BAYONET CHARGE

Ted Hughes



WHAT HAPPENS? A soldier's physical rush into battle disrupts abstract ideas of patriotic purpose.

BIG IDEA **Physical terror strips the soldier of the abstract ideals that might once have justified battle.**

FOUR EVIDENCE FRAGMENTS · ZOOM IN, THEN EXPLAIN

"Suddenly"

In medias res

The opening denies the reader a calm approach to the action.

"cold clockwork"

Metaphor

The soldier imagines himself as a component in an impersonal mechanism.

"yellow hare"

Animal imagery

The injured creature exposes the indiscriminate cost of violence.

"etcetera"

Dismissive listing

Public ideals become dispensable when immediate survival dominates.

FORM

Three unequal stanzas in free verse; disrupted movement and enjambment follow a disorientated consciousness.

CONTEXT

Hughes was born after the First World War. The poem imagines combat rather than reporting his own military experience.

COMPARE IT WITH…

The Charge of the Light Brigade: public ideals versus individual experience. Remains: psychological cost.

VOICE, TONE & FEELINGS · FOLLOW THE SHIFTS

Running

BREATHLESS AND SHOCKED

An abrupt start places the reader inside motion before an explanation arrives.

Hesitation

BEWILDERED

The soldier questions his place in forces larger than his understanding.

Hare and renewed charge

DESPERATE

Animal suffering precedes a return to instinctive survival.

FULL POEM: use your anthology. Evidence fragments are prompts for close reading.

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