**REFUGEES BLUES BY W.H. AUDEN**

**COMPREHENSION**

2.

The victims are the Jews (refugees). The narrator is one of these refugees who have escaped from Germany with a partner (“my dear”); however, they can’t find a place to stay anywhere (first stanza: the city where they have arrived has 10 million people, but there is no place for them). In the second stanza, we learn that the refugees had a home (probably in Germany), but they can’t live there now.

The perpetrators are Hitler and the Nazi soldiers.

The spectators are the common people who see what is happening but don’t do anything (the consul in line 10, the committee in line 13, the owner of the dog and of the cat in lines 22-23) or who condemn the Jews without understanding the situation (the speaker at the public meeting in line 16). Auden condemns not only Germany that persecutes the Jews, but also the other countries that don’t help them

4.

From the third to the sixth stanza Auden speaks about the bureaucracy that prevents the Jews from finding a place to stay. Their passports are old and no longer valid, so they can’t be accepted by the new country (probably the USA).

**ANALYSIS**

5.

1. The poem is formed by 12 stanzas composed of triplets (3 lines).
2. The third line of each stanza is longer than the others. The first 2 lines rhyme.
3. There are many repetitions (for ex. “saw” in l. 22, 23,26,28,31 and “my dear” which is repeated in the last line of each stanza). The repetitions increase the musicality of the poem, which has a structure similar to a blues song (blues is a musical style that was born in the slave communities in America and it is used to tell sad stories).
4. The third line of each stanza is a refrain because it is formed by the repetition of 2 half lines, separated by the words “my dear”

6.

The language is simple, ordinary and common

7.

Auden usually combines different registers and different styles. In this case, there are few poetic images. Some examples are the old yew (l.7), the thunder rumbling in the sky (l.19) and a plain in the falling snow (l.34). The images belonging to common and everyday life are much more, for ex. the atlas (l.5), the dog and the cat (l.22-23), the harbor (l.25), the fish (l.26), the birds (l.28), windows and doors (l.32)

The poet also uses a device that is typical of colloquial speech, that is the lack of the subject in the first line of each stanza.

8. The poem uses many contrasting images to underline the main themes, that is the loneliness and social isolation of the Jews and the lack of solidarity of the other people; for ex.

- line 2 speaks about the contrast between the mansions (beautiful houses) and the holes and it represents the gap between the rich and the poor (and the situation of the Jews is even worse than the poor, because they don’t even have a hole where they can stay)

- lines 11-12 say that the Jews are considered officially dead by the Government, even if they are actually alive, because they haven’t a valid passport

- lines 22-24 speak about the contrast between the love shown for the pets and the hostility felt for the Jews. Here Auden uses bitter irony when he compares the situation of the pets and of the Jews

- lines 25-27 and 28-30 are based on the contrast between the freedom of the fish and birds that can go wherever they want and the Jews that can’t go anywhere and are persecuted