**Ted Hughes: ‘Six Young Men’**

### What it is about

A photograph of six young men who have died in the Great War is found by the speaker. The poem is an account of the thoughts and feelings about the brevity of human life that are induced in the speaker by such a discovery.

### How the poet describes what happens

**Imagery** of photography and photographic techniques is used throughout the poem. The key single image is the photograph, which seemingly captures life in a frozen moment, but this is an illusion, as they and we shall die. **Language** – blunt, simple, often monosyllabic, illustrated by the title – the men are simply that; ‘six young men’. Hughes creates a picture of them as typical young lads on an outing together; the descriptions are given added poignancy by the final statement. The sorrow of their deaths is conveyed simply; they were young, they were friends, there were six of them and their lives were brief – ‘six months after’, ‘they were all dead’. The stanza ends (as do all of the others) with an abrupt, shocking statement. The repetition of ‘six’ hammers home this fact.

### The poet’s role

As observer of the photograph. This, however, is not a ‘war poem’. The photograph is almost a ‘memento mori’, a reminder that we shall die. We are exposed to this inescapable ‘horror’, just as the six young men were and as is the speaker of the poem.

### The relationships in the poem

Between the speaker and the six young men – the manners of their deaths are known to the speaker.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What it is about</th>
<th>How the poet describes what happens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A photograph of six young men who have died in the Great War is found by the speaker. The poem is an account of the thoughts and feelings about the brevity of human life that are induced in the speaker by such a discovery.</td>
<td><strong>Imagery</strong> of photography and photographic techniques is used throughout the poem. The key single image is the photograph, which seemingly captures life in a frozen moment, but this is an illusion, as they and we shall die. <strong>Language</strong> – blunt, simple, often monosyllabic, illustrated by the title – the men are simply that; ‘six young men’. Hughes creates a picture of them as typical young lads on an outing together; the descriptions are given added poignancy by the final statement. The sorrow of their deaths is conveyed simply; they were young, they were friends, there were six of them and their lives were brief – ‘six months after’, ‘they were all dead’. The stanza ends (as do all of the others) with an abrupt, shocking statement. The repetition of ‘six’ hammers home this fact.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The poet’s role | The poet’s role
| The poet’s role | As observer of the photograph. This, however, is not a ‘war poem’. The photograph is almost a ‘memento mori’, a reminder that we shall die. We are exposed to this inescapable ‘horror’, just as the six young men were and as is the speaker of the poem. |
| The relationships in the poem | The relationships in the poem
| The relationships in the poem | Between the speaker and the six young men – the manners of their deaths are known to the speaker. |