

# Wider CONTEXTS EVIL

## Hawk Roosting

By Ted Hughes

Pre-reading

### 6. Word classes and translation.

a) Fill in the missing word classes and translate the noun.

Adjective	Noun	Danish translation of noun
	convenient	
	power	
	remorse	
superior		
ferocious		
brutal		
destructive		
arrogant		
confident		
megalomaniac		
mad		

LEARNING CHECK

In pairs: student A gives student B the Danish noun and student B, without looking at the task, has to come up with the equivalent English noun. Then student B gives student A the English noun and student A, without looking at the task, has to come up with the corresponding English adjective.

b)

Verb	Noun	Danish translation of noun
hesitate		
celebrate		
argue		
create		
satisfy		
assert		
inspect		
admire		

LEARNING CHECK

In pairs: student B gives student A the Danish noun and student B, without looking at the task, has to come up with the equivalent English noun. Then student A gives student B the English verb and student A, without looking at the task, has to come up with the corresponding English noun.

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## Post-reading

### LEARNING CHECK

#### 1. Written assignment: translation. No study aids.

Høgen sidder og hviler. Den lider af storhedsvanvid. Den tror, at hele verden er til for dens skyld, at den er skabelsens højdepunkt. Den mener, at det er den, der får verden til at dreje rundt, og den dræber uden at føle nogen form for anger, da den hævder, at dens væremåde er at rive hoveder af.

### WIDER CONTEXTS

#### 1. Critical context:

Critical comment on the poem. In his book *Poetry 1900 to 1975* (Faber and Faber 1979), the editor George Macbeth writes the following about Ted Hughes' poem "Hawk Roosting":

"HAWK ROOSTING. This is the monologue of a hawk sitting in the top of a wood. Hughes has said, however, that he had in mind the personality of someone like Hitler and the poem is best interpreted as a remarkable insight into the nature of Fascist psychology. At the same time it never gets away from the essential nature of the bird which is the outward subject of the poem. The headlong violence and the tensed arrogance of the poem is enormously exciting and something quite new in English poetry. One has to turn back towards Jacobean drama for this kind of uninhibited expression of villainy."

Does this critical comment enhance your understanding of the poem? Discuss.

#### 2. Literary context.

Comparison of other text by a different author: Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "The Eagle".

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) was educated at Cambridge University. He was considered the greatest poet of Victorian England, and he was made Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom in 1850 after Wordsworth died. Among his best known poems today are *In Memoriam* (1850), a collection of poems mourning the death of his friend Arthur Hallam, and "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854) about the Crimean War.

a) Look at a picture of an eagle and read the following poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

#### **The Eagle: A Fragment**

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ring'd with the azure world he stands

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

#### **Gloser**

**crag** fremspringende, stejl klippe

**'azure** bright blue

**Thunderbolt** tordenkile

- b What is the poet's attitude to the eagle?  
c What, if anything, does the eagle represent to you?  
d Write an essay where you compare "Hawk Roosting" and "The Eagle". You must include the following points in your essay:
- 1 the tenses used in the two poems
  - 2 the use of pronouns
  - 3 the use of rhyme
  - 4 the attitude to the birds expressed in the two poems
  - 5 the use of words not normally associated with birds.
- 3 Compare "Hawk Roosting" and William Blake's poem "The Tyger".

**The Tyger**  
**By William Blake**

**Pre-reading**

1. What words do you associate with:
  - a) tiger
  - b) "burning bright"
  - c) "the forests of the night"
2. Find the odd one out:

**horror**      **fear**      **strength**      **dread**      **terror**      **awe**

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3. Compare and contrast the front-page illustrations of *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*.

## The Tyger

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,  
In the forests of the night;  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful  
symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies,  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,  
Could twist the sinews of thy  
heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? & what dread  
feet?

What the hammer? what the  
chain,  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? what dread grasp,  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their  
spears,  
And water'd heaven with their  
tears:  
Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make  
thee?

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,  
In the forests of the night:  
What immortal hand or eye  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

(1794)

## Glosser

**tyger = tiger**

**i'mmortal**

udødelig

**frame**

lave, konstruere

**fearful**

skrækindjagende, uhyggelig

**'symmetry**

symmetrisk form, (her) evt. skønhed

**deeps**

dybder; underjordiske steder

**thine**

your

**he**

he who created the tyger

**aspire**

flyve højt op ligesom Ikaros. Icarus (*Greek myth.*) escaped from the labyrinth of Crete with wings attached by wax, but flew too near the sun. The wax melted and he drowned in the Aegean.

**what the hand**

what hand was it that dared  
gribe fat om evt. stjæle ilden ligesom  
Prometheus. Prometheus (*Greek myth.*) was the  
brother of Atlas. He stole fire from the gods and  
gave it to man. In punishment Zeus chained him  
to a rock and sent an eagle or vulture by day to  
eat out his liver, which was restored by night.

**what shoulder**

perhaps a reference to Atlas, who as punishment  
for leading a battle against the gods was ordered  
to carry the sky on his shoulders

**art**

snilde

**twist**

sno

**sinew** ['sinju:]

sene

**dread**

skræmmende, frygtelig

**what dread hand ? & what dread feet**

what dread

hand formed your dread feet

**'furnace**

smelteovn

**anvil**

ambolt; an iron block on which a blacksmith puts  
pieces of metal before shaping them with a  
hammer

**grasp**

greb

**clasp**

gribe om, holde fast om

**stars**

the good angels who threw down their spears and  
wept when they were defeated by Satan in their  
defense of heaven.

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## While-reading

### Comprehension and analysis

1 In groups: translate the poem.

2 In groups: take turns to read the poem. One student reads one stanza, one student paraphrases the stanza, and two students comment on what strikes them concerning rhyme, rhythm, punctuation, alliteration, repetition and sentence structure.

3 What do you call a stanza that has four lines?

4 The first stanza:

a Learn it by heart.

b Who is speaking? To whom? What is the question?

c Which aspect/s of the tiger is/are emphasized? *Beauty – danger – power – strength – size*

d What does the expression “the forests of the night” suggest?

e Why do you think the speaker finds the tiger’s symmetry fearful?

5 What is the link between stanza 1 and the following stanzas?

6 Stanza 2:

a What is the effect of the repetition of questions?

b How are stanza 1 and stanza 2 linked?

c Why the repetition of “dare”?

7 Stanza 3:

a How is the creator of the tiger characterized?

b Comment on the effect of repetition and alliteration.

c What is the effect of the unfinished sentences in stanzas 3 and 4?

8 Stanza 4:

a Where was the tiger’s brain created?

b Does the word “furnace” make you think of other things than a blacksmith’s furnace? Look also at “distant deeps” in stanza 2.

c Which word from stanza 3 is repeated? Why?

9 Stanza 5:

a How did the stars react to the creation of the tiger?

b What is the function of the personification?

c Why does the speaker ask if it is the same person who created the lamb and the tiger?

d Why do you think Blake uses capital letters in Tyger and Lamb?

10 Stanza 6:

a In an earlier draft Blake wrote “dare” both in stanza 1 and stanza 6. Why do you think Blake changed the word in stanza 1?

b Are the questions answered?

c What is the predominant metre? iambic or trochaic. Does it matter?

## Overall questions

1 How would you characterize the speaker’s reaction to the tiger?

*fascination dread awe fear admiration wonder reverence terror*

2 Is the description of the tiger realistic?

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3 Which aspect of the tiger is emphasized? *beauty power danger violence majesty vitality strength*

4 What does the tiger symbolize?

5 What is the theme of the poem? – evil – how to reconcile the existence of good and evil – power – creation – the human soul – the French Revolution

6 Try to answer the basic question asked.

7 Look at Blake's engraving. Does the engraving add to your understanding of the poem?

## LEARNING CHECK

Individually or in groups. No study aids.

1a You learned stanza 1 by heart. Now write it down.

Tyger \_\_\_\_\_

In the \_\_\_\_\_

What immortal \_\_\_\_\_

Could frame \_\_\_\_\_

b What is the rhyme pattern of the poem?

c Which is the other animal that is mentioned in the poem?

d What is the difference between the first stanza and the last stanza?

e What do you call stanzas that have four lines?

2 Mention four nouns that are (near) synonyms to "fear"

Compare the view of nature expressed in "Hawk Roosting" and Wordsworth's view of nature as, for example, expressed in "The Tables Turned" on page 204 or "My Heart Leaps Up".

3 In Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*, Act IV, scene 1, lines 146 -152, Macbeth says

"From this moment

The very firstlings of my heart shall be

The firstlings of my hand. And even now,

To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:

The castle of Macduff I will surprise,

Seize upon Fife; give to th' edge o' th' sword

His wife, his babies, and all unfortunate souls

That trace him in his line.

## Gloser

**firstlings** første indfald

**seize upon** indtage

**give to the edge of the sword** kill

**trace him in his line** der er i familie med ham

Wider

# CONTEXTS **EVIL**

Do the Hawk and Macbeth speak the same language? Support your point of view by referring to the text.