

# Wind



## SUMMARY

During a violent storm, the speaker's house felt like it was lost in the middle of the ocean throughout the night. The trees outside were crashing in the dark, thunder boomed in the hills, and the wind rushed wildly through the fields below the window, darkly thrashing about. It was so rainy that you couldn't see anything.

This went on until dawn. Then, beneath the rising sun, the hills seemed to open up, and the wind carried a threatening light, shining black and green, contracting like the lens of an insane eye.

At noon, the speaker climbed along the side of the house to reach the door of the shed where coal is stored. The speaker glanced up one time, and the forceful wind pushed against the speaker's eyeballs. The hills seemed like a tent thumping and twisting against the rope that anchored it to the ground.

The fields shivered and the horizon seemed to scowl, and it seemed at any moment that this tent would snap and abruptly fly off. The wind hurled a bird aside and then made another, bigger bird slowly buckle.

The house groaned, like a delicate green drinking glass vibrating at the musical pitch that would shatter it at any moment. Now settled in chairs in front of a hearty fire, the speaker and the speaker's partner feel rigid with fear and can't focus on books, thoughts, or one another.

They stare at the fire and feel the house's foundation shift, but keep sitting there, watching the window rattle as if it were trying to come inside, hearing the wind wail through rocks in the distance.

the speaker saying that the house "has been far out at sea all night," as if it were a ship caught in a tempest. Imagining the house as a ship shows how small and vulnerable it is compared to the wind: just as the sea is capable of capsizing and drowning sailors, the wind could devastate the house and its inhabitants. Sitting in front of a fireplace, the speaker and whoever else is there "feel the roots of the house move." This [metaphor](#) suggests that the storm could wreck the house as easily as it could topple a tree. When braving the storm directly, the speaker senses its destructive power over the human body: the wind "dents the balls of [the speaker's] eyes" even on a short venture outdoors.

This terrible wind threatens the natural world, too. The speaker describes the "fields" around the house as "quivering" and "the skyline" as "a grimace." Even nature seems to grit its teeth against the elemental force of the wind, which has no mind but only a "mad" fury. This wind decimates everything it encounters, hurling a "magpie" (a kind of bird) aside and "ben[ding]" a "black- / Back gull" as if it were "an iron bar." Even "the stones cry out under the horizons." In short, *nothing* is impervious to the storm.

In the face of such awful force, the speaker suggests, people can only look on in amazement and hope they don't die. Feeling the house—the only protection from the storm—ringing "like some fine green goblet in the note / That any second would shatter it," the house's inhabitants feel as if they might be blown apart. Meanwhile, they "cannot entertain book, thought, / Or each other." In other words, they can't distract themselves: they're forced to confront their own anxiety and helplessness.

Overall, the poem expresses a deep fear and awe of nature, emphasizing that humans are far less powerful than the natural forces surrounding them—and that this can be both a terrifying and an illuminating fact to confront.



## THEMES



### HUMANITY VS. NATURE

"Wind" is a poem about the sheer force of nature. As a storm wreaks havoc on the countryside, the speaker observes the wind's indifferent brutality toward both the natural and human worlds. The wind is so violent that it seems to threaten every kind of stability: it seems capable of destroying not only the speaker's house but also the landscape itself. The poem thus portrays nature's power as both terrible and awe-inspiring, and also shows that despite their inventiveness, human beings are still subject to its merciless whims.

Fascinated by the storm's violence, the speaker clearly doesn't trust the safety of any human structure. The poem begins with

### Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-18



### THE STORMINESS OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

While "Wind" describes a literal storm battering the speaker's house, that storm can also be interpreted as an [extended metaphor](#) for domestic strife, expressing the unbearable tension *within* the house. Read as an image of the couple's tempestuous emotions, the wind suggests that anger can be just as destructive as any storm.

The speaker's [personification](#) of the storm suggests that it reflects not only nature's power but also violent human

emotion. The speaker describes the wind as brandishing "Blade-light" and "flexing like the lens of a mad eye." By comparing the storm to a knife-wielding lunatic, the poem gives it an air of menace—and reminds readers that people can carry stormy violence inside themselves, too.

The way the storm rages around the speaker's house suggests that what's going on *inside* the house may be just as chaotic and unmanageable. The speaker explains that the house's inhabitants can't manage to "entertain" (that is, either distract or tolerate!) "each other" during the storm. Their tension as they "grip" their "hearts" suggests that they've been arguing or fighting, and that these interactions have been as ruinous and frightening as the storm. Their unease seems so powerful that it might destroy the bonds between them, just as the winds might literally knock the house down. The house, which seems on the verge of "shatter[ing]," can be read as an image of their relationship: a fragile human construction that might violently collapse.

Through a subtle extended metaphor, the poem thus suggests that relationships, like houses, are vulnerable to the storms of emotion: anger can blow families and households apart.

#### Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 18-24



## LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

### LINES 1-4

*This house has ...  
... and blinding wet*

The poem opens with a [metaphor](#): "This house has been far out at sea all night."

This metaphor implies that the house feels isolated, unsteady, and surrounded by danger, like a ship at sea. Only in the second line does the reader begin to learn *why* the house feels so insecure. The speaker describes "woods crashing through darkness" and "booming hills"; in other words, the house is bombarded by storm winds, thunder, and rain.

It's the wind in particular that captivates the speaker, who describes it as "stampeding," like a herd of panicked animals. This [imagery](#) suggests that the speaker perceives it as loud, threatening, and overwhelming. The image and grammar then become a bit jumbled, as if to match the confusion of the storm. Either the "Winds," the wind-besieged "fields under the window," or the window itself are described as "Floundering black astride and blinding wet." This could mean a few things:

1. The winds, like riders "astride" stampeding animals, are "Floundering" (thrashing) as they rush the

house. They're so wet as to be "blinding"—that is, they carry pelting rain that prevents anyone outside from seeing clearly.

2. The fields on either side (astride) of the window are rain-soaked and appear "black" in the storm.
3. The window itself, seeming to sit "astride" the wind-blast, is "Floundering" (rattling), "black" with nighttime, and too rain-soaked to see through.

The [alliteration](#) in "fields"/"floundering" and "black"/"blinding" add intensity, musicality, and rhythmic emphasis to the stanza, as do [consonance](#) (e.g., the [repetition](#) of /l/ sounds in "Floundering," "black," and "blinding") and [assonance](#) (e.g., the /ow/ sounds in "house" and "out").

The first stanza ends with an [enjambéd](#) line, giving it a sense of incompleteness: the reader has to continue past the stanza break in order to reach the end of the thought. This effect mirrors the longevity of the storm, which doesn't pass during the night but continues to rage all the way into morning.

### LINES 5-8

*Till day rose; ...  
... a mad eye.*

The second stanza begins by completing the clause introduced in the first stanza; the speaker says that the wind and rain continued to bombard the fields in darkness "Till day rose." As daylight turns the sky "orange," the speaker says that it seems as if "The hills had new places." In other words, now that the speaker can see what's going on, the hills offer more for the speaker to notice—including, perhaps, fallen trees or other changes wrought by the storm.

The speaker observes the wind "wield[ing] / Blade-light," a [metaphor](#) that suggests the piercing and threatening qualities of the storm's weird "black and emerald" glow. By assigning the wind the human ability to "wield" something, the speaker [personifies](#) it, imbuing it with malevolent intention as if it were *trying* to cause damage.

The [alliteration](#) in "wind wielded" draws added attention to this [image](#) of power and danger—and even evokes the whooshing sound of wind. This stanza also highlights the contrast between the normal, "orange" light of sunrise and the "luminous" black and green of the storm.

The stanza ends with a [simile](#):

*Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.*

As in the last line of the previous stanza, there's some grammatical ambiguity here. This simile could apply either to the wind itself or to the wind's "Blade" of light. (The light's "black and emerald" colors might suggest an eye's pupil and iris.) Either way, the simile indicates that the wind's violence is impersonal and irrational. Like someone who's gone "mad"

(insane), the storm doesn't follow any clear logic.

### LINES 9-12

*At noon I ...  
... strained its guyrope,*

In the third stanza, the speaker risks venturing out into the storm to gather more coal for the fireplace, hanging onto the side of the house in the wind. (Perhaps, in trying not to get blown over, the speaker looked like a climber trying not to fall.) The speaker glanced up just once, and the wind was so strong it seemed to "dent" the speaker's eyeballs. This tactile [imagery](#) (imagery pertaining to a sense of touch) helps the reader imagine the wind's incredible force.

Line 12 compares the wind-beaten hills to a "tent" that's "drumm[ing] and strain[ing]" against its "guyrope" (the wire that secures a tent to the ground). This [metaphor](#) suggests that even the hills look flimsy amid the fury of the storm—as if they might blow away at any moment. The word "drummed" conveys the battering sound of the wind.

[Consonance](#) and [assonance](#) add emphasis and rhythm to these lines, especially lines 11-12:

Through the brunt wind that dented the balls of my  
eyes  
The tent of the hills drummed and strained its  
guyrope

In particular, /nt/ sounds ("brunt," "dented," "tent") helps evoke the powerful wind battering the speaker, while an abundance of /d/ consonance suggests the "drumm[ing]" sound of the wind in the hills.

### LINES 13-14

*The fields quivering, ...  
... with a flap:*

As the speaker looks up at the "tent of the hills" through the furious wind, the fields appear to be "quivering." This [imagery](#) suggests that the earth itself is cowering from this storm. The speaker describes the "skyline," or horizon, as "a grimace," again suggesting that nature is at odds with itself. After all, the storm isn't just making the humans' lives more difficult; it's indiscriminately tearing up everything in its path.

In line 14, the speaker returns to the [metaphor](#) of the hills as a tent "strain[ing]" against its ropes, claiming that "at any second [the tent could] bang and vanish with a flap." In other words, this wind is so powerful that it seems capable of blowing the hills away like a tent.

The sounds of the poem itself emphasize the intensity of this moment. The words "bang" and "flap" are both [onomatopoeia](#) words, meaning that they sound like the thing they're describing. This makes the experience of reading them more

immersive; the reader can almost hear the fields (or a tent) seem to "bang" and "flap." The stressed syllables "bang," "van[ish]," and "flap"—which contain [assonant](#) vowel sounds—suggest the percussive force of the wind gusts bombarding the hills.

### LINES 15-18

*The wind flung ...  
... it. Now deep*

After the fanciful [metaphor](#) comparing the hills to flapping tents, the speaker presents a more realistic, more disturbing image: this wind is so fierce, the speaker says, that the birds (those "magpies") trying to navigate it stand no chance. One gets tossed aside and another gets bent in half "like an iron bar."

The strange [simile](#) comparing the gull to "an iron bar" captures the unexpectedness of what the speaker is witnessing. Heavy /b/ alliteration ("black," "Back," "bent," "bar") further emphasizes the intensity and awfulness of the event.

[Enjambment](#) in lines 15-18 adds to the tension of this moment:

[...] a black-  
Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly. The house  
Rang like some fine green goblet in the note  
That [...]

The line break after "black-" breaks up the hyphenated name of the gull, suggesting the way the gull itself is being wrenched in half. The following line is also enjambed, so that the stanza ends on a slight cliffhanger. Visually, "The house" is lumped together with "Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly," with the conflation of these images hinting at the house's own vulnerability. After the stanza break, the speaker describes the house "[Ring[ing] like some fine green goblet in the note / That any second would shatter it." These two lines are also enjambed, further drawing out the tension the speaker is describing.

The simile comparing the house to a delicate drinking glass conveys the house's fragility in the storm. Just as a glass can be intact one moment and then, if someone sings just the right note, break into pieces, so, too, the house (and the illusion of security it provides) could shatter with just the right amount of wind pressure. The speaker is keenly aware of this potential for destruction; it's as if the speaker is listening for the fateful moment.

### LINES 19-21

*In chairs, in ...  
... the fire blazing,*

As the poem nears its conclusion, the speaker switches gears, shifting from descriptions of the storm outside and the house itself to a description of what's happening *inside* the house:

[Enjambment](#) continues to draw out the poem's tension, while

also undermining reader expectations. Line 19 ends with "we grip," but the poem doesn't provide the object of that action until the following line, when the reader finds out that it isn't the chairs or some other physical object the people are gripping: it's their own hearts.

Likewise, the second-to-last stanza ends with the claim that they "cannot entertain book [or] thought"—which is understandable, given the circumstances. Who could read or think clearly with such a destructive storm raging outside? Yet after the stanza break, the poem takes an even sharper turn, revealing that these people can't even tolerate *each other*.

In this way, the poem raises the possibility that the storm, though terrible and magnificent, is really only a backdrop for the stormy relationship between the house's residents. Given the tense atmosphere, even the "fire" they're watching—though seemingly a source of comfort and warmth—might carry [symbolic](#) overtones of danger or destruction.

## LINES 22-24

*And feel the ...  
... under the horizons.*

As they tensely watch the fire, the speaker says that the house's inhabitants can "feel the roots of the house move, but [they] sit on." In other words, even though the very foundations of their home are giving way (a possible [metaphor](#) for the state of their relationship), they aren't crying or talking or trying to comfort each other. They're still just sitting there.

The poem is ambiguous enough that their brooding can be read as either a fearful response to the storm (after all, it's hard to do much when you're in imminent danger) or as the *source* of all this tension. Why can't these people tolerate each other? Might the speaker's perceptions of the (very real) storm be shadowed by the speaker's feelings about the relationship? In other words, does the speaker see this violent storm as a metaphor for what's going on inside the house?

However one reads the ending (and the poem makes room for both interpretations), the speaker returns to the external world in the last two lines of the poem. The speaker watches the "windows tremble to come in"—[imagery](#) that again suggests the force of the wind, while also [personifying](#) the windows and making the house itself seem fearful. Finally, even the personified "stones" seem to "cry out under the horizons": even something as unfeeling and durable as rock seems vulnerable in this storm. This imagery might also suggest the "stony" silence (and/or the muffled internal "cry") of the house's residents, as they perceive the storm's danger and the tension of their own discord.



## SYMBOLS



### WIND

On one level, the wind in this poem is quite literal. On another level, it [symbolizes](#) the vast, impersonal power of nature. It wreaks havoc not only on the human world but also on plants and animals—"stampeding the fields," flinging away one bird and bending another "like an iron bar." In fact, this wind is so terrible that it even makes "the stones cry out." Nothing is impervious to it; it threatens everything it encounters. In this way, it represents nature's vast destructive power.

At the same time, the wind symbolizes the relationship between the inhabitants of the house, who are unable to "entertain"—or tolerate—one another. Even as "the roots of the house move," they're unable to communicate with each other, instead sitting in stony silence and listening to the wind. In a way, the wind does the talking for them: it embodies the turmoil that threatens to "shatter" the house—or their relationship.

#### Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- Line 3
- Lines 6-8
- Lines 11-24



### THE HOUSE

On one level, the house, like the wind, is literal. On another level, it [symbolizes](#) humanity's fragility in the face of nature's destructiveness.

The poem begins with an unsettling [metaphor](#): "This house has been far out at sea all night." In other words, the speaker's source of shelter and stability feels terribly insecure. The speaker is painfully aware that the storm could "shatter" the house as if it were a mere "goblet." Even a warm fire and comfortable chairs can't hide the fact that the house's very "roots" (foundations) are shifting. By extension, nature can destroy humans' safety, or existence, at any moment.

The house may also symbolize the fragile relationship between the people *in* the house. Unable to distract each other from the storm (a possible metaphor for the turmoil in their relationship), these people fear that the walls will literally and figuratively crash down around them. Their relationship, or comfortable domestic life, seems to be the thing in danger of shattering.

#### Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "This house has been far out at sea all night,"
- **Lines 16-24:** "The house / Rang like some fine green

goblet in the note / That any second would shatter it.  
Now deep / In chairs, in front of the great fire, we grip /  
Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought, / Or  
each other. We watch the fire blazing, / And feel the  
roots of the house move, but sit on, / Seeing the window  
tremble to come in, / Hearing the stones cry out under  
the horizons."



## POETIC DEVICES

### CONSONANCE

The poem is filled with [consonance](#), which gives it musicality and rhythm. Take lines 3-4, which are packed with a rush of sounds that evoke the power of the storm itself:

Winds stampeding the fields under the window  
Floundering black astride and blinding wet

Those /w/ and /f/ sounds call to mind the whoosh of the wind, while the heavier /b/, /d/, and /n/ sounds suggest the feeling of being bogged down by wind and rain. (Note that there's specific [alliteration](#) here as well, which adds to the intensity of these lines in words like "wind"/"window," "fields"/"Floundering," and "black"/"blinding.")

In the second stanza, that consonance is dominated by /l/ sounds, which make things feel somewhat more fluid than they did in the previous stanza (perhaps hinting at the slight relief that comes with sunrise). The [assonance](#) (those short /eh/ sounds in "emerald / Flexing like the lens") adds to the effect. Take lines 7-8:

Blade-light, luminous black and emerald,  
Flexing like the lens [...]

The poem is thick with repeated sounds throughout, making its language feel rich and deliberate. The sounds of the lines make it seem like the speaker recognizes the danger of the storm, but is also pretty captivated by it.

#### Where Consonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "house has"
- **Line 2:** "woods crashing," "darkness"
- **Line 3:** "Winds stampeding," "fields under," "window"
- **Line 4:** "Floundering black astride and blinding wet"
- **Line 6:** "hills had," "wind wielded"
- **Line 7:** "Blade-light, luminous black," "emerald"
- **Line 8:** "Flexing like," "lens"
- **Line 9:** "scaled along," "house-side"
- **Line 10:** "coal-house," "Once," "looked"

- **Line 11:** "brunt wind," "dented," "balls"
- **Line 12:** "tent," "drummed," "strained"
- **Line 13:** "quivering," "skyline"
- **Line 14:** "second," "with," "flap"
- **Line 15:** "wind flung," "away"
- **Lines 15-16:** "black- / Back gull bent like"
- **Line 16:** "bar," "slowly," "house"
- **Line 17:** "like some fine green goblet"
- **Line 18:** "second"
- **Line 19:** "front," "great," "fire," "grip"
- **Line 20:** "hearts"
- **Line 21:** "We watch," "fire," "blazing"
- **Line 22:** "feel," "sit"
- **Line 23:** "Seeing," "come"
- **Line 24:** "stones"

### ASSONANCE

Like [consonance](#), [assonance](#) adds musicality and rhythm to the poem. Take line 1, where the shared sounds of "house" and "out" start the poem off on a rousing note and emphasize the striking image of the house bobbing along "at sea" (the speaker's [metaphor](#) for how it has felt to be caught within this violent storm).

Later, the long /i/ sounds of "astride" and "blinding" at the end of this first stanza add yet more music to the speaker's language, subtly evoking the building power of the storm.

Assonance again evokes the frenzy of the storm through the repeated /uh/ and /eh/ sounds in lines 10-12:

[...] Once I looked up —  
Through the brunt wind that dented the balls of my  
eyes  
The tent of the hills drummed [...]

As with the poem's other sonic devices, assonance makes the poem feel more distinctly *poetic*, elevating the speaker's language and emphasizing the epic (and [symbolic](#)) nature of the storm being described.

#### Where Assonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "house," "out"
- **Line 4:** "astride," "blinding"
- **Line 7:** "emerald"
- **Line 8:** "Flexing," "lens"
- **Line 10:** "up"
- **Line 11:** "brunt," "dented," "my eyes"
- **Line 12:** "tent," "drummed"
- **Line 13:** "quivering," "grimace"
- **Line 14:** "flap"
- **Line 15:** "magpie," "black"

- **Line 16:** "Back"
- **Line 22:** "roots," "move"

## ALLITERATION

Along with [consonance](#) and [assonance](#), the poem uses [alliteration](#) to add musicality and rhythm to the poem's language in general, and also to intensify and emphasize specific moments.

As with those other sonic devices, the closer together alliterative sounds are, the more striking they tend to be. So while the /b/ alliteration in line 4 ("black"/"blinding") subtly adds to the rhythm of the line—and also underscores the connection between darkness and being unable to see—the /w/ alliteration in line 6 ("wind wielded") is much more noticeable. It not only draws attention to the image of the wind, which is [personified](#) as "wield[ing]" the light like a weapon, but also evokes the *sound* of the wind—its whooshing and wailing.

In lines 15-16, alliteration helps convey the awfulness of the image: the speaker observes that "a black- / Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly." The intensity of so many /b/ sounds in a row (combined with /ah/ assonance and /l/ consonance) is jarring—much like the experience of seeing a bird bent in half by the wind.

### Where Alliteration appears in the poem:

- **Line 2:** "booming"
- **Line 3:** "Winds," "window"
- **Line 4:** "black," "blinding," "wet"
- **Line 6:** "wind," "wielded"
- **Line 7:** "luminous"
- **Line 8:** "lens"
- **Line 14:** "flap"
- **Line 15:** "flung," "black"
- **Line 16:** "Back," "bent," "bar"
- **Line 17:** "green," "goblet"
- **Line 19:** "great," "grip"
- **Line 22:** "sit"
- **Line 23:** "Seeing"
- **Line 24:** "stones"

## IMAGERY

There isn't a single line in "Wind" that doesn't contain [imagery](#)! The poem is full to bursting with sensory details that immerse the reader in the storm it's describing. It uses many *kinds* of imagery, too, from visual imagery (which appeals to the reader's sense of sight) to tactile imagery (which pertains to touch). An example of the latter is the phrase "feel[ing] the roots of the house move" (line 22), while an example of the former appears in lines 5-7:

Till day rose; then under an orange sky  
The hills had new places, and wind wielded  
Blade-light, luminous black and emerald,

In this passage, the reader can practically *see* the morning sky brightening and turning orange, the hills glowing in the sunrise, and the wind seeming to wield a blade of piercing, ominous light.

The poem uses particularly strong *auditory* imagery, or imagery that appeals to the reader's sense of hearing. The first stanza, for example, describes the woods "crashing" in the wind and the hills "booming" with thunder. The winds are said to "stamped[e]," a visual image that also conveys the loudness of animals running in panic. Lines 12-14 ("The tent of [...] with a flap"), compare the hills to a tent "drumm[ing]" in the wind, one that might "bang and vanish with a flap" at any moment. "Bang" and "flap" are [onomatopoeia](#) words, meaning that their sound evokes the very sound they describe. They give the passage a visceral intensity that helps the reader vividly imagine the speaker's experience.

Sometimes the imagery is more [metaphorical](#) than literal; in the last line, for example, the speaker describes "Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons." This is a metaphor (the stones aren't *literally* crying out), but one built with imagery. Readers can visualize the distant stones and imagine the sound of the wind sweeping through them.

### Where Imagery appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-8
- Lines 9-16
- Lines 17-24

## SIMILE

There are a handful of [similes](#) in the poem. For example, lines 6-8 describe the wind as wielding a blade of black and green light, which "Flex[es] like the lens of a mad eye." This simile dramatizes the wind's fury while also pointing to its impersonal nature; like someone who's "mad" (deranged), the wind doesn't know what it's doing.

In lines 15-16, the speaker sees the wind bend a "black- / Back gull" (a kind of bird) "like an iron bar slowly." By comparing the bird to an iron bar, the speaker emphasizes how strong the wind must be in order to bend it so violently. The simile also conveys the speaker's horror at witnessing this suffering; it seems to happen in slow motion, imprinting on the speaker's memory.

Finally, in lines 16-18, the speaker says that the house:

Rang like some fine green goblet in the note  
That any second would shatter it.

This simile likens the house to a delicate drinking glass, one that can be shattered by hitting just the right musical note. Though it's built to protect the people inside it, the house is really no match for nature's ferocity.

#### Where Simile appears in the poem:

- **Line 8:** "Flexing like the lens of a mad eye."
- **Lines 15-16:** "and a black- / Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly."
- **Lines 16-18:** "The house / Rang like some fine green goblet in the note / That any second would shatter it."

## METAPHOR

The poem uses several [metaphors](#), starting with the opening line:

This house has been far out at sea all night,

The house isn't actually floating in the ocean; rather, it's similar to a ship far from land in that it's wet, isolated, and vulnerable to the elements.

In lines 6-7, the speaker [personifies](#) the wind by saying that it "wielded / Blade-light." By comparing the storm's weird black and green light to a weapon the storm is using, the speaker communicates the danger of the storm.

The metaphor in lines 12-14 compares the wind-battered hills to a tent "drumm[ing] and strain[ing]" against the rope that secures it. In other words, compared to the wind, even the hills seem flimsy and vulnerable. This storm seems capable of destroying the landscape as if it were mere canvas.

In the final stanza, the speaker claims that the house's other inhabitant(s) can "feel the roots of the house move." Here, roots are a metaphor for the house's foundations—and also, perhaps, the emotional foundations of the relationship between these people. Their relationship is clearly strained; they can't "entertain" (tolerate or amuse) each other. They feel that things aren't stable, yet they can only keep sitting in silence, "grip[ping]" their "hearts" (holding their emotions in).

#### Where Metaphor appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "This house has been far out at sea all night,"
- **Lines 6-7:** "and wind wielded / Blade-light"
- **Lines 12-14:** "The tent of the hills drummed and strained its guyrope, / The fields quivering, the skyline a grimace, / At any second to bang and vanish with a flap."
- **Line 22:** "And feel the roots of the house move"

## PERSONIFICATION

The poem frequently [personifies](#) the natural world, imbuing the storm with menace and the landscape with some of the

speaker's horror and awe. Lines 6-7, for example, state that the "wind wielded / Blade-light." By imagining the wind as holding a weapon, the speaker conveys its violence, making it seem as if it's *trying* to cause damage.

There's also personification in line 13:

The fields quivering, the skyline a grimace,

"Quivering" suggests an almost human, or animal, fear, as if the fields are shrinking back from the wind. The horizon's "grimace" further suggests that even the earth and sky are gritting their teeth against this terrible storm.

In the same stanza, the speaker says that "The wind flung a magpie away." Here, too, the word choice ("flung") seems to imbue the wind with malicious intention, as if it *purposely* tossed aside the magpie.

Finally, in the last two lines of the poem, the inhabitants of the house watch "the window tremble to come in" and hear "the stones cry out under the horizons." By personifying the window and the stones, the poem again suggests that nothing is impervious to the wind's fury—not even human-made objects or solid natural objects. It also captures the fearful atmosphere within the house; the people inside can think of nothing but the storm, and project their human fear onto everything around them.

#### Where Personification appears in the poem:

- **Lines 6-7:** "and wind wielded / Blade-light"
- **Line 13:** "The fields quivering, the skyline a grimace,"
- **Line 15:** "The wind flung a magpie away"
- **Lines 23-24:** "Seeing the window tremble to come in, / Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons."

## ENJAMBMENT

Less than half of the lines in "Wind" are [enjambéd](#); most are [end-stopped](#). However, the enjambments are frequent enough to have noticeable effects on the poem.

Enjambment helps control the poem's pace. For instance, while the first two lines are end-stopped, the verse speeds up in lines 3-7 as enjambment hurries the reader along past the ends of lines. Notably, this speeding up coincides with the introduction of wind in the poem:

Winds stampeding the fields under the window  
Floundering [...]

The stanza ends with an enjambéd line, so despite the stanza break, the reader is encouraged to keep reading through the completion of the clause. This comes early in line 5:

[...] an orange sky

The hills had new places, and wind wielded  
Blade-light [...]

The semicolon after "rose" offers a needed pause, but it hardly checks the poem's breathless momentum, as lines 5 and 6 are enjambed as well. All the enjambment in lines 3-7 seems to evoke the blustering wind, which isn't slowed or stopped by anything in the landscape.

Lines 16-20 ("Back gull [...] thought,") contain a similar series of enjambed lines. Here, the series of enjambments evokes not only the wind's continuous blowing, but also the tension in the house as the inhabitants wonder whether they'll make it through the storm. After all, enjambments create a kind of grammatical suspense, which mirrors these people's mindset as they wait out the danger.

#### Where Enjambment appears in the poem:

- **Lines 3-4:** "window / Floundering"
- **Lines 4-5:** "wet / Till"
- **Lines 5-6:** "sky / The"
- **Lines 6-7:** "wielded / Blade-light"
- **Lines 9-10:** "as / The"
- **Lines 11-12:** "eyes / The"
- **Lines 15-16:** "black- / Back"
- **Lines 16-17:** "house / Rang"
- **Lines 17-18:** "note / That"
- **Lines 18-19:** "deep / In"
- **Lines 19-20:** "grip / Our"

**Guyrope** (Line 12) - The rope or wire that fixes a tent to the ground.

**Grimace** (Line 13) - A scowl; a twisted facial expression indicating pain or disgust. (Here used metaphorically to describe the grim-looking horizon.)

**Magpie** (Line 15) - A type of small bird.

**Black-back gull** (Lines 15-16) - Another, larger type of bird.

**Goblet** (Lines 16-17) - A drinking glass with a base and a stem; a chalice.

**Entertain** (Lines 19-21) - Give attention or consideration to; think about; tolerate.



## FORM, METER, & RHYME

### FORM

"Wind" doesn't follow a traditional form, such as a [sonnet](#) or a haiku, nor does it maintain a consistent [meter](#) or [rhyme scheme](#). However, it does consist of six [quatrains](#) (four-line stanzas) and use a number of [slant rhymes](#), giving it a somewhat orderly appearance on the surface. For a poem about the wild, destructive forces of nature, it *looks* fairly composed.

Perhaps this structure speaks to the way humans try to maintain control even in extreme circumstances: they build houses to protect themselves from storms, light fires to warm themselves during the coldest nights and write with relative restraint about things that are too overwhelming to understand. At the same time, the poem's shifting rhythms and off-kilter rhymes—like the wind itself—keep disrupting any attempt at order.

### METER

"Wind" is written in [free verse](#): it doesn't follow any fixed pattern of [meter](#) or [rhyme](#). That said, it never strays far from pentameter (a pattern of five metrical feet—or ten syllables—per line). While some lines have only eight or nine syllables and others have twelve or thirteen, the average syllable count stays around ten.

In fact, the poem begins with a line of what sounds a lot like [iambic](#) pentameter (an iamb being a foot made up of an unstressed syllable followed by a **stressed** syllable):

This house | has been | far out | at sea | all night

While this line is generally iambic, it does contain one [spondee](#) (a foot made up of two **stressed** syllables) in the middle ("far out"). This spondee adds vigor and emphasis to the line without disrupting the rhythm too much. Line 2, however, is much less rhythmic and contrasts sharply with the first line:



## VOCABULARY

**Stampeding** (Line 3) - Rushing wildly in sudden mass panic.

**Astride** (Lines 3-4) - With a leg on each side of something. (Here, the forceful wind is compared to "stampeding" animals, such as horses with riders sitting *astride* them.)

**Floundering** (Line 4) - Struggling or staggering helplessly, especially in water.

**Wielded** (Lines 6-7) - Brandished, carried, or used (a weapon or tool).

**Blade-light** (Lines 6-7) - The poet is comparing the piercing, threatening light to a blade.

**Luminous** (Line 7) - Shining; full of light.

**Coal-house** (Lines 9-10) - A shed for storing coal.

**Scaled** (Line 9) - Climbed up or along a steep surface.

**House-side** (Line 9) - The side of the house.

**Brunt** (Line 11) - The full force or impact of something. Usually a noun, but here used as an adjective meaning "blunt and forceful."



The woods | crashing | through dark- | ness, the |  
booming | hills

This line strings together an iamb (da-DUM), a [trochee](#) (DA-dum), another iamb, a pyrrhic foot (two unstressed syllables), another trochee, and a final stressed syllable. The unpredictability of the rhythm mirrors the temperamental nature of the storm, which lulls and rages with no warning.

Line 3 is just as striking:

Winds stamp- | eding | the fields | under | the wind- |  
ow

This line begins with two forceful trochees that evoke the rushing wind, but then becomes metrically unpredictable. In this way, the poem's meter—or lack thereof—seems to suggest that the poet's impulse toward order can't tame the wildness of the storm any more than human structures can fully guard against the force of nature.

## RHYME SCHEME

"Wind" doesn't have a consistent [rhyme scheme](#), and at first glance, it doesn't seem to rhyme at all. However, on closer inspection, the poem contains plenty of [slant rhyme](#)—as in lines 1 and 4 ("night"/"wet"), for example—and even one full rhyme: "sky" and "eye" in lines 5 and 8.

These rhymes provide musicality, but not the steady, sing-song kind. Instead, the music is vigorous, off-kilter, and startling, fitting for a poem about the violence of nature.



## SPEAKER

In real life, Ted Hughes had a notoriously stormy relationship with his then-wife, fellow poet Sylvia Plath. However, the poem doesn't need to be read as autobiographical, nor does it assign the speaker a gender.

All readers know is that the speaker is someone who has been inside a house all night while strong winds, rain, and thunder assail the surrounding landscape. The storm rages on as morning arrives, and at noon, the speaker ventures out to get coal for the fire. The speaker seems both daunted and amazed by the storm—by the way it wreaks havoc on the human and natural worlds alike.

As the speaker retires to the fireplace toward the end of the poem, it becomes clear that this person isn't alone. In fact, more than the storm raging outside, it may be the speaker's tempestuous relationship with the house's other inhabitants that's really distressing the speaker. Either way, the poem ends with the speaker in a rather grim frame of mind.



## SETTING

"Wind" is set in a house and its surrounding landscape during a fierce storm. The setting is depicted through intense, visceral [imagery](#): the speaker describes "the woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills," as well as "stampeding" winds that "wiel[d] / Blade-light [...] / Flexing like the lens of a mad eye." These descriptions [personify](#) the natural world, lending the storm an air of fury, wildness, and menace.

Upon venturing outside to gather coal for the fire, the speaker gets a closer look at the storm, which moves so ferociously that it seems to "dent" the speaker's eyeballs. The fields are described as "quivering" and the horizon as "grimac[ing]," as if they, too, are afraid of the storm's brute force. The wind hurls aside a "magpie" (a small bird) and seems to bend a larger "gull" in half. These images emphasize that nature's violence spares nothing and no one.

The house itself is compared to a "green goblet," suggesting humanity's fragility in the face of nature's power. The poem concludes inside the house, where the speaker and another person (or people) sit in front of the fireplace, too tense to read, think, or speak. The stormy weather outside seems to reflect the tension in the household.



## CONTEXT

### LITERARY CONTEXT

In 1956, Hughes met and married the American poet Sylvia Plath. Though their marriage became notoriously troubled (and allegedly violent on Hughes's part), they had a high regard for each other's work. It was Plath who typed up Hughes's manuscript *The Hawk in the Rain* and convinced him to submit it to a first-book contest judged by Marianne Moore, W. H. Auden, and Stephen Spender. The manuscript won first prize, and its publication in 1957 propelled Hughes to international recognition. The domestic strife between Hughes and Plath, perhaps hinted at in "Wind," became a key subject in both poets' work, including in Plath's *Ariel* (published posthumously after her 1963 suicide) and Hughes's *Birthday Letters* (1998).

Like other poems in *The Hawk in the Rain* (including [the title poem](#)), "Wind" explores themes of natural struggle and elemental violence—themes that remained at the heart of Hughes's poems throughout his career. At the time of its publication, *The Hawk in the Rain* was considered a departure from predominant Western poetic styles, particularly in England, where Hughes felt that the "octopus" of literary tradition stifled young poets.

The mythical themes and vigorous, yet economical language of his early poems marked a major shift in the landscape of British poetry. He was named Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom in

1984 and remained so until his death in 1998.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Hughes was born in Mytholmroyd in Yorkshire, England in 1930. The poems of *The Hawk in the Rain* (and much of his later work) are influenced by the rural landscape of his upbringing. His depictions of struggles within nature and the violence of natural forces (such as wind!) reflect his lifelong fascination with animals and wilderness.

Often he depicts these struggles by way of exploring similar dynamics between humans. Hughes's father served in World War I, and the shadow of both world wars informed Hughes's observations of the natural world. Though the 1950s—when "Wind" was written—were a time of rebuilding and economic growth, they were also a time of increasing Cold War tension. The threat of nuclear war weighed heavy on a planet still recovering from two of history's bloodiest conflicts. From *The Hawk in the Rain* onward, his work often traced connections between natural, mythic, domestic, and political violence.

Yet as grim as the outlook of poems like "Wind" might be, Hughes's choice to become a poet largely stemmed from his love of nature. Even in its harshest, most unforgiving moments, nature attracted him as a source of inspiration and awe. Hughes grew up hunting animals, but he soon found that the thrill of chasing an animal was deflated by the result. Rather than trap or kill wild creatures, he preferred to portray the essence of their wildness and to explore the deep bond he felt with nature. In this way, he found poetry better suited to his aims.



## MORE RESOURCES

### EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- [Ted Hughes's Life and Work](#) — Check out a biography of

the poet and additional poems via the Poetry Foundation. (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/ted-hughes>)

- [Hughes and Plath](#) — Listen to a 1961 interview with Ted Hughes and his wife, poet Sylvia Plath, for the BBC. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vqhsnk6vY8E>)
- [The Hawk in the Rain](#) — An essay by Heather Clark about Hughes's first poetry collection, *The Hawk in the Rain*, via The Ted Hughes Society. (<http://thettedhughessociety.org/hawk>)
- [British Library Archives](#) — Additional resources on Hughes's work from the British Library. (<https://www.bl.uk/people/ted-hughes>)
- [A Reading of the Poem](#) — Hear the poem read aloud by British actor Christopher Naylor. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4TggxiXsXI>)

### LITCHARTS ON OTHER TED HUGHES POEMS

- [A Picture of Otto](#)
- [Bayonet Charge](#)
- [Hawk Roosting](#)
- [The Thought Fox](#)



## HOW TO CITE

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