

## KEY FEATURES IN TED HUGHES POETRY

Muxamedova Sitorabegim Kamolovna.

Buxoro Shahar Turkiston Yangi

Innovatsiyalar Universiteti.

### Abstract:

The main features of Ted Hughes' poetry and the main collections of his life are written.

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Ted Hughes has emerged as a major English poet not only in Britain but in the whole of the English - speaking world. As a prolific poet, he has produced during the last thirty years over a dozen anthologies and sequences of poems. He was much interested in the external nature from the very beginning of life. He had created a distinctive imaginative world. Ted Hughes' animal poems are like a thunderbolt and indeed many of them seem to spring from the page with the energy of a force of nature. His most recent verse implies a recantation of materialism and its world of death, suffering and woe, a conscious abandonment of 'fate', even if, in halting and questioning one's destiny, one may be subject to profound loss. The future development of Hughes' poetry is hard to predict. His early poems include Pike, Wind and View of a Pig. At the first appearance these poems did not make much impression. Later on they were treated as poems of great success.

Ted Hughes is already a major poet and his career is still rich in promise. Already with elements of Crow and his translation of Seneca's Oedipus, he has made approaches to a synthesis of poetry and drama, and this is an ongoing preoccupation in his work. He has published the following collections of poems: Lupercal (1960), Meet My Folks! (1961), Earth Owl and Other Moon People (1963), Wodwo (1967), Crow (1970), Season Songs (1974), Graduate (1977), and Cave Birds (1978).

His poetry offers a wide range and variety of themes and styles. His subjects range from animals, landscape, war, the problems poses by the inner world of modern man to the philosophical and metaphysical queries about the status of man in the universe.



His moods and methods also reveal a great variety. If he can describe a blank Mooreland as in *The Horse* in a Wordsworthian manner, he can also speak in a cynical voice of the Crow as in *Crow Alight*. If he can speak of the feelings of a predatory force as in *The Jaguars* or in *Second Glance at a Jaguar*, he can also speak of the horrors that violence in war unleashes as in *Bayonet Charge* or in *Six Young Men* or in *Out* and in *Crow's Account of the Battle*.

His poems are not about violence but about vitality. Animals are not violent; they are more completely controlled than men. He recognizes that there is vitality in animals; on the other hand modern rationalism has deprived man of this primeval source of vitality. In his poems, on predatory animals or birds there is more emphasis on their power and energy than on anything else.

Hughes' poetry continues the tradition of Nature - poetry that dates back to 16th century but unlike Wordsworth who found in Nature, "a nurse a guide and guardian" and unlike Tennyson who found Nature "red in tooth and claw". Ted Hughes tries to take both the Wordsworthian and Tennysonian approaches to Nature in consideration. In his poems like *October Dawn*, *The Horses* and *The Wind*, Hughes can describe Nature in a Wordsworthian manner while in poems like *Hawk Roosting*, *The Pipe* and *Crow* he recognises the power, vitality, violence and predatoriness of Nature without commenting on it.

Ted Hughes has earned a great distinction for himself as a writer of animal poems. There are many poems which are directly related to animals. They deal with the savagery and ferocity of those animals. Poems like *The Bull Moses*, *A Otter*, *Pike*, *View of a Pig* are some examples of animal poems. They depict violence. But there is also a poem entitled *The Horses* which depicts the passivity and gentleness of a group of ten horses at a particular moment in their existence. In *Wodwo* and *The Cave Birds*, there are poems that do not directly deal with animals but there are symbolic drawings about birds, and so are *Crow* poems. Many animals represent the dark forces inside the human sub consciousness, the forces that modern civilization tries to crush in the name of rationalism. Hughes' company with his brother greatly concurred his interest in animals. Hughes does not have any prejudice against animals who are fierce and blood - thirsty by nature. He often relates animal cruelty to the life of human beings.



Hughes had fascination for primitive beliefs and superstitions. He depends upon many ancient myths for many of his poems. The use of myths and legends is best found in the poems collected in the volume *Crow*. Hughes has taken the features of Eskimo, Red Indians and Celtic folklore and launched them in our world. One of the myths which inspired Hughes is related to 'the white goddess' (or the Nature goddess) in her three aspects of maiden, mother and crone, (or Persephone, Demeter and Hecate). This goddess is both beneficent and destructive. Ted Hughes' interest in mythology and anthropology led him to study ancient myths of various cultures in detail. His knowledge of myths is not restricted to Christianity and Greek paganism but extends as far as North America, Asia, Africa and Australia. Ted Hughes understands the essence of each myth and adopts it for use in his poetry. He does achieve what he tries through the use of myth in his various poems in *Ghost Crabs*. Myths provide a symbolism which is expressive of Hughes' various interpretations of human experiences, the questions about life and death that confront most intelligent men at one period of their life or another.

Despite the changes of violence against him, Ted Hughes emerges as a champion of pacifism in his poems written against the horrors of war. While his contemporary poets like John Holloway and Amiss showed signs of certain benumbment caused by the horrors of wars, Hughes did not close his eyes to the horrible reality and describes war's ravages in a highly realistic manner. In the *Bayonet Charges*, *Grief for Dead Soldiers*, *Out* and *Six Young Men*, he shows the havoc that war causes.

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