

Crowdieknowe by Hugh MacDiarmid

Oh to be at Crowdieknowe
When the last trumpet blows,
An see the deid come loupin owre
The auld grey wa's

Muckle men wi tousled beards,
I grat at as a bairn
'Il scramble frae the croodit clay
Wi feck o swearin.

An glower at God an a' his gang
O angels i the lift
- Thae trashy bleezin French-like folk
Wha gar'd them shift.

Fain the weemun-folk'll seek
To mak them haud their row
- Fegs, God's no blate gin he stirs up
The men o Crowdieknowe!

Learning Resources

Read the poem and listen to the audio file. You can also [watch a video](#) of the poem being read out.

If there are unfamiliar words, try to work out what they mean according to their context, or look them up using a Scots dictionary – you can use an online Scots dictionary at www.dsl.ac.uk.

The poet's grandfather was buried at Crowdieknowe, which is a graveyard in Dumfries. A friend of the poet is reading the poem.

Reading

Understanding

Write down the answers to the following questions:

1. What does the poet describe happening in verse 1?
2. In verse 2, what childhood memory does the poet have?
3. What does the phrase 'last trumpet blows' mean?

Analysis

1. What are the men like who will come loupin owre the auld grey wa's?
Quote the description of them, and describe the impression you get from the description.
2. MacDiarmid says that the men will 'glower' at God an aa his gang o angels i the lift'.
What are the connotations of 'glower'? What does this word tell us about what the men are like?
3. 'God's no blate gin he stirs up the men o Crowdieknowe' - 'blate' means 'scared'.
What is MacDiarmid saying about God? How does this line of the poem reinforce the impression we get of the men?

Writing

Task:

Choose one of the following writing activities, using Scots if you can.

Think of a place you know well. Is it dreich, wild, creepy, beautiful? Write a vivid description of it. Consider the time of day, as well as the seasons of the year, and how they affect the landscape you will describe.

OR

MacDiarmid explores many themes in this poem – fear; childhood, death, the supernatural, religion, power.

Create a poem or short story that explores one of these themes. Consider using one of the following titles: 'Fear'; 'Childhood'; 'Life After Death'.

Extension Task

Crowdieknowe means 'crowded hill', as 'knowe' means 'hillock'.

There are lots of place names that have Scots origins. Your task is to find places around you that have Scots words in them and find out what they mean. To help you, you can use the following links:

[Scots Language Centre map](#) (some of the place names on this map have been translated into Scots).

[Place Names of Scotland guide](#)

[Scots Words and Place-names database](#)