

Critical appreciation of ted hughes' "thistles" essay sample

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Ted Hughes is a renowned, restrained poet for his ability to be intricate, and his concealment of emotion in insignificant forms of life. In the poem, *Thistles*, Hughes personalizes Thistles; such trivial plant, to successfully evoke the lives of human beings, while emphasizing nature's dominance over men. The poem also deals with the idea of history being repeated in a cycle, the dead being "resurrected". Such complex ideas are effectively conveyed through language techniques, diction and versification.

"Thistles" is an insignificant form of life, which are generally disregarded by other superior forms of life (cows and farmers), losing its' identity of existence. However the poet personifies the plant, giving it life. 'Thistles' begins with a description of the location of the trivial plant and its physical appearance. "Against the rubber tongues of cows and the hoeing hands of men / Thistles spike the summer air / And crackle open under a blue-black pressure." The thistles are situated in a field amidst cows and farmers, yet among such serene background, they appear to have an aggressive purpose. Alliteration is present, "Blue-black" with the repetition of the 'b' sound, emphasizing the immense pressure they are in, the Thistles literally bursting with reproductive energy. Also, the alliteration implies the imagery of a bruise, caused by a physical contact.

Then it is seen that the thistles pollinate and reproduce: "Every one a revengeful burst". This conveys that there is a motive, a reason, for the reproduction; other than simply to maintain its species. The motive is to fight

a battle, a continuous war. Hughes has given the thistles human features and emotions, such as the ability to take revenge. Through personifying such inconsequential organism, Hughes expresses his speculation of how, even the petty forms of life has it's own purpose in life.

It seems that history repeats itself, in the law of vast nature. Human beings are also a part of nature itself, this is conveyed through the subtle comparison between human and thistles. " Of resurrection, a grasped fistful / Of splintered weapons and Icelandic frost thrust up."

Here we encounter the thistles ready and armed for a battle.

This battle is for the land, the field of reproduction. This parallels with the lives of modern human beings, always in competition amidst the heavily industrialized urban; in areas of economy, possession, and wealth. It is a never-ending cycle of conflict, which is most inevitable.

Another appropriate comparison made by the poet, is how all organisms must inevitable die, and come to an end. Allowing our " sons" to takeover the roles of their elder and take responsibility. " Then they grow grey like men / Mown down, it is a feud / Their sons appear / Stiff with weapons, fighting back over the same ground". Therefore, the conflict is sustained trough many ages, resulting in a cycle of " feud". Also humanity almost dictates the battle of the thistles in the sense that mankind too strives to reproduce. Such symbolic parallelism between human and thistles, vividly conveys the idea that we are a part of nature itself, belonging to the repetitive cycle of reproduction and conflict.

Another intention of Hughes in writing the poem was to show that nature will always last over humanity. In terms of history, the fight for the land is a repetitive cycle, trailing back to ancient history. The battle seems like a cycle because they are "resurrected", being raised from the dead, giving the image of never-ending life. "...Icelandic frost thrust up / From the underground stain of a decayed Viking." Referring to history, centuries ago, the Vikings attacked the Scots, during their siege; they stood on thistle on the hillsides, causing them to yell in pain. Such fortunate event, alarmed the Scots and able them to defeat them, that is why today the thistle is the emblem of Scotland. Today, the strength of thistles are reborn and are "fighting back over the same ground" as they did centuries ago, however the Vikings have been worn down and vanished. Leaving, a petty form of nature once thought to be such trivial; stronger than humanity. Hughes was able to take a perfectly ordinary object and cast it in an entirely new light; transforming thistle from humble weeds into a symbol of strength, resistance and humankind.