

Thought fox



Fox: What do you mean? Starting with an interpretation of “ The Burnt Fox,” and going on to an analysis of the poem, aim to figure out what exactly might be the relation of poem to dream, dream to poem. Refer closely to both, quote, and analyze what you have quoted, in support of your argument. In the year of 1952, Ted Hughes was a second year student at Cambridge University. For the first two years of his schooling he studied English in hopes to become a poet. However during his time there he had a profound experience.

For quite some time Hughes was working on a paper over the lasting contributions of Samuel Johnson but had only ever been able to write one sentence. The night before the paper was due for his English teacher he gave up and went to sleep. That night he had a very graphic and disturbing dream about a fox. In his dream he was still sitting at his desk trying to write his paper. He looks over at the door and a fox face peers. The fox stands about five or six feet off the ground on two legs and is as large as a human.

However, one of the more disturbing parts of the fox is that it is burnt and “ smoldering all over as if it just escaped from a furnace” (Rees 2009; 3). The fox walks over to Hughes and puts its paw, which looks like a human hand at this point, on the blank page. He smears blood on the page and says, “ You are killing us”. Hughes studied English in school so he could become a poet or creative writer. However, his studies never seemed to be geared in such a manner. The burnt fox dream here is a cry for help. Hughes seems to be splitting his own self by not being able to do what it is he loves.

The strict writing style that's expected of him is not in his true nature. The fox, his inner self, in the dream is dying because Hughes' has to stifle or suppress his real identity. The stereotypical archetype of the fox is wit. Wit and knowledge are closely related. Here the fox is clearly burrowing, representing the destruction of knowledge. Through the further examination of the Thought Fox, the poem he wrote after his dream, we can see that it is very closely related to the dream through deep symbolism. After this dream Hughes changed his study major to anthropology and archeology.

This important change in his life sparks this poem. In the first sentence he sets the time at midnight. This word is very powerful. Midnight is a time that's neither night nor day. It's a transition period, which is important to this poem as there is a transition being made in the author's life. The next line reads something else is alive. I feel like this is playing on something that is distantly known to Hughes. Perhaps it could be the creativity that he knows he possesses but that he has lost somewhere. In the end of the first stanza he talks about the blank page where his fingers move.

Here I feel it doesn't represent anything but, it is more of the literal blank page that he was trying to write his English paper on. At the beginning of the second stanza the poem starts to become not only personally deep but also slightly dark. There are two pieces of symbolism here that invoke a strong emotional response. He sees no stars through the window. This is a metaphor for a lack of hope. Stars give off light and light can be easily seen as hope. Hughes is thoroughly crushed by the pressure of the essay he's been struggling with. The window is the reader's way of seeing into Hughes' more personal self and deepest feelings.

If we go through the window, at first we can only see the darkness of his loneliness, which he explains throughout the rest of the second stanza. Next we see a fox. Hughes thought it was very important to understand nature if we wanted to understand ourselves. He even wrote a whole series of poems on animals. All of which have extraordinarily spiritual meanings that relate to everyday human life. The image of a fox's nose touches twig, leaf is presented to us. This is a beautiful scene that can only take place in nature. Hughes is trying to reconnect with his spirit animal, the fox, by connecting with nature.

He is trying to find his primordial self; his true nature. This true nature is his creativity. Then it's almost as if he has connected when he expresses that the moment is viewed through the fox's eyes: two eyes serve a moment that now, and again now, and now. The words snow is seen again for the second time in the beginning of the fourth stanza. Here it can be interpreted in two ways. On one hand we can view the fox literally as it sets neat prints into snow as he walks or on the other hand the snow could be seen as the blank page he's trying to work on. After this sentence though, the poem gets even blacker again. Hughes uses a lot of words in the next three lines such as lame, shadow, hollow, lags, and stump. These words all have a negative connotation that come with them. There is an immense amount of struggle and pain that the author is dealing with. However after the fox leads the readers through the forest the pain and evil of the darkness seem to leave. It's almost as if we, the readers, have come upon a literal clearing in the fifth stanza. It seems to be viewed through the eye of the fox again with extreme pleasure.

Words like greenness and brilliance can be easily categorized as something that is seen in a positive light. There are contrasting feelings in stanza four and five. As Hughes moves from one view to the other we can see the deep spiritual transition from anger and sadness to happiness and relief. It's almost as if the fox has been the guide in the journey to an enlightening experience. From here we can determine that it is not a literal clearing we've come to but a clarity in the sense of a new state of mind.

Hughes has realized that his current studies are crushing him and he knows he has to change. However in the last four lines there is a clear warning that is given by the Burnt Fox. The poem seems as if it were to end in a joyous manner. However, the Burnt Fox sneaks, as foxes often do, into the hole of the head, back into his thoughts and create the sense of doom again. There is now the same lack of light from the stars, the same lack of hope. The sharp hot stink of the fox is a strong reminder that he must change his life before he destroys himself.

The poem ends with the page is printed. Printing ink on a page is a very permanent action. So permanent that it could symbolize the sealing of one's fate. If Hughes didn't change the current suppression of his inner self he could permanently damage himself. Hughes' work is very symbolic and can be interpreted in many ways. When comparing the Burnt fox to the Thought fox many connections can be made. The readers can clearly see the pain Hughes was hiding. It is very important as we move through our lives that we stay true to our inner nature if we wish to be happy.