

RUGBY LEAGUE GAME

By James Kirkup

Born 1918 – 2009 (51) – Conscientious objector in WW2.
Left England in the 1960s when one of his poems was
banned. 'Very prolific' – spent time in Japan where he
mastered the art of Haiku. Lived in Spain.

Sport is absurd, and sad.
Those grown men ~~just~~ look
In those dreary long blue shorts.
Those ringed stockings, Edwardian,
Balding pates, and huge
Fat knees that ought to be heroes'

Crown of a man's head – losing hair – manhood.

Official rugby terms used

Grappling, hooking, gallantly ~~rolling~~ –
Is all this courage really necessary?
Taking their good clean fun
So solemnly, they run each other down
With earnest keenness, for the honour of
Victory, the cap, the country side

Epithet – words in descending order of importance
results in ridicule – the country side contradicts the
expectation of a grand ideal / ambition.

Overgrown / incongruous

Like great boys roll each other,
In the mud of public Saturdays,
Groping their blind way back
To noble youth, away from the bank.
The wife, the gram, the spin drier
Back to the Spartan freedom of the field.

Tone of witty whimsy. Light, wit, conversational
style. Beside the wisdom and fine irony is a ruthless
commentary on the human condition.

Title creates expectation of glorious competition. To
be part of a league suggests competitive status. But
ironically the content of the poem contradicts this.

Contradiction – silly / tragic

Players are no longer young – suggests they are
doing something childish / no longer appropriate.

Appeal to reader – involves them.

They are kitted out in a uniform which makes them
look foolish.

Edward (King of England from 1901 – 1910) seems
old fashioned – from a bygone era.

Disgust – sneering – opposite of his idea of the
heroic.

Old fashioned term for valiant / noble in battle –
satirical tone / irony. These men are past it.

Rhetorical question challenges their actions.

Cliche poems ironic – makes fun of them. They are
the cliché.

Poet seems to laugh at the violence but recognises
the sincerity of their objective.

Embarrassment of their dirty bodies in public

Contrast description of youth and middle age –
adults seem unable to recapture their past

Youth – qualities of courage / honour – memories of
a more romantic era

Financial responsibilities – grind of a gull job

Emotional ties, the weight of a child's dependence,
mundane domesticity

Double meaning / ambiguity – austere life-style /
self-discipline OR courage in the face of danger

James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes

J Spring



James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes:

A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory J. A. Cuddon, 2012-11-07 With new entries and sensitive edits this fifth edition places J A Cuddon's indispensable dictionary firmly in the 21st Century Written in a clear and highly readable style Comprehensive historical coverage extending from ancient times to the present day Broad intellectual and cultural range Expands on the previous edition to incorporate the most recent literary terminology New material is particularly focused in areas such as gender studies and queer theory post colonial theory post structuralism post modernism narrative theory and cultural studies Existing entries have been edited to ensure that topics receive balanced treatment

The Use of English ,1974 **The Makers** Michael J. F. Chapman, Richard Purkis, 1982 *The Spectator* ,1980

Unveiling the Magic of Words: A Report on "**James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes**"

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Table of Contents James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes

1. Understanding the eBook James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - The Rise of Digital Reading James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes User Reviews and Ratings
 - James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes and Bestseller Lists

5. Accessing James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes Free and Paid eBooks
 - James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes Public Domain eBooks
 - James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes eBook Subscription Services
 - James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes eBook Formats
 - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes Compatibility with Devices
 - James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - Interactive Elements James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
8. Staying Engaged with James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - Setting Reading Goals James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of James Kirkup Rugby League Game Poem Notes
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning

- Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
- Exploring Educational eBooks

14. Embracing eBook Trends

- Integration of Multimedia Elements
- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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