- Was an English poet and children's writer.
- Critics routinely rank him as one of the best poets of his generation.
- Hughes was British Poet Laureate from 1984 until his death (1998)
- Animals appear frequently throughout his work as deity, metaphor, persona, and icon

# PIKE

- **Language:**

- Conventional tone and simple language, very literal
- Semantic field of evil, '*killers*', '*malevolent*' and '*horror*'
- Juxtaposition, '*delicacy and horror*' & '*lilies and muscular tench*'
- Oxymoron, '*still splashes*'
- Repetition,
  - Repetition of '*immense*': '*too immense to stir, so immense and old*'
  - Repetition of '*eye*' – watching: '*outside eye stared*', '*in this eye*', '*for what eye*'
- Hyperbole, '*as deep as England*', '*fifty years across*'

- **Structure:**

- Dramatic pause, '*there were two. Finally one*'
- Enjambment, '*muscular tench Had outlasted*', '*old That past nightfall*'

# PIKE

- **Sound devices:**

- No regular rhyme scheme
- Strong alliteration 'g' describing pike: *'green tigering the gold'*
- Weak sibilance suggesting subtlety: *'silhouette of submarine'*

- **Attitudes/feelings:**

- Fear of the pike: *'killers from the egg', 'malevolent ... grin', 'I dared not cast'*
- Obsession with the creature: *'kept behind glass', 'green tigering the gold'*
- Admires the pike's power: *'iron in this eye', 'two feet long', 'immense'*

- **Linking poems:**

- 'Hunting snake' as both persona's admire the creature
- 'Horses' as they are both memories
- 'Horses', 'Cockroach', 'Hunting snake' as all main characters are animals



# HUNTING SNAKE

- **Summary:**
  - A group of people are observing a passing snake
  - There is no interaction between the snake and the people
  - Setting: daytime outdoor
- **Split into two parts according to emotion:**
  - Part 1: **First 2 stanzas** (admiration/fascination of the creature)
  - Part 2: **Last 2 stanzas** (curiosity/apprehension of the snake's potential ferocity)
- **Judith Wright:**
  - Campaigned for Aboriginal land rights
  - Wrote mostly about Australia's land and wildlife
  - Also writes about the indigenous population of Australia
  - Known for comparing inner existence and objective reality in her poems

# HUNTING SNAKE

- **Language:**

- Past tense and 1st person plural suggesting that it is the persona's memory
- Very literal language, few language devices:
- Personification: *'season's grace'*
- Hyperbole: *'sun glazed his curves of diamond scale'*
- Juxtaposition: *'Cold, dark and splendid'*
- Repetition
  - Repeating use of *'breath'* for dramatic effect: *'we lost breath'* and *'took a deeper breath'*
  - Repeating use of *'sun'* for an affect of awe: *'sun-warmed'* and *'sun glazed'*
  - Repeated focus on *'eyes'* and *'watching'*: *'watch him pass'*, *'our eyes went with him'* and *'looked at each other'*

# HUNTING SNAKE

- **Structure:**

- Enjambment is evident in all stanzas
- Consistent rhyme scheme of ABAB until last stanza where it changes to ABBA
- Suggests that the whole experience with the snake was actually scary
- Interesting that it was realized after the snake disappeared
- The Poem is a 4 stanza ballad

- **Sound devices:**

- Alliteration: *'we walked'*, abundance of alliteration in 3rd stanza ('w' and 'f')
- Sibilance: *'scarcely thought; still as we stood'* emphasis on the hissing of a snake
- Power of 3: *'Cold, dark and splendid'*

NOTES

# HUNTING SNAKE

- **Attitudes/feelings:**

- Main three persona impressions are Fascination, Admiration and Fear
- Fascinated by the snake: *'lost breath to watch him pass'* and *'great black snake'*
- Curious of the snake's path: *'our eyes went with him'*
- Admires the superficial beauty of the snake: *'sun glazed his curves of diamond scale'* and *'Cold, dark and splendid'*
- Also in fear of the snake (apprehensive): *'froze half-through a pace'* and *'fierce intent'*
- Marveled by the creature's presence

- **Linking poems:**

- 'The Cockroach': shares fascination impression
- 'Pike' and 'Horses': shares fearful impression
- Relatable to 'Pike', 'Horses' and 'Hunting Snake' since they all focus on a specific animal
- Poem tells only one story, similar to 'The Cockroach' different from 'Horses' and 'Pike'

# THE COCKROACH

- **Summary:**

- One person is observing the movements made by a cockroach
- There are no interactions between the person and cockroach
- Setting: indoors (inferred from objects described in poem)

- **Split into two parts according to emotion:**

- Part 1: **1st line to 4th line**, the cockroach is normal, idle emotions
- Part 2: **5th line to 9th line**, the cockroach is circling then flips, apprehensive emotions
- Part 3: **10th line to 14th line**, the cockroach stops and is uncertain, empathetic uncertain emotions

- **Kevin Halligan:**

- Travels countries and writes about their fascinations, Asia was birthplace of this poem
- His poems are on one level very direct but on another level very powerful
- They often consist of a subject (such as an insect) to reflect something else (e.g. himself)

# THE COCKROACH

- **Language:**

- Literal Language, little use of language devices
- Metaphoric: *'dust that rode the floor'*
- Empathy: *'I recognized myself'*
- Hyperbole: *'giant cockroach'*
- Simile: *'As if the victim of a mild attack'*

- **Structure:** poem is a sonnet

- Rhyme scheme starts with normal ABAB then falls apart after **8th line**, becoming ABCACB
- This could be connected to the confusion of cockroach

- **Sound devices:**

- Sibilance: *'seemed quite satisfied'*
- Enjambment: **10th to 11th line** and **12th to 13th line**
- Mid-Line Pause: *'And stopped.'* This is a dramatic pause emphasizing the stopping

# THE COCKROACH

- **Attitudes/feelings:**

- The persona conveys his own life with the presence of empathy
- Observant and fascinated by the cockroach: *'I watched'* and *'giant cockroach'*
- Empathetic towards the creature's uncertainty: *'I don't know'* and *'I recognized myself'*
- Feels lost, similar to the cockroach: *'looked uncertain'* and the change in the rhyme scheme
- Feels guilty: *'Was this due payment for some vicious crime'*
- There is evidence of using specific time scales: *'at first'*, *'but soon'* and *'after a while'*
- Linked to time scales in the persona's life too

- **Linking poems:**

- 'Hunting Snake': shares fascination impression
- Relatable to 'Pike', 'Horses' and 'Hunting Snake' since they all focus on a specific animal
- The poem tells only one story, similar to 'Hunting Snake' different from 'Horses' and 'Pike'

# PIED BEAUTY

- **Summary**

- Praising God for his colorful creations
- Consistent praise for colorfulness of creations
- Setting: On a farm (*5<sup>th</sup> line*)

- **Split into three parts according to topic:**

- Part 1 = *Lines 1-6* (Praising color of animals/things/farm)
- Part 2 = *Lines 7-9* (Praising all things different)
- Part 3 = *Lines 10-11* (Praising Gods ability to create)

- **Gerard Manley Hopkins:**

- Converted to Roman Catholic.
- Leading Victorian Poet.
- Known for his use of imagery.

NOTES



# PIED BEAUTY

- **Language:**

- Very literal language
- Imagery: *'fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls'* & *'all in stipple upon trout that swim'*
- Juxtaposition: *'Rose-moles'*
- Similes: *'as a brinded cow'*
- Sibilance: *'swift, slow, sweet, sour'*

- **Structure:**

- Constant rhyme pattern ABC for the first part of poem
- For parts 2 & 3 of poem, rhyme pattern is lost (Note: all end in 'C' – consistent)
  - Part 2: DBC
  - Part 3: DC
- No enjambment used
- It is a 'Curtal' Sonnet (invented by Hopkins)

NOTES

# PIED BEAUTY

- **Sound devices:**

- Constant alliteration is found
- Inconsistent rhyme pattern
- Soft sibilance ('s') used when praising Gods different creations (*9th line*)

- **Attitudes/feelings:**

- Baffled by God's creations: 'who knows how?'
- Religious impressions: '*Glory be to God*', '*Praise him*'
- In awe of God's creation (nature):
  - '*He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change*'
  - '*For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow*'
- God is the center of universe

NOTES

# PIED BEAUTY

- **Linking poems:**

- Summer farm: Both settings are in 'farms' and have a centre of universe
  - Summer farm = Persona
  - Pied Beauty = God
- Horses: Both in awe.
  - Pied Beauty = awe of God
  - Horses = awe of Horses
- Pike: Both have 3 parts that tell a story/message and are also admiration of the creature
- Horses: Both settings also on a farm

NOTES

# SUMMER FARM

- **Summary:**

- Persona describes what he sees on the farm.
- Then we find out what he's actually seeing are different layers of his subconscious (*final stanza*)
- Setting: On a farm (inferred through lexis)

- **Split into two parts according to emotions**

- Part 1 = *First 2 stanzas* (calm and peaceful descriptions)
- Part 2 = *Final 2 stanzas* (erratic and lost emotions)

- **Norman MacCaig:**

- His poetry is known for its humour, simplicity of language and great popularity.
- Won many awards e.g. Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 1986

# SUMMER FARM

- **Language:**

- Very figurative language
- Similes, '*Green as glass*'
- Imagery, '*This grasshopper with plated face*'
- Juxtaposition, '*dives up again*' & '*tame lightnings*'
- Grasshopper = Symbolic - his stressed self
- Farm = Symbolic - his layers of emotion

- **Structure:**

- Consistent rhyme pattern of AABB
- Enjambment is constantly used; clearly found in every stanza.

- **Sound devices:**

- Constant rhyme pattern - unchanged (shows he's hiding that he's lost in his emotions)
- Sibilance: '*self under selves*' & '*selves I stand*'

NOTES

# SUMMER FARM

- **Attitudes/feelings:**

- Calm: *'tame'* & *'lie'* & *'cool, soft grass'*
- Fearful of his emotions: *'Afraid of where a thought might take me'*
- Erratic and out of control, trying to hide emotions: *'grasshopper with plated face'*
- Takes time to control his emotions: *'unfolds his legs and finds himself in space'*
- He is the centre of the universe: *'centre me'*
- Different personalities: *'self under self'*
- The truth is in everything that is going on in the farm,. It's all part of his different layers of emotions (he is the centre of it all):
  - *'with metaphysic hand lift the farm like a lid'*
  - *'Farm within farm, and in the centre me'*

NOTES

# SUMMER FARM

- **Linking poems:**

- Summer farm: Both settings are in 'farms' and have a center of universe
  - Summer farm = Persona
  - Pied Beauty = God
- Cockroach: Both personas are recognizing themselves as animals.
- Horses: Both settings also on a farm
- Hunting Snake: consistent/constant enjambment is used in both poems.

**NOTES**

# A BIRTHDAY

- **Summary:**

- The whole poem is basically the persona expressing their happiness
- It is also a very possessive and self-centered poem in the sense that 'my' is repeated many times
- Odd combination of using nature (humble) with luxury to portray happiness

- **Split into two parts according to emotions**

- First part: **1st stanza** (expressing her love in terms of nature/romantic and humble)
- Second part: **2nd stanza** (luxurious concepts but still essence of nature/snobbish)

- **Christina Rossetti:**

- Follower of the Pre-Raphaelite movement
- Sister to the founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood
- Known for composing romantic and emotional poetry
- Often had feminist concepts in her poetry



# A BIRTHDAY

- **Language:**

- Very figurative language
- Simile: *'My heart is like a singing bird/an apple tree/a rainbow shell'*
- Personification: *'apple tree... Whose boughs are bent with the thickest fruit'*
- Hyperbole: Whole of first stanza is quite exaggerated – *'my heart ... paddles in a ... sea'*
- Repetition:
  - First stanza: *'My heart is'*
  - Ending of both stanzas: *'my love is come to me'*

- **Structure:** poem is structure like a hymn

- Enjambment is recurring in all of first stanza, and last two lines in second stanza
- Rhyme scheme is quite regular with a few inconsistencies:
  - ABCBDCEC in first stanza
  - ABCBDEFE in second stanza

# A BIRTHDAY

- **Sound devices:** very few
  - Alliteration: *'dais of silk and down'* and *'boughs are bent'*
- **Attitudes/feelings:**
  - Main three impressions are Love, Majesty and Conceit (being snobby)
  - Persona is in very a deep state of romance because his/her *'love has come'* to him/her
  - Abundance of medieval majesty *'with vair and purple dyes'*; essence of majesty
  - The fact that his/her *'heart is like a rainbow shell'* portrays an almost mystical image
  - The constant imperative tone (*'raise me/carve it/work it'*); materialistic and snobbery
  - Suggests that her *'love'* has given her a new life hence *'the birthday'* of her new life
- **Linking poems:**
  - Pied Beauty, Horses, Hunting Snake, Summer Farm: all related to nature
  - Summer Farm: self-centered
  - Pied Beauty: Relatively more positive whereas the others have a major essence of negativity