

Pike is one Ted Hughes's best loved animal poems. It is a tribute to a freshwater fish he respected and feared, one which he knew of as a child and carried with him in his dreams. For Hughes, fishing was extra special: "Fishing provides that connection with the whole living world. It gives you the opportunity of being totally immersed, turning back into yourself in a good way. A form of meditation, some form of communion with levels of yourself that are deeper than the ordinary self." The pike (*Esox lucius*) is a carnivore and can grow to large lengths in deeper waters. They are known for their ambush style of hunting, lying in wait for smaller fish behind reeds and plant-life before striking. Armed with sharp teeth and lightning speed they're at the top of the food chain. The poem suggests is that, even though the human feels a need to fish, to hunt and catch such a fish as a pike, it is the pike's aura and essence that will in the end prevail.