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| <p><b>CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION</b></p> <p><b>About the poet:</b><br/> Wystan Hugh Auden was born in York, in the United Kingdom. At Oxford, he became associated with a number of radical poets and authors, including Stephen Spender. Many of his poems focus on social ills, as well as concern with the workings of the mind. He lived and worked for many years in the United States of America and returned to the United Kingdom in 1972, where he died a year later.</p> <p><b>About this poem:</b><br/> This poem is an expression of grief and heartache. The speaker describes his pain and links his overwhelming emotion of despair to the world around him. The reference to ‘clocks’, ‘telephone’ (line 1), ‘dog’ (line 2) and ‘pianos’ (line 3) examines the mourner’s reaction to his immediate, domestic surroundings through the lens of loss. The poem then expands the surroundings to the public arena with ‘aeroplanes’ (line 5), ‘doves’ (line 7) and ‘traffic policemen’ (line 8), and finally ends in the universal sphere of ‘stars’ (line 13), ‘moon’, ‘sun’ (line 14), ‘ocean’ and ‘wood’ (line 15). The third stanza describes their special relationship, and gives a personal account of what the dead man meant to the speaker.</p> | <p><b>IMAGERY</b></p> <p><b>METAPHOR</b> – ‘He was my North, my South, my East and West’ is indicative of how the deceased had given the speaker direction and purpose in life.</p> <p>‘my talk, my song’ – their relationship was strong and they shared a similar vision and thoughts, ‘song’ reflecting the happiness and joy they had found in each other’s company</p> <p><b>ALLITERATION</b> – ‘mourners’ and ‘muffled’ is indicative of the speaker trying to stifle his crying and stop the tears from flowing.</p> <p><b>PERSONIFICATION</b> – ‘Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead’ the sound of an aeroplane is long and droning like mourners crying profusely at funerals.</p> <p><b>ONOMATOPOEIA</b> – ‘moaning’ the sound of muffled pain and grief.</p> <p><b>HYPERBOLE</b> – this is the major literary device used by the author</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘<i>Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone</i>’ is the exaggeration of the speaker’s grief so much so that he wants the world to come to a standstill.</li> <li>• ‘<i>put crepe bows around round the white necks of the public doves</i>’ is an exaggerated expectation of the public to share in his grief and mourning.</li> <li>• ‘<i>My noon, my midnight</i>’ represents the speakers deep and utter devastation by his loss of his loved one.</li> <li>• ‘<i>For nothing now can ever come to any good</i>’ highlights the speakers utter grief, devastation and depression which runs so deep that he cannot see his life to continue as normal given his pain and grief.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>STRUCTURE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elegy or dirge</li> <li>• Four stanzas of four lines with a rhyme scheme of aabb, ccdd, eeff, gghh, which is indicative of elegiac stanzas.</li> <li>• Normally an elegy has a slow contemplative pace but this poem is almost rushed as if the speaker is rushing to say everything he feels, before the pace slows down towards the end again.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p><b>THEMES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grief and mourning for a loved one</li> <li>• Love nor life does not last forever</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

## TONE/MOOD

**Mood:** somber, depressing, sad

### Tone

The four stanzas are each indicative of a **change in tone**.

**Stanza 1**[lines 1 – 4]: **CURT and COMMANDING**; The poem begins with a series of harsh commands: stop the clocks! Cut off the telephones! The speaker sounds forceful, even angry. He wants everything to just stop.

**Stanza 2**[lines 5 – 8]: **HYSTERICAL and ABSURD** as the speaker suggests impossible ways of marking the death of his loved one, in his desire to share his loss with other, even the general public as if this person had been a person of great importance in the public eye. The speaker's using a hyperbole or exaggeration to convey just how important all this mourning is.

**Stanza 3**[lines 9 – 12]: **SAD** as the speaker seems to be particularly cut up about the death of the person. The lines are nostalgic especially about the importance of the person to him. The shock at the death of the person brings a strange calmness with the antithesis '*I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.*'

**Stanza 4**[lines 13 – 16]: **HYSTERICAL GRIEF** the speaker wants to "*dismantle the sun*". the speaker's grief is so intense that he wishes all of these romantic and natural images—the stars, the moon, the sun- that are too painful for him to disappear. It's almost as if he wants to blot out everything in the world except his own mourning. This demonstrates the depth of his grief.

## DICTION

• The title of the poem is called "Funeral Blues". It's a sad song (blues) about a dead man (funeral).

- The speaker describes his pain and links his overwhelming emotion of despair to the world around him. The reference to 'clocks', 'telephone' (line 1), 'dog' (line 2) and 'pianos' (line 3) examines the mourner's reaction to his immediate, domestic surroundings through the lens of loss. The poem then expands the surroundings to the public arena with 'aeroplanes' (line 5), 'doves' (line 7) and 'traffic policemen' (line 8), and finally ends in the universal sphere of 'stars' (line 13), 'moon', 'sun' (line 14), 'ocean' and 'wood' (line 15). The third stanza describes their special relationship, and gives a personal account of what the dead man meant to the speaker.
- The choice of the word 'Blues' is an effective one as this could refer to a depressed mood, and also describes a slow, sad musical piece.