

# Hawk roosting essay sample



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In all the poems being studied Hughes likens the behaviour of animals to that of humans; this anthropomorphism serves not only to make these poems enjoyable to read, but help to convey exactly what the author is trying to say.

' Hawk Roosting' portrays the hawk as a powerful, arrogantly confident bird that sees the entire world as being created purely for his convenience.

' The convenience of the high trees!

The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray

Are of advantage to me'

He believes that everything was created just for him; there is nothing or nobody else to consider because the hawk is the only one that matters. He views himself as the ruler of all he purveys; he can go where he wants and do what he wants because he owns it all -

' I kill where I please because it is all mine.'

If the hawk had any idea of the notion of a God he would think of himself as the God of his world. This is reflected in the image at the end of the poem -

' The sun is behind me.'

This gives a very powerful image of the hawk stood proudly on a branch with the sun shining in a halo around his head, surveying his land below him. It shows the hawk as an important god-like figure. Hughes uses other imagery

in the poem to show the hawk is violent; he is well able to do all the killing he wants to.

‘...Between my hooked head and hooked feet’

This provokes an image of the bird’s sharp beak and claws and gives the impression of the hawk being a strong killing creature, further proven by the lines,

‘ For the one path of my flight is direct

Through the bones of the living.’

This again shows the ruthless attitude of the hawk towards other creatures.

A sense of the hawk’s power and brutality is gained through the way the poem is written. The tone of the poem and the words used display the character of the hawk. It is written in a cool, unemotional voice. The hawk seems to be very self possessed and uses elegant vocabulary to get his messages across. Everything that is said is very rational; from the hawk’s point of view he cannot be argued with. The sentences are brief, calculated and to the point and emphasize that the hawk is in control.

The hawk’s voice and tone is so controlled because he feels no emotions and is not ruled by his intellect.

‘ Inaction, no falsifying dream

Between my hooked head and hooked feet’

He is ruled by his instincts only; he does not think about his actions and he has no conscience to make him feel guilty about what he does. The hawk sees life as it is; he is not misled by anything. The hawk thinks he is superior to humans and he mocks our way of life –

‘ There is no sophistry in my body:

My manners are tearing off heads’

The hawk’s way of life is very pure and simple compared to our own. The hawk does not have any crises of conscience or confidence, has no qualms about doing as he pleases. The hawk has no cares or worries; his life is all about survival and taking each day as it comes. In this respect perhaps the hawk is justified in thinking he is superior to humans – his life has a simplicity ours will never have.

One contradiction inherent in this poem is that the poem is meant to be written from the hawk’s point of view; it is the hawk’s thoughts put down on paper. However, if the hawk is controlled by his instincts only, and does not have any intellectual thoughts, where does the poem come from? Logically the hawk would not be able to write anything. One explanation of the poem is that the hawk is a symbol of Nature; it is Nature speaking. The idea that it is simply Nature, ‘ red in tooth and claw’, thinking fits in very well with the callous and brutal sense of the poem.