

## Context: Ted Hughes and 'Hawk Roosting'

### Ted Hughes (1930–1998)

Ted Hughes was born near Halifax, West Yorkshire in 1930. His father was a carpenter and a veteran of World War One. Although his family moved when he was eight years old, the landscape of his birthplace had a huge impact on his writing. He went to Cambridge in the 1950s where he read English Literature, Anthropology and Archaeology. While at Cambridge, he met his first wife, Sylvia Plath, whom he married in 1956.

After university he had various jobs, including working in a zoo, teaching and reading scripts at Pinewood Studios. Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes had two children but later separated. In the year after their separation she committed suicide. Hughes' next relationship was with Assia Wevill. They lived together and she looked after his children from his first marriage. However, she also committed suicide, gassing herself and her daughter in a manner similar to that of Plath.

In 1970, Hughes married Carol Orchard and they remained together until his death. In 1984 Hughes became Poet Laureate and held the post until his death. He died in 1998, shortly after the publication of *Birthday Letters*, a collection of poems about his relationship with Sylvia Plath. His ashes were scattered on Dartmoor.

Hughes writes about the elements and aspects of the natural world in much of his poetry. The poet Simon Armitage said that for Hughes, poetry was 'a connecting rod between nature and humanity'. Hughes was a very prolific writer who in addition to poetry, also wrote for children. In his book *Poetry in the Making*, he gives insight into the writing process and his inspiration for writing:

It is occasionally possible, just for brief moments, to find the words that will unlock the doors of all those many mansions in the head and express something – perhaps not much, just something – of the crush of information that presses in on us from the way a crow flies over and the way a man walks and the look of a street and from what we did one day a dozen years ago. Words that will express something of the deep complexity that makes us precisely the way we are.

## 'Hawk Roosting'

'Hawk Roosting' was published in 1960 as part of Hughes' second book, *Lupercal*. It is one of many poems that he wrote about nature and the natural world.

At the time of writing Hughes was living with his wife Sylvia Plath, in America.

### Bibliography

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