

Compare and
contrast a 20th
century and non-20th
century animal poem
essay sample...



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For this essay I need to compare and contrast a pre 20th Century and 20th Century piece of poetry that share animals. The Two poems I have chosen are Horses by Edwin Muir for my pre 20th century piece. For my 20th century text I have chosen " The Jaguar" by Ted Hughes. The two poets are using their poetry to inform their audience about their beliefs and thoughts on certain issues. In " Horses" by Edwin Muir the poet is informing the audience about his thoughts on the beginning of the industrial revolution and the effect it will have on the countryside and in particular the shire horse.

In " The Jaguar" Ted Hughes makes us aware of his dislike of zoos and the imprisonment of animals and the feelings they encounter, boredom, hope and loneliness. Within " Horses" the poet informs us about his fascination with the shire horse. He describes them as ' like a magic power'. This fascination has been lifelong, from some ' childish hour' to the present time. The poet is fascinated by their strength and beauty, with their ' conquering hooves' on ' great hulks'. Throughout the poem there is also a sense that the poet does not fully understand these ' mute ecstatic monsters.

This is probably because he does not understand his own fascination with these strange beasts but he understands that he will miss them with the coming of the industrial revolution. The poem is also about the end of mans harnessing of nature to further themselves. The poem the jaguar introduces us to the jaguar in captivity and it's feelings. Ted Hughes is definitely against zoos and more generally the imprisonment of animals. We know this by not only looking at the general themes of the poem but by also looking at the language he uses on certain occasions.

For example he wastes no opportunity to directly compare the animal's enclosure directly with prison by using such words as ' prison' and ' cell. ' Ted Hughes describes the early death dealt to many of the animals in a zoo; ' the boa constrictor's coil' he describes ' is like a fossil', strong and powerful imagery with a serious point. He focuses on the lack of a quality of life for the animals within the cages at the zoo. The poem describes how a single animal still has hope like an ' eye satisfied to be blind in a fire,' the animal is the jaguar.

The poem " The Jaguar" has two distinct halves in language if not in form. The first two stanzas describe the death that is in the zoo. The last three stanzas are much more positive, describing the hope of the jaguar and are generally read in a quicker fashion with more life. The first two stanzas are a rich selection of animals and I think that Ted Hughes is trying to prompt the user into understanding that the animals are all non natives thrown together in close proximity in an unnatural environment. In the poem " Horses" there is a clear and definite structure to the poem, very orderly and precise.

The poem takes the form of iambic pentameter with rhyming couplets. I know that it takes the form of iambic pentameter because there are ten syllables in every line and they fall in pairs of stressed and unstressed. I think that the regularity of this poem is symbolic of how these ' great hulks' of shire horses would come out at the same time every morning and go back to the stables at the same time. They would also plough in a regular fashion up and down the fields. I think this is why Edwin Muir has used such a regular pattern and form because it is suitable for the subject.

The poem "The Jaguar" doesn't share a rhyming scheme with its pre 20th century counterpart. It is, though, fairly regular and the poem quite clearly takes the form of five quite closely resembling stanzas. I think the form of the poem on the page resembles the cages of imprisoned animals. There is a lot of space around the poem and I think this is to taunt the audience and convey the frustration of the animals and the feelings they have when they look out upon freedom. For a pre 20th century poem the language is not too archaic and there certainly aren't any words that need to be looked up in a dictionary to be understood.

The poem is rich in imagery and to form this imagery the poet has used lots of similes and metaphors; these are very effective. Edwin Muir uses the industrial revolution's ' pistons' in a ' mill' to describe the hooves of the Shire horse in a simile. Edwin Muir also uses the metaphor of tanks to describe their ' great hulks' and their ' conquering'. This metaphor is strong and suitable; the Shire horse is comparatively the tank of the horse world, not necessarily the fastest but most definitely both the strongest and toughest.

When describing both their beauty and size Edwin Muir is using an oxymoron. When the poet uses the metaphor in ' their great hulks were seraphim of gold', seraphim being angelic, he is really describing them as both small and angelic but of a grand stature. Although an obvious contradiction and oxymoron I believe this is the poet in some small way describing his fascination and also confusion about these ' lumbering' beasts. Edwin Muir also uses metaphor to describe the glossy coat of the horse; the poet describes ' light flowing' off their ' bossy sides in flakes. Alliteration is used well to draw attention to specific areas of the poem.

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The phrase where the only exclamation mark is used is ' sinking sun! ' This phrase is exactly half way through the poem. Alliteration draws attention to this special point in the poem. I believe the placing of the alliteration and explanation mark is no accident. There is end of sentence punctuation half way through a stanza on only one more occasion and that is a full stop and not an explanation mark. The line before the explanation mark is ' oh the rapture when, one, furrow done. I believe that up to that point in the poem that a single furrow has been done and the second part of the poem is the return to the beginning of the furrow.

The poet could be saying several things here. I think the poet is romantically saying that all things come around, history repeats and the shire horses will make a return. The language within the poem " The Jaguar" has obviously been well thought over. " The jaguar" is rich in both imagery and metaphors. Ted Hughes describes, using a simile the ' parrots streaking as if they were on fire. There is a sense of regret at what the parrots have been reduced to using the simile. Once beautiful gracious birds are reduced to ' cheap tarts'. Ted Hughes makes his audience think about the conditions of animals in captivity of the zoo, the ' boa constrictors coil is a fossil,' the ' tiger and lion' are ' fatigued with indolence. '

The second stanza is particularly strong, the poet uses alliteration to emphasise ' cage after cage' being seemingly empty. He sums his feeling on captivity and the false environment it provides by saying ' it might be painted on a nursery wall. In the beginning of the third stanza the conjunctive but is used. This conjunctive is really a major turning point in the poem. The poems emphasis swaps specifically to one individual animal. The <https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-a-20th-century-and-non-20th-century-animal-poem-essay-sample/>

pace and rhythm of the poem change dramatically, it becomes faster and stronger like somebody has breathed life into it. This is brilliantly done, before the poem is focusing on dead lifeless animals but as soon as the poem focuses on an animal with hope and a desire for freedom the poem picks up in rhythm and movement in general just like the animal it is representing.

The Jaguar attracts a lot of attention and the poet uses alliteration punctuated with commas in the phrase ' stands, stares, mesmerised. ' The pairing of alliteration and careful punctuation makes the reader pause and reflect just for a second like the subjects in the poem. Alliteration is used before punctuation but not to the same effect. Elsewhere in the poem it is used to clearly define something from everything else such as a ' fierce fuse' and ' his heel.

Alliteration is also brilliantly and thoughtfully used when he is describing the jaguar's defiance, the ' bang of blood in the brain deaf ear. ' These are strong words that with the help of alliteration immediately inspire strong feelings in the reader. Ted Hughes describes the ability of defiance and the glimmer of hope in the Jaguar by his use of the language. The jaguar, metaphorically the eye, ' is satisfied to be blind in a fire. ' Ted Hughes is saying although the evidence of life imprisoned totally surrounds the Jaguar he is able to defy it.

The ear is ' brain deaf. ' The Jaguar has withdrawn inside his own world. A world of defiance with a glimmer of hope but more importantly a different place outside the four walls of his cell. Both poems are successful. They both

inspire strong imagery and strong thoughts about the relationship between animals and man, whether it be for pleasure or to advance man itself. Poems normally bore me immensely but by looking into these poems in detail I have found that underneath a very enjoyable surface they both have many serious points to be made within their subtext.

Both also have many merits and are definitely lacking on points of criticism. Between the two my personal favourite is "The Jaguar" because of the issues it addresses. The jaguar gave me a creative impression of issues such as our new perception as animals having increased intelligence and their feelings in captivity, issues that have been in the news recently. The imagery Ted Hughes generated in my mind was also a special point for me. Some of his metaphors (thought the one about the parrots and the cheap tarts was superb) helped me understand his viewpoint of captivity.