

Key

1. Why did the narrator serve (help) him the most?

Rhyme scheme
AABB

intruding

"The Hangman"
by Maurice Ogden

visitors coming to take over their land → shows his death

2. Why was Hangman so successful?

has the scent imagery
Smell of riches as if he has done this before

Into our town the Hangman came,
Smelling of gold and blood and flame.
And he paced our bricks with a diffident air,
And built his frame in the courthouse square.

builds his gallows, not too large

The scaffold stood by the courthouse side,
Only as wide as the door was wide;
A frame as tall, or little more,
Than the capping sill of the courthouse door.

gallow / scaffold - used for hanging
not too large - at first symbolizes not a lot of power.

don't know his intentions

Townspice wonder why he has come here?

And we wondered, whenever we had the time,
Who the criminal, what the crime
That the Hangman judged with the yellow twist
of knotted hemp in his busy fist.

alliteration not too concerned
metaphor comparing eyes to bullets
who is the criminal? we are innocent? (Jewish people)

all seem to be innocent

And innocent though we were, with dread,
We passed those eyes of buckshot lead --
Till one cried: "Hangman, who is he
For whom you raised the gallows-tree?"

he enjoys this

Then a twinkle grew in the buckshot eye,
And he gave us a riddle instead of reply:
"He who serves me best," said he,
"Shall earn the rope of the gallows-tree."

ironic - the one who serves him best will be punished?

he who helps me the most will be hanged

And he stepped down, and laid his hand
On a man who came from another land.
And we breathed again, for another's grief
At the Hangman's hand was our relief

foreigner - not from here
It's not them, so they are not worried. they sign.

Someone died, still relieved → people happy not them

3 things you can do:

And the gallows-frame on the courthouse lawn
By tomorrow's sun would be struck and gone.
So we gave him way, and no one spoke,
Out of respect for his Hangman's cloak.

want challenge him out of respect for his job, but glad he will be leaving.

1. Walk away/ignore

1st reason given for not opposing

they think he will leave tomorrow, almost done

2. join in

3. try to stop it

2. *personification*

death
EVIL

The next day's sun looked mildly down
On roof and street in our quiet town,
And stark and black in the morning air
Was the gallows-tree in the courthouse square.

gallows still present

still there next day

And the Hangman stood at his usual stand
With the yellow hemp in his busy hand;
With his buckshot eye and his jaw like a pike
And his air so knowing and business-like.

is he not done?

fabnc used to make rope

smile

bullet eyes

And we cried, "Hangman, have you not done
Yesterday, with the foreign one?"
Then we fell silent, and stood amazed,
"Oh, not for him was the gallows raised."

Questioning if he killed the right man

thought you were alone?

oh, not just hanging foreigners?

He laughed a laugh as he looked at us:
"Did you think I'd gone to all this fuss
To hang one man? That's a thing I do
To stretch a rope when the rope is new."

A lot of work for killing of one man, more to come.

worke/trouble/fuss for one man

Then one cried "Murder!" and one cried "Shame!"
And into our midst the Hangman came
To that man's place. "Do you hold," said he,
"with him that was meant for the gallows-tree?"

one shows opposition when Hangman confronts him, others retreat

are you protecting him / standing up for him?

And he laid his hand on that one's arm.
And we shrank back in quick alarm!
And we gave him way, and no one spoke
Out of fear of his Hangman's cloak.

they back up, let him have the man, they have fear now, not respect

lack of opposition has changed to fear

no one speaks up

That night we saw with dread surprise
The Hangman's scaffold had grown in size.
Fed by the blood beneath the chute,
The gallows-tree had taken root;

Why is gallow growing in size?

Successful in mission

getting bigger, more power

Now as wide, or a little more,
Than the steps that led to the courthouse door,
As tall as the writing, or nearly as tall,
Halfway up on the courthouse wall.

Snowball effect

3.

The third he took -- we had all heard tell --
Was a usurer, and an infidel.
"What," said the Hangman "have you to do
With the gallows-bound, and he a Jew?"

3rd man - Jewish man

And we cried out, "Is this one he
Who has served you well and faithfully?"
The Hangman smiled: "It's a clever scheme
to try the strength of the gallows-beam."

The fourth man's dark, accusing song
Had scratched our comfort hard and long;
"And what concern," he gave us back.

"Have you for the doomed -- the doomed and Black?"

5th man 6th man

The fifth. The sixth. And we cried again,
"Hangman, Hangman, is this the man?"

"It's a trick," he said. "that we hangmen know
For easing the trap when the trap springs slow."

And so we ceased, and asked no more,
As the Hangman tallied his bloody score.

And sun by sun, and night by night,
The gallows grew to monstrous height.

size ↑ power ↑

The wings of the scaffold opened wide
Till they covered the square from side to side;
And the monster cross-beam, looking down,
Cast its shadow across the town.

4.

Then through the town the Hangman came,
Through the empty streets, and called my name --
And I looked at the gallows soaring tall,
And thought, "There is no one left at all

For hanging, and so he calls to me
To help pull down the gallows-tree."

So I went out with right good hope
To the Hangman's tree and the Hangman's rope.

money lender at high rate

*does not respect another's views
against a religion, not accepting
one stands up for him
because he is not
their religion*

*is this
the one
you came
for?*

*It's not
you!
why
do you
care?*

*his power is
growing because
they accept his
killings*

*Killings
continue
evil
person.*

*are you
done yet?*

*stand back,
don't question
him anymore
counting
killings*

*gallows
continue to
grow*

*darkness
spreading over
entire town*

*everyone
is gone
except
narrator*

*streets now
empty except
for him.*

*thinks
being called
to help
the Hangman*

*feels he has
done his duty
and is free
to survive
"I'm still here"*

Happiness at accomplishing his goal

He smiled at me as I came down
To the courthouse square through the silent town.

And supple and stretched in his busy hand
Was the yellow twist of the hempen strand.

→ notices the rope is in his hand still

And he whistled his tune as he tried the trap,
And it sprang down with a ready snap --
And then with a smile of awful command
He laid his hand upon my hand.

Whenever he lays a hand, you're next

→ the sign of death to come

"You tricked me. Hangman!," I shouted then,
"That your scaffold was built for other men...
And I no henchman of yours," I cried,
"You lied to me, Hangman. Folly lied!"

Showing the narrator was still fine with killing of others

Then a twinkle grew in the buckshot eye,
"Lied to you? Tricked you?" he said. "Not I.
For I answered straight and I told you true --
The scaffold was raised for none but you.

→ Go back to my first answer, I told you the truth "He who serves helps me best"

For who has served me more faithfully
Then you with your coward's hope?" said he,
"And where are the others who might have stood
Side by your side in the common good?"

Why does he call the narrator a coward

"Dead," I whispered. And amiably
"Murdered," the Hangman corrected me:

"First the foreigner, then the Jew..."

I did no more than you let me do."

THEME - I succeeded because you did not stop me!

Beneath the beam that blocked the sky
None had stood so alone as I.

The Hangman noosed me, and no voice there
Cried "Stop!" for me in the empty square.

→ no one left to stand up for the narrator