



The Hunchback in the Park: Workbook- Stanza by stanza

Lesson 3: Poetry Analysis

The hunchback in the park
A solitary mister
Propped between trees and water
From the opening of the garden lock
That lets the trees and water enter
Until the Sunday sombre bell at dark

Think about the sound of the bell - what else would you associate this with?



What images does the second line of the poem suggest to you? How does the length of the line help create this image?

What do you think the word 'propped' suggests about the character in the poem?

Why does the poet describes the bell as 'Sunday sombre'? What is the importance of the use of alliteration in this line?



Alliteration draws the attention of the reader to the line, it therefore emphasises the text in that line.



Eating bread from a newspaper
Drinking water from the chained cup
That the children filled with gravel
In the fountain basin where I sailed my ship
Slept at night in a dog kennel
But nobody chained him up.



The use of the personal pronoun 'I' here shows the poet's personal experiences in the park.

What do the boys do to mock the hunchback? Why do you think they do this?

What is the effect of the hunchback being compared to a dog? Think about the views that society would have about the hunchback.

Why do you think the poet chose to use the verb "chained" twice in this stanza? What impact does this have on creating character?



Comparisons to both nature and animals are used by Thomas to emphasise the hunchback's status in society.

Like the park birds he came early
Like the water he sat down
And Mister they called Hey Mister
The truant boys from the town
Running when he heard them clearly
On out of sound



How are the boys presented by Thomas in this stanza?

Past lake and rockery
Laughing when he shook his paper
Hunchback in mockery
Through the loud zoo of the willow graves
Dodging the park keeper
With his stick that picked up leaves

Is the park really 'a loud zoo'? Do the words underlined above make you empathise with the hunchback?

How does Thomas reflect the fast pace of the boys movements through the organisation of the stanza? Think about letter sounds (harsh or gentle), punctuation and sentence structure/ lengths of lines.

And the old dog sleeper
Alone between nurses and swans
While the boys among willows
Made the tigers jump out of their eyes
To roar on the rockery stones
And the groves were blue with sailors

Onomatopoeia is used with "roar" here.



Another reference to animals is provided here with "old dog sleeper"





What image is the poet trying to present where he describes the boys in the line 'Made the tigers jump out of their eyes'?

What do you associate with the images of nurses and swans that are presented here?

Made all day until bell time
A woman figure without fault
Straight as a young elm
Straight and tall from his crooked bones
That she might stand in the night
After the locks and chains

Look carefully at the description of the woman given above. What does the hunchback's construction of the woman tell us about his own character?

All night in the unmade park
After the railings and shrubberies
The birds the grass the trees the lake
And the wild boys innocent as strawberries
Had followed the hunchback
To his kennel in the dark.



Look at the lack of punctuation in line 39 “The birds the grass the trees the lake”. What is the effect of the poet’s omission of commas here?

Why do you think the poet uses a simile to describe the boys torment towards the hunchback as, “innocent as strawberries”?

Lesson 6:

Main Activity

What is your response to the way the hunchback is presented in the poem? Do you feel sympathy towards him? Discuss the way that Thomas presents him using evidence from the text to support your view.

Supplementary Tasks:

1. Write the script between the hunchback and one of the boys that are mocking him in the park. Present this to the class in pairs.
2. Imagine that you are the hunchback. Write a monologue of his private feelings and thoughts as he sits on the bench. Consider his reactions to what he sees and hears in the park. Also, consider his past, and possibly his dreams for the future.