



## The Hunchback in the Park

### Websites:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/english\\_literature/poetrycharactervoice/thehunchbackparkrev1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/english_literature/poetrycharactervoice/thehunchbackparkrev1.shtml)

[http://www.skool.ie/skool/examcentre\\_sc.asp?id=5168](http://www.skool.ie/skool/examcentre_sc.asp?id=5168)

### Overview:

#### Stanza 1

To begin think about discussing the terms '**denotation**' and '**connotation**'  
Denotation being the literal meaning of the word and connotation being the emotional attachment to the word e.g. fire could symbolise passion, danger etc.

- **Line 2:** the use of short line here has a clear denotation; but its appearance or its form within the poem being separated in an independent line could possibly suggest that the poet wants to shape the meaning that is being created by using **organisation** to impact the actual words.

The connotations here strongly suggest an image of loneliness and quite a melancholic image – the man is 'solitary' despite being in a public place.

- **Line 3:** the fact that he is 'propped' may suggest that he is drunk. Here pupils could consider the stereotypical image of people who spend their times in parks as drunks. It might also suggest or present him almost to be a fitting/fixture in the park; a constant image- propped up against a tree.
- **Line 6:** The use of 'sombre' in line 6 suggests great unhappiness both with having to exit the park and with his life as a whole. The bells could also refer to the tolling of funeral bells and provide some darker imagery.
- There are several words and phrases that are repeated throughout the poem and two of them appear in the first stanza; bells which provides a link to both death and the literary figure of Quasimodo; and also to trees and water which are links to the natural and quite pastoral imagery presented by Thomas here.

#### Stanza 2

- **Line 2:** there is use of repetition of the word 'chained' which could suggest the idea of the man being trapped or confined.



- **Line 3:** the children are teasing the hunchback by filling the drinking cup with gravel. This presents an image of mocking and allows for some empathy to be created between the persona and the readers.
- **Line 4:** the poet tells us that this poem is inspired or enthused by memories of his youth/ his childhood by mentioning sailing his toy boat in the fountain.
- **Line 5:** the dog kennel that he sleeps in suggests a low position/ status, similar to that of dogs and other caged animals where there is an owner dictating the movements of the animal. Here there is effective use of animal imagery or anthropomorphism-Consider what the purpose of this linking to dogs is?
- **Line 6:** the fact that there isn't a need to chain him up suggests that he possibly isn't important enough to chain up (again hinting at the social standing and his loneliness).

\*\*He is eating out of newspaper and drinking from a public water fountain. Does this suggest that the hunchback is homeless? Pupils to consider this.\*\*

### Stanza 3

- **Lines 1 and 2:** the similes show a link between the hunchback and the park. It presents the idea that he belongs to the park as do the birds and the water and it emphasises and echoes the natural images that are presented in the opening stanza.
- **Line 4:** The boys who taunt him are 'truant boys' – this suggests that they are naughty, mischievous boys.
- **Line 5:** the fact that they call him and then run away when he looks over at them highlights the playful nature of the boys and also draws attention to their youth. It could also indicate that they are not accustomed to seeing men like the hunchback.



#### Stanza 4

- **Line 1:** the images of “lake and rockery” are used here, once again to capitalise on the images of nature.
- **Line 2:** the boys are linked to the hunchback by the phrase 'hunchbacked in mockery' – they are bent over laughing which makes them look similar to hunchback and his stance.
- **Line 4:** the metaphor in this line presents the image of a human being both caged and stared at. There is a contrast with regards to noise between the 'zoo' and the 'willow groves' – one a loud, noisy place and one a peaceful and very idyllic place.

\*The lack of punctuation in this stanza allows for a fast pace which almost imitates the running away of the boys from the hunchback after mocking him.

#### Stanza 5

- **Line 1:** the 'old sleeper' could represent the hunchback and signify both his age and his actions at this point. The idea of the 'sleeper' could show that he hasn't the energy of the will to do anything about the mocking of the boys and therefore doesn't attempt to stop it. This too could indicate that he is tired of the constant battles with the youths in the park.
- **Line 2:** the 'nurses' and 'swans' who are also frequent visitors to the park so they are linked to the hunchback. . The fact that the hunchback is 'lone' while between people serves to emphasise his loneliness. The fact that these images or both very feminine in nature; the swan is elegant and the typically female nurse there to aid/ assist shows that he desires female company.
- **Line 4:** the metaphor suggests something menacing and quite ominous – the boys are staring at him in an aggressive manner. The fact that the hunchback is 'alone' while between people serves to emphasise his isolation.



## Stanza 6

Through creating an imaginary woman the hunchback is showing his loneliness – as if he only has a human relationship with someone that he has created.

- **Line 2:** the fact that the woman is “without fault” is simply to emphasise and accentuate his own faults and issues.
- **Line 3:** the woman is a direct and complete contrast to the hunchback. The simile “straight as a young elm” emphasises her youth in contrast to the “old sleeper” in the previous stanza.
- **Line 4:** she is tall and straight while he has 'crooked bones'. The word 'straight' is repeated to emphasise her stance and to emphasise his imperfections.
- **Line 5/6:** the imaginary woman could also be perceived as a guardian in the park when the hunchback isn't there- she could possibly be a figment of his imagination- something that he desires but cannot have. The locks and chains are referred to again; he has been locked out of the park for the night so these chains aren't confining or restricting him, they are simply excluding him from the world where he feels most at home, which is in the park.

## Stanza 7

- The stanza doesn't include any punctuation in an attempt to present these things as being linked together – it is not a list of separate things, it is a list of interrelated things.
- **Line 4:** there is a clear sense of irony in the simile use here as these are the same boys who have been mocking and teasing the hunchback: because of their actions we question how 'innocent' they actually are.
- **Line 6:** the kennel and darkness are repeated again at the end of the poem provides more emphasis on the lowly status and marginalisation of the hunchback.