

Bayonet Charge by Ted Hughes - analysis questions

Summary

1. What is happening to the soldier at the beginning of the poem?
2. How does the soldier seem to feel as he runs across the battlefield?
3. What does the poem suggest about the reality of war compared with ideas of patriotism or glory?
4. How does the soldier's attitude seem to change from the start to the end of the poem?

Language

1. What does the phrase "suddenly he awoke" suggest about the soldier's experience of battle?
2. How does Ted Hughes use violent language to show the danger and chaos of war?
3. What is the effect of describing the soldier's "sweat heavy" body?
4. How does the language used to describe the hare make the reader feel sympathy or horror?

Poetic Techniques

1. Find one simile in the poem. What comparison is being made, and what is its effect?
2. How does Hughes use imagery to make the battlefield seem confusing or terrifying?
3. What is the effect of the rhetorical question: "In what cold clockwork of the stars and the nations / Was he the hand pointing that second?"
4. How does Hughes use personification or metaphor to suggest that the soldier is no longer fully in control?

Form

1. Why do you think the poem is written in three stanzas?
2. How does the poem's dramatic monologue style help us understand the soldier's thoughts and feelings?
3. Why might Hughes have chosen not to use a regular rhyme scheme?
4. How does the poem's form help create a sense of panic or movement?

Structure

1. How does the poem begin suddenly, and what effect does this have on the reader?
2. How does Hughes shift from physical action to the soldier's thoughts in the middle of the poem?
3. How does the pace of the poem change as the soldier becomes more confused and afraid?
4. How does the ending leave the reader with a sense of fear, instinct or desperation?