

Task for *Burial Rites*

Setting and metaphorical meaning

Read and study the examples below. For each one, discuss if, and how, it is evidence of pathetic fallacy. How does it show setting to function in ways other than merely as time and place?

Example 1

As he travelled over the north peninsula with its thin lip of ocean on the horizon, the clouds began to clear and the soft red light of the late June sun flooded the pass. Drops of water glittered brightly upon the ground, and the hills appeared pink and muted, shadows moving slowly across them as clouds drifted overhead. Small insects wound their way through the air, lit up light flecks of dust as they passed through the sunshine, and the sweet, damp smell of grass, almost ready to be harvested, lingered in the cool air of the valleys. The dread that Tóti had felt so firmly lining his stomach dissipated as he fell into a quiet appreciation of the countryside before him. (p. 32)

Example 2

It was an evil sight. Dark clouds bore down upon the mountain range and under their smoky-blackness, a grey swarm of snow swirled as far as you could see. The wind was fierce, and a great, icy gust of it suddenly blew against the door so hard that it knocked me off my feet. The candle on the corridor wall went out in an instant, and from within the croft Björn shouted what the Devil I thought I was doing, letting the blizzard into his home. (p. 144)

Example 3

It was a relief to be outside. It had grown cloudy and dim, but the cold air, and the strong smell of fish drying on the racks near the cowshed, seemed sympathetic to his confusion. He thought of Blondal's greasy finger against his throat. The crunch of bone. Natan Ketilsson begging for his life. He wanted to be sick. (p. 174)

Example 4

The next day had broken in the embrace of more wet and snowy weather, and Margrét had persuaded Tóti to delay his return home until the skies were cleared. He was relieved. His dreams had been troubled, and he had woken with an aching head. (p. 224)