

Themes & Ideas: - Hyena is representative of death

- Nature is cruel and harsh

- Hyena's dramatic monologue is trying to manipulate reader / listener's impression of it.

'Hyena', by Edwin Morgan

TONE: menacing and unsettling

1. I am waiting for you. - death is at the end for everyone

2. I have been travelling all morning through the bush

3. and not eaten. > hyena is building impression of itself as particularly hungry, thirsty.

4. I am lying at the edge of the bush

5. on a dusty path that leads from the burnt-out kraal.

6. I am panting, it is midday, I found no water-hole.

7. I am very fierce without food and although my eyes

8. are screwed to slits against the sun  
unable to see.

9. you must believe I am prepared to spring.

↳ threat: willingness to state intentions shows the hyena is confident in its superiority

10. What do you think of me? - Rhetorical question intended to challenge and unsettle the listener.

11. I have a rough coat like Africa.

12. I am crafty with dark spots

13. like the bush-tufted plains of Africa.

14. I sprawl as a shaggy bundle of gathered energy

15. like Africa sprawling in its waters.

16. I trot, I lope, I slaver, I am a ranger.

Vivid, specific, active verbs give strong visual sense of hyena.

Stanza 1  
Hyena's habitat

alliteration

alliteration

Details emphasise inhospitable, harsh environment - makes the hyena more impressive / sinister that it lives here.

Similes make the hyena fundamentally connected to the environment. - it's almost an embodiment of Africa.

Stanza 2  
Appearance & physique

Dramatic monologue: the hyena is talking to a silent listener and revealing things it wants to and doesn't want to (unintentionally)

17. I hunch my shoulders. I eat the dead. - Short, blunt statement at end of stanza

Word choice - 'song' refers to its laughter emphasises the hyena's idea of itself

18. Do you like my song? - Rhetorical question - toying with listener

19. When the moon pours hard and cold on the veldt

metaphor

20. I sing, and I am the slave of darkness. - servant of night, and ideas (death, evil) associated with darkness.

Stanza 3

The hyena at night

21. Over the stone walls and the mud wall and the ruined laces

22. and the owls, the moonlight falls.

List of man-made and natural things emphasises the completeness of the night.

23. I sniff a broken drum. I bristle. My pelt is silver.

24. I howl my song to the moon - up it goes.

Sinister invitation, with obvious

25. Would you meet me there in the waste places?

undertones of threat and mockery - if the listener meets this sinister carnivore on its home turf, they'll likely be killed and eaten.

26. It is said I am a good match

Introduction of lion introduces idea of comparison

27. for a dead lion. I put my muzzle

between majestic, strong, regal lions and lowly, creep, scavenging hyenas.

28. at his golden flanks, and tear. He

repetition

Connotations of wealth, royalty.

29. is my golden supper, but my tastes are easy.

The hyena isn't too impressed or very or the other at the high status of its meal.

30. I have a crowd of fangs, and I use them.

metaphor - fangs are numerous and messy.

31. Oh and my tongue - do you like me

32. when it comes lolling out over my jaw

Grotesque imagery and rhetorical question again used to taunt/toy with the listener.

33. very long, and I am laughing?

Stanza 4

Hyena's teeth

Present tense & frequent use of short sentences gives sense of immediacy - of 'happening right now' to the poem.

34. I am not laughing. - Brief, strong statement - hyena undercuts its own question and so further unsettles the listener.
35. But I am not snarling either, only
36. panting in the sun, showing you
37. what I grip
38. carrion with.
- ↳ Threat - the hyena is trolling the listener then acting offended/angry at the listener's expected response.
- ↳ Threat 2 → Then 'I'm not snarling':

Stanza 5

Hyena's hunting methods

39. I am waiting - 'waiting' repeated from stanza 1
- ↳ The hyena is expanding on what it meant in the opening line.
40. for the foot to slide,
41. for the heart to seize,
42. for the leaping sinews to go slack,
43. for the fight to the death to be fought to the death,
44. for a glazing eye and a rumour of blood.
- word choice - 'rumour' suggests even the slightest sign of blood will draw the hyena near.
45. I am crouching in my dry shadows
- word choice - 'dry' returns to the idea of how inhospitable the environment is.
46. till you are ready for me.
47. My place is to pick you clean
- ↳ 'your' bones makes it a direct, personal threat to the listener.
48. And leave your bones to the wind.
- ↳ not 'my choice', 'my joy', 'my place' - the hyena sees its activities as a fundamental, necessary part of things.
- ↳ Reminder that the hyena is careful and calculating.