

Poem: Evening Hawk | Author: Robert Penn Warren | Year: 1985 |

About the author [1905 – 1989]

- Double Pulitzer Prize winning American poet, novelist, and literary critic

Poem is written in free verse poetry; poem is without rhyme or other forms of patterns

- Closely approximates the look and sound of everyday speech
- Divided into five unequal parts that shifts gears when transitioning from one to the next. Each part has its own meaning, and joining them together to understand the depth of the poem, and discovering its true meaning is the real challenge
- The opening sentence introduces the hawk, and quickly begins to build up its significance
- Wings of the hawk are significant as they “cut the earth”. The wings represent his scythe which has multiple meanings such as a tool farmers use to mow a field, and a tool associated with death; used by the grim reaper

Draws on some of the themes explored in Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale”

- The speaker changes as he observes the creature
- Same time of day; around evening to night time, when it gets dark
- Poem switching gears is marked with an exclamation, just like Keats’ poetry. “Look! Look!” marks the transition to the third section of the poem

Poem is about how the presence of a non-human creature activates the poet’s imagination

- What thoughts, feelings, observations, and perceptions does the presence of the hawk imbue?
- Think about mortality and what it means to be mortal

- Keeping the scythe, time, and cutting in mind. Think about what errors we have made, the mess we have made of our lives, and others. Time does not care. The hawk does not care. Time continues to tick, just as the hawk continues to fly
- The hawk knows neither time nor error. It lives in a world where the distinction between truth and error don't mean a thing. Think about how the society we live in is the same. Think about how we live our lives unobserved, un-watched over.

The poem uses a simile to compare Plato to a star. Plato was a famous ancient Greek philosopher and is sometimes said to be the founder of Western philosophy. Warren suggests that Plato's vast knowledge and wisdom will stand the test of time, just a star that stands over a mountain. A star will last for millions and billions of years, so will Plato's wisdom. This elaborates onto the next idea that humans are insignificant to the earth. People are born everyday and people die everyday, yet the earth continues to spin indefinitely.

From the dawn of civilization, humans have impacted the earth, and left their footprint on it. We have walked all over the earth and continue to do so, but we are insignificant to the earth. The earth is so grand and we are so so small. However, what we do to the earth matters, because we either take care of it or harm it. Everything we do leaves an impact on the earth.

The universe is constant, but humanity isn't guaranteed to survive. i.e. Natural disasters.