

The Rain Horse

By Ted Hughes

1. Before he sees the horse, the narrator is feeling confused and angry;

“...anger against himself for blundering into this mud-trap...”

As you can see from another word in the sentence, ‘blundering’, the narrator’s anger against himself has made him clumsy, and ‘blundering’ is a very clumsy word. At this point, the narrator is feeling confused because he cannot decide whether to go round a longer journey, or take a shortcut through a farm. It seems as though he has a bad history with the farmer, because he talks of being called a trespasser;

“...or shouted at as a trespasser deterred him...”

2. The sense of fear and mystery surrounding the horse is given because the writer uses many similes to describe it;

“...running on its toes like a cat, like a dog up to no good...like a nightmarish leopard...”

Because the horse is far away from him, he can only give a description of its appearance, and he can not know any more, this is what gives the horse a sense of mystery and wonder.

3. As the man sits in the wood, covered by his coat, the rain seems to lock him in, and he feels safe and comfortable, but not trapped in any way;

“...he felt hidden and safe...seemed to seal him in...he sank into a state of comfort that was all but trance...”

The man probably felt this way because he had just run a long way, and this was his first rest for a long time, it seemed. He seemed to turn peaceful and content (for a while at least).

4. “...he saw the rain pulling up out of the distance, dragging its grey broken columns, smudging the trees and the farms...”

The part about this sentence that I like is the ‘grey broken columns’, these columns are the effect given by shafts of light hitting the rain and giving it a ‘broken shaft’ effect.

“...the distance had vanished in a wall of grey...”

This sentence seems to make the distance no longer the distance, but a barrier or wall. This makes the atmosphere seem no longer calm (if a bit rainy), but become claustrophobic.

“...beyond the river smouldered the town like a great heap of blue cinders...”

This sentence is effective because it uses colour, a verb and a simile all in one: blue cinders, smouldering town and the likeness to it.

5. Blundering – this suggests the man being clumsy and reckless in the mud and rain.

Jumping – when he says this, it suggests the movement of the unmown grass in the wind.

Smouldering – this shows the town is slowly working away, and suggests it is very comfortable.

Sucking and splashing – this is a good and fair representation of the sound made when running through a muddy area that is also wet.

Nightmarish – this word installs fear into the story and gives the horse a very scary appearance.

Unpleasantly strange – this gives a great uneasiness about the story.

Barricade – this is a strange representation of brambles, as they are hardly a barricade.

Pulsed and gleamed – these are strange words to be used to describe bark, but suitable when used here, in the rain.

6. The writer describes the trees very intricately;

“...thin, leafless thorns of the hedge...barricade of brambles...little crippled trees...”

These descriptions are very intricate and strange just for trees, but the part where the man finds shelter is one of the most important in the passage.

“...rushed and lulled in the wood...trickled down the oak trunk onto his neck...”

7. “At the wood top, with the silvered grey light coming in behind it, the black horse was standing under the oaks, its head high and alert, its ears pricked, watching him.”

I believe this sentence is very important, because it is at this stage when the story takes a somewhat dark turn, as the horse is displayed as some kind of large, dangerous and chilling thing, that appears to have been watching him the whole time.