

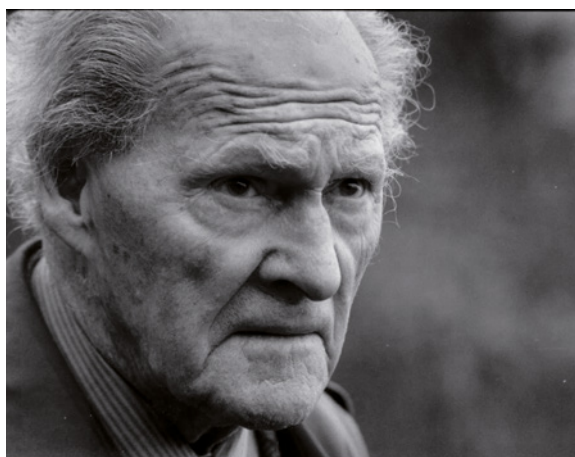
R.S. Thomas, *A Welshman to Any Tourist*

Ronald Stuart Thomas (1913-2000) was born in Cardiff in 1913. He was educated at University College, North Wales, and later studied theology at St Michael's College, Llandaff. He was ordained as a priest in the Anglican Church in Wales in 1936. He began studying Welsh aged 30, and after his retirement from the Church in 1978 he became an active political campaigner and a fierce advocate of Welsh nationalism. Awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 1964 and nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1996, R.S. Thomas was the best known Welsh poet of his day. He died in 2000.

In the poem below, Ronald Stuart Thomas gives his readers a quite unconventional image of Wales referring to a mythical past that today seems almost meaningless.

A Welshman to Any Tourist

We've nothing vast to offer you, no deserts
Except the waste of thought
Forming from mind erosion;
No canyons where the pterodactyl¹'s wing
Falls like a shadow.
The hills are fine, of course,
Bearded with water to suggest age
And pocked with² caverns,
One being Arthur's dormitory;
He and his knights are the bright ore³
That seams⁴ our history,
But shame has kept them late in bed.



Ronald Stuart Thomas

GLOSSARY

- 1** any of various small, mostly tailless, extinct flying reptiles that existed during the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods
- 2** dotted with
- 3** a mineral or an aggregate of minerals from which a valuable constituent, especially a metal, can be profitably mined or extracted
- 4** puts together as if with a seam



ACTIVITIES

- 1** Answer the following questions.
 - 1 What has Wales to offer to tourists according to the speaking voice?
 - 2 What are hills like in Wales?
 - 3 Why are Arthur and his knights defined "the bright ore that seams our history"?