- Repetition, emphasising how second coming sounds like irrational folly, Yeats uses quasi-frozen, religious language
- Exclamation, sounds like he's preaching/sermonising
'A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun'

- Pitiless God, indifferent to cruelty
- God/sun is what we rely on to survive
'The ceremony of innocence is drowned,'

- Idea of baptism
'Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle'

- Cradle = birth image, Jesus's birth was meant to bring love/redemption, but instead brought horror/suffering
- Vexed to nightmare = subverting ideas about pacifism/christianity, those who aren't Christian/clouded by Christian beliefs are living a nightmare
'And what rough beast... Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?'

- Inescapability of it, 1418 WW1 men go out to war + die at sea
'The darkness drops again,'

- Eclipse, darkness descending
- In Shakespeare eclipse represents terrible things happening and darkness
- Idea of dark ages

Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert

- Sibilant dream-like alliteration
'A shape with lion body and the head of a man'

- Sphinx, merciless, those who cannot answer the sphinx's riddle suffer fate of death
- Poem acts as a riddle