**CHAPTER 1**

**ROMANTICISM**



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**Introduction**

Historians have outlined the ages of British literature in different ways over time, for easy understanding, it shall be classified into three major periods: ***Pre-Romantic Period***, ***Romantic Period,*** and ***Post-Romantic Period***.

**The Romantic Period (1785–1832)**

The beginning date for the Romantic period is often debated. Some claim it is 1785, immediately following the Age of Sensibility. Others say it began in 1789 with the start of the French Revolution, and still, others believe that 1798, the publication year for William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s book Lyrical Ballads is the start. Whatever the case***, Romanticism*** was a literary, artistic, and intellectual belief reacting to the fast-changing cultural scene of the late 18th and early 19th century. In a world increasingly ruled by rowdy rationalism and industrialism, the Romantics strived to retrieve the value of beauty, nature, and imagination. Charles Taylor writes…

*“... a rebellion against the construction of neoclassical norms in art and especially literature. Against the classical stress on rationalism, tradition and formal harmony, the Romantics affirmed the rights of the individual of the imaginative, and of feeling.”*

— Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self

Romanticism was a literary movement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries that emphasized nature and the importance of emotion and artistic freedom. In many ways, writers of this era were rebelling against the attempt to explain the world and human nature through science and the lens of the Industrial Revolution. In Romanticism, emotion is much more powerful than rational thought.

Romanticism in both artistic production and cultural reception elevated the aesthetic practice to almost divine activity, a realm wherein the individual might forge his or her very self as an ethical, political, and creative being.

A German literary movement called **Sturm and Drang** had popularized the concept of a suffering main hero or poetic “voice”. This concept refers to rebels and people who go against the expectations of society. Romantic literature questions authority and pursues personal liberty. Romanticism was about creative thinking, “thinking outside the box”, completely contradicting Neoclassicism, which was about straight forward-thinking, “thinking inside the box”. It was a philosophical movement that redefined the fundamental ways of what people thought about themselves and the world around them.

**The French Revolution**

The political liberalism of the French Revolution inspired the liberation, individuality, and rejection of prescribed rules in Romantic Literature.  The Romantic poets were inspired by the ideals of equality, fraternity, and liberty. They revolted against the tyranny of set formulas, rules, and conventions. They asserted the dignity of the individual spirit. This new form of philosophy became one of the main guidelines of a new school of Romantic poets, writers, and philosophers. Romantic’s search for the fresh subject, their belief in nature, their emphasis upon spontaneity, and their belief that everyone has a right to express his own idea are the features of individualism which was the prime demand of the French Revolution.

The Romantic period overlapped with the “age of revolution”, which included the American, (1776) and the French, (1789) revolutions. This was a time of change, where new skeptical ideas were “in” and old traditional ones were “out”.

In romanticism, poetry became new concepts, like the use of imagination, nature, and symbolism. These new concepts soon became very popular with most of the poets. With these new concepts came new poets like *John Keats*, *William Blake*, and *William Wordsworth*, who soon became leading poets of the romanticism movement. Although using the same concepts: imagination, nature, and symbolism, *Keats’s, Blake’s*, and *Wordsworth*’s works are distinguishably different due to their distinct use of poetic devices. The style of writing is a characteristic of the poet. Each poet uses concepts in various ways to present their ideas. The **concept** of opening a reader’s imagination is used widely with several poetic devices.

**The British Romanticism:**

The influence of the French Revolution of 1789-1794 and the English Industrial Revolution was obvious in English Romanticism. The romanticists express a negative attitude towards the existing social or political conditions. They place the individual at the center of art, as can be seen from Lord Byron’s Byronic Hero. Byronic Heroes include irresistible “bad” heroes and are introduced in the Romantic poetry of Lord Byron.

In general, "*it was the best of times...it was the worst of times*." The Romantic Period came to an end with the death of Charles Dickens in 1870. However, dating a literary period is useful because it reminds us of the historical context and world view of its authors.

**The Romantic Poetry**

Romanticism in poetry refers to a love of excitement, beauty, adventure, or life itself. One can find this quality in the poetry of almost all periods, but it was deliberately cultivated during the Romantic Period of English poetry. The present selection sees at least one of these qualities in a simple country girl, in a statue in a faraway country, in a ship lost at sea in a military battle, or even in the sadness of parting friends. In their different ways, all of these poems are trying to celebrate the beauty and spectacle of life.

The term "***Romantic Poetry***" refers primarily to a particular style and mode of poetry that emerged in the late 18th century and continued into the early 19th, largely as a reaction against the prevailing [Enlightenment](http://www.bookrags.com/Enlightenment) ideals of the day.

We dare say, the romantic period is an age of poetry. The first period of British Romanticism, beginning around 1790 was mainly defined by the works of *William Wordsworth, William Blake*, and *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. The movement was, in a sense, formalized with the joint publication by Wordsworth and Coleridge of Lyrical Ballads in 1798. They explore new concepts and new innovative techniques in versification. They believe that poetry could purify individual souls and society. The work emphasized what would become the key tenets of Romanticism, namely the reconciliation of man and nature, along with an attempt to abandon the high language of 18th century English poetry and to attempt to convey poetic ideas via a common vernacular.

*John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley*, and *Lord Byron* then covered the latter half of the movement as a second-generation of the movement, mostly continuing in the same tradition, though deviating slightly into more metaphysical matters.

**Lake Poets**

The **first generation of the Romantic Era** is known as **the Lake Poets** because they lived and knew one another in the last few years of the 18th century in the district of the great lakes in Northwestern England.  The three main figures of what has become known as the Lake poets were:

* William Wordsworth (1770-1850) who came from the Lake District and was the leading poet of the group, whose work was especially associated with the centrality of the self and the love of nature;
* Samuel Taylor [Coleridge](https://crossref-it.info/repository/atoz/Coleridge) (1772-1834) was Wordsworth's closest colleague and collaborator, a powerful intellectual whose work was often influenced by contemporary ideas about science and philosophy;
* Robert Southey (1774-1843) was the third poet of the group of Lake Poets. He was a Poet Laureate for 30 years from 1813 until he died in 1843. Although his fame has long been eclipsed by his contemporaries and friends William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Southey's verse still enjoys some popularity. Robert Southey was also a literary scholar, essay writer, historian, and biographer

While Wordsworth and Coleridge are both romantic poets and co-publishers of the *LYRICAL BALLADS*, they describe nature in different ways. Coleridge underlines the tragic, supernatural, and **sublime** aspects of nature, while Wordsworth uses anecdotes of everyday life and underlines the serene aspect of nature.

To imply a connection between nature and the human mind, Wordsworth uses the technique of identification and comparison whereas Coleridge does the opposite in 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Kubla Khan'. Both admire nature's healing strength and hope that their children will grow up in a natural environment instead of growing up in cities. Wordsworth nature seems to sympathize with the love and suffering of the persona. The landscape is seen as an interior presence rather than an external scene. His idea is that emotions are reflected in the tranquility of nature. On the contrary, Coleridge says that poetry is clearly distinguished from nature.

**Lyrical Ballads (*Romantic manifesto*)**

*In spite of a difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth and overall time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man."*

—William Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads"

As Romanticism was the largest artistic movement of the late 1700s, it influenced all the continents and so far many of its values and beliefs can still be seen in contemporary poetry.

Romantic poets cultivated individualism, reverence for the natural world, idealism, physical and emotional passion, and an interest in the mystic and supernatural. Romantics set themselves in opposition to the order and rationality of classical and neoclassical artistic precepts to hold freedom and revolution in their art and politics.

Poets such as William Wordsworth were actively engaged in trying to create a new kind of poetry that emphasized intuition over reason and the pastoral over the urban, often eschewing consciously poetic language to use more colloquial language.

Wordsworth himself in the Preface to his and Coleridge's Lyrical Ballads defined good poetry as “*the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings*,” though in the same sentence he goes on to clarify this statement by asserting that nonetheless any poem of value must still be composed by a man “*possessed of more than usual organic sensibility [who has] also thought long and deeply*;” he also emphasizes the importance of the use of meter in poetry (which he views as one of the key features that differentiates poetry from prose).

Consequently, though many people seize unfairly upon the notion of spontaneity in Romantic Poetry, one must realize that the movement was still greatly concerned with the idea of composition, of translating these emotive responses into the form of Poetry.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, another prominent Romantic poet and critic in his On Poesy or Art sees art as “*the media tress between, and reconciler of nature and man*”. Such an attitude reflects what might be called the dominant theme of Romantic Poetry: the filtering of natural emotion through the human mind to create art, coupled with an awareness of the duality created by such a process.

The most celebrated poems of the Romantics were rendered in the pattern of prose-like speech; Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats all wrote in this medium. One would be stating the obvious if one says that this preference for linguistic simplicity was worthwhile.

Preface to ***Lyrical Ballads*** is noteworthy as a Romantic manifesto because it contains Wordsworth’s famed comment about what good poetry should be '...a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility' (569).

This process of the making of poetry advances the persuasion that the poet would be possessed by a poem before the poem is created, and the poem should come to the poet ‘as naturally as leaves come to a tree' (596). Anything short of this is mere pretentiousness. ‘***My Heart Leaps Up***' and ***'Ode to a Nightingale***' most certainly could have come to their authors quite spontaneously. Another poem written through "***possession***" or spontaneous overflow is Byron's ***'She Walks in Beauty***'.

**Romanticism Vs Enlightenment:**

1. **The Enlightenment**

The Enlightenment was a philosophical movement that dominated the world of ideas in Europe in the 18th century. Likewise known as the Age of Reason, it was an intellectual and cultural movement in the eighteenth century that emphasized reason over superstition and science over blind faith. Using the power of the press, Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke, Isaac Newton, and Voltaire questioned accepted knowledge and spread new ideas about openness, investigation, and religious tolerance throughout Europe and the Americas. It included a range of ideas centered on the sovereignty of reason and the evidence of the senses as the primary sources of knowledge and advanced ideals such as liberty, progress, toleration, fraternity, constitutional government, and separation of church and state. Many consider the Enlightenment a major turning point in Western civilization, an age of light replacing an age of darkness.

The characteristic Enlightenment suspicion of all allegedly authoritative claims the validity of which is obscure, which is directed first of all against religious dogmas, extends to the claims of metaphysics as well.

All these developments, which followed and partly overlapped with the European exploration and colonization of the Americas and the intensification of the European presence in Asia and Africa, make the Enlightenment a starting point of what some historians define as the European Moment in World History: the long period of often tragic European domination over the rest of the world.

The concept of Enlightenment is the state of having knowledge or understanding; and/or giving someone knowledge or understanding. It is a movement of the 18th century that stressed the belief that science and logic give people more knowledge and understanding than tradition. European politics, philosophy, science, and communications were radically reoriented during the “long 18th century” (1685 - 1815) as part of a movement referred to by its participants as the Age of Reason, or simply the Enlightenment. Several ideas dominated Enlightenment thought, including:

* **Rationalism** is the idea that humans are capable of using their faculty of reason to gain knowledge. This was a sharp turn away from the prevailing idea that people needed to rely on scripture or church authorities for knowledge.
* **Empiricism promotes** the idea that knowledge comes from experience and observation of the world.
* **Progressivism** is the belief that through their powers of reason and observation, humans can make unlimited, linear progress over time; this belief was especially important as a response to the carnage and upheaval of the English Civil Wars in the 17th century.
* **Cosmopolitanism** reflected Enlightenment thinkers’ view of themselves as actively engaged citizens of the world as opposed to provincial and close-minded individuals. In all, Enlightenment thinkers endeavored to be ruled by reason, not prejudice

**B. The Romanticism**

The application of the term Romanticism or ‗Romantic‘ as the case may be to literature was used in Germany, where the Schlegel brothers spoke of *romantische Poesie* ("romantic poetry") in the 1790s, contrasting it with "classic" but in terms of spirit rather than merely dating as we had earlier noted. [Friedrich Schlegel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Wilhelm_Friedrich_Schlegel), in his *Dialogue on Poetry* (1800) wrote: "I seek and find the romantic among the older moderns, in Shakespeare, in Cervantes, in Italian poetry, in that age of chivalry, love, and fable, from which the phenomenon and the word itself are derived". It largely began as a reaction against the prevailing Enlightenment ideals of the day. Romantic ideas arose both as criticisms of 18th century Enlightenment thought. It opposed and in conflict with the Enlightenment. The Romantics attacked the Enlightenment because it rejected emotions and creativity.

* Attacked nature of urban industrial society. The industrial society brought new problems: soulless individualism, economic egoism, utilitarianism, materialism.
* Enlightenment had turned man into a soulless, thinking machine as a robot.
* Rejection of traditional authority and dogmas.
* Enlightenment too objective; it saw human nature as uniform.
* Rejected the Enlightenment ideal of balance and rationalism.
* Emphasize individual expression, not imitation, and obedience to formal rules, in art
* Emphasize the concrete, the sensuous, and the particular in poetry
* Treat poetry as an organic, living entity or whole
* Valorize engagement with or return to nature as the regenerator of imagination and guide for all that is best in humankind
* Treat poetry as an organic, living entity or whole
* May replace the neatly rounded poem with a “fragment”; to complete a poem is to kill it, to destroy its growth as an organic, living entity (Nature is profoundly an engine of the process; it never “finishes” anything)
* Challenge the moral codes of ordinary society
* Believe that poetry does not so much delight and teach (neoclassical requirements) as help the reader undergoes a poetic/spiritual experience
* Favor the lyric over other types of poem (when a Romantic poet writes an “ode,” he or she refers to a state of mind, not so much to the poetic genre)

“*Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves? Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world*.”

-Shelley (from “A Defense of Poetry”)

Inevitably, the characterization of a broad range of contemporaneous poets and poetry under the single unifying name can be viewed more as an exercise in historical compartmentalization than an actual attempt to capture the essence of the actual ‘movement’. Indeed, the term “Romanticism” did not arise until the Victorian period.

**Romantic Poets & Writers**

William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge are renowned Romantic poets. They could be regarded as first-generation Romantic poets. With the publication of Lyrical Ballads (1798 and 1800), William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge presented and illustrated a liberating aesthetic: that poetry should express in genuine language, experience as filtered through personal emotion and imagination; that the truest experience was to be found in nature.

The concept of the Sublime strengthened this turn to nature because, in wild countrysides/ rural settings, the power of the sublime could be felt almost immediately. Wordsworth's romanticism is probably most fully realized in his great autobiographical poem, "The Prelude" (1805–50). In search of sublime moments, romantic poets wrote about the marvelous and supernatural, the exotic, and the medieval. But they also found beauty in the lives of simple rural people and aspects of the everyday world.

The second generation of romantic poets included John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and George Gordon, Lord Byron. In Keats's great odes, intellectual and emotional sensibilities merge in a language of great power and beauty. Shelley combined soaring lyricism with an apocalyptic political vision, sought more extreme effects, and occasionally achieved them, as in his great drama Prometheus Unbound (1820). Lord Byron on his part was the prototypical romantic hero, the envy, and scandal of the age.

Writers of the English Romantic Movement include:

Shelley, Mary (1797-1851)

Shelley, Percy Bysshe (1792-1822)

Wordsworth, William (1770-1850)

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772-1834)

Blake, William (1757-1827)

Lord Byron (1788-1824)

Keats, John (1795-1821)

Lowell, James Russell (1819-1891)

So far, we have seen that romanticism is a new way of thinking and style of undertaking literary issues and art differently. Romantic literature is not about romance literature or literature that has romance as its subject matter but rather one that emphasizes passion and spontaneity against reason and logic. We also saw in this unit that poetry is the chief form of expression for the Romantic. in the second half of the 19th century, Realism was offered as a polar opposite to Romanticism. The decline of Romanticism during this time was associated with multiple processes, including social and political changes and the spread of nationalism. The English Romantic Period ended with the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837. ***The Victorian Era*** was beginning to be fully felt by the Industrial Revolution and the working class became dominant in the culture. Most significant would be the introduction of the steam printing press and the railroads, which would make it possible to easily make and distribute texts.

The following table summarizes the differences between Romanticism and Neoclassicism for a better understanding:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Romanticism** | **Neoclassicism** |
| Romantic writers gave prominence to emotions and self-experience. | Neoclassic writers gave importance to thought and reason. |
| Poetry reflected the personal feelings of the poet, as it is spontaneous and not the characters. | In Neoclassicism, poetry was the artful manipulation of real-life happenings into a poetic composition portraying a fictional character. |
| Gave importance to poetic 'I', meaning the reader sees the poet in the protagonist. | Gave importance to poetic 'eye' where the reader sees the other person through the poet's eye. |
| Nature, individualism, and egotistical sublime, to a great extent, became a persistent subject of poetry. | Human beings, as an integral part of the social organization, were the primary subject of poetry. |
| Less importance was given to diction and more to the language of the common man. | More importance was given to diction, focusing on vocabulary and grammar. |

**Study Questions & Discussion:**

1. What are the differences between Romanticism and classism?
2. Analyze Wordsworth's definition of poetry from his Preface to the "Lyrical Ballads." "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility."
3. ﻿﻿What were the material causes of the rise of Romanticism?
4. What is the contribution (importance) of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley to Romanticism?
5. What did the Romantics revolt against, and what did they revive? Discuss.
6. British Romanticism developed on the heels of the Enlightenment—a period in European history when huge advances in the sciences were made and when there was a lot of emphasis on order, reason, and rationality. How can we view and understand Romanticism as a reaction against the values of the Enlightenment?
7. The major poets of British Romanticism are often divided up into two generations (William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Blake make up the older generation, and John Keats, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley make up the younger one). What are the similarities in the work of these two generations? How is the younger generation different from the older generation?
8. Why do the Romantics put so much weight on emotion? How do the Romantics understand the difference between emotion and reason, and what can emotion give us that reason can't?
9. Romanticism wasn't just a literary movement confined to Britain. It swept through many parts of Europe: there's German Romanticism and French Romanticism, for example. What are the common characteristics that we might find in different national versions of Romanticism? What are some of the differences?
10. One of the catalysts for the development of British Romanticism as a movement was the French Revolution, with its ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Why do you think the values of the French Revolution appealed so much to the Romantics?

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**CHAPTER 2**

**FEATURES & THEMES**



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**Characteristics of the Romantic Poetry:**

Romanticism in poetry can be defined as the development of individualism and an embrace of the natural world in poetic form. Many Romantic poets revered idealism, emotional passion, and mysticism in their works. Furthermore, a large emphasis was placed on the imagination, which was in response to the neoclassic tradition, a movement that favored science and reason. Central features of romanticism may include:

**Imagination**

Imagination is the hallmark of romantic poetry. It is a part and parcel of romantic poets like John Keats, Samuel Coleridge, and P.B Shelley. Unlike neoclassical poets, who shunned imagination and didn’t give any preference to the imagination in their poetry, romantic poets laid extraordinary stress on imagination. They discredited the influence of reason and intellect in any form in their poetry. Samuel Coleridge considered an integral part of his poetry. In his Biographia Literaria, he has discussed two types of imagination-Primary and Secondary Imagination. He says, “The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and a repetition in the finite of the external act of creation of the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode its operation.”

Johan Keats was a great supporter of imagination in poetry. He says, “I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination- What the imagination seizes as beauty must be the truth.” It is Keats’s plight of imagination that helps him leave the real world and transport him into the world of nightingale. Look at the following example:

*Already with thee! tender is the night,*

*And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,*

*Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;*

*But here there is no light,*

*Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown*

*Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.*

(Ode to Nightingale by John Keats)

**Nature**

Nature is the holy mother endowed with spirituals and unbound glory. Nature plays a huge role in Romantic literature. Nature, sometimes seen as the opposite of the rational, is a powerful symbol in work from this era. Romantic poets and writers give personal, deep descriptions of nature and its wild and powerful qualities.

Natural elements also work as symbols for the unfettered emotions of the poet or writer, as in the final stanza of “***To Autumn***” by John Keats. Keats was aware that he was dying of consumption throughout much of his short life and career, and his celebration of autumn symbolizes the beauty in the ephemeral.

*Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?*

*Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—*

*While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,*

*And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;*

*Then in a wailful choir, the small gnats mourn*

*Among the river sallows, borne aloft*

*Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;*

*And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;*

*Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft*

*The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;*

*And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.*

Shelley was similarly an extraordinary lover of nature, yet he didn't think about nature as an instructor, aide, and a wellspring of pleasure. He believed that nature is a living thing and there is a union between nature and man. Shelley likewise put stock in the recuperating force of nature like Wordsworth. Wordsworth gives a philosophical touch to nature, while Shelly stays upon the intellectual aspect of nature.

John Keats is also an eminent lover of nature. John Keats didn’t love nature just for the sake of guidance or spiritual inspiration; rather, he adored nature just for the sake of its sensuousness and beauty. Keats enjoys nature in its full essence. He says:

*There was an awful rainbow once in heaven,*

*We know here woof; texture she is given*

*In the dull catalogue common things.*

*(Lamia by John Keats)*

Coleridge was completely different from other romantic poets of his age. He considered nature as it is. He has a realistic perspective on nature. He believes that nature is not the source of joy and pleasure. It all depends upon our mood and disposition. He believes that joy doesn’t come from any external nature, rather, it emanates from the heart of our hearts. He says in this regard:

*I may not hope from outward forms to win*

*The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.*

*O Lady! we receive but what we give,*

*And in our life alone does Nature live:*

*Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!*

*(Dejection: An Ode by Samuel Coleridge)*

The modern fascination with self-definition and self-invention, the notion that adolescence is naturally a time of rebellion in which one "finds oneself," the idea that the best path to faith is through individual choice, the idea that government exists to serve the individuals who have created it: all of these are products of the romantic celebration of the individual at the expense of society and tradition.

**Aesthetic Beauty**

Romantic literature explores the theme of aesthetic beauty, not just of nature but that beauty of people; the physical beauty and the warmth of performance. This was especially true with descriptions of female beauty. Writers praised women of the Romantic era for their natural loveliness, rather than anything artificial or constrained.

A classic example of this characteristic is George Gordon, or Lord Byron’s, poem “***She Walks in Beauty***."

*She walks in beauty, like the night*

*Of cloudless climes and starry skies;*

*And all that’s best of dark and bright*

*Meet in her aspect and her eyes;*

*Thus mellowed to that tender light*

*Which heaven to gaudy day denies.*

**Emotions**

Romantics believed that knowledge is gained through intuition rather than deduction. This is best summed up by Wordsworth who stated that “*all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings*.” A focus on emotion is a key characteristic of nearly all writing from the Romantic period. When you read work of this period, you’ll see feelings described in all forms, including romantic and filial love, fear, sorrow, loneliness, and more. This focus on emotion offered a counterpoint to the rationale, and it also made Romantic poetry and prose extremely readable and relatable.

In Browning’s *My Last Duchess* the protagonist is telling the story of the last Duchess that he had while admiring his painting of her. At first, he seems to be celebrating her memory by telling the story of his last wife, but as the story progresses he reveals the truth about why she is in a painting and not standing beside him. He *says:*

*“I gave commands;/*

*Then all smiles stopped together.*

*There she stands/*

*As if alive”.*

This is the major turning point in the story when it is revealed what happened to the too happy Duchess. He has had her sent away or probably had killed indicated when he says that she is alive through the painting. He has abandoned all reason by having her killed, and let emotion completely take over his decisions. Also, the reason that he gives his “commands” for the Duchess is emotional without regarding reason at all. Earlier in his monologue, he said,

*She had*

*A heart-how shall I say? Too soon made glad,*

*To easily impressed; she liked whate’er*

*She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.*

This is based purely on emotional thinking that she should value him more than everyone else. Being an easily pleased and an overall happy person is not a bad thing and should not make someone so jealous as to end a life.

**Themes of Solitude**

Writers of the Romantic era believed that creative inspiration came from solitary exploration. They celebrated the feeling of being alone, whether that meant loneliness or a much-needed quiet space to think and create.

You’ll see solitary themes in many literary works from this period, including in this excerpt from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem “Frost at Midnight."

*The Frost performs its secret ministry,*

*Unhelped by any wind. The owlet’s cry*

*Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.*

*The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,*

*Have left me to that solitude, which suits*

*Abstruser musings: save that at my side*

*My cradled infant slumbers peacefully …*

**The Sublime**

The concept of the sublime strengthened this turn to nature; in wild countryside, the power of the sublime could be felt almost immediately. In search of sublime moments, romantic poets wrote about the marvelous and supernatural, the exotic, and the medieval. Nonetheless, they also found beauty in the lives of simple rural people and aspects of the everyday world. Another important subject of the Romantics was memory. Wordsworth’s romanticism and originality are most evident in his lengthy autobiographical poem, The Prelude (1805–50).

The Romantic Period in British Literature was a time of nature that inspired poetry, political questioning, and individualism. During this period there is a new emphasis on imagination, feeling, and the value of the primitive. The Romanic Period focuses on the “fulfillment” of the individual.

**Escapism in Romantic Poetry**

Escapism is another striking characteristic of romantic poetry. Escapism is a term, which implies a writer's failure to face the agonies of real-life and take shelter somewhere else instead of fighting against the odds. Escapism is the main theme of romantic poetry. As most of the romantic poets were in the grip of miseries, they tried to take asylum in the power of their poetry. It was their most loved pastime to escape from reality and take asylum in the realm of their imagination. For example, Keats desires to fly away with the nightingale to forget the miseries of the world:

*Away! away! for I will fly to thee,*

*Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,*

*But on the viewless wings of Poesy.*

*(Ode to Nightingale by John Keats)*

**Melancholy in Romantic Poetry**

Melancholy likewise occupies a prominent place in romantic poetry. Melancholy is a major source of inspiration for romantic poets. Due to extreme melancholy, all the romantic poets tend to compose subjective poetry. They write poetry, which is the voice of the heart of their heart. They don’t try to compose philosophical and complicated poetry. They just want to give vent to their feelings and emotions so that to ease their minds. They want to take a load of their minds. Look at the following example:

*………………………….for many a time*

*I have been half in love with easeful Death,*

*Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,*

*To take into the air my quiet breath;*

*Now more than ever seems it rich to die,*

*To cease upon the midnight with no pain.*

*(Ode to Nightingale by John Keats)*

**Cult of Personality**

Cult of personality is a term, usually pejorative, which refers to a situation where a public figure is presented to the populace via propaganda as an amazing person who should be admired, loved, and respected. This term is often used to refer to national political leaders. This lesson is going to go over a couple of very important examples of this.

Perhaps due to the perceived personal nature of Romantic poetry (one which the Romantic Poets themselves are not entirely innocent of encouraging), there has often been a fascination with the lives of the Romantic poets. This view is often reinforced by the imagery invented up in contemporary discourse since a number of them died before reaching thirty, notably Percy Bysshe Shelley (29) and John Keats (25). This has led to a conflation of the lives of the Romantic poets with the poetry itself.

**Supernaturalism**

Supernaturalism is another outstanding quality of Romantic Poetry. Poets like Coleridge and Scott gave a sense of wonder and mystery to poetry. It was this supernaturalism that gave the atmosphere of wonder and mystery to Romantic Poetry. Most of the romantic poets used supernatural elements in their poetry. Samuel Taylor Coleridge is the leading romantic poet in this regard, and "**Kubla Kha**n" is full of supernatural elements.

**Sensual Descriptions**

Another essential characteristic of nearly all Romantic-era literature is vivid sensory descriptions. The poems and prose of this period include **examples of simile** and metaphor, as well as visual imagery and other sensory details. Poets and other writers went beyond simply telling about things and instead gave the information readers need to feel and taste and touch the objects and surroundings in Romantic-era writing.

Wordsworth uses vivid descriptions, including similes and metaphors, in his famous poem, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud."

*I wandered lonely as a cloud*

*That floats on high o’er vales and hills,*

*When all at once I saw a crowd,*

*A host, of golden daffodils;*

*Beside the lake, beneath the trees,*

*Fluttering and dancing in the breeze …*

**Subjectivity**

Romantic poetry is the poetry of sentiments, emotions, and imagination. Romantic poetry opposed the objectivity of neoclassical poetry. Neoclassical poets avoided describing their emotions in their poetry, unlike the Romantics.

Subjectivity began to have its full play in the poetry of this age. The poets of this period were in favor of giving a subjective interpretation of the objective realities of life. “The Romantic Movement”, says William J. Long “was the expression of individual genius rather than of the established rules.”

**Individualism**

Romantic poetry is individualistic; it stresses man’s individuality. Man is usually presented alone. Every poet has his personality which is rather different from the others.

**Nostalgia**

Another predominant feature of Romantic poetry is the sense of nostalgia.

**Common man & childhood**

Romantics believed in the natural goodness of humans which is hindered by the urban life of civilization. To a Romantic poet, the period of childhood was very important. The child is nearer to nature than the grown-up man and he gains wisdom from nature. Thus he loses his Natural wisdom. “*The child is father of the man*”, Wordsworth says. The Romantic poet sees the world through the eyes of a child. This is why Romantic poetry was described as poetry of wonder. They believed that the savage is noble, childhood is good and the emotions inspired by both beliefs cause the heart to soar.

**Lyricism**

In Romantic Poetry, lyricism predominates and the poets of this school have, to their credit, many fine lyrics excelling the heroic couplet of the Neoclassical Age in melody and sweetness of tone.

**Simplicity in Style**

The style of the Romantic Poets is varied but the stress was laid on simplicity. Instead of an artificial model of the expression of classical poets, we have a natural diction and spontaneous way of expressing thoughts in Romantic Poetry.

**Influence:**

Romantic poets cultivated individualism, reverence for the natural world, idealism, physical and emotional passion, and an interest in the mystic and supernatural. Romantics set themselves in opposition to the order and rationality of classical and neoclassical artistic precepts to embrace freedom and revolution in their art and politics. German romantic poets included *Fredrich Schiller* and *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*, and British poets such as *Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, George Gordon Lord Byron, and John Keats* propelled the English Romantic Movement. *Victor Hugo* was a noted French romantic poet as well, and romanticism crossed the Atlantic through the work of American poets like *Walt Whitman* and *Edgar Allan Poe.* The romantic era produced many of the stereotypes of poets and poetry that exist to this day.

The scope of influence realized by Romantic Poetry is often hard to count, despite certain obvious instances such as in the Modernist poetry of William Butler Yeats, who even went so far as to call his generation “the last romantics”. Certainly, the cultural idea of Romanticism persists very much today, as an evocative term that is often as much associated with the lives of the Romantic Poets as the poetry itself. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Modern movement became increasingly prominent and Romantic ideals never died out in poetry but were largely absorbed into the precepts of many other movements. Traces of romanticism lived on in French *symbolism* and *surrealism* and the work of prominent poets such as *Charles Baudelaire* and *Rainer Maria Rilke.*

**Criticisms against Romanticism**

Every movement has its pros and cons; so does Romanticism. No system of thought, in practical life, is completely error-free. So among the arguments against Romanticism is its subjective portrayal of Nature, its idealization of Nature, as though Nature itself is a bed of roses without thorns. Nature in this sense has reference to both forces that rule or influence existence and natural phenomena. To the Romantics, there is something infinitely favorable about Nature. Wordsworth terms it "***Nature’s holy plan***" in his poem "*Lines Written in Early Spring*." But some critical minds have risen against this notion of "*Nature’s holy plan*".

Hardy admired Wordsworth and his breezy and pure song but disagrees with the idea of “Nature’s holy plan”; for there are many reasons in Nature why one, or some people, as Hardy has put it should doubt this idea – earthquake, volcano, flooding, wildfire elemental extremes, jungle justice and countless other phenomena that threaten life itself.

Shelley' a Romantic, celebrates the wind in his' *Ode to the West Wind* as if the wind can never wreak havoc on the living; and Blake sings of the symmetry of the tiger in his ‘Tyger’ as though the subject of the poem is one gentle and peaceful creature, not minding that the tiger is a big threat to the smaller animals within its environment. Ultimately, if there is a holy plan in Nature, there would be no life-threatening events in life; for if Nature is perfect it would not self-destruct. The Romantics, if not overemotional, they were too sentimental, in their attitude towards Nature. Nature is admirable, grand, and sublime, definitely, but to view it as perfect is pure sentimentality.

Romanticism has also been criticized for the extremism of some of its leading writers. Romantics like Blake, Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley were all eccentrics both in lifestyle and in approach to the established society. Coleridge, for instance, could not finish his ‘***Kubla Khan',*** because, being under the influence of opium while composing the poem, its composition was interrupted by a visitor, and when he returned to continue with his writing, the visitor had gone, his inspiration and memory of the lines in his head had vanished (Stephen 2000). Again, both Byron and Shelley were hated in England because of their unorthodox views. Shelley was so dishonorable in England of his day that an obituary announced, "Shelley the Atheist is dead. Now he knows whether there is a hell or not" Anyway, the commonest defamation of the revolutionary in most societies limits on religion. But the point is that some of the Romantics were extreme in their views; and extremism of any sort may be irrational.

Again, the language of the Romantics in some cases is not as everyday language exactly as they claimed it to be. Blake, for instance, is infamous for his vague symbolism. Wordsworth was criticized for his language it is not as simple as he declared. This is so considering that in some cases, the language of Wordsworth is full of allusions to classical mythology as is the case in the last two lines of *'The World is Too Much with Us*’. Meanwhile, the expression such as ‘*famed paradox’ in ‘My Heart, Leaps Up'* could be a big challenge (in terms of their comprehension) to the new learner.

Moreover, the Romantics have been accused of escapism. Some Romantic poems search for ways of avoiding reality at the outflow of addressing the problems in human society. Keats *'Ode to Nightingale*'is a good example of escapist Romantic poetry. The ways of avoiding the reality that the poem presents include the use of poison, drugs, wine, and loss of memory, imagination, and even death.

These are by no means ways of addressing the problems of life. Also, in the poem, the persona prefers the world of the nightingale to that of people. This type of accusation could also be leveled against Wordsworth, especially in such poems as '*Lines Written in Early Spring’ and ‘My Heart Leaps Up'.* the former, the persona has escaped into the wood – however, he is concerned with people’s problems and shows signs of giving up his humanity. Many Romantic poems are formed in this mode.

**Some Facts about Romanticism**

As a revolutionary movement that had to address some issues in society, Romanticism had many positive and artistic truths behind it one of which is opposition to basic human failings such as man’s inhumanity to man, tyranny, materialism, pretentiousness, among others. As reformers, the Romantics contributed their part towards addressing these problems in their society, because had been that of inequality, poverty, strife, and slavery. So the Romantics were like social critics determined to shed light on the calamities of their society.

Before the emergence of Romanticism, people had paid little or no attention to Nature/Divine. The reason was man’s undue emphasis on the written word – as the leading religion of the day, especially in Western Europe and America was a scripture-based religion. But the Romantics (Wordsworth was *primus inter pares* in this regard) championed an unprecedented revival of interest in *NATURE* to the extent that some people have mistakenly termed them, Nature poets. Wordsworth’s ‘*Let Nature be your Teacher*’ was something of a clarion call. And since then, people have benefited a lot from the exploration of Nature.

**Catchphrases**

* Romanticism is an artistic and intellectual movement that originated in the late 18th century and stressed strong emotion, subjectivity, mortality, nature, freedom from classical correctness in art forms, and rebellion against social conventions.
* The Romantic Movement was a revolt against the Enlightenment and its focus on rational and scientific thought.
* William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats are the notable British Romantic poets.
* Narrowing of outlook, from the universal to the particular – from humankind to man, nation ethnic group.
* Emphasis on individual and national uniqueness. Traits which set one man apart from another, one nation apart from another
* Nature, religious fervor, emotional response to beauty, and Ancient Greek aesthetics, are some of the common themes in their work.
* Note that each Romantic poet had his style and emphasized different aspects. That’s where you come in with your research.

**Study Questions & Discussion:**

1. Briefly, comment on the ***Preface to Lyrical Ballads***.
2. What do you understand by Romanticism?
3. Explain the factors that led to the emergence of Romanticism.
4. Highlight the major differences between Romanticism and Neoclassicism.
5. What are the highlights of the Romantic manifesto?
6. How, according to Wordsworth, should the language of poetry be and why?
7. Nature is a dominant theme in Romantic Poetry? Discuss in detail
8. What were the characteristic features of poetry during the Romantic Movement?
9. Discuss return to nature and the renaissance of wonder as characteristics of Romanticism.
10. How do romantics emphasize individuality?
11. Discuss the presence of melancholy in Wordsworth's poems.
12. What reasons have been advanced against the Romantics' idealization of Nature?
13. Romantics are hypocrites. How true is this assertion?
14. Contrary to their manifesto, the language of the Romantic is not an everyday type. Comment on this.
15. Extremism and escapism are part of the criticisms against the Romantic… Discuss.
16. The "sublime" is a big concept in British Romanticism. Why do you think the Romantics find the sublime so inspiring?

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**CHAPTER 3**

**WILLIAM BLAKE**

**(1757-1827)**

**Chapter 3**

**William Blake (1757-1827)**

William Blake was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Generally unrecognized during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a significant figure in the history of the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. His writings have influenced countless writers and artists through the ages.

## Early life

William Blake was born on November 28, 1757, in the Soho district of London, England. He only briefly attended school, being chiefly educated at home by his mother. The Bible had an early, profound influence on Blake, and it would remain a lifetime source of inspiration, coloring his life and works with intense spirituality. William Blake began writing at an early age and claimed to have had his first vision, of a tree full of angels, at age 10. He studied engraving and grew to love Gothic art, which he incorporated into his unique works.

A misunderstood poet, artist, and visionary throughout much of his life, Blake found admirers late in life and has been vastly influential since his death in 1827. At an early age, Blake began experiencing visions, and his friend and journalist Henry Crabb Robinson wrote that Blake saw God's head appear in a window when Blake was 4 years old. He also allegedly saw the prophet Ezekiel under a tree and had a vision of "a tree filled with angels." Blake's visions would have a lasting effect on the art and writings that he produced.

Also around this time, Blake began collecting prints of artists who had fallen out of trend at the time, including Durer, Raphael, and Michelangelo. In the catalog for an exhibition of his work in 1809, nearly 40 years later Blake would lambast artists "who endeavor to rise a style against Rafael, Mich. Angelo, and the Antique." He also rejected 18th-century literary trends, preferring the Elizabethans (Shakespeare, Jonson, and Spenser) and ancient ballads instead.

**Marriage & Earlier Career**

In 1779, at age 21, Blake completed his seven-year apprenticeship and became a journeyman copy engraver, working on projects for book and print publishers. Also preparing himself for a career as a painter, that same year, he was admitted to the Royal Academy of Art's Schools of Design, where he began exhibiting his works in 1780. Blake's artistic energies branched out at this point, and he privately published his Poetical Sketches (1783), a collection of poems that he had written over the previous 14 years.

In August 1782, Blake married Catherine Sophia Boucher, who was illiterate. Blake taught her how to read, write, draw, and color (his designs and prints). He also helped her to experience visions, as he did. Catherine believed explicitly in her husband's visions and his genius, and supported him in everything he did, right up to his death 45 years later. He never had children, but he was devoted to his younger brother Robert and taught him drawing and nursed him.

One of the most traumatic events of Blake's life occurred in 1787, when his beloved brother, Robert, died from tuberculosis at age 24. At the moment of Robert's death, Blake allegedly saw his spirit ascend through the ceiling, joyously; the moment, which entered into Blake's psyche, greatly influenced his later poetry.

The following year, Robert appeared to Blake in a vision and presented him with a new method of printing his works, which Blake called "illuminated printing." Once incorporated, this method allowed Blake to control every aspect of the production of his art. Blake was not just a poet. He was also an engraver; and his paintings earned him fame just like his poetry.

**Felpham Troubles**

In 1800, Blake accepted an invitation from poet William Hayley to move to the little seaside village of Felpham and work as his protégé. While the relationship between Hayley and Blake began to sour, Blake ran into trouble, in August 1803, Blake found a soldier, John Schofield, in his garden and ordered him to leave. After Schofield refused and an argument ensued, Blake removed him by force. Schofield accused Blake of assault and, worse, of sedition, claiming that he had damned the king. The punishments for sedition in England at the time (during the Napoleonic Wars) were severe. Blake anguished, uncertain of his fate. Hayley hired a lawyer on Blake's behalf, and he was acquitted in January 1804, by which time Blake and Catherine had moved back to London.

## Later Years

He had written most of his poems before the publication of *Preface to Lyrical Ballad*s, anyhow, he is classified as a Romantic, the reason being that Romantic features could be observed in his poetry, and he lived through the period. Blake held an anti-clerical view, disregarding the institution of organized religion. The reason was that the church of his day could not mitigate the plight of the masses. Blake is particularly noted for his comment on Milton’s *Paradise Lost (1667)* He says in his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, that Milton in *Paradise Lost* is part of Satan’s train without knowing it. This type of view has been typical of Blake who would see things from unorthodox perspectives. In 1819, however, Blake began sketching a series of "visionary heads," claiming that the historical and imaginary figures that he depicted appeared and sat for him. By 1825, Blake had sketched more than 100 of them, including those of Solomon and Merlin the magician and those included in "The Man Who Built the Pyramids" and "Harold Killed at the Battle of Hastings"; along with the most famous visionary head, that included in Blake's "The Ghost of a Flea."

**Death and Legacy**

In the final years of his life, Blake suffered from recurring bouts of an undiagnosed disease that he called "that sickness to which there is no name." He died on August 12, 1827, leaving unfinished watercolor illustrations to Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and an illuminated manuscript of the Bible's Book of Genesis. Unappreciated in life, Blake has since become a giant in literary and artistic circles, and his visionary approach to art and writing has not only spawned countless, spellbound speculations about Blake, they have inspired a vast array of artists and writers. We shall now examine some of his poems. You must seek out and pay attention to the spirit of Romanticism present in his poetry.

**Blake's Poetry**

Blake’s poetry is as delighted as it is challenging, he is noted for his use of symbols. And these do not always have the same referents wherever they are seen. Among these are animals used as symbols: the Lamb, Tiger, and the Eagle. Mysticism comes to bear in Blake’s poetry too. He looks at things as being mystical. The Bible informs his brand of mysticism. Very importantly, Blake is seen as a prophet in his poetry.

The writings of Blake may be classified under the following literary heads:

* Lyrical poems, including songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience
* Irregular rhyme-less verse
* Rhythmic prose and
* Descriptive and critical prose

The poems discussed here are from *Poetical Sketches* (1783)*, Songs of Innocence (1789), and Songs of Experience* (1794)*.*

1. **“The Lamb”**

***Little Lamb who made thee   
Dost thou know who made thee   
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.   
By the stream & o’er the mead;   
Gave thee clothing of delight,   
Softest clothing wooly bright;   
Gave thee such a tender voice,   
Making all the vales rejoice!   
Little Lamb who made thee   
Dost thou know who made thee   
  
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee,   
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee!   
He is called by thy name,   
For he calls himself a Lamb:   
He is meek & he is mild,   
He became a little child:   
I a child & thou a lamb,   
We are called by his name.   
Little Lamb God bless thee.   
Little Lamb God bless thee.***

**Summary**

"The Lamb" offers a poetic rendition that marks Blake out as a mystic. The poem is supposedly a song rendered by a country boy in a state of innocence. The person in the poem addresses the symbolic lamb. It is a didactic poem.

The poem begins with the question, “*Little Lamb, who made thee?”* The speaker, a child, asks the lamb about its origins: how it came into being, how it acquired its particular manner of feeding, its “clothing” of wool, and its “tender voice.” In the next stanza, the speaker attempts a riddling answer to his question: the lamb was made by one who “calls himself a Lamb,” one who resembles in his gentleness both the child and the lamb. The poem ends with the child giving a blessing on the lamb.

**Form**

“The Lamb” has two stanzas, each having five rhymed couplets. Repetition in the first and last couplet of each stanza makes these lines into a refrain and helps to give the poem its song-like quality. The flowing *l*’s and soft vowel sounds contribute to this effect and suggest the bleating of a lamb or the lisping character of a child’s chant.

**Analysis**

The poem is a child’s song, in the form of a question and answer. The first stanza is rural and descriptive, while the second focuses on abstract spiritual matters and contains explanation and analogy. The child’s question is both naive and profound. The question (“***who made thee***?”) is a simple one, and yet the child is also tapping into the deep and timeless questions that all human beings have, about their origins and the nature of creation.The poem’s apostrophic form contributes to the effect of naiveté since the situation of a child talking to an animal is a believable one and not simply a literary contrivance. Yet by answering his question, the child converts it into a rhetorical one, thus counteracting the initial spontaneous sense of the poem. The answer is presented as a puzzle or riddle, and even though it is an easy one—child’s play—this also contributes to an underlying sense of ironic knowingness or artifice in the poem. The child’s answer, however, reveals his confidence in his simple Christian faith and his innocent acceptance of its teachings.

The lamb of course symbolizes Jesus. The traditional image of Jesus as a lamb underscores the Christian values of gentleness, meekness, and peace. The image of the child is also associated with Jesus: in the Gospel, Jesus displays a special solicitude for children, and the Bible’s depiction of Jesus in his childhood shows him as guileless and vulnerable.

These are also the characteristics from which the child-speaker approaches the ideas of nature and God. This poem, like many of the *Songs of Innocence,* accepts what Blake saw as the more positive aspects of conventional Christian belief.

However it does not provide a completely adequate doctrine, because it fails to account for the presence of suffering and evil in the world. The pendant (or companion) poem to this one, found in the *Songs of Experience,* is “The Tyger”; taken together, the two poems give a perspective on religion that includes the good and clear as well as the terrible and inscrutable. These poems complement each other to produce a fuller account than either offer independently. They offer a good instance of how Blake himself stands somewhere outside the perspectives of innocence and experience the projects.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. Comment on Blake’s use of the Christian mythology in ‘The Lamb’
2. Comment on Blake’s use of the Christian mythology in 'The Lamb'
3. How does Blake portray the lamb? And what does it symbolize?
4. **“The Tyger”**

*Tyger Tyger, burning bright,****In the forests of the night;   
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?   
  
In what distant deeps or skies.  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?   
On what wings dare he aspire?   
What the hand, dare seize the fire?   
  
And what shoulder, & what art,   
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?   
And when thy heart began to beat,   
What dread hand? & what dread feet?   
  
What the hammer? what the chain,  
In what furnace was thy brain?   
What the anvil? what dread grasp,   
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!   
  
When the stars threw down their spears  
And water’d heaven with their tears:   
Did he smile his work to see?   
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?   
  
Tyger Tyger burning bright,   
In the forests of the night:   
What immortal hand or eye,   
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?***

**Summary**

'The Tyger’ is another of Blake’s poem that is centered on faunal symbolism. It belongs to the same collection as 'The Lamb'. The persona in the poem, who is not Blake, regards the tiger with reverence and wonder – there is something mysterious about this phenomenon. This is definitely why there are questions in the poem, and perhaps if answers were given to these questions, the mystery would not have been resolved.

The poem begins with the speaker asking a fearsome tiger what kind of divine being could have created it: “*What immortal hand or eye/ Could frame they fearful symmetry*?” Each subsequent stanza contains further questions, all of which refine this first one. From what part of the cosmos could the tiger’s fiery eyes have come, and who would have dared to handle that fire? What sort of physical presence, and what kind of dark craftsmanship, would have been required to “*twist the sinews*” of the tiger’s heart? The speaker wonders how once that horrible heart “*began to beat*,” its creator would have had the courage to continue the job. And when the job was done, the speaker wonders, how would the creator have felt? “*Did he smile his work to see?*” Could this possibly be the same being who made the lamb?

**Form**

The poem is formed of six quatrains in rhymed couplets. The meter is regular and rhythmic, its hammering beat suggestive of the smithy that is the poem’s central image. The simplicity and neat proportions of the poems form perfectly suit its regular structure, in which a string of questions all contribute to the articulation of a single, central idea.

**Analysis**

The opening question enacts what will be the single dramatic gesture of the poem, and each subsequent stanza elaborates on this conception. Blake is building on the conventional idea that nature, like a work of art, must in some way contain a reflection of its creator. The tiger is strikingly beautiful yet also horrific in its capacity for violence. What kind of a God, then, could or would design such a terrifying beast as the tiger? In more general terms, what does the undeniable existence of evil and violence in the world tell us about the nature of God, and what does it mean to live in a world where a being can at once contain both beauty and horror?

The tiger initially appears as a strikingly sensuous image. However, as the poem progresses, it takes on a symbolic character and comes to embody the spiritual and moral problem the poem explores: perfectly beautiful and yet perfectly destructive, Blake’s tiger becomes the symbolic center for an investigation into the presence of evil in the world. Since the tiger’s remarkable nature exists both in physical and moral terms, the speaker’s questions about its origin must also encompass both physical and moral dimensions. The poem’s series of questions repeatedly ask what sort of physical creative capacity the “fearful symmetry” of the tiger bespeaks; assumedly only a very strong and powerful being could be capable of such a creation.

The smithy represents a traditional image of artistic creation; here Blake applies it to the divine creation of the natural world. The “forging” of the tiger suggests a very physical, laborious, and deliberate kind of making; it emphasizes the awesome physical presence of the tiger and precludes the idea that such a creation could have been in any way accidentally or haphazardly produced. It also continues from the first description of the tiger the imagery of fire with its simultaneous connotations of creation, purification, and destruction. The speaker stands in awe of the tiger as a sheer physical and aesthetic achievement, even as he recoils in horror from the moral implications of such a creation; for the poem addresses not only the question of who *could* make such a creature as the tiger, but who *would* perform this act. This is a question of creative responsibility and will, and the poet carefully includes this moral question with the consideration of physical power. The repeated use of the word “dare” to replace the “could” of the first stanza introduces a dimension of aspiration and willfulness into the sheer might of the creative act.

The reference to the lamb in the penultimate stanza reminds the reader that a tiger and a lamb have been created by the same God and raises questions about the implications of this. It also invites a contrast between the perspectives of “experience” and “innocence” represented here and in the poem “The Lamb.” “The Tyger” consists entirely of unanswered questions, and the poet leaves us to awe at the complexity of creation, the sheer magnitude of God’s power, and the inscrutability of divine will. The perspective of experience in this poem involves a sophisticated acknowledgment of what is unexplainable in the universe, presenting evil as the prime example of something that cannot be denied but will not withstand facile explanation, either. The open awe of “The Tyger” contrasts with the easy confidence, in “The Lamb,” of a child’s innocent faith in a benevolent universe.

Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794) juxtapose the innocent, pastoral world of childhood against an adult world of corruption and repression; while such poems as “The Lamb” represent a meek virtue, poems like “The Tyger” exhibit opposing, darker forces. Thus, the collection as a whole explores the value and limitations of two different perspectives on the world. Many of the poems fall into pairs so that the same situation or problem is seen through the lens of innocence first and then experience. Blake does not identify himself wholly with either view; most of the poems are dramatic—that is, in the voice of a speaker other than the poet himself. Blake stands outside innocence and experience, in a distanced position from which he hopes to be able to recognize and correct the fallacies of both. In particular, he pits himself against despotic authority, restrictive morality, sexual repression, and institutionalized religion; his great insight is into the way these separate modes of control work together to squelch what is most holy in human beings.

The *Songs of Innocence* dramatize the naive hopes and fears that inform the lives of children and trace their transformation as the child grows into adulthood. Some of the poems are written from the perspective of children, while others are about children as seen from an adult perspective. Many of the poems draw attention to the positive aspects of natural human understanding before the corruption and distortion of experience. Others take a more critical stance toward innocent purity: for example, while Blake draws touching portraits of the emotional power of rudimentary Christian values, he also exposes—over the heads, as it were, of the innocent—Christianity’s capacity for promoting injustice and cruelty.

The *Songs of Experience* work via parallels and contrasts to lament how the harsh experiences of adult life destroy what is good in innocence, while also articulating the weaknesses of the innocent perspective (“The Tyger,” for example, attempts to account for real, negative forces in the universe, which innocence fails to confront). These latter poems treat sexual morality in terms of the repressive effects of jealousy, shame, and secrecy, all of which corrupt the ingenuousness of innocent love. Concerning religion, they are less concerned with the character of individual faith than with the institution of the Church, its role in politics, and its effects on society and the individual mind. The experience thus adds a layer to innocence that darkens its hopeful vision while compensating for some of its blindness.

The style of the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* is simple and direct, but the language and the rhythms are painstakingly crafted, and the ideas they explore are often deceptively complex. Many of the poems are narrative in style; others, like “The Sick Rose” and “***The Divine Image***,” make their arguments through symbolism or abstract concepts. Some of Blake’s favorite rhetorical techniques are personification and the reworking of Biblical symbolism and language. Blake frequently employs the familiar meters of ballads, nursery rhymes, and hymns, applying them to his own, often unorthodox conceptions. This combination of the traditional with the unfamiliar is consonant with Blake’s perpetual interest in reconsidering and reframing the assumptions of human thought and social behavior.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. Bring out the contrast between 'The Lamb' and 'The Tyger' as used in Blake's symbolism.
2. What kinds of questions is the poet asking? Which of these did you find to be most striking or effective in capturing your attention?
3. Bring out the contrast between ‘The Lamb’ and *‘*The Tyger’ as used in Blake’s symbolism.
4. **“The Sick Rose”**

*O Rose thou art sick.   
The invisible worm,   
That flies in the night   
In the howling storm:   
  
Has found out thy bed   
Of crimson joy:   
And his dark secret love   
Does thy life destroy.*

**Summary**

The speaker, addressing a rose, informs it that it is sick. An “invisible” worm has stolen into its bed in a “howling storm” and under the cover of night. The “dark secret love” of this worm is destroying the rose’s life.

**Form**

The two quatrains of this poem rhyme ABCB. The ominous rhythm of these short, two-beat lines contributes to the poem’s sense of foreboding or dread and complements the unflinching directness with which the speaker tells the rose she is dying.

**Analysis**

While the rose exists as a beautiful natural object that has become infected by a worm, it also exists as a literary rose, the conventional symbol of love. The image of the worm resonates with the Biblical serpent and also suggests a phallus. Worms are quintessentially earthbound and symbolize death and decay. The “bed” into which the worm creeps denotes both the natural flowerbed and also the lovers’ bed. The rose is sick, and the poem implies that love is sick as well. Yet the rose is unaware of its sickness. Of course, an actual rose could not know anything about its condition, and so the emphasis falls on the allegorical suggestion that it is love that does not recognize its ailing state. This results partly from the insidious secrecy with which the “worm” performs its work of corruption—not only is it invisible, it enters the bed at night. This secrecy indeed constitutes part of the infection itself. The “crimson joy” of the rose connotes both sexual pleasure and shame, thus joining the two concepts in a way that Blake thought was perverted and unhealthy. The rose’s joyful attitude toward love is tainted by the aura of shame and secrecy that our culture attaches to love.

For a better assessment of the poem, you should bear in mind that almost all the words in the poem have references or a set of references beyond themselves as used in the poem. Thus, the rose could be taken to symbolize a beautiful woman or even love itself. At the outset, the rose is sick. This sickness is caused by the nocturnal activities of the invisible worm. Without the activities of the invisible worm, the rose would be healthy. The invisible worm compels a phallic image. By extension, it symbolizes a man whose love for the rose, the woman, is undesirable. This phallic love is both dark and secret; and because of this, it destroys the essence of the rose. The rose has a good measure of culpability considering that its bed is of crimson joy; the phrase is suggestive of lustful experience. As such, the rose is not innocent before the nighttime activities of the worm.

There is a problem in the symbolic imagery of Blake’s poem the worm is *flying* in. It puzzles and disturbs because worms ***wriggle*** and ***crawl;*** they aren’t known for ***flying***. It a symbolic worm, signifying some sort of ***corruption*** at a more metaphorical level. The fact that the worm is a creature of the night suggests that it is like a demon or other night-visitor which feeds upon people as they sleep (back to that ‘bed’ again), like a succubus or incubus sexually ‘feeding’ upon sleeping victims.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. Examine the use of symbolism in Blake, using illustrations from two of his poems.
2. Nature is never perfect. Justify this statement against the backdrop of Blake’s ‘The Sick Rose*.’*
3. Blake’s poetry is largely poetry of disillusionment. Discuss.
4. Does Blake indicate who is responsible for the suffering experienced by the rose? How could this link to contextual factors and societal viewpoints?
5. **“London”**

***1I wander thro' each charter'd street,***

***2Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.***

***3And mark in every face I meet***

***4Marks of weakness, marks of woe.***

***5In every cry of every Man,***

***6In every Infants cry of fear,***

***7In every voice: in every ban,***

***8The mind-forg'd manacles I hear***

***9How the Chimney-sweepers cry***

***10Every blackning Church appalls,***

***11And the hapless Soldiers sigh***

***12Runs in blood down Palace walls***

***13But most thro' midnight streets I hear***

***14How the youthful Harlots curse***

***15Blasts the new-born Infants tear***

***16And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse***

**Summary**

"London" is among the best-known writings by visionary English poet William Blake. The poem describes a walk through London, which is presented as a pained, oppressive, and impoverished city in which all the speaker can find is misery. It places particular emphasis on the sounds of London, with cries coming from men, women, and children throughout the poem.

The speaker hears the cry of young chimney-sweeps, whose misery disgraces the Church authorities. Thinking of unfortunate British soldiers dying in vain, the speaker imagines their blood running down the walls of a palace.

Most of all, the speaker hears the midnight cries of young prostitutes, who swear and curse at their situation. In turn, this miserable sound brings misery to their tearful new-born children. The speaker also imagines this sound plaguing what the speaker calls "the Marriage hearse"—a surreal imagined vehicle that carries love and death together.

The poem is in part a response to the Industrial Revolution, but more than anything is a fierce critique of humankind's failure to build a society based on love, joy, freedom, and communion with God.

**First Stanza:**

* The people the poet sees seem lost, like him
* "weakness" and "woe" = oppression & unhappiness

**Second Stanza:**

* The poet stresses the mental constriction imposed on the characters
* People are crying out for freedom

**Third Stanza:**

* The poet describes the effect of the oppression
* How even the good can go bad and hopeful go hopeless

**Fourth Stanza:**

* The poet describes the corruption in society
* All things are corrupt

### Poetic/ Literary Devices

**Imagery**:

- ***"Runs in blood down palace walls***" (12)

* Uses this to create an image of death
* Palace walls = royalty
* Blood = Despair
* Creates a deeper meaning that the soldier gives up his life for what is futile = corrupt
* - "The mind-forged manacles" (8)
* Creates an image of bondage and confinement of the people
* There is heavy bondage between the society and the people with complete power (government, people who follow popular beliefs)
* Shows the danger of ignorance = it comes with sorrow

**Symbol:** "manacles" (8)

* Symbolizes the restriction of freedom and slavery.

**Symbol**: "chimney-sweeper" (9)

* Symbolizes the corrupting of innocence.

**Symbol**: "church" (10)

* Symbolizes a place that represents all good things.

**Repetition**: "mark" is used three times in stanza one; in line 3 and two times within line 4.

* Reiterates the importance

**Metaphor**: "Mind-forged manacles I hear" (8) - The manacles are related to the cries and echoes the speaker heard earlier on in the poem and is also symbolic; it symbolizes the ways the people are restricted and enslaved, resulting in widespread crying.

"*How the youthful harlot's* *curse / Blasts the newborn infant's tear"* (15-16): It shows that the harlot's gruesome cursing can debase and impose itself on people crying. Additionally, it means how depressed people don't even get the chance to cry peacefully and alone.

**Synecdoche**: "... every face I meet" (3) - In this context, "face: is used to refer to a person as a whole, not just a part of the body.

**Foreshadowing**: "And blights with plagues the marriage hearse" (16) - This hints to the readers that something unfortunate will happen and will be closely related to death.

**Symbol**: "harlot's curse" (14) - Symbolizes the prostitute's terrible life experiences.

**Symbol**: "soldier's sigh" (11) - Symbolizes the state of frustration, sadness, and annoyance the soldier is in.

**Symbol**: Chimney sweeping is an extremely dangerous and filthy job and it symbolizes death/darkness and the destruction of innocence.

**Alliteration:**  Blake frequently uses **alliteration** to link concepts:

* The **w**eak are in ‘**w**oe' / misery
* The ‘**m**ind' is ‘**m**anacled'
* The sooty ‘**Ch**imney' is equated with the ‘black'ning **Ch**urch'
* The ‘**S**oldier' is not proud but **s**ighs

The strength of the speaker's feeling is particularly conveyed by the **plosive** alliteration of:

* ‘**P**alace' and ‘**p**lagues'
* ‘**B**lood', ‘**b**lasts', ‘**b**lights'

**Form**

As with many of Blake's poems, "London" has a simple form that furthers a discussion of complicated ideas.

There are four **quatrain** stanzas. Taking a zoomed-out look at these stanzas, the first can be said to deal with the sights of London, while the following three focus instead on the sounds of the city.

Of these, the only one with a particularly inventive form is stanza three. Here, Blake takes the final word of stanza two and uses it to create an **acrostic**. The first letter of each line in stanza three spells out HEAR, which helps the poem emphasize the sense of sound that the speaker experiences in London. But this formal feature is not immediately noticeable, which reflects the poem's idea that to truly understand the pain and impoverishment of London (and cities like it) takes a deliberate effort.

**Meter**

At first glance, "London" is written in **iambic** tetrameter. Indeed, the first three lines conform to this scheme perfectly:

I **wan-** | -der **thro'** | each **chart-**|-er'd **street,**

Near **where** | the **chart-** | -er'd **Thames** | does **flow.**  
And **mark** | in **eve-** |-ry **face** | I **meet**

The poem here is setting up its basic premise—a walk through London—and the regularity of the meter calls to mind the speaker's solid and rhythmic walking pace. But suddenly, this regularity is thrown off by line 4, when the "marks" in people's faces appear in front of the speaker. Their "weakness" and "woe" disrupt the speaker's walking rhythm, and this change is reflected metrically the shortened first foot of the line (technically something called headless catalexis; we could also scan this is being a line made up of trochees and the sound would be the same):

**Marks** | of **weak-** | ness, **marks** | of **woe**.

This makes the appearance of the people's faces more dramatic, as though they have just jumped unexpectedly in front of the speaker's eyes.

What's more, line 4 isn't the only line to cut out the final syllable. Every line in stanza three breaks with iambic tetrameter in the same way, which makes the "chimney-sweepers' cry" and the "hapless soldiers' sigh" more prominent and audible—stressed from the first syllable, the lines *feel* louder. Lines 14 and 15 employ a form of catalexis too, with an effect similar to that of stanza three. All of these lines scan the same way that line 4 (quoted above) does.

**Rhyme Scheme**

"London" follows a simple rhyme scheme all through**:**

**abab cdcd efgf hihi**

**“London” Setting**

As the title of the poem suggests, the setting here is "London." Specifically, it's the London of Blake's time—so the late 18th century.

**Comment**

As the poem makes clear, this was a time of economic and social hardship. Rapid industrialization had completely changed the character of the city, and it was a hard place to survive. The image of 'London poem' is a dark and bleak place. The descriptions create an image of a tedious city that is marked by death. The narrator hears cries at every corner, and words like "curse," "plagues" and "hearse" conjure images of death. The poem mirrors the life struggle for survival; it is represented by: the young (chimney-sweepers), men (soldiers) and women (youthful prostitutes); they have to unite for their existence. This creates the sense that London is an unforgiving and foreboding place, where threat and danger lurking at every corner. But the poem is also set in the speaker's particular perceptions of London. The reader is seeing, hearing, and understanding the city through the speaker's own eyes, ears, and mind. The "mind-forg'd manacles" and the "marriage hearse," for example, are the speaker's ideas. Indeed, the links between poverty and authority represent the speaker's theory that, in the speaker's mind, explains London's misery.

**Conclusion**

Blake's poetry is representative of the Romantic intellectual orientation. He set out to use his poetry to address the problems of the society of his day. He is particularly not happy with the church and the palace (ruling class). These institutions to him have failed miserably in eliminating the evils in the society and they contributed to more complications. Blake is a mystic who looks at issues from an esoteric angle. He would not mind being unorthodox provided that he has a point to make. The use of symbolic language in his poetry makes his poems have different levels of significance; understanding the symbols is key to understanding his poetry.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. ‘London’ is a criticism against the social system. Discuss.
2. Blake’s poetry is the poetry of its place and time. Discuss.
3. How one-sided is the speaker's perspective of London? Why doesn't he say anything positive, or point out any of the beauties of London?

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**CHAPTER 3**

**WILLIAM WORDSWORTH**

**(1770-1850)**



**Chapter 3**

**William Wordsworth (1770-1850)**

**Early Life**

William Wordsworth was one of the towering figures of the English Romanticism and one of its influential intellects. He was born on April 7, 1770 in Cockermouth, Cumberland, located in the Lake District of England. Wordsworth’s mother died when he was 7, and he was an orphan at 13. Despite these losses, he did well at Hawkshead Grammar School, where he wrote his first poetry. He graduated in 1791 at Cambridge University. He began writing poetry as a young boy in grammar school, and before graduating from college he went on a walking tour of Europe, which deepened his love for nature and his sympathy for the common man; both major themes in his poetry. Wordsworth had visited France in 1790 in the midst of the French Revolution; he was a supporter of the new government’s republican ideals. During this period, Wordsworth’s interest in both poetry and politics gained in sophistication, as natural sensitivity strengthened his perceptions of the natural and social scenes he encountered.

**His Romantic Attitude**

In 1795, Wordsworth met Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The two became friends, and together worked on Lyrical Ballads (1798). The volume contained poems such as Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," and helped Romanticism take hold in English poetry. In September 1798 the Wordsworth set off for Germany with Coleridge, returning separately, after some disagreements, in May 1799. In Germany Wordsworth continued to write poems, and when he returned to England he began to prepare a new edition of Lyrical Ballads. He wrote the preface of the second edition of Lyrical Ballads; it explained his poetry as being inspired by powerful emotions and would come to be seen as a declaration of Romantic philosophy; that has remained influential and controversial to the present day. Despite the deep grief for the loss of his daughter Catherine at age of six and his son Thomas who died six months later at the age of 6, Wordsworth continued to produce poetry. He had reached a highest creativity amongst the years 1798 and 1808. In 1843, Wordsworth became England's poet laureate, a position he held for the rest of his life. It was this early work that cemented his reputation as an acclaimed literary figure.

**Religious beliefs**

Wordsworth's youthful political radicalism, unlike Coleridge's, never led him to rebel against his religious upbringing. He remarked in 1812 that he was willing to shed his blood for the established Church of England, reflected in his Ecclesiastical Sketches of 1822. This religious conservatism also colors The Excursion (1814), a long poem that became extremely popular during the nineteenth century; it features three central characters, the Wanderer; the Solitary, who has experienced the hopes and miseries of the French Revolution; and the Pastor, who dominates the last third of the poem.

**Poetic career**

Since Wordsworth was born and passed most of his life in the Lake District where the natural magnificent scenery captivated powerfully his personality and he always enjoyed close contact with the countryside. Nature gives him strong emotions which are recollected in tranquility and take the form of a poem: this way of work is exemplified in the poem "**Daffodils**", that is about Wordsworth remembering the daffodils, not the very moment when he saw them but later. In the Preface of "Lyrical Ballads" Wordsworth also says that *"poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and takes origin from emotion recollected in tranquility".*

### Philosophy of Nature:

Wordsworth had a complete philosophy of Nature a Pantheist: he considered **Nature** as a living character. “He believed that there is a divine spirit pervading all the objects of Nature.” Nature gives joy to the human heart, exercising a healing influence on sorrow-stricken hearts. Regarding Man and Nature there is “spiritual interaction.” Wordsworthian doctrine is based on “dualism”, the entities of mind and Nature are linked together but not fully identified, each retaining its separate strength to modify and color the other. “*Nature never did betray the heart that loved her*”. Wordsworth strengthened his faith in universality of life through better understanding of spiritual manifestation in Nature.

**Death**

In December of 1783 John Wordsworth, returning home from a business trip, lost his way and was forced to spend a cold night in the open. At the age of 80, he died on April 23, 1850, at his home in Rydal Mount, Westmorland, England. He is remembered as a poet of spiritual and epistemological speculation, a poet concerned with the human relationship to nature and a solid backer of using the vocabulary and speech patterns of common people in poetry.

Wordsworth has many collections of poetry. They include the following: the ***Lyrical Ballads*** (1798 and 1800)*, Poems in Two Volumes (1807*), *The Excursion (1814)* and *The Prelude*  (1850). We shall now consider some of his poems:

1. **The Tables Turned**

The idealization of Nature in ‘Lines Written in Early Spring’ is further displayed in ‘The Tables Turned’. In this poem, Wordsworth juxtaposes the human world and the world of Nature: the one is replete with strife; the other with sweet lore. The persona in ‘The Tables Turned’ is involved in a discourse with the addressee; but it is only the speech of the persona that is heard and this constitutes the poem. The poem clearly reads like a dramatic monologue in that two persons are involved in the discourse, but only one person is heard. From the speech of the speaker, the reader draws clues about the disposition of the speaker and the presence of a speaker.

The addressee in the poem is a studious character at the table, reading. His own civilization or learnedness is derived only from the printed word; he is specifically a man of letters or a man of learning who has turned his back to Nature. The reason is not unconnected with the fact that the two most widespread religions the world has ever known are scripture-based. ‘The Tables turned’ could be seen as a rebellion against the emphasis people lay on the written material. There are so many things people would gain if they turn to Nature as a guide.

*Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;*

*Or surely you'll grow double:*

*Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;*

*Why all this toil and trouble?*

*The sun above the mountain's head,*

*A freshening lustre mellow*

*Through all the long green fields has spread,*

*His first sweet evening yellow.*

*Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:*

*Come, hear the woodland linnet,*

*How sweet his music! on my life,*

*There's more of wisdom in it.*

*And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!*

*He, too, is no mean preacher:*

*Come forth into the light of things,*

*Let Nature be your teacher.*

*She has a world of ready wealth,*

*Our minds and hearts to bless—*

*Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,*

*Truth breathed by cheerfulness.*

*One impulse from a vernal wood*

*May teach you more of man,*

*Of moral evil and of good,*

*Than all the sages can.*

*Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;*

*Our meddling intellect*

*Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—*

*We murder to dissect.*

*Enough of Science and of Art;*

*Close up those barren leaves;*

*Come forth, and bring with you a heart*

*That watches and receives*.

The Tables Turned was first published in Lyrical Ballads in 1798. Wordsworth dedicates this poem to his dear friend and asks him to leave all his books on the side and come out with him to observe and enjoy the nature. To Wordsworth, the books that human reads are of no use while nature provides them with the knowledge and wisdom that books are lacking. Nature, to him, is filled with knowledge that would offer him peacetime and tranquility. On the other hand, these books are of no good to humans rather it dissects them from the nature that is something beautiful and worth enjoying.

## Overview

The Tables Turned, by William Wordsworth, is a poem that echoes a poet strong faith in nature and is confident that nature is the best teacher rather than books. The poem fervently repeats that a man can only attain knowledge in the circle of nature. In the poem, the poet has turned the tables when he asked his friend to leave his dull and barren books behind and observe the nature rather than saying that why is he wasting his time outside instead of focusing on his studies.

The poet, in the poem, points out that nowadays man is so busy with his books that he forgets to go outside and spend some time in nature. The peace and tranquility that nature provides couldn’t find out insides the book. Books may provide you with knowledge but this knowledge is little or of no use. Nature is filled with knowledge and it will give you wisdom which is superior to knowledge. The wisdom that you get from nature will always keep you fit and healthy.

Spending time in nature, according to Wordsworth, will not provide you only with mental peace and health but also teaches you more about humanity, goodness, and evil as well. However, the poet sadly says that the melodiousness of nature and the understanding it carries has been slanted by the way human beings try to brutally divide it. On the basis of bookish knowledge, we make differences. The poet gives an example of birds that they are the creature who lack bookish knowledge and are free from duality, but there is distortion in humans because of so-called bookish knowledge that preaches duality.

The poet ends the poem by asking his friend to leave aside Science and Arts and close their books as its pages are just barren leaves that is of no use. He asks his friend to come up with an open heart that is willing to receive and absorb the message from nature.

## Themes

The poem has many themes. Wordsworth signifies nature as an entity for both the academic and spiritual progress for the welfare of individuals.

Wordsworth believes that bookish knowledge is nothing but a deviation; however nature teaches us wisdom and tranquility.

According to Wordsworth, humans have lost their originality. We have become what we are not. We associate ourselves to various shadows of self (human); we prioritize our shadows on our real self, therefore we have to get back to recognize ourselves.

## Analysis

The poet begins the 1st stanza by exclamation Up! Up! He calls upon his friend to get up and leaves his books. He claims that these books will make him double; losing his originality and reality. The poet again calls his friend to get up who looks confused by the sudden call. He put emphasizes by again using exclamation Up! Up! He asks his friend to clear his looks; that is to change his perspective on seeing things.

In the second stanza, Wordsworth, nature’s poets, through the use of imagery in this stanza, beautifully creates the picture/ scenery of sunset. The Savannah and the fields are green; however, they appear golden in the glimmers of the evening sun.

In this stanza, the poet emphasis on the pictures of nature to convey a message that knowledge is not inside the books. It is outside, in nature; and one can only get the true knowledge when observes the nature.

The poet begins the third stanza with an exclamation Book! He calls books dull along with endless conflict. The poet claims that books make us double, losing your identity while on the other hand a bird, nature’s creature, is free from this duality. He says that there is distortion in humans due to bookish knowledge.

The poet, in the fourth stanza, argues with his friend that in order to acquire real knowledge and wisdom, he should listen to the blackbirds. The post says that let the nature to be your teacher; when you accept nature as your teacher, you will be enlightened. The poet, in the fifth stanza, says that the nature surrounding us has a lot of wealth of wisdom to bless our mind and hearts with. By observing nature, we are spontaneously breathing wisdom, health and cheerfulness. The poet, arguing with his friend, claims that nature will not provide you only with mental peace and health but also teaches you more about humanity, goodness, and evil as well.

The poet says that every knowledge and wisdom that nature brings is full of sweet feelings and expression that brings peace to the human mind and soul. But it is human’s nature, says the poet, that they with their intellect and knowledge miss-shape the things that are attractive.

The poet, in the last stanza, asks his friend to leave the philosophies of Science and Arts. He tells him to bring his heart, not mind, with him; the heart with receives the message from nature because mind dissects but heart, on the other, heart understands.

### Poetic Devices

### Rhyming Scheme:

The Tables Turned is an eight-stanza poem having a rhyming scheme of abab, cdcd, efef, gfgf, ijij, klkl, mnmn, opop. In simple, every stanza has abab rhyming scheme.

### Speaker:

The poem is the 1stperson narrative in which the poet himself, speaking to his friend, is the speaker backing the nature.

### Structure:

The poem consists of eight four lines stanza. It is a ballad written in iambs with four syllables in the 1st and 3rd line three syllables in the 2nd and 4th line of each stanza.

### Tone:

The whole tone of the poet is direct, fervent, and enthusiastic. His tone changes from this encouraging voice to influential in the second last stanza when he states, “We murder to dissect.”

### Language:

The poet/speaker uses a formal language in the poem. The use of uncommon words and phrases like lore, come forth, hark and blithe makes the poem difficult to understand.

### Imagery:

Wordsworth creates the image of the Lake District in the second stanza where he grew up. He associated nature with many things creating a visual picture in the minds of readers. He uses various metaphors between nature and education. For instance: “freshening mellow”, and “long green field”.

### Figures of Speeches:

**Personification:**

The poet has personified nature as a person who is full of knowledge, and could be the best teacher when it comes to teaching lessons of life. For example: “let the nature be your teacher”, and “above the mountains head”.

**Alliteration:**

The poet uses alliteration at: “Toil and Trouble” and “world of ready wealth”.

**Anaphora:**

By the mentioning UP! UP!, in the first and 3rd line of the 1st stanza, the poet makes use of anaphora.

**Onomatopoeia:**

We can imagine the sound of birds y reading the poem. For instance: “And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!.

**Conclusion**:

The conclusion to the poem is that nature is the best teacher in the world, and it teaches us much more than what we could learn from the books. Science and arts deceive man from the beauty around us, and encourage us to analyze and dissect everything around us, but the nature teaches us how to appreciate thins around us.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. How has Wordsworth proved that the sublimity of the Almighty is not only contained in the printed word in ‘***The Tables Turned***?’
2. What are the characteristics of the Romantic poetry in the poem The Table Turned by William Wordsworth?
3. Why did William Wordsworth write the poem "The Tables Turned"?
4. Can you analyze it and criticize this poem from the fourth stanza to the end?
5. **Daffodils*, or ‘I wandered lonely as a cloud’***

*I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

*Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.*

*The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:*

*For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.*

This poem is by now a bit too famous for its own good. Yet some masterpieces are so great that they will bear endless repetition without losing their effect, and I suspect that the spiritual balm of this poem’s opening lines (particularly the first) will soothe souls for as long as English is understood:

*I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils.*

If this occasion which Wordsworth describes seems at first a little slight, he offers what is tantamount to a defense of his enthusiasm in the following stanza, where the daffodils are

*Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way;  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay’.*

But this is not all: if they are as numerous (and so by implication glorious) as the stars, moreover they out-perform the nearby waves in jollity:

*The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee.*

And if we are not yet won over to the poet’s excitement, neither (at the time) is he, since he realizes only later the lasting spiritual strength which the flowers have brought him:

*I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:*

*For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.*

We might wish the poet had concluded the poem with something other than those last two rather superficial lines (something which a different rhyme scheme might have helped), but the kernel that makes this poem one of Wordsworth’s very best comes in the heart of the above-quoted final stanza:

*They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude.*

But what, precisely, does it mean? The mystery is precisely what makes so enthralling. We all know that solitude can give bliss, but Wordsworth here offers an insight unique to him and typical of his searching descriptions of experience by making this inward eye the instrument by which we find bliss in solitude—so much so, indeed, that it in fact is the bliss of solitude. This analysis is all fine, but ultimately all we need is that beautiful nexus of inward eye, bliss, and solitude—a trinity, and a distich (i.e., any two apposite lines of poetry, not necessarily rhymed) that forcefully communicates the texture of spiritual excitement.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. In “I wandered lonely as a cloud,” how does Wordsworth achieve the seemingly effortless effect of implying the unity of his consciousness with nature? Does this technique appear in any other Wordsworth lyrics?
2. Describe the main features of Wordsworth's poetry. What are the main features with examples?
3. What is the rhythm of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" by William Wordsworth?
4. **“The Solitary Reaper”**

‘The Solitary Reaper’ is one of Wordsworth’s best-known poems. Although it’s a ballad, it didn’t appear in Wordsworth’s most famous collection, Lyrical Ballads, because he wrote it after the publication of that volume (co-authored with Samuel Taylor Coleridge) in 1798. ‘The Solitary Reaper’ appeared in Wordsworth’s 1807 collection Poems in Two Volumes. The driving force in the poem is the great passion of admiration which the persona has for the highland lass.

*Behold her, single in the field,  
Yon solitary Highland Lass!  
Reaping and singing by herself;  
Stop here, or gently pass!  
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,  
And sings a melancholy strain;  
O listen! for the Vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound.*

*No Nightingale did ever chaunt  
More welcome notes to weary bands  
Of travellers in some shady haunt,  
Among Arabian sands:  
A voice so thrilling ne’er was heard  
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.*

*Will no one tell me what she sings?—  
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago:  
Or is it some more humble lay,  
Familiar matter of to-day?  
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
That has been, and may be again?*

*Whate’er the theme, the Maiden sang  
As if her song could have no ending;  
I saw her singing at her work,  
And o’er the sickle bending;—  
I listened, motionless and still;  
And, as I mounted up the hill,  
The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more.*

**Summary of ‘The Solitary Reaper’**

“The Solitary Reaper” a respond to an overwhelming emotional experience. It is about the song sung by a Solitary Reaper. ‘*The Solitary Reaper’* was singing and doing her work without minding about anyone. But, the poet was observing her, mesmerized by the song.  He compares her song to that of Nightingale and the Cuckoo-bird, yet he states that her song is the best. Despite the poet’s inability to decipher the song’s meaning, he understands that it is a song of melancholy. The poet listened motionlessly until he left the place, but the song never left him. Even after a long time, he has come away from that place, he says, he could still listen. The song continued to echo in his heart long after it is heard no more. The beautiful experience left a deep impact and gave him a long-lasting pleasure.

**Analysis**

In the **First stanza** of “The Solitary Reaper,” Wordsworth describes how the Reaper was singing all alone. During one of his journeys in the countryside of Scotland, he saw a Highland girl working in the field all alone. She had no one to help her out in the field. So she was singing to herself. She was singing without knowing that someone was listening to her song. The poet doesn’t want to disturb her solitude so requests the passerby’s go without disturbing her. She was immersed in her work of cutting and binding while singing a melancholy song. For the poet, he is so struck by the sad beauty of her song that the whole valley seems to overflow with its sound.

 In the **second stanza** of “The Solitary Reaper,” the poet compares the young woman’s song with ‘Nightingale’ and ‘Cuckoo’ – the most celebrated birds by the writers and poets for the sweetness of voice. But, here he complains that neither ‘Nightingale’ nor the ‘Cuckoo’ sang a song that is as sweet as hers. He says that no nightingale has sung the song so soothing like that for the weary travelers. For, the song of the girl has stopped him from going about his business. He is utterly enchanted that he says that her voice is so thrilling and penetrable like that of the Cuckoo Bird, which sings to break the silence in the ‘Hebrides’ Islands. He symbolically puts forth that her voice is so melodious and more than that of the two birds, known for their voice.

In the **third stanza** of “The Solitary Reaper,” the poet depicts his plight over not understanding the theme or language of the poem. The poet couldn’t understand the local Scottish dialect in which the reaper was singing. So tries to imagine what the song might be about. Given that it is a  ‘plaintive number’ and a ‘melancholy strain’ (as given in line 6) he speculates that her song might be about some past sorrow, pain or loss ‘of old, unhappy things‘ or battles fought long ago. Or perhaps, he says, it is a humbler, simpler song about some present sorrow, pain, or loss, a ‘matter of to-day.’ He further wonders if that is about something that has happened in the past or something that has reoccurred now.

In the **fourth stanza**, the poet decides not to probe further into the theme of her poem; it is not going to end. Not only her song but also her suffering sounds like a never-ending one. He stays there motionless and listened to her song quite some times. Even when he left and mounted up the hill he could still hear her voice coming amongst the produce, she was cutting and binding. Though the poet left that place, the song remained in his heart, long after he heard that song.

**Literary & Poetic Devices**

‘***The Solitary Reaper***’ has a straightforward language and meter as well as natural theme and imagery. Once again Wordsworth reflected his belief in the importance of the natural world.  The poem highlights his definition of poetry to be ‘a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’ from the poet and the readers’ part.

**Rhyme scheme**

The poem’s **32** lines are equally distributed among the **four stanzas**. Each stanza follows the rhyme scheme: **ABABCCDD**. Use of end rhymes, such as “profound/sound”, “***still/hill***”, “***lay/day***” and “***grain/strain***” makes the poem melodic.

**Apostrophe**

“**The Solitary Reaper**” begins with an Apostrophe “***Behold***” where the poet addresses the unknown passersby. He uses it again in the seventh line “***O Listen***” telling them how the valley is filled with the sound of her.

**Symbolism/ Metaphor**

The poet makes a symbolic comparison of the young **woman’s song** with **Nightingale and Cuckoo** **bird** for the melodic nature of her song. But it turns out to be **hyperbole** for he exaggerates that her song is better than theirs. The poet very much captivated by her song that the valley is “*overflowing with the sound*”. Again, he says that the song looked like a never-ending as her sorrows.

**Imagery**

The imagery used in a literary work enables the readers to perceive things involving their five senses. For example, “Reaping and singing by herself”, “I saw her singing at her work” and “More welcome notes to weary bands” gives a pictorial description of the young woman at work. He makes the readers visualize what he has seen and how he felt.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. What does the poet focus on in the woman's song? How does he describe it? What stood out to you about this description? Why is he so interested in the tone, the mood, and how it makes him feel?
2. How does William Wordsworth show that the song sung by The Solitary Reaper was really enchanting and beautiful?
3. In the poem, the poet mentions two places. What are they and what is their significance in the poem?

## ****The Lucy Poems****

Another important part of Wordsworth's production are the so-called "Lucy poems", five short poems composed in 1799 and published in 1800. They describe the poet's love for a country girl, a 'natural' creature. He feels a sense of separation from nature because Lucy seems completely natural while he is more sophisticated, and farther from truth. He loves Lucy but he cannot possess her, just he cannot possess nature and became one of it. The gulf separating the poet from Lucy becomes a metaphor for the gulf separating man from nature.

The little sequence of Lucy poems—five short stanzaic poems on the mysterious Lucy figure—are exceptional in the works of Wordsworth. Never did he so successfully unite the compression demanded by the short lyric with the powerful impression of word and image. Although he is at his absolute greatest in the huge expatiations which we come to later in our list, in these latter he never attained the still, haunting atmosphere of the present eerie verses. The cycle, which is so interlinked as fairly to be considered a unit, consists of five short poems but in this instance we will discuss no II in more details for didactic purpose:

1. **Lucy or *'She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways****'*

*She dwelt among the untrodden ways /a  
Beside the springs of Dove,/ b  
A Maid whom there were none to praise a  
And very few to love: b*

*A violet by a mossy stone c  
Half hidden from the eye! d  
Fair as a star, when only one c  
Is shining in the sky. d*

*She lived unknown, and few could know e  
When Lucy ceased to be; f  
But she is in her grave, and, oh, e  
The difference to me! f*

**Overview**

William Wordsworth's “**She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways**” is a three-stanza poem with characteristics of an elegy (in that the poem laments a person's death) and a ballad (in that the poem tells a bit of a story).

**Composition and Publication**

William Wordsworth wrote the poem while staying in Germany in 1798. Longman published it in London in 1800 in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, a collection of poems by Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. "She Dwelt" is one of five Wordsworth poems focusing on a woman named **Lucy**, who died young. Whether she was a real person, whom Wordsworth encountered while living in the village of Grasmere in Cumbria County, England, is unknown.  Other Lucy poems include "*Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower*," "*A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal*," "*Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known*" and "*I Travelled among Unknown Men*."

**General Description**

"**She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways**" is a three-stanza poem written by the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth in 1798 when he was 28 years old. The verse was first printed in Lyrical Ballads, 1800, a volume of Wordsworth's and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poems that marked a climacteric in the English Romantic movement.

The poem is the best known of Wordsworth's series of five works which comprise his "Lucy" series and was a favorite amongst early readers. It was composed both as a meditation on his own feelings of loneliness and loss, and as an ode to the beauty and dignity of an idealized woman who lived unnoticed by all others except by the poet himself. The title line implies Lucy lived unknown and remote, both physically and intellectually. The poet's subject's isolated sensitivity expresses a characteristic aspect of Romantic expectations of the human, and especially of the poet's, condition.

According to the literary critic Kenneth Ober, the poem describes the "growth, perfection, and death" of Lucy. 2 Whether Wordsworth has declared his love for her is left ambivalent, and even whether she had been aware of the poet's affection is unsaid. However the poet's feelings remain unanswered and his final verse reveals that the subject of his affections has died alone. Lucy's "untrodden ways" are symbolic to the poet of both her physical isolation and the unknown details of her mind and life. In the poem, Wordsworth is concerned not so much with his observation of Lucy, but with his experience when reflecting on her passing.

"She dwelt" consists of three quatrains, and describes a woman, Lucy, who lived in solitude near the source of the River Dove. 4 In order to convey the dignity and unaffected flowerlike naturalness of his subject, Wordsworth uses simple language, mainly words of one syllable. In the opening quatrain, he describes the isolated and untouched area where Lucy lived, while her innocence is explored in the second, during which her beauty is compared to that of a hidden flower. The final stanza laments Lucy's early and lonesome death, which only he alone notices.

Throughout the poem, sadness and ecstasy are intertwined, a fact emphasized by the exclamation marks in the second and third verses. The effectiveness of the concluding line in the concluding stanza has divided critics and has variously been described as "a masterstroke of understatement" and overtly sentimental. Wordsworth's voice remains largely muted, and he was equally silent about the poem and series throughout his life. 1 This fact was often mentioned by 19th century critics; however they disagreed as to its value.

This is written with an economy and sparseness intended to capture the simplicity the poet sees in Lucy. Lucy's femininity is described in the verse in girlish terms, a fact that has drawn criticism from some critics that see a female icon, in the words of John Woolford "represented in Lucy by condemning her to death while denying her the actual or symbolic fulfillment of maternity". To evoke the "***loveliness of body and spirit***", a pair of complementary but opposite images are employed in the second stanza a solitary violet, unseen and hidden, and Venus, emblem of love, and the first star of evening, public and visible to all.

Wondering which Lucy most resembled the violet or the star the critic Cleanth Brooks concluded that although Wordsworth likely viewed her as "the single star, completely dominating his world, not arrogantly like the sun, but **sweetly and modestly**". For Wordsworth, Lucy's appeal is closer to the violet and lies in her privacy, and her perceived sympathy with nature.

**Rhyme and Meter**

The rhyme scheme is **abab, cdcd, efef**. Note, however, that the final syllables of lines 5 and 7 (*stone* and *one*) constitute an eye rhyme rather than a sound rhyme. Each of the end rhymes is masculine—that is, only the final syllables are involved in the rhyme. (In feminine rhyme, on the other hand, the rhyme involves the final two syllables, as in *ringing* and *singing.)*

The verse format consists mainly of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter, as in lines 3 and 4 and lines 11 and 12:

.....**1**.......................**2**......................**3**........................**4**  
A **MAID**..|..whom **THERE**..|..were **NONE**..|..to **PRAISE**

**Iambic Tetrameter (Four Feet)**

.....1................**2**..............**3**  
And **VER**..|..y **FEW**..|..to **LOVE**

**Iambic Trimeter (Three Feet)**

.....**1**…...........**2**.................**3**.......................**4**   
But **SHE**..|..is **IN**..|..her **GRAVE**,..|..and, **OH**,

**Iambic Tetrameter (Four Feet)**

.....**1**.................**2**.............**3**   
The **DIFF**..|..er **ENCE**..|..to **ME**!

**Iambic Trimeter (Three Feet)**

An extra syllable appears in lines 1 and 5. One may alter the pronunciation as follows to make them iambic tetrameters.

........**1**.........................**2**............................**3**........................**4**  
She **DWELT**..|..a **MONG**..|..th'un **TROD**..|..den **WAYS**

**Iambic Tetrameter (Four Feet)**

…..**1**.............**2**................3....................4  
A **VI**..|..let **BY**..|..a **MOSS**..|..y **STONE**

**Iambic Tetrameter (Four Feet)**

One may also pronounce the extra syllable in each line, making one of the feet in the line an anapest.

............**1**...................**2**.................................**3**.......................**4**  
She **DWELT**..|..a **MONG**..|..the un **TROD**..|..den **WAYS**

**Iambic (1, 2, 4), Anapestic (3)**

….**1**................**2**.................**3**....................**4**  
A **VI**..|..o let **BY**..|..a **MOSS**..|..y **STONE**

**Iambic (1, 3, 4), Anapestic (2)**

**Setting**

The poem is set in northern England in Cumbria County's Lake District, near the village of Grasmere, where Wordsworth maintained a cottage.

**Theme**

The noble and virtuous sometimes receive little or no attention during their trip through life. They are blazing stars through the skies unobserved or seldom seen, then burn out and die.

**Figures of Speech**

The following are some examples of poetic devices and figures of speech in the poem.

**Alliteration**

Be**s**ide the **s**prings of **D**ove /**H**alf **h**idden /  
**w**hen only **o**ne

**Metaphor**

A **violet** by a mossy stone (comparison of Lucy to a violet)

**Simile**

Fair as a star (comparison of Lucy to a star)

**Universality**

The poem can stand as a lament on behalf of all people who go through life unnoticed and unappreciated.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. In a sentence or two, explain the theme of the poem.
2. What is the conflict of the poem? Provide a reason for your answer.
3. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?
4. List two major patterns of alliteration in the poem.
5. Point out a metaphor in the poem. Explain the comparison involved.
6. Find a simile in the poem.
7. Is the poem in any way ironic poem? If so, why?
8. Write an essay arguing that Wordsworth's theme remains highly relevant today. Be generous with examples of people who are unnoticed and unappreciated.
9. There are the Romantic elements in Wordsworth's "*She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways*". Discuss.

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**CHAPTER 5**

**Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

**(1772-1834)**



**CHAPTER 5**

**Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a major poet of the English Romantic period, a literary movement characterized by imagination, passion, and the supernatural. He is also noted for his works on literature, religion, and the organization of society.

**Early life**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the tenth and last child of the vicar of Ottery Saint Mary near Devonshire, England, was born on October 21, 1772. After his father's death in 1782, he was sent to Christ's Hospital for schooling. He had an amazing memory and an eagerness to learn. However, he described his next three years of school as, "depressed, moping, and friendless." In 1791 he entered Jesus College, Cambridge, England. Because of bad debts, Coleridge joined the 15th Light Dragoons, a British cavalry unit, in December 1793.

After his discharge in April 1794, he returned to Jesus College, but he left in December without completing a degree. The reason he left was because of his developing friendship with Robert Southey (1774–1843). Both young men were very interested in poetry and shared the same dislike for the neoclassic tradition (a return to the Greek and Latin classics). Both were also radicals in politics. From their emotional and idealistic conversations, they developed a plan for a "pantisocracy," a vision of an ideal community to be founded in America. This plan never came to be. On October 4, 1795, Coleridge married Sara Fricker, the sister of Southey's wife-to-be. By that time, however, his friendship with Southey had already ended.

**Poetic career**

The years from 1795 to 1802 were for Coleridge a period of fast poetic and intellectual growth. His first major poem, "The Eolian Harp," was published in 1796 in his Poems on Various Subjects. Its verse and theme contributed to the growth of English Romanticism, illustrating a blending of emotional expression and description with meditation. From March to May 1796 Coleridge edited the Watchman, a periodical that failed after ten issues. While this failure made him realize that he was "not fit for public life," his next poem, "Ode to the Departing Year," shows that he still had poetic passion. Yet philosophy and religion were his overriding interests. In Religious Musings (published in 1796), he wrote about the unity and wholeness of the universe and the relationship between God and the created world.

The most influential event in Coleridge's career was his friendship with William Wordsworth (1770–1850) and his wife Dorothy from 1796 to 1810. This friendship brought a joint publication with Wordsworth of the Lyrical Ballads, a collection of twenty-three poems, in September 1798. The volume contained nineteen of Wordsworth's poems and four of Coleridge's. The most famous of these was "***The Rime of the Ancient Mariner***."

Coleridge later described the division of labor between the two poets: Wordsworth was "to give the charm of novelty to things of every day by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us," while Coleridge's "endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic." A second, enlarged edition of Coleridge's Poems also appeared in 1798. It contained further lyrical and symbolic works, such as "This Lime-Tree Bower, My Prison" and "Fears in Solitude." At this time Coleridge also wrote "Kubla Khan," perhaps the most famous of his poems, and began the piece "Christabel."

**Bitter Life**

After spending a year in Germany with the Wordsworths, Coleridge returned to England and settled in the Lake District. In 1810 Coleridge's friendship with Wordsworth came to crisis, and the two poets never fully returned to the relationship they had earlier. During the following years Coleridge lived in London, on the verge of suicide. After a physical and spiritual crisis at Greyhound Inn, Bath, he submitted himself to a series of medical régimes to free himself from opium.

His marriage was failing, especially once Coleridge fell in love with Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth's sister-in-law. Poor health and emotional stress affected his writing. However, in 1802, he did publish the last and most moving of his major poems, "Dejection: An Ode." After a two-year stay in Malta (a group of islands in the Mediterranean), he separated from his wife in 1806. The only bright point in his life was his friendship with the Wordsworth, but by 1810, after his return to the Lake District, their friendship had lessened. Coleridge then moved to London.

Meanwhile, Coleridge's poetry and his brilliant conversation had earned him public recognition, and between 1808 and 1819 he gave several series of lectures, mainly on William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and other literary topics. His only dramatic work, Osorio, written in 1797, was performed in 1813 under the title Remorse. "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan" were published in 1816.

**Later life**

Coleridge spent the last eighteen years of his life at Highgate, near London, England, as a patient under the care of Dr. James Gillman. During this time he rarely left the house. There he wrote several works which were to have tremendous influence on the future course of English thought in many fields: Biographia literaria (1817), Lay Sermons (1817), Aids to Reflection (1825), and The Constitution of Church and State (1829).

When Coleridge died on July 25, 1834, at Highgate, he left bulky manuscript notes that scholars of the mid-twentieth century found and began editing. When the material is eventually published, scholars and the general public will realize the extraordinary range and depth of Coleridge's philosophical thoughts, and will understand his true impact on generations of poets and thinkers and enjoyed almost legendary reputation among the younger Romantics.

Coleridge has many collections of poetry; Poems on Various Subjects (1769), Poems (1803), Dejection: An Ode (1802) among others and enjoyed almost legendary reputation among the younger Romantics. We shall now analyze some of his individual poems.

1. **The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**

One of the famous, if not the most famous, of the poems of Coleridge is ***'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'***. Originally published in 1798 as part of *Preface to Lyrical Ballads the* poem is a ballad that narrates the experiences of a mariner the narration itself being a sort of penance for the mariner having killed an albatross on a voyage to the Antarctica. The tale of the poem may seem simple and modest, but it offers a narrative that illustrates the relationship between the natural realm and the supernatural realm.The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ tells the story of the sailor who killed an albatross. At the beginning of the poem, the mariner or sailor stops a wedding guest on his way to a wedding celebration. The wedding guest initially hesitates but is later captivated by the sailor’s “glittering eye”. He sits down and listens to the story told by the ancient mariner.

The mariner’s tale has it that he was one of the mariners that embarked on a voyage. At the onset of the journey their ship sailed southward under good weather. The elements were propitious. But after a while there was a storm which drove the mariners and their ship southward towards Antarctica. The new environment looked strange and unbearable:

*The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around:                                      
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,  
Like noises in a swound!*

At length, a great seabird, an albatross, appeared in the sky, circling the ship. The bird, being a bird of good omen, led the crew out of the ice, and “a good south wind sprung up behind”. The crew was hopeful, happy with the great seabird, the albatross whose coming changed the elements. But this was short-lived, as the ancient mariner inhospitably killed the albatross for no good reason. The crew got annoyed with the mariner for having killed the bird, as the elements changed for the worse after the killing of the bird. But when the elements improved, the crew was happy and justified the killing of the albatross, thereby making themselves complicity in the crime. The killing of the albatross and the justification of the action by the crewmen marked a turning point in the course of the voyage. Suddenly, the fair weather changed and the ship was stalled:

*As idle as a painted ship*

*Upon a painted ocean*

At this point, the forces that ruled the icy world began to take vengeance on the shipmates for the death of the albatross:

*Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink;*

*Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.*

The crew got exceedingly thirsty and could not drink the water of the ocean, because of its brackishness. The ancient mariner was once again blamed by his shipmates who hung the dead albatross round his neck as a way of dissociating themselves from the crime. But it was already too late. The deed had been done, and their complicity had been established.

The ancient mariner with the albatross round his neck saw the figure of a ship coming towards them. This gave a glimmer of hope to the crew at large. The ship got closer; it turned out to be a ghostly spectacle, a skeleton-ship with *Death* and *Life-in-Death* as its crew. The vengeance had just begun and the rest of the crew doomed to *Death****.*** Following this, the rest of the crew, two hundred of them, fell down one by one, dead. Each had an accusing glance on his face, though dead, and cast the accusing glance on the mariner. The mariner suffered the reproachful look but did not die the albatross about its neck. He wanted to pray, but could not, his heart "as dry as dust".

The mariner saw some water snakes, disgusting and slimy as they were, and blessed them in his heart. In that instant, he found out he could pray, and he prayed. At once, the albatross fell off his neck. The dead bodies of the mariner’s mates got inspired and they steered the ship homeward. When they got to a whirlpool, the ship sank with the crew except the ancient mariner. A hermit and a pilot came to the rescue of the mariner. The mariner passed “***like night, from land to land***” telling people the tale of his experience with the albatross he had shot dead. At the moment, he bids the wedding guest farewell, reminding him the crux of the tale.

*He prayeth well who loveth well*

*Both man and bird and beast*

*He prayeth best, who loveth best*

*All things both great and small;*

*For the dear God who loveth us*

*He made and loveth all*

Afterwards, the wedding guest turns from the bridegroom’s door, going home like one stunned. He wakes up the following morning sadder and wiser.

‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ captures the spirit of Romanticism in so many ways. The setting of the tale for instance, is an exotic locale, just like the setting of some Romantic poems. The setting is devoid of the hustle and bustle of city dwelling. It is like the untrodden ways in the poetry of Wordsworth.

The characters too are not aristocratic and highborn. They are mostly everyday characters. Exceptions are Death and Life-in-Death who are the personifications of the supernatural. The wedding guest himself is by no means aristocratic. He belongs to the ordinary folk whom the Romantics would like to celebrate in their poetry.

Most importantly, ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ is a poem that celebrates Nature. The albatross in the poem is symbolic of the sublimity of Nature. It is of good omen and its existence has never been harmful to the mariners, but man must “murder to dissect" and the mariner shoots it dead, thus violating the forces that control the elements. Many lives are lost because of this singular senseless act. The killing of the albatross could be seen as a metaphor for violating a benefactor, considering that the bird has been of good omen to the sailors. The complicity of the rest of the crew worsens the situation. They could be seen as lacking strength of character, for their opinions would change in line with the atmosphere of a given situation. They do not see beyond the surface. They are similar to most people in real life that would very easily jump to conclusion or join the bandwagon in any given situation. They die because of their lack of strength of character.

The slimy creatures and sea-snakes are also symbolic of the sublimity of Nature. There is something sublime about them; it is this that the mariner realizes. He blesses them in his heart and the albatross falls off his neck. Sublimity does not only exist in the albatross; it also exists in the slimy nature of these crawling creatures. There is nothing “unclean" about them. They reflect the supremacy of the Divine Being, just like the albatross. This concept makes manifest the notion of pantheism in the poem. It suffices to state that everything God created is beautiful and He is present in everything He created; as such, every creature deserves to be respected, both man and animals. But one has to have strength of character to see beauty in slimy creatures.

Many themes are present in the poem. They include the themes of vengeance, repentance, forgiveness, providence, among others. At this point, I am sure you should be in the position to comment on how these themes are manifested in the poem.

On the whole, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is a great poem by Coleridge that raises many questions about existence generally. It is a poem that challenges our understanding of the interface between the natural and the supernatural.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. Make a case for why the Ancient Mariner stops and tells his tale to the Wedding Guest of all people. In your analysis, consider the Hermit, to whom the Ancient Mariner tells his tale for the first time.
2. How does Coleridge use Christian and/or Biblical references to weave a moral into "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"? Is the moral itself Christian? Why or why not? Be sure to use at least two of the following categories of evidence in your analysis: symbolism, setting, numbers, baptism, crucifixion, original sin.
3. How does Coleridge portray the natural world before and after the Ancient Mariner shoots the Albatross? Is there a major change? Use evidence pertaining to symbolism, metaphor, and rhyme scheme to support your thesis.
4. In your opinion, is the Ancient Mariner's punishment for killing the Albatross fair? Whose fate is worse, the Ancient Mariner's or the sailors'? Why?
5. Why do you think the Ancient Mariner kills the Albatross? Do his actions make him unusually cruel, or do they connect him to the whole of humanity?
6. **“To Nature”**

In “To Nature”, Coleridge upholds the Romantic practice of worshipping Nature as an actual God. Hence, it can be considered to be the expression of one of the central tenets of the Romantic Movement itself.

#### The setting of To Nature:

This poem is set firmly in the physical world, unlike most of Coleridge’s poems which have some supernatural element or the other. This physical world is what inspires the poet to offer a prayer to Nature, and it is also the church where that prayer is offered.

**Summary of To Nature:**

“To Nature” consists of 14 lines in total. A poem like this, which is composed of 14 lines, is generally called a sonnet. A sonnet is usually divided into an eight-line unit known as an octet, and a six-line unit known as a sestet. The octet and sestet can together form a single stanza (which is the case in this poem), or appear as two separate stanzas. Here the 14 lines are divided into meaningful segments for the purposes of this summary, in order to make the poem easier to follow and understand.

**Lines 1 – 5:**  
*It may indeed be fantasy when I   
Essay to draw from all created things   
Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings;   
And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie   
Lessons of love and earnest piety.*

In these lines, the poet says that it is only his imagination that lets him draw [joy from all earthly things](https://beamingnotes.com/2013/11/12/thing-beauty-joy-forever-summary-analysis/). This joy is felt deep within his heart, and it never leaves his side. He further adds that in his imagination, mere leaves and flowers become his teachers, and these teachers teach him both how to love and how to have faith. However, in truth, none of this happens.

**Lines 6 – 8:**  
*So let it be; and if the wide world rings   
In mock of this belief, it brings   
Nor fear, nor grief, nor vain perplexity.*

In these lines, the poet says that he does not mind reality turning out the way it is. The whole world might make fun of his beliefs since they are not based on any reality, but this does not shake his faith in any way. He is not afraid that it will become untrue. He is not saddened that no one else understands it. And he also does not believe that it will not come to any purpose.

**Lines 9 – 14:**  
*So will I build my altar in the fields,   
And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,   
And the sweet fragrance that the wildflower yields   
Shall be the incense I will yield to Thee,   
Thee only God! and thou shalt not despise   
Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice.*

In these lines, the poet gives us a valiant assertion that he will build his own church in the lap of nature. In this church, the dome will be constituted by the open sky. He will worship only with the scent of flowers, and that will serve the purpose of incense for him. Nature is the only God that exists for the poet. And that God will love even a man like him, who has made a very humble offering to him.

This is a poem that powerfully evokes images of a priest before his deity, the images drawn from external nature – the landscape together with its flora and fauna. Reading the poem closely (for it deserved some thoughtfulness on the part of the reader), you would note the passion, or better still, the frenzy behind the quest to identify poetry in everything created by the Supreme Being. It is this frenzy, this unalloyed eagerness that propels the pantheism in the poem.

One remarkable thing about the essence of the eternal lines of this poem is that the persona addresses the deity in a familiar tone; this is reflected in the last two lines of the poem. And very importantly, the persona does not need a mediator between him and the Deity, choosing to speak to Him directly, like Donne would in ‘Batter My Heart’*,* for there is something of bond between them.

The deity in the poem is God of Nature – not a scriptural God, so the title of the poem '**To Nature**' could be seen as having a reference to the Creator. In the poem, Nature and God are depicted as analogues. The poem is titled ‘Nature’ and it ends up addressing God. There lies the analogy.

**Critical Analysis of To Nature:**

This poem is Coleridge’s way of offering a prayer to Nature. Like Wordsworth and some other Romantic poets as well, Coleridge sees Nature as a god. To him, the worship of Nature is much nobler than that of any organized religion. The worship of the natural world does not take the kind of ostentatious form that the worship of the Christian God in particular does. The worship of nature does not even have a real manifestation either. That is why the poet considers the entire physical world to be his altar. While Christians spend a lot of money in building up extravagant churches, installing stained glass windows and commissioning statues of Jesus and Mother Mary, Coleridge is not in favor of such expenses. No money is spent in erecting Coleridge’s altar, so he anticipates that his Christian readers will feel that the poet has not made any sacrifices to the god in question. However, his faith is much stronger than that of any Christian. It cannot be shaken by other non-believers. On the other hand, Christianity has been challenged through the ages first by factions within itself (such as Protestants or Anglicans), then by the Eastern religions (such as Buddhism) and finally by science. Unlike Christian missionaries, the poet does not even attempt to convert any others to his own faith. It is his intention that his readers should be encouraged to follow their own paths where their beliefs are concerned, and not be dictated by anyone else. He wants them to be independent thinkers and make up their own minds about which god to worship, or whether to worship any god at all. He simply provides an alternative to Christianity, to organized religion, as well as to conventional forms of worship.

**Rhyme scheme**:

Sonnets typically occur in two types of rhyme schemes – in the pattern ABBA ABBA CDE CDE , known as the Petrarchan sonnet, or in the pattern ABAB CDCD EFEF GG, known as the Shakespearian sonnet. In “To Nature” neither of these patterns is followed in its entirety. The rhyme scheme of “To Nature’ is as follows: ABBA CDDC EFEFGG. Thus it is an atypical sonnet.

**Rhetorical devices:**

**Transposed sentence:**

Poets often change the sequence of words in their lines in order to maintain the rhyme scheme chosen by them for that particular poem. In this poem, the poet uses the device of transposed sentence in lines 1-3 when he writes “… when I/ Essay to draw from all created things/ Deep, heartfelt, inward joy…” instead of writing “…when I essay to draw deep, heartfelt, inward joy from all created things”, in lines 4-5 when he writes “…trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie/Lessons of love and earnest piety” instead of writing “… trace lessons of love and earnest piety in leaves and flowers that lie round me”, in line 9 when he writes “So will I build my altar in the fields” instead of writing “So I will build my altar in the fields”, and in line when he writes “…the blue sky my fretted dome shall be” instead of writing “… the blue sky shall be my fretted dome”, the latter being more grammatically correct in each case.

**Metaphor**:

This rhetorical device is used when a covert comparison is made between two different things or ideas. In this poem, the poet uses the device of metaphor in lines 11-12 when he compares the fragrance of flowers with incense that is offered to God.

**Apostrophe:**

This rhetorical device is used when a poet addresses his or her poem to an absent audience. In this poem, the poet uses the device of an apostrophe in lines 12-13 when he addresses his devotion directly to Nature with such words as “thee” and “Thou”.

### Central Idea of To Nature:

Nature is the poet’s only teacher, and His teachings give him great joy. That is why he worships only Nature and no other God. His faith in the Nature god can withstand any test. He has built his own church, and it is made up of the entire natural world. This may not seem to be much of a sacrifice, but he is sure that the Nature God will not hold that against him.

### Themes of To Nature:

*Critique of ostentatious practices of the Christian church:*In this poem, the poet conceives the natural world itself to be his church. This is because he is a child of the Reformation. As we know, the Reformation was a movement against the ostentatious practices of the Catholic Church. The Protestants did not think that their places of worship needed to be adorned with stained glass windows and the like. Similarly, the poet here imagines the blue sky to be the dome of his church and the scent of wildflowers to be incensed.  
*Critique of faith that can be easily shaken:*Beginning in the 17th century, many scientific studies had shown that there was no foundation in reality for certain theories propagated by Christianity, such as the Earth is at the center of all things and that man is the most superior amongst all animals. Hence man’s faith in Christianity was starting to be shaken.  However, if you worship Nature, your faith will be founded on a stronger base, thought the poet.

*Critique of priests:* Catholicism was preached by priests or church fathers who believed that only they had the right to interpret the Bible for the common people. However, the Protestants believe that every man, woman, and child ought to be able to read the Bible and interpret it for themselves. Coleridge also thought that every man was entitled to practice his own unique form of faith.

#### The Tone of To Nature:

The tone of Coleridge in this poem is very devout. In his worship of Nature, he is absolutely sure that it is a legitimate form of worship. That is why his devotion cannot be called into question by anyone. Even when he speaks of the Nature god himself, he does not lose his faith in His ability to love humble believers like the poet himself. There is not even a tone of regret when Coleridge admits that he cannot offer much to the Nature god, for he does not doubt that no such offerings are necessary to appease Him.

#### Conclusion:

“To Nature” is an atypical poem in many ways. Its rhyme scheme does not adhere to the usual rhyme schemes that a sonnet can follow. Its subject matter also does not adhere to the usual concerns that Coleridge voices in his poetry, especially the aspect of a supernatural presence. However, this does not make us doubt the poet’s commitment to worshipping Nature in any way. Perhaps under the influence of his good friend William Wordsworth, or perhaps of his own accord, the poet certainly developed a strong devotion towards Nature, and that devotion is exactly what this poem is about. In fact, this poem reaffirms more surely than any other poem by Coleridge how in tune with the times he was. This makes us admire him in a way that neither *Christabel*nor *Kubla Khan*can.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. What similarities are there in Wordsworth’s ‘*The World is Too Much with Us*’ and Coleridge’s ‘Work without Hope?
2. How did Coleridge view nature?
3. [What's the difference between Coleridge's vision of nature and Wordsworth's?](https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/whats-difference-between-coleridges-vision-nature-364367)

**3. “Kubla Khan”**

*Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.*

*1In Xanadu did Kubla Khan*

*2A stately pleasure-dome decree:*

*3Where Alph, the sacred river, ran*

*4Through caverns measureless to man*

*5 Down to a sunless sea.*

*6So twice five miles of fertile ground*

*7With walls and towers were girdled round;*

*8And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,*

*9Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;*

*10And here were forests ancient as the hills,*

*11Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.*

*12But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted*

*13Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!*

*14A savage place! as holy and enchanted*

*15As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted*

*16By woman wailing for her demon-lover!*

*17And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,*

*18As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,*

*19A mighty fountain momently was forced:*

*20Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst*

*21Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,*

*22Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher’s flail:*

*23And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever*

*24It flung up momently the sacred river.*

*25Five miles meandering with a mazy motion*

*26Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,*

*27Then reached the caverns measureless to man,*

*28And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;*

*29And ’mid this tumult Kubla heard from far*

*30Ancestral voices prophesying war!*

*31The shadow of the dome of pleasure*

*32 Floated midway on the waves;*

*33 Where was heard the mingled measure*

*34 From the fountain and the caves.*

*35It was a miracle of rare device,*

*36A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!*

*37A damsel with a dulcimer*

*38 In a vision once I saw:*

*39 It was an Abyssinian maid*

*40 And on her dulcimer she played,*

*41Singing of Mount Abora.*

*42Could I revive within me*

*43Her symphony and song,*

*44 To such a deep delight ’twould win me,*

*45That with music loud and long,*

*46I would build that dome in air,*

*47That sunny dome! those caves of ice!*

*48And all who heard should see them there,*

*49And all should cry, Beware! Beware!*

*50His flashing eyes, his floating hair!*

*51Weave a circle round him thrice,*

*52And close your eyes with holy dread*

*53For he on honey-dew hath fed,*

*54And drunk the milk of Paradise.*

**Form & Meter**

“Kubla Khan” doesn't have a set form—nor does it follow a traditional form like the sonnet or the ballad. On a basic level, there are three stanzas. The first has 11 lines, the second has 25, and the third has 18. The poem meanders, wandering between different rhyme schemes and meters over the course of its 54 lines. The poem uses three separate meters—**iambic tetrameter**, **iambic pentameter**, and in line **5**, **iambic trimeter**. There isn't always a clear reason why the speaker switches between these meters.

The poem opens with four lines in **iambic tetrameter**. The first line demonstrates the pattern.

...1..............2...............3............4  
In **XAN**..|..a **DU**.|..did **KUB**..|..la **KHAN**

The poem then shifts to lines of varying length, usually with iambic feet. For example, line 10 is in iambic pentameter.

.......1..................2................3...............4................5  
And **HERE**..|..were **FOR**..|..ests **AN**..|..cient **AS**..|..the **HILLS**

Line 43 is in iambic trimeter.

......1..............2...............3  
Her **SYM**..|..phon **Y**..|..and **SONG**

Iambic just means that the poem is made up of lots of two-syllable units, in which the **stress** is placed on the **second syllable**. The lines also **rhyme**, although maybe not in the ways expected. "**Rhyming Iambic Meter**" makes the form and meter sound simpler than it really is. Preferably, the lines would all have the same number of iambic syllables. If they had four, we would call it "iambic tetrameter" if they had five, "iambic pentameter," and so on. But Coleridge didn't make this a normal poem.

The **poem** is a dream **poem** and related to works describing visions common to the Romantic poets. **Kubla Khan** is also related to the genre of fragmentary **poetry**, with internal images reinforcing the idea of fragmentation that is found within the **form** of the **poem**. For the overwhelming majority of Coleridge's contemporaries, **Kubla Khan** seemed to be no better than nonsense, and they dismissed it disapprovingly. In fact, when first published, many contemporary reviewers regarded the **poem** as "nonsense," because of its **fragmentary** nature.

This **poem** describes Xanadu, the palace of **Kubla Khan**, a Mongol emperor and the grandson of Genghis **Khan**. He also tells us about the fertile land that surrounds the palace. The nearby area is covered in streams, sweet-smelling trees, and beautiful forests.The **name Xanadu means** Mongolian City and is of Mongolian origin. **Xanadu** is **name** that's been used by parents who are considering unisex or non-gendered baby **names**--baby **names** that can be used for any gender.

**Theme**

The interaction between man and **nature** is a major theme for Coleridge. It's painted all over "Kubla Khan," as we go from the dome to the river, and then from the gardens to the sea. Sometimes he's focused on human characters, sometimes on natural forces. In fact, it's difficult to get away from this theme in this poem**.**

SPEAKER

We think the speaker of this poem sounds like he's trying to impress a crowd. He would be right at

home at a circus or a magic show. He could even be a con ar3st, performing card tricks on the street.

He knows he has to draw his audience in right away, and make his pitch fascina3ng.

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**Symbolism**

However there is a river **ALPH** in Antarctica, the river mentioned in Coleridge's poem, “**Kubla Khan**,” is fictional and represents the ***power****,* ***force*** and ***excitement*** of the natural world. It also represents ***movement***.

**Poetic Devices & Figurative Language**

**Anaphora**

**And** sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:  
**And** ’mid this tumult Kubla heard from far

**And all** who heard should see them there,  
**And all** should cry, Beware! Beware!

**His** flashing eyes, **his** floating hair! (Line 50)

**Simile**

* *Huge fragments vaulted* ***like*** *rebounding hail* (line 21)  
  **Comparison of upward thrust of the fragments to that of rebounding hail**
* **As if** this earth in fast thick pants were breathing  
  **Comparison of the earth to a living, breathing thing**

**Metaphor**

 There are two metaphors in the poem. First is used in the twelfth line where it is “deep romantic chasm.” Here the “deep romantic chasm” represents the creativity and deep imagination of the poet. Second is used in the last stanza such as “woman wailing for her demon-lover.” Here “wait” metaphorically represents the desire for love.

**Personification**

Coleridge has used personification in the first stanza where he states, “***as if this earth in fast thick pant was breathing***,” comparing the earth to a breathing human being. He also has personified rocks in line 23 as “***the dancing rocks***.” Dancing is a human characteristic, but the poet has attributed this quality to rocks.

**Synecdoche:**

 Synecdoche is a literary device in which a part of something represents the whole. Coleridge has used synecdoche in line 19 such as “A mighty fountain momentarily was forced” where the fountain has been used for the waterfall or the streamlet that is coming out of a gorge with force.

**Alliteration:**

Examples include the name "**K**ubla **K**han," as well as "**s**unless **s**ea," and "**s**unny **s**pots." Later examples include "**c**edarn **c**over," "**m**iles **m**eandering," "**m**ingled **m**easure," "**d**amsel with a **d**ulcimer," and "deep delight." Alliteration adds a musical, singsong quality to the poem.

**Consonance** involves the repetition of consonant sounds in places other than the beginning of words (usually the **end** of words) includes: "girdle**d** roun**d**" and "sinuou**s** rill**s**."

**Assonance** involves the repetition of **internal** vowel sounds. Examples are "tw**i**ce f**i**ve," "th**e**re w**e**re."

**Onomatopoeia**: "**wailing**" in line 16 to refer to the sound the woman was making as she mourned her lover. Another example is "**fast thick pants**" to refer to the sounds of the earth and its fountain.

Coleridge’s use of literary devices has helped him present a complete and luxurious picture of the palace of Kubla Khan and the beauty in that realm.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. Write an informative essay about writers who based literary works on dreams. You may wish to begin with Robert Louis Stevenson, who is said to have based The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde on a dream.
2. Define the following words from the poem: girdled, sinuous, chasm, athwart, and thresher.
3. Please give some examples of simile and metaphor in "Kubla Khan".
4. How can Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” be read as an allegory for imagination?
5. What is the main idea of "Kubla Khan" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge?
6. What is the message of Kubla Khan?
7. How is "Kubla Khan" a Romantic poem and what are the romantic elements found in that poem?
8. What is the main theme in "Kubla Khan" and what is it about?
9. Discuss the influence of German philosophers on Coleridge.
10. How does Coleridge describe the Pleasure Dome in the 1st part?

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CHAPTER 6

GEORGE GORDON BYRON

**1788-1824**



**Chapter 6**

**George Gordon Byron, Lord Byron (1788-1824)**

Lord Byron is regarded as one of the greatest British poets and is best known for his amorous lifestyle and his brilliant use of the English language. He was one of the leading figures of the Romantic Movement in early 19th century England. The notoriety of his sexual adventures is outdone only by the beauty and brilliance of his writings. After leading an unconventional lifestyle and producing a massive amount of emotionally stirring literary works, Byron died at a young age in Greece pursuing romantic adventures of heroism.

**Early Life**

George Gordon Byron was born on January 22, 1788, to Captain John Byron and Catherine Gordon of Gight Estate in the Parish of Fyvie, in the Formartine area of Aberdeenshire, Scotland. As a boy, young George endured a father who abandoned him, a schizophrenic mother, and a nurse who abused him. As a result, he lacked discipline and a sense of moderation, traits he held on to his entire life.

In 1798, at age 10, when his father died, George inherited the title of his great-uncle, William Byron, and was officially recognized as Lord Byron. Two years later, he attended Harrow School in London, where he experienced his first sexual encounters with males and females. In 1803, Byron fell deeply in love with his distant cousin, Mary Chaworth, and this unrequited passion found expression in several poems, including "*Hills of Annesley*" and "*The Adieu.*"

From 1805 to 1808, Byron attended Trinity College intermittently, engaged in many sexual exploits, and fell deep into debt. During this time, he found diversion from school and partying with boxing, horse riding, and gambling. In June 1807, he formed a stable friendship with John Cam Hobhouse and was initiated into liberal politics, joining the Cambridge Whig Club.

**Career**

Byron attended the Harrow School and Cambridge University. He admired Alexander Pope, a neo-classical English poet, and Napoleon Bonaparte. He started writing poetry when he was just fourteen. And he has many publications. Among them include Hours of Idleness (1807), Childe Harolds Pilgrimage (1812), The Corsair (1814), and Hebrew Melodies (1815). After receiving a scathing review of his first volume of poetry, Hours of Idleness, in 1808, Byron reacted with the satirical poem "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," since the poem attacked the literary community with wit and satire, it gained him his first literary acknowledgment.

Byron was not just a literary artist; he was also a politician. He took his seat in the House of Lords in 1809 where he eloquently urged Catholic Emancipation and defended the “framebreakers”, workers that destroyed machines that had displaced them. He traveled to continental Europe several where he later joined the Greeks’ fight for their independence from the Turks. Filled with inspiration, he began writing "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," a poem of a young man's reflections on travel in foreign lands.

**Miseries**

In July 1811, Byron returned to London after the death of his mother, and despite all her failings, her passing plunged him into deep mourning. High praise by London society pulled him out of his doldrums, as did a series of love affairs, first with the passionate and eccentric Lady Caroline Lamb, who described Byron as "mad, bad and dangerous to know," and then with Lady Oxford, who encouraged Byron's radicalism. Then, in the summer of 1813, Byron entered into an intimate relationship with his half-sister, Augusta, now married. The tumult and guilt he experienced as a result of these love affairs were reflected in a series of dark and repentant poems, "The Giaour," "The Bride of Abydos" and "The Corsair."

In September 1814, seeking to escape the pressures of his loving embarrassments, Byron proposed to the educated and intellectual Anne Isabella Milbanke (also known as Annabella Milbanke). They married in January 1815, and in December of that year, their daughter, Augusta Ada (Ada Lovelace) was born. However, by January the ill-fated union crumbled, and Annabella left Byron amid his drinking, increased debt, and rumors of his relations with his half-sister and of his bisexuality. He never saw his wife or daughter again.

**Late Poetry**

In April 1816, Byron left England, never to return. He traveled to Geneva, Switzerland, befriending Percy Bysshe Shelley, his wife Mary, and her stepsister, Claire Clairmont. While in Geneva, Byron wrote the third canto to "*Childe Harold*," depicting his travels from Belgium up the Rhine to Switzerland. Byron does have many aspects in common with the usual associations of Romanticism. These include political engagement, extensive travel, and a taste for freedom. That said, he occupies a place in Romanticism like no other. After publishing his long poem ***Childe Harold's Pilgrimage***, Byron became a celebrity on a scale that was practically unknown at the time. That poem saw the genesis of the "Byronic hero," a well-educated, cunning, and charming man who has a disdain for authority. Many readers saw Byron himself as the archetype for this hero. On a trip to the Bernese Oberland, Byron was inspired to write the Faustian poetic-drama Manfred. By the end of that summer, the Shelleys departed for England, where Claire gave birth to Byron's daughter Allegra in January 1817.

In October 1816, Byron and John Hobhouse sailed for Italy. Along the way, he continued his lustful ways with several women and portrayed these experiences in his greatest poem, "*Don Juan*." The poem was a witty and satirical change from the melancholy of "Childe Harold" and revealed other sides of Byron's personality. He would go on to write 16 cantos before his death and leave the poem unfinished.

By 1818, Byron's life of dissolution had aged him well beyond his 30 years. He then met 19-year-old Teresa Guiccioli, a married countess. The pair were immediately attracted to each other and carried on an incomplete relationship until she separated from her husband. Byron soon won the admiration of Teresa's father, who had him initiated into the secret Carbonari society dedicated to free Italy from Austrian rule. Between 1821 and 1822, Byron edited the society's short-lived newspaper, The Liberal.

**Latest Adventure & Death**

In 1823 a restless Byron accepted an invitation to support Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire. Byron spent 4,000 pounds of his own money to refit the Greek naval fleet and took personal command of a Greek unit of elite fighters. On February 15, 1824, he fell ill. Doctors bled him, which weakened his condition further and likely gave him an infection.

On April 19, 1824, Byron passed away at age 36. He was deeply mourned in England and became a hero in Greece. His body was brought back to England, but the clergy refused to bury him at Westminster Abbey, as was the custom for individuals of great stature. Instead, he was buried in the family vault near Newstead. In 1969, a memorial to Byron was finally placed on the floor of Westminster Abbey.

Byron has many collections with wonderful lyrical poems amongst them the most famous the following ones:

1. **She Walks in Beauty**

Byron’s ***'Hebrew Melodies***' of 1815 contains some of the most famous lyrical poems of his. One of these lyric poems is ‘She Walks in Beauty’. The poem praises and seeks to capture a sense of the beauty of a particular woman. The poem is Byron’s spontaneous reaction to the beauty of a Mrs. Wilmot, a wife to his cousin, Robert Wilmot. The poem records the persona’s awe as he beheld the subject:

*HE walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that’s best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:  
Thus mellow’d to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.*

*One shade the more, one ray the less,  
Had half impair’d the nameless grace  
Which waves in every raven tress,  
Or softly lightens o’er her face;  
Where thoughts serenely sweet express  
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.*

*And on that cheek, and o’er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart whose love is innocent!*

"*She Walks in Beauty*" is a famous poem by British Romantic poet Lord Byron, first published in 1815. The speaker compares this woman to a lovely night with a clear starry sky and goes on to convey her beauty as a harmonious "meeting" between darkness and light. After it discusses physical attractiveness, the poem then portrays this outer beauty as representative of inner goodness and virtue.

One striking feature of Mrs. Wilmot’s beauty as observed in this poem is its combination of opposites. This is evident in the first stanza of the poem. It is a type of beauty that hinges on contrasting features – light and night, dark and bright. These features, contrasting as they are, help to balance the beauty of the subject, making it something exceptional, something extraordinary.

The second stanza of the poem points out the fact that the beauty of the subject is in the right proportion. This is the point made in lines 7-8. Any beauty that is not in the right proportion is no beauty at all. A very short woman with dazzling features, for instance, cannot be said to be beautiful. In the context of the beauty of the subject of this poem, the fabric of her beauty is intact, nothing to be removed and nothing to be added. If this is done, her beauty will be impaired. ‘The nameless grace’ of the eighth line refers to a quality/set of qualities inherent in her hair and face. She is of nameless grace given that her beauty is that of perfection, extraordinary. Though, her beauty, as presented by the Lord Byron himself, reminds one of that of the most beautiful woman in western civilization, Helen of Troy, who had caused the legendary Trojan War. What manner of woman could this be?

The rest of the second stanza is devoted to the delineation of the features of the beauty of the subject. These features are further pointed out in the final stanza. The beauty of the woman in question is not only a physical type of beauty; it is a type of beauty that runs deep – the woman is inwardly beautiful too; she is a virtuous woman. This is the subject of the last three lines of the last stanza. This type of beauty is but a rarity. Such virtue and such beauty hardly sit side by side. Helen, because of her devastating beauty, had caused the burning of the topless towers of Ilium, for instance; her beauty was dazzling, but it was destructive. Such was the beauty of Yeats’ Maud Gonne, the subject of his ‘No Second Troy’.

The language of ‘She Walks in Beauty’ reflects Wordsworth’s claim in Preface to Lyrical Ballads that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good prose, the meaning of course, that the language of poetry should be simple, a type of language spoken by people. The Romantics had stressed the simplicity of the language of poetry because it reflects natural human language. This tenet is central to the form of ‘*She Walks in Beauty’*. Also of note is the attitude of the speaker towards the subject. It brings to mind that of the persona in ‘*The Solitary Reaper*’ towards the Highland lass. There is something subjective about it, bespeaking admiration and powerful feelings. If not for the feelings Lord Byron had for Mrs. Wilmot, he might not have been able to compose this poem.

**Themes**

As its title might suggest, “*She Walks in Beauty*” is a poem that praises a woman’s beauty. More specifically, it presents that beauty as a kind of harmony that is as perfect as it is rare. Indeed, that’s the main point of the poem—that this particular woman’s beauty is practically unparalleled because of the exquisite harmony and visual balance of her looks. Beauty, the poem thus suggests, is perfection achieved through harmony. And as the poem progresses, it makes clear that this harmony is delicate and fragile—potentially altered by even the smallest of changes.

The poem begins by establishing a sense of the speaker’s wonder at the woman’s majestic beauty. The speaker doesn’t say that the woman walks beautifully—but that she walks in beauty. This unusual construction helps with the sense that the woman’s beauty is truly remarkable, so vast and impressive that it seems to surround this woman like an aura or cloud. The poem quickly reveals what it believes to be the source of such beauty: the woman’s physical appearance brings together “*all that’s best of dark and bright*.” This suggests that beauty is a harmony between distinct elements—darkness and light. Beauty takes the “*best*” of these elements and places them in a delicate balance.

The poem then expands on this marriage of light and dark in stanza 2. Here, beauty is presented as almost beyond language, a “nameless grace.” The complex and intensely beautiful interplay between light (“*ray[s]*”) and dark (“*shade*”) is made possible only by the shape and contours of the woman’s physical appearance. This reinforces the idea that beauty is a kind of perfection achieved through harmony.

Part of the power of beauty is in its rarity. As lines 5 and 6 make clear, the woman’s harmonious beauty is not an everyday occurrence—this interplay of light and dark is the exclusive preserve of “*heaven*,” not the “*gaudy day[s]*” of life on earth. Beauty, then, also has an air of the divine or supernatural that contributes to this sense of rarity—comparable to sighting a comet or eclipse, perhaps. Furthermore, beauty is all-the-rarer because the harmony required for it to exist is so fragile. In the second stanza, the speaker outlines how even one shade—or one ray—out of place in the interplay of light and dark on the woman’s hair would upset her beauty; indeed, it would be “half impaired.”

It’s also worth noting that the common literary associations of darkness tend to be mystery and fear (in the works of Edgar Allan Poe, for example). Contrastingly, light is often linked to purity, beauty, and love (e.g., Carol Ann Duffy’s “*Valentine*” or Shakespeare’s “*Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day*?”) The beauty in “*She Walks in Beauty*” depends on both light and dark, bringing them together in harmony. Accordingly, the woman’s beauty is all the more powerful and uncommon. “*She Walks in Beauty,*” then, is a poem that cherishes physical beauty and perfection. In the figure of the woman that it addresses, it sees an unparalleled example of perfect beauty and seeks to explain it, even though it may prove impossible to characterize its “*nameless grace*,” as a type of rare harmony that brings together light and dark. The poem spends most of its time focusing on physical beauty, and the reader learns little about the woman other than what the speaker tells them. Regardless, in the speaker’s opinion at least, ***outer beauty is a reflection of inner beauty***—and indeed, both are in ***harmony*** with one another.

**Poetic Devices & Figurative Language**

**Alliteration**

The first example of alliteration is in line 2: "cloudless climes and starry skies." The alliteration here is not subtle and forms two obvious pairs—the hard /***c***/ sound and the /***s***/ sound (which is specifically an example of ***sibilance***). As the poem intends to establish beauty as a kind of perfection achieved through harmony (in this case, between light and dark), the pairing-off of sounds creates a sense of harmoniousness; in other words, the sounds—two /**c**/ sounds in a row followed by two /**s**/ sounds in a row—create a sense of balance and symmetry.

The next key example is between lines 4 and 5, with "Meet" and "mellowed." "Meet" is a stressed syllable, which opens the line with a trochee and upsets the poem's iambic tetrameter:

**Meet** in her **as**pect **and** her **eyes**

This stress makes the word "Meet" sound particularly prominent, allowing for the alliteration between this and "mellowed" to ring out despite the relatively wide distance between these two words. "Mellowed" in turn, shows the reader what happens when the "best of dark and bright / Meet" in the appearance of the woman. As such, the cause is linked with effect through sound.

Line 9 has alliteration through the phrase "***W***hich ***w***aves," which is part of the stanza's broader heavy use of ***consonance, assonance, and sibilance***. All of these techniques function as ornamentation, intended to make the stanza sound "prettier" to reflect the woman's beauty.

**Figurative Language**

**Form**

"She Walks in Beauty" has a simple and regular form. It is comprised of three six-line stanzas, a.k.a. ***sestets***, all of which are ***iambic tetrameter***.

Each sestet serves a slightly different purpose in developing the poem's discussion of beauty. The first is simply to establish the beauty of the poem's subject: a woman seen by the speaker. The speaker develops the idea that beauty is a form of perfection achieved through harmony, particularly in this case through the "meeting" of darkness and light. The rarity of this harmony is also established through the mention of heaven—this is not an everyday, "gaudy" beauty.

The second stanza portrays this beauty as delicate and fragile. Even a slight change to the light—one shade more or one ray less—would greatly diminish this beauty. Line 11 marks a shift in the poem in which the discussion moves beyond physical appearance and starts to consider inner beauty too.

The third stanza picks up on this idea, honing on the individual features of the woman's face and building a composite picture that speaks of inner goodness, peace, and love. In other words, the woman's physical attractiveness is read by the speaker as a signal of an equally beautiful interior state.

**Meter**

"*She Walks in Beauty*" has a regular metrical scheme throughout ***the iambic tetrameter***. This means there are four poetic feet per line, each consisting of a da ***DUM*** syllable pattern. Looked at broadly, perhaps it is fitting that the poem is so regular in terms of meter, stanza shape, and rhyme—together, these traits denote a sense of order, harmony, and symmetry befitting the type of rare beauty the poem attempts to describe. On another general point, it's worth remembering that iambs are often associated with walking. Their steady groups of two syllables mimic the alternating combination of the left foot and right foot—indeed, extending the analogy further, people themselves have one stronger and one weaker foot (just as the iamb has a stronger and weaker syllable). The way this steady rhythm evokes the woman's walk is evident from the beginning:

*She* ***walks*** *in* ***beau****-ty,* ***like*** *the* ***night***

*Of****cloud****-less****climes****and****star****-ry****skies****;*

There is only one deviation from this metrical regularity throughout the whole poem. This happens in line 4 when the line uses a ***trochee*** (**stressed**-unstressed, basically the opposite of an iamb) in the first foot. This places sudden and dramatic stress on the verb "Meet," which helps creates the sense of "dark and bright" being forced together:

***Meet*** *in her* ***as****-pect* ***and******eyes;***

**Rhyme Scheme**

The rhyme scheme is highly regular, with each six-line stanza following a pattern of ***ababab*.**

Apart from the slant rhyme of brow," "**glow**," and "**below**," in the third stanza, these are all strong, perfect rhymes.

The elegance of the rhyme scheme is intended to create a sense of ***harmony and symmetry***. Given that one of the poem's main ideas is that beauty is a kind of perfection achieved through harmony, it makes sense that the rhymes would ring out so clearly and cleanly. Furthermore, each stanza uses only two different rhyme sounds helps to reflect the poem's central antithesis between light and dark. Each stanza is a kind of fusion between these two different rhyme sounds, just as the woman's beauty brings together the "best of dark and bright.

**The speaker**

The speaker is not specified—given no name, age, occupation, nor gender. This adds to the universality of the poem and suggests that anyone would be able to appreciate this woman's beauty. That said, it's also worth noting that Lord Byron himself is often equated with the poem's speaker. So the story goes, the poem was written after a party Byron attended at which he saw a particularly beautiful woman(who was the wife of his cousin).

In any case, a speaker is a person preoccupied with the contemplation of beauty, physical or otherwise—though perhaps mostly physical; it's not until past the poem's midway point that the speaker starts to discuss the woman's inner beauty.

**Setting**

"She Walks in Beauty" doesn't have a particular sense of location or place. Primarily, it takes place in the mind of the speaker, who is trying to understand the astonishing beauty of a particular woman. The poem does evoke a kind of setting, mentioning a clear and starry night in the opening lines and "tender light" later in the stanza. There is a certain atmosphere, then, one which is constructed on a kind of gentle and delicate light—but it's not wedded to a particular site. The poem also casts a kind of microscopic gaze on the woman's outer appearance, making this is a part of the setting too.

**Study questions & Discussion**

1. Identify the literary terms in the poem "She Walks in Beauty."
2. Nature is perfect. How true is this statement in the light of Byron’s ‘She Walks in Beauty’?
3. Can a person's spiritual goodness make them physically beautiful? Give examples of qualities you feel would make a person beautiful and explain why.
4. Discuss the image of the woman in this poem, bearing in mind the details that Byron gives her, but also giving your interpretation of her beauty.
5. **Prometheus**

"Prometheus" is a poem first published in 1816. The poem is a celebration of Prometheus, a figure from Greek mythology known for stealing fire from the gods to help humanity. It makes a claim for the power of resisting tyranny, and for the value of individual sacrifice. Byron himself was a politician-turned-revolutionary who fought in the Greek War for Independence, and the character of Prometheus is typical of Byron's work: the solitary, suffering, defiant hero is meant to empower readers, reminding them that revolutions begin with individuals who dare to imagine the future differently.

***The Full Text of “Prometheus”***

*1Titan! to whose immortal eyes*

*2         The sufferings of mortality,*

*3         Seen in their sad reality,*

*4Were not as things that gods despise;*

*5What was thy pity's recompense?*

*6A silent suffering, and intense;*

*7The rock, the vulture, and the chain,*

*8All that the proud can feel of pain,*

*9The agony they do not show,*

*10The suffocating sense of woe,*

*11         Which speaks but in its loneliness,*

*12And then is jealous lest the sky*

*13Should have a listener, nor will sigh*

*14         Until its voice is echoless.*

*15Titan! to thee the strife was given*

*16         Between the suffering and the will,*

*17         Which torture where they cannot kill;*

*18And the inexorable Heaven,*

*19And the deaf tyranny of Fate,*

*20The ruling principle of Hate,*

*21Which for its pleasure doth create*

*22The things it may annihilate,*

*23Refus'd thee even the boon to die:*

*24The wretched gift Eternity*

*25Was thine—and thou hast borne it well.*

*26All that the Thunderer wrung from thee*

*27Was but the menace which flung back*

*28On him the torments of thy rack;*

*29The fate thou didst so well foresee,*

*30But would not to appease him tell;*

*31And in thy Silence was his Sentence,*

*32And in his Soul a vain repentance,*

*33And evil dread so ill dissembled,*

*34That in his hand the lightnings trembled.*

*35Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,*

*36         To render with thy precepts less*

*37         The sum of human wretchedness,*

*38And strengthen Man with his own mind;*

*39But baffled as thou wert from high,*

*40Still in thy patient energy,*

*41In the endurance, and repulse*

*42         Of thine impenetrable Spirit,*

*43Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,*

*44         A mighty lesson we inherit:*

*45Thou art a symbol and a sign*

*46         To Mortals of their fate and force;*

*47Like thee, Man is in part divine,*

*48         A troubled stream from a pure source;*

*49And Man in portions can foresee*

*50His own funereal destiny;*

*51His wretchedness, and his resistance,*

*52And his sad unallied existence:*

*53To which his Spirit may oppose*

*54Itself—and equal to all woes,*

*55         And a firm will, and a deep sense,*

*56Which even in torture can descry*

*57         Its own concenter'd recompense,*

*58Triumphant where it dares defy,*

*59And making Death a Victory.*

**Summary**

Titan! With your undying eyes, you saw the misery of human beings, a sad reality that would not typically bother the gods. And how were you repaid for taking pity on mortals? You were subject to silent, harsh suffering: you were chained to a rock, with a vulture coming every day to eat your liver. You experienced what any proud person would feel of pain: an agony they keep to themselves, a sorrow so intense it makes it difficult to breathe. Such sorrow cannot help but cry out in loneliness, but is careful in case someone is paying attention: it does not make a sound until it knows it will not be overheard.

Titan! You were caught between your pain and your determination, a struggle so terrible it is itself a form of torture. And Zeus—relentless, tyrannical, hateful Zeus, who takes pleasure in creating things just to be able to kill them—did not even grant your request to die. Your awful gift was to live forever—and you have handled it well. All that Zeus got out of you was the very anguish he inflicted on you. You saw the future but refused to tell him what you saw. Your silence would lead to his downfall. Secretly he wished he had never punished you because of the dread you inspired in him, a dread so poorly hidden that his lightning bolts trembled in his hands.

Your Godlike crime was to act with kindness, too, by your example, improving humanity's circumstance, giving them the tools of knowledge and enlightenment that they need to improve themselves. And as bewildered as you were looking down on humankind, it is through the example of your patience, endurance, and the rebellion of your unshakeable spirit that we human beings learn an incredible lesson. You represent, to humans, their destiny as well as their power to change it. Like you, humanity is part godlike, an imperfect stream from a perfect source. And while humans are capable of foreseeing their miserable fates, they are also capable of resistance. Though it is painful, with the firmness of purpose and the power of the human mind, the spirit is capable of catching sight of the very thing for which it suffers, through the act of resistance, the spirit triumphs, turning even death into victory.

"Prometheus" consists of three [**stanzas**](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/stanza) of varying lengths, adding up to a total of 59 lines. None of the stanzas follow a specific form—such as that seen in the [**sonnet**](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/sonnet), for example—but the way the poem is structured is evocative nevertheless. Each of these three stanzas helps to develop the poem's attitude toward the myth of Prometheus. The first stanza relates the myth the most straightforwardly. It moves forward linearly, beginning with Prometheus witnessing humanity's suffering and going on to describe his own suffering. This stanza also employs the poem's most consistent use of meter and rhyme.

In the second stanza, Prometheus, though he is being tortured, continues to stand against the tyranny of Zeus. By not giving in to his pain and suffering, he begins to shift the power dynamic between Zeus and himself. The shift in the poem's rhyme scheme reflects this change, and the longer length of the stanza (20 lines as opposed to 14) seems to make room for the gathering force represented by Prometheus, as well as the poem's shifting gears into not just relating Prometheus's struggle, but interpreting it and assigning it human value.

The third stanza is the longest, as well as the most complicated and unpredictable. Rhyme is present, but the rules seem to be constantly shifting (more on this in the Rhyme Scheme section of this guide). This seems indicative of where the poem has arrived in the third stanza: a place of struggle and resistance.

**Themes**

The poem honors the rebellious spirit of Prometheus—who, according to Greek mythology, stole fire from the gods and gave it to human beings. Zeus, the most powerful of the Olympian gods, punished Prometheus for this act of defiance by sentencing him to an eternity of being chained to a rock, with a **vulture** coming every day to eat his **liver**. The poem casts **Zeus** as an oppressive **tyrant** who ruled through fear and enforced ignorance and uses the mythological figure of **Prometheus** to celebrate the power of rising against such tyranny.

Prometheus is thus a friend to humanity and a traitor to the gods because he helps mortals cast off their oppression. His "crime" was to "*strengthen Man with his own mind*"—a line that makes sense when considering that fire is usually taken to be a symbol for knowledge and enlightenment. Prometheus's actions thus freed humanity from its ignorance and total subservience to the gods.

Zeus feared the power represented by Prometheus's rebellion so much that his belief in his power began to weaken. The poem thus implies that rebellion itself is a form of power; that in the very act of standing up to tyranny and oppression one may crack the foundation of the oppressor.

Finally, in the third stanza, the poem becomes explicit about using the figure of Prometheus as "***a symbol and a sign***." Though the poem is addressed to Prometheus, it is meant for the reader, who is supposed to take from the poem a sense of empowerment. Like Prometheus, the speaker claims, human beings are capable of patience, endurance, and of possessing an "impenetrable Spirit." These qualities mean that people do not need to suffer under the rule of tyrannical leaders; they have at their disposal all the necessary tools to fight for their own liberation.

The poem concludes not with an image of Prometheus, but with the human spirit catching sight of the reward for its suffering, "**triumphant where it dares defy**." Like Prometheus, the poem asserts, human beings are well-equipped to rebel against the "*funereal destiny*" imposed on them by their oppressors. The poem then ends with the word "***Victory***," leaving the reader with a sense of empowerment.

**Meter**

The poem is mostly written in iambic tetrameter, which means generally there are four [**iambs**](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/iamb) per line. An iamb is a poetic foot comprised of one unstressed and then one **stressed** syllable. For example, take: line 5

What **was** | thy **pi**- | ty's **re**- | com**pense**?

Occasionally these lines contain an extra syllable, where one foot is inconsistent with the others in the line. These lines are, for all intents and purposes, often simply maintaining the overall meter of the poem. Line 43 is a perfect example:

Which **Earth** | and **Hea**- | ven could **not** | Con**vulse**

Here the line contains one extra unstressed syllable, technically making its third foot an **anapest**. This is a minor blip, the kind of which would be expected in a poem of this length. Because the meter is still mostly intact, readers can just call it an imperfect iambic tetrameter.

In other instances, however, breaks in the meter are more deliberate. Take the first lines of the first and second stanzas, when the speaker addresses Prometheus as "Titan." The unstressed-**stressed** pattern of the iamb is absent and instead, readers see the **stressed**-unstressed pattern of the **trochee**. Here's line 1:

**Tit**an! | to **whose** | im**mort**- | al **eyes**

The trochee is significant as it further emphasizes Prometheus's rebellious nature: just by addressing him, the speaker of the poem is disrupting the current order of things (that is, the poem's iambic meter). This disruption is all the more conspicuous because of the exclamation point that follows both instances of "Titan" (an instance of **caesura**). The exclamation point forces the reader to place full emphasis on the word and then pause, giving the word and—as the word acts as a kind of invocation of Prometheus—Prometheus himself more power.

Notably, there are a couple of places in the poem where the meter breaks down altogether or is replaced by a different kind of meter. For instance, there is no discernible meter in line 18, and line 26 employs a **dactylic** meter (a dactyl follows a **stressed**-unstressed-unstressed pattern):

**All** that the | **Thun**derer | **wrung** from thee

Thematically, this abrupt change in meter signals a shift in the power dynamic between Prometheus and Zeus. It coincides with the reader's dawning realization of Zeus's faltering confidence.

**Rhyme scheme and Style**

"Prometheus" does not have a consistent, overarching rhyme scheme. It is a three-stanza poem. The first stanza contains fourteen lines. The second has twenty. The third has twenty-five. It has the rhyme scheme of ABBACCDDEEFGGF in the first. ABBACCCCDDBDEEDBFFGG in the second. The third has the rhyme scheme ABBACCBDBDEFEFCCGGHHGIGIC.

There isn't any particular meter scheme, although most of the lines hoover around eight syllables (some with nine).

**Poetic Devices**

**Apostrophe**

The poem's use of apostrophe makes it feel more urgent and immediate. Through this apostrophe, which begins each stanza, Byron brings the myth of Prometheus into the present, making a centuries-old mythological hero relevant to the socio-political concerns of Byron's own time. Even now, two centuries after Byron wrote it, the poem retains its relevancy. Byron's speaker is addressing not just Prometheus, but the characteristics symbolized by Prometheus—characteristics the speaker reveres and wishes to see embraced and enacted by other human beings.

The use of apostrophe also has the effect of summoning the divine aspects of the speaker as well as of the reader. When the speaker exclaims "Titan!" at the beginning of a stanza, it is easy to imagine that he is calling upon his own, inner Prometheus—a part of himself which is powerful and enlightened and will not stand for injustice. This is a reminder of the poem's core argument, which is that anyone is capable of standing up to tyranny and, in so doing, emulating Prometheus's "impenetrable Spirit."

**The speaker**

The speaker is someone who greatly admires Prometheus and the values he represents: kindness, patience, endurance, defiance, and an "impenetrable spirit." Prometheus's choice to defy tyranny in favor of alleviating human suffering is a shining example to all humankind of the power at their disposal: the ability to fight for a more equitable world.

**Setting**

Though early tellings of the myth name the Caucuses as the geographic location for the rock to which Prometheus was chained, the poem opts for only a vague gesture toward this physical setting.

*The rock, the vulture, and the chain,*

**Symbolism**

Fire here is a symbol of awakening and enlightenment. Wherein God, Zeus, is shown as a symbol of the evil power of oppression and wickedness, Prometheus has been shown as a symbol of an angel. Prometheus also could be seen as a metaphor for liberty. By giving man the gift of fire, he has invited the man to have the liberty to be like gods, glorification for man as liberty enlightens the world:

*Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,*

*To render with thy precepts less*

*The sum of human wretchedness,*

*And strengthen Man with his own mind…*

The sole desire of Prometheus is to set man free from intellectual darkness and blindness. This makes him a heroic character in the eyes of man. His “crime” is the revolution that the Romantics, especially Shelley and Byron, celebrate in their poetry.

**Study question & Discussion**

1. How are friendship and pity related to Zeus's tyranny within the play?
2. Why do you think Prometheus (a god) takes the human side in this negotiation?
3. What deceptive gift does Prometheus offer? What deceptive gift does Zeus offer?
4. Do you think the gods need fire? Who tends the fire in human homes? What could fire symbolize? Why should women be exchanged for fire?
5. Why do you suppose Zeus punishes humans for Prometheus' deed?
6. Comment on any three themes in the poetry of Byron.
7. Somebody exclaims that Prometheus Bound is the story of an uncompromising rebel who stands up to tyrannical power, thereby giving hope to all those who want to rebel against political and religious evils. What evidence could you bring up to suggest that this is a bit of an exaggeration?
8. Compare and contrast different sorts of responses to Zeus's tyrannical authority within the play?
9. Discuss ‘Prometheus’ as a poem that captures the spirit of Romanticism.
10. ‘Prometheus’ is an allegory. Discuss

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**CHAPTER 7**

**PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY**

**(1792–1822)**



**Chapter 7**

**Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)**

Known for his lyrical and long-form verse, Percy Bysshe Shelley was an outstanding English Romantic poet and was one of the most highly regarded and influential poets of the 19th century.

**Early Life**

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born on August 4, 1792. He was born and raised in the English countryside in the village Broadbridge Heath, just outside of West Sussex. He learned to fish and hunt in the meadows surrounding his home, often surveying the rivers and fields with his cousin and good friend Thomas Medwin. His parents were Timothy Shelley, a squire and member of Parliament, and Elizabeth Pilfold. Shelley left home at age of 10 to study at Syon House Academy. After two years, he enrolled at Eton College. While there, he was severely bullied, both physically and mentally, by his classmates. Sinking in imagination, within a year, he had published two novels and two volumes of poetry, including St. Irvyne and Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson.

In the fall of 1810, Shelly entered University College, Oxford. While at Oxford University, Shelley co-authored ‘***The Necessity of Atheism***’ with Thomas Jefferson Hogg and sent autographed copies to all heads of Oxford Colleges at the University. The book was a source of shock and embarrassment to the British mind at the time of its publication (1811), (“…*The mind cannot believe in the existence of a God*.”), and subsequently, Shelley and his friend were sacked from Oxford.

Shelley’s parents were so annoyed by their son’s actions that they demanded him abandons his beliefs, including vegetarianism, political radicalism, and sexual freedom. In August 1811, Shelley eloped with Harriet Westbrook, a 16-year-old woman his parents had explicitly forbidden him to see. His love for her was centered on the hope that he could save her from committing suicide. They eloped, but Shelley was soon become interested in another woman named Elizabeth Hitchener, a schoolteacher who inspired his first major poem, '***Queen Mab***'. In addition to long-form poetry, Shelley also began writing political pamphlets, which he distributed by way of hot air balloons, glass bottles, and paper boats. In 1812, he met his hero and future mentor, the radical political philosopher William Godwin, author of Political Justice.

**Love Affairs**

Although Shelley’s relationship with Harriet remained troubled, the young couple had two children together. Their daughter, Elizabeth Ianthe, was born in June 1813, when Shelley was 21. Before their second child was born, Shelley abandoned his wife and immediately took up with another young educated, and talented woman. His new love interest was named Mary, the daughter of Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft, the famous feminist author of ***A Vindication of the Rights of Women***. Shelley and Mary fled to Paris, taking Mary’s sister, Jane, with them. They departed London by ship and, mostly traveling by foot, toured France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland, often reading aloud to each other from the works of Shakespeare and Rousseau.

When the three finally returned home, Mary was pregnant and so was Shelley’s wife. The news of Mary’s pregnancy brought Harriet to her wit’s end. She requested a divorce and sued Shelley for alimony and full custody of their children. Harriet’s second child with Shelley, Charles, was born in November 1814. Three months later, Mary gave birth to a girl. The infant died just a few weeks later. In 1816, Mary gave birth to their son, William.

In 1815, Shelley wrote Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude, a 720-line poem, now recognized as his first great work. That same year, Shelley’s grandfather passed away and left him an annual allowance of 1,000 British pounds.

**Friendship with Lord Byron**

In 1816, Mary’s step-sister, Claire Clairmont, invited Shelley and Mary to join her on a trip to Switzerland. Clairmont had begun dating the Romantic poet Lord Byron and wished to show him off to her sister. By the time they began the trip, Byron was less interested in Clairmont. Nevertheless, the three stayed in Switzerland all summer and the two men became fast friends. After a long day of boating with Byron, Shelley returned home and wrote ***Hymn to Intellectual Beauty***. After a trip through the French Alps with Byron, he was inspired to write ***Mont Blanc***, pondering on the relationship between man and nature.

**On the Return**

In the fall of 1816, Shelley and Mary returned to England to find that Mary’s half-sister, Fanny Imlay, had committed suicide. In December of the same year, it was discovered that Harriet had also committed suicide. She was found drowned in the Serpentine River in Hyde Park, London. A few weeks later, Shelley and Mary finally married. Mary’s father was delighted by the news and accepted his daughter back into the family fold. With these matters settled, Shelley and Mary moved to Marlow, a small village in Buckinghamshire. There, Shelley befriended John Keats and Leigh Hunt, both talented poets and writers. Shelley’s conversations with them encouraged his own literary pursuits. Around 1817, he wrote ***Laon and Cythna***; or, ***The Revolution of the Golden City***. His publishers balked at the main storyline, which centers on incestuous lovers. He was asked to edit it and to find a new title for the work. In 1818, he reissued it as ***'The Revolt of Islam***.' Though the title suggests the subject of Islam, the poem’s focus is religious in general and features socialist political themes.

**Life in Italy**

Shortly after the publication of The Revolt of Islam, Shelley, Mary, and Clairmont left for Italy. Byron was living in Venice, and Clairmont was on a mission to bring their daughter, Allegra, to visit with him. For the next several years, Shelley and Mary moved from city to city. While in Venice, their baby daughter, Clara Everina, died. A year later, their son William also passed away. Around this time, Shelley wrote ***Prometheus Unbound***. During their residency in Livorno, in 1819, he wrote ***The Cenci and The Masque of Anarchy and Men of England***, a response to the Peterloo Massacre in England.

**Death and Legacy**

On July 8, 1822, just shy of turning 30, Shelley drowned while sailing his schooner back from Livorno to Lerici, after having met with Hunt to discuss their newly printed journal, ***The Liberal***. Despite conflicting evidence, most papers reported Shelley’s death as an accident. However, based on the scene that was discovered on the boat’s deck, others speculated that he might have been murdered by an enemy who hated his political beliefs.

Shelley’s body was cremated on the beach in Viareggio, where his body had washed ashore. Mary, as was the custom for women during the time, did not attend her husband’s funeral. Shelley’s ashes were interred in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. More than a century later, he was memorialized in Poet’s Corner in Westminster Abbey.

Shelly has a great bulk of works of poetry; representative poems will be discussed as follow:

1. **England in 1819**

‘England in 1819’ is the angriest sonnet and politically direct poem, although a number of the allusions Shelley makes to contemporary events require some analysis and interpretation to be fully understood now, more than two centuries on. Before we offer an analysis of ‘England in 1819’, here is the text of the poem.

*An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying King;*

*Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow*

*Through public scorn,—mud from a muddy spring;*

*Rulers who neither see nor feel nor know,*

*But leechlike to their fainting country cling*

*Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow.*

*A people starved and stabbed in th' untilled field;*

*An army, whom liberticide and prey*

*Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield;*

*Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;*

*Religion Christless, Godless—a book sealed;*

*A senate, Time’s worst statute, unrepealed—*

*Are graves from which a glorious Phantom may*

*Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.*

**Summary**

The king is dying, old, blind, insane, and despised. His sons are objects of public scorn. His ministers run the country for their selfish interests. The people are hungry and oppressed. The army is used to destroy liberty and to collect booty. The law is manipulated to protect the rich and enchain the poor. Religion is in a state of apathy. Parliament denies Roman Catholics their civil rights. But out of this unhappy state of affairs may come a revolution that will right all wrongs.

**Analysis**

"Sonnet: England in 1819" is one of Shelley's most vigorous political statements. The language is unusually vivid and emphatic and shows how deeply Shelley's feelings were involved. The sonnet is probably the best of a group of political poems written by Shelley in 1819 which were inspired by Shelley's indignation regarding the condition of England at that time. None of them were printed in 1819 because of publishers' fears of the strict libel laws. Any publisher who would print "Sonnet: England in 1819" ran the risk of being jailed or fined or both.

The king Shelley refers to in his poem is George III. In 1819, he was eighty-one years old, insane, blind, and deaf. He died the following year and was succeeded by George IV, the oldest of George III's dissolute sons, "mud from a muddy spring." His separation from his wife, Princess Caroline of Brunswick, after a year of marriage, caused a public scandal, and his numerous affairs injured his reputation. English liberals, such as Shelley and Byron, regarded him with profound scorn both as prince regent (1811-20) and asking (1820-30). His cabinet ministers were arch-conservatives.

The "rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know" are Lord Liverpool and his conservative cabinet. In calling them leeches who are bleeding their country, Shelley is indulging in hyperbole. They were men of integrity who happened to be in power at a time of general unrest caused by the unemployment and hunger that followed the end of the Napoleonic wars. There was rioting, some destruction of property, inevitable arrests, and repressive measures. The cabinet suspended the Habeas Corpus act and passed laws severely limiting public gatherings. Shelley was convinced that revolution was going to break out in England, "a glorious Phantom" that would "illumine our tempestuous day."

The line "a people starved and stabbed in the untilled field" may be an allusion to the Peterloo massacre. On August 16, 1819, a large number of people in favor of parliamentary reform had gathered in St. Peter's Field in Manchester to hear a speech by Henry Hunt, a reformer. When troops attempted to arrest Hunt, panic ensued in which eleven people were killed and four hundred were injured.

The army, "which liberticide and prey / Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield" it, seems to be a reference to the use of troops by the government to quell disturbances and repress liberty. "Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay" are laws that vested interests caused to be passed and which led to bloodshed. "Religion Christless, Godless" refers to the torpid state of the Anglican Church, from which it was aroused by the Oxford Movement in 1833. "Time's worst statute" refers to the restrictions under which English Roman Catholics were forced to live. They were not allowed to vote or sit in Parliament, preside over law courts, or enter the universities.

"Catholic emancipation" had been a lively political issue for several years, and not until 1829 did Catholics recover most of their civil liberties.

One last point to observe, by way of conclusion to this analysis: ‘England in 1819’ may be a sonnet (Shelley described it as such in his letter to Hunt), but it’s a decidedly odd one. Although it has 14 lines and is written (largely) in **iambic pentameter**, as we expect from a sonnet, its rhyme scheme departs from the usual rhyme schemes seen in sonnets. Shelley **rhymes** ‘England in 1819’ **ababab cdcd ccdd**. The return to the pattern of the Shakespearean sonnet at the end of ‘England in 1819’ – that final rhyming couplet – arrives just in time for Shelley to end the poem on a note of hope, and his belief that out of such chaos, a new order might be created.

**Study question & discussion**

1. What are the themes of England in 1819?
2. How and why does Shelley believe poetry to be an instrument of moral good what impact does this belief have on his poems if any?
3. How and why does Shelley believe poetry to be an instrument of moral good? What impact does this belief have on his poems, if any? MacEachen, Dougald.
4. Many of Shelley’s poems include a climactic moment, an instant when the poet’s feelings overwhelm him and overwhelm his poem. What are some of these moments? How do they relate to the poems as wholes? How they are typical of the poetic personality Shelley brings to his writing?
5. **The sonnet is a political satire. Comment.**

**2. Ode to the West Wind**

According to Shelley, the poem was written in the woods outside Florence, Italy in the autumn of 1819. In the poem, the speaker directly addresses the west wind. The speaker treats the west wind as a force of death and decay and welcomes this death and decay because it means rebirth will come soon. In the final two sections of the poem, the speaker suggests that he wants to help promote this rebirth through his own poetry—and that rejuvenation he hopes to see is both political and poetic: a rebirth of society and its ways of writing.

**The Full Text of “Ode to the West Wind”**

**I**

*1O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,*

*2Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead*

*3Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,*

*4Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,*

*5Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,*

*6Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed*

*7The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,*

*8Each like a corpse within its grave, until*

*9Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow*

*10Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill*

*11(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)*

*12With living hues and odours plain and hill:*

*13Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;*

*14Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!*

**II**

*15Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,*

*16Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,*

*17Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,*

*18Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread*

*19On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,*

*20Like the bright hair uplifted from the head*

*21Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge*

*22Of the horizon to the zenith's height,*

*23The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge*

*24Of the dying year, to which this closing night*

*25Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,*

*26Vaulted with all thy congregated might*

*27Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere*

*28Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!*

**III**

*29Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams*

*30The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,*

*31Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,*

*32Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,*

*33And saw in sleep old palaces and towers*

*34Quivering within the wave's intenser day,*

*35All overgrown with azure moss and flowers*

*36So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou*

*37For whose path the Atlantic's level powers*

*38Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below*

*39The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear*

*40The sapless foliage of the ocean, know*

*41Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,*

*42And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!*

**IV**

*43If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;*

*44If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;*

*45A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share*

*46The impulse of thy strength, only less free*

*47Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even*

*48I were as in my boyhood, and could be*

*49The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,*

*50As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed*

*51Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven*

*52As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.*

*53Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!*

*54I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!*

*55A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd*

*56One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.*

**V**

*57Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:*

*58What if my leaves are falling like its own!*

*59The tumult of thy mighty harmonies*

*60Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,*

*61Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,*

*62My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!*

*63Drive my dead thoughts over the universe*

*64Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!*

*65And, by the incantation of this verse,*

*66Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth*

*67Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!*

*68Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth*

*69The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,*

*70If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?*

**Summary**

**1.**

You, the unruly west wind, are the essence of the Fall. You are invisible, but you scatter the fallen leaves: they look like ghosts running away from a witch or wizard. The leaves are yellow and black, white, and wild red. They look like crowds of sick people. You carry the seeds, as if you're their chariot, down to the earth where they'll sleep all winter. They lie there, cold and humble, like dead bodies in their graves, until your blue sister, the Spring wind, blows her trumpet and wakes up the earth. Then she brings out the buds. They are like flocks of sheep; they feed in the open air. And she fills the meadows and the hills with sweet smells and beautiful colors. Unruly west wind, moving everywhere: you are both an exterminator and a savior. Please listen to me!

**2.**

In the high and whirling reaches of the sky, you send the clouds twirling: they look like dead leaves, shaken loose from the branches of the heavens and the sea. They are like angels, full of rain and lightning. Or they are scattered across the blue sky, like the blond hair of a wildly dancing girl who is a follower of Dionysus. The clouds stretch from the horizon to the top of the sky like the hair of the coming storm.  The night will be like the dome of a vast tomb, the clouds you gathered like archways running across it. And from the solid top of that tomb, dark rain, lightning, and hail will fall. Listen to me!

**3.**

You woke the Mediterranean from its summer dreams. That blue sea, which lay wrapped in its crystal-clear currents, was snoozing near an island made of volcanic rock in the Bay of Baiae, near Naples. In the waters of the bay, you saw the ruins of old palaces and towers, now submerged in the water's thicker form of daylight. These ruins were overgrown with sea plants that looked like blue moss and flowers. They are so beautiful that I faint when I think of them. You—whose path turns the smooth surface of the Atlantic Ocean into tall waves, while deep below the surface sea-flowers and forests of seaweed, which have leaves with no sap, hear your voice and turn gray from fear, trembling, losing their flowers and leaves—listen to me, wind!

**4.**

If only I was a dead leaf, you might carry me. You might let me fly with you if I was a cloud. Or if I was a wave that you drive forward, I would share your strength—though I’d be less free than you, since no one can control you. If only I could be the way I was when I was a child, when I was your friend, wandering with you across the sky—then it didn’t seem crazy to imagine that I could be as fast as you are—then I wouldn’t have called out to you, prayed to you, in desperation. *Please lift me up like a wave, a leaf, or a cloud! I am falling into life’s sharp thorns and bleeding! Time has put me in shackles and diminished my pride, though I was once as proud, fast, and unruly as you.*

**5.**

Make me into your musical instrument, just as the forest is when you blow through it. So what if my leaves are falling like the forest’s leaves. The ruckus of your powerful music will bring a deep, autumn music out of both me and the forest. It will be beautiful even though it’s sad. Unruly soul, you should become my soul. You should become me, you unpredictable creature. Scatter my dead thoughts across the universe like fallen leaves to inspire something new and exciting. Let this poem be a prayer that scatters ashes and sparks—as though from a fire that someone forgot to put out—throughout the human race. Speak through me, and in that way, turn my words into a prediction of the future. *O wind, if winter is on its way, isn’t Spring going to follow it soon?*

**Analysis of Literary Devices**

Here is the analysis of some of the literary devices used in this poem “*Ode to the West Wind*”.

**Meter**

“*Ode to the West Wind*” is written in **iambic pentameter**. Iambic pentameter has a duh-**DUH** rhythm, with five feet in each line. One can hear this rhythm clearly in the poem’s 7th line ("winged" is pronounced so that it has two syllables):

The **wing**- | ed **seeds**, | where **they** | lie **cold** | and **low**.

However, for most of “*Ode to the West Wind*” the meter is not smooth and regular. Instead, it is full of metrical substitutions, which alter the rhythm and feeling of its lines. One can see this in the poem’s first stanza, which doesn’t contain a single metrically regular line.

O **wild** | **West** **Wind**, | thou **breath** | of **Aut**- | umn's **be**- | ing,  
**Thou**, from | whose **un**- | **seen** **pre**- | sence the | **leaves** **dead**  
Are **dri**- | ven, like **ghosts** | from **an** | en**chant**- | er **flee**- | ing

**Rhyme scheme**

“*Ode to the West Wind*” is written in **terza rima**. Terza rima is mostly defined by its interlocking rhyme scheme. The first stanza of a terza rima poem follows an **ABA** rhyme scheme. The next stanza picks up the B rhyme and adds a new rhyme: **BCB**. Then the pattern repeats itself: **CDC, DED**. There’s no limit to how long a poet can go on like this: a terza rima poem may include any number of stanzas. But the final two lines of terza-rima always form a rhyming **couplet, EE**. This final couplet serves as a kind of punctuation, marking the end of the poem or the section of the poem. Thus, in this poem, each section follows the following rhyme scheme:

**ABA BCB CDC DED EE**

**Themes**

* Man and the Natural World
* Transformation
* Mortality
* Language and Communication

**Poetic Devices**

The poet has used various literary devices to enhance the intended impacts of her poem. Some of the major literary devices have been analyzed below.

**Alliteration**:  examples the sound of /**w**/ in “O **w**ild **W**est **W**ind, thou breath of Autumn’s being” and /**g**/ sound in “Thy voice, and suddenly **g**row **g**ray with fear”.

**Simile**: For example, “*Are driven,* ***like*** *ghosts from an enchanter fleeing*”; “*Each* ***like*** *a corpse within its grave*”; “*Loose clouds* ***like*** *earth’s decaying leaves are shed*”.

**Symbolism**: The poem has several symbolic layers of meaning:

“***West wind***” symbolizes the mighty power of nature, a symbol of change/renewal; “***dead leaves***” are symbols of death and destruction, it is the hope for new world order and “***dying year***” symbolizes the end of the season that will announce the new order of mankind.

**Imagery**:  For example, “***dark wintery bed***”, “***yellow, and black and pale and hectic red***” and “***Angles of rain and lightning***” are some examples of visual imagery. The images such as, “***the trumpet of a prophecy***”, “***Black rain and fire and hail will burst***” and “***Her clarion***” are examples of auditory imagery. Similarly, “***Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere***” and “***Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth Ashes and sparks***” are examples of kinetic imagery.

**Personification**: For example, “***Destroyer and Preserver***”, “***Who chariotest***”, “***Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams***”, “***The blue Mediterranean, where he lay***” and “***thou breath of Autumn’s being***” as if the wind is human that can dream, breathe and rest like a human being.

**Anastrophe**: It refers to the reversal of the syntactically correct order of subjects, verbs, and objects in a sentence. Shelley has used anastrophe in the second line, “***leaves dead***” instead of dead leaves.

**Enjambment**:  “*Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below  
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear  
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know*.”

The literary analysis shows that the appropriate use of literary elements has made the poem, not just thought-provoking but also explains the power of human imagination and nature.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. How does Shelley describe the power of West Wind?
2. What does the speaker want the West Wind to do for him? What relationship does he want to establish between the wind and himself?
3. Why do wind and water the most commonly described parts of the natural world here? Why does the poem more concerned with seas, oceans, bays, and breezes than, say, fields and mountains and wildfires?

# Discuss Shelley's myth-making power in the poem "Ode to the west wind".

1. Give your justification for the Literary and Historical Context of “Ode to the West Wind”

**3. Ozymandias**

"Ozymandias" is a sonnet by Percy Bysshe Shelley, published in 1818 in the 11 January issue of The Examiner in London. It is frequently anthologized and is probably Shelley's most famous short poem. It was written in competition with his friend Horace Smith, who wrote another sonnet entitled "Ozymandias" seen below. In addition to the power of its themes and imagery, the poem is notable for its virtuosic diction. The rhyme scheme of the sonnet is unusual and creates a sinuous and interwoven effect.

## The Full Text of “Ozymandias”

*1 I met a traveller from an antique land,*

*2 Who said—“Two vast and trunkless legs of stone*

*3 Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,*

*4 Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,*

*5 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,*

*6 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read*

*7 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,*

*8 The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;*

*9 And on the pedestal, these words appear:*

*10 My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;*

*11 Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!*

*12 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay*

*13 Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare*

*14 The lone and level sands stretch far away.”*

**Summary**

The speaker recalls having met a traveler “*from an antique land,*” who told him a story of the ruins in the desert. Two vast legs of stone stand without a body, and near them, a massive, decaying stone head lies “half sunk” in the sand. The traveler told the speaker that the frown and “*sneer of cold command*” on the statue’s face indicates that the sculptor understood well the emotions of the statue’s subject. The memory of those emotions survives "stamped" on the lifeless statue, even though both the sculptor and his subject are both now dead. On the pedestal of the statue appear the words, “*My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!*” But around the decaying ruin of the statue, nothing remains only the “*lone and level sands*,” stretching out around it.

**Poetic devices**

“**Ozymandias**” is a **sonnet**, a fourteen-line poem metered in **iambic pentameter**.

* **Rhyme Scheme**

The rhyme scheme is somewhat unusual for a sonnet of its time. "Ozymandias" mostly follows **(ABABACDCEDEFEF)** pattern, but introduces three important deviations:

* An extra A rhyme inserted into line 5
* An extra E rhyme inserted into line 9
* No concluding couplet
* **Meter**

For instance, line 9 of the poem is perfect iambic pentameter:

And **on** the **ped**e**stal**, these **words** ap**pear**

**Setting**

“*Ozymandias*” has two primary settings. The first is an unspecified time and place—most likely, early 19th century England when the poem was written—where the speaker and the traveler meet. The second is the recent past in Egypt, where the traveler sees a ruined statue of Ozymandias in the desert.

**Themes:**

1. ***The Transience of Power***

No power is permanent, regardless of how omnipotent a ruler believes himself to be. Even the “king of kings” may one day be a forgotten relic of an “antique land.”

1. ***The Power of Art***

Although the statue is a “*wreck*” in a state of “*decay*,” its pieces show the skill of the sculptor "*the hand that made*" and preserve the story of Ozymandias. The face is “*shattered*,” leaving only a mouth and nose above the desert sand, but the “*frown*,” “*wrinkled lip*,” and “*sneer* *of the cold command*” clearly show Ozymandias’s “*passions*” (that is, his pride, tyranny, and disdain for others).

1. ***Man versus Nature***

Ozymandias may be the king of kings, but even kings can be toppled by mere grains of sand.

**Imagery**

* **Sand**

Sand is a symbol of nature’s power and also for time itself. The sand has eroded and buried the statue and all of Ozymandias’s works a reminder that nature can destroy all human achievements, no matter how substantial.

* **Statue**

The statue of Ozymandias has a few different symbolic meanings. First, it is a physical representation of the might of human political institutions, such as Ozymandias’s empire — this is the symbolic purpose for which Ozymandias himself had the statue built.

The statue also symbolizes the power of art. Through the sculptor's skill, the statue captures and preserves the "passions" of its subject by stamping them on "lifeless" rock.

**The Speaker**

The poem's primary speaker is anonymous and genderless, and all Shelley tells us about them is that they "met a traveler from an antique land." The poem pointedly does not include details about what this speaker thinks about the traveler, about Ozymandias, or the destruction of Ozymandias's works. The speaker seems to primarily serve a function of distancing the reader from what is being told, as the speaker is relating a story told to him or her by the traveler.

**Literary Devices**

. Shelley reveals his artistic skill in this poem using various literary devices.

1)    **Metaphor**:  There is one extended metaphor used in the poem. The statue of Ozymandias metaphorically represents **power**, legacy, and command. It clarifies the meanings of the **object** and makes it clear that once the king was mighty and all-powerful.  It also shows that the sand has eroded the actual shape of the statue, representing the destructive power of time.

2)    **Personification**: Shelley has used personification twice in the poem. The fifth line “***And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command***,” refers to the broken head of the statue. However, the lifeless statue Ozymandias is referred to as a real person. The second example is in the sixth line of the poem where “***Tell that its sculptor well those passions read***” shows as if the statue is commanding the sculptor how to carve or express his emotions.

3)    **Imagery**:  The poet has used images involving a sense of sights such as two vast and trunk-less legs, shattered face, wrinkled lip, and desert. These images help readers visualize the status of the broken statue.

4)    **Alliteration**: for example the use of /**c**/ in “**c**old **c**ommand”, the sound of /**b**/ in “***b****oundless and* ***b****are*” and the sound of /**l**/ in “**l**one and **l**evel.

5)    **Enjambment**: Shelley has used enjambments in the second and sixth line of the poem where it is stated, “*Who said—“Two vast and trunkless legs of stone*” and “*Tell that its sculptor well those passions read*”.

6)    **Assonance**:  such as the sounds of /**a**/ in “st**a**nd and s**a**nd” and sound of /**e**/ in “w**e**ll and r**ea**d.”

7)    **Irony**: Ozymandias’s description presents him as a mighty, great and fierce king, but in reality, there is nothing but a broken, lifeless statue.

8)    **Consonance**: for example /**s**/ in “Half **s**unk, a **sh**attered **v**isage lies, whose **f**rown”.

The literary devices have provided uniqueness to the text, and they have opened up new sights for interpretations. Moreover, Shelley has explored many contemporary issues under these literary devices.

**Comment**

This sonnet from 1817 is probably Shelley’s most famous and most anthologized poem—which is somewhat strange, considering that it is in many ways an atypical poem for Shelley and that it touches little upon the most important themes in his work at large (beauty, expression, love, imagination).

Still, “***Ozymandias***” is a masterful sonnet. Essentially it is devoted to a single metaphor: the shattered, ruined statue in the desert wasteland, with its arrogant, passionate face and monomaniacal inscription ('***Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair***!'). The once-great king’s proud boast has been ironically disproved; Ozymandias’s works have crumbled and disappeared, his civilization is gone, all have been turned to dust by the impersonal, indiscriminate, destructive power of history. The ruined statue is now merely a monument to one man’s arrogance and a powerful statement about the insignificance of human beings to the passage of time.

Ozymandias is first and foremost a metaphor for the transient nature of political power, and in that sense the poem is Shelley’s most outstanding political sonnet, trading the specific rage of a poem like “***England in 1819***” for the crushing impersonal metaphor of the statue. But Ozymandias symbolizes not only political power—the statue can be a metaphor for the pride and hubris of all of humanity, in any of its manifestations. Significantly, all that remains of Ozymandias is a work of art and a group of words; as Shakespeare does in the sonnets, Shelley demonstrates that art and language long outlast the other legacies of power.

Of course, it is Shelley’s brilliant poetic rendering of the story, and not the subject of the story itself, which makes the poem so memorable. Framing the sonnet as a story told to the speaker by “a traveler from an antique land” enables Shelley to add another level of obscurity to Ozymandias’s position concerning the reader—rather than seeing the statue with our own eyes, so to speak, we hear about it from someone who heard about it from someone who has seen it. Thus the ancient king is meltdown even less commanding; the distancing of the narrative serves to undermine his power over us just as completely as has the passage of time. Shelley’s description of the statue works to reconstruct, gradually, the figure of the “***king of kings***”: first we see merely the “***shattered visage***,” then, the face itself, with its “***frown / And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command***”; then we are introduced to the figure of the sculptor, and can imagine the living man sculpting the living king, whose face wore the expression of the passions now inferable; then we are introduced to the king’s people in the line, “***the hand that mocked them and the heart that fed***.” The kingdom is now imaginatively complete, and we are introduced to the extraordinary, prideful boast of the king: “***Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair***!” With that, the poet demolishes our imaginary picture of the king, and interposes centuries of ruin between it and us:

***“ ‘Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!’ /***

***Nothing beside remains. Round the decay /***

***Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, /***

***The lone and level sands stretch far away.”***

The analysis shows that this poem, though, seems a simple description of a statue, deceptively points to the dark reality that power corrupts humans. The statue, even after its ruination, displays harsh expressions to show that the king was not benevolent during his regime. The ruins point out that nothing in the world is permanent

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. How do you justify that Ozymandias is a romantic poem? Support with quotes.
2. What did the phrase 'and sneer of cold command' in line five suggest about the way the real Ozymandias (Pharaoh Ramses II) ruled over Egypt?
3. Discuss the central idea of the poem Ozymandias
4. Discuss the main themes of the poem Ozymandias?
5. What is the message of Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem "Ozymandias"?
6. How is power presented in the poem 'Ozymandias'?
7. What are some figurative devices in the poem "Ozymandias"?
8. What is ironic about the inscription on the pedestal of Ozymandias’ statue?
9. Bring out the irony in the words, “My name is Ozymandias, king of kings, Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!” as inscribed on the pedestal of the statue. What lesson does this irony teach us?
10. Discuss how Shelley brings out the futility of power and riches in the poem, ‘Ozymandias’.

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**CHAPTER 8**

**John Keats (1795-1821)**



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**John Keats (1795-1821)**

John Keats, one of the greatest figures of the Romantic Movement. He was an English Romantic poet of the second generation, alongside Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

**Early Life**

John Keats was born in London on October 31, 1795. His parents were Thomas Keats, a hostler at the stables at the Swan and Hoop Inn, which he would later manage, and Frances Jennings. He had three younger siblings: George, Thomas, and Frances Mary, known as Fanny. When he was eight, his father died in April 1804 in a horse-riding accident, without leaving a will.

In 1803, Keats was sent to John Clarke's school in Enfield, which was close to his grandparents’ house and had a curriculum that was more progressive and modern than what was found in similar institutions. John Clarke fostered his interest in classical studies and history. Charles Cowden Clarke, who was the headmaster’s son, became a mentor figure for Keats and introduced him to Renaissance writers Torquato Tasso, Spenser, and the works of George Chapman. A temperamental boy, young Keats was both indolent and belligerent, but starting at age 13, he channeled his energies into the pursuit of academic excellence, to the point that, in midsummer 1809, he won his first academic prize.

His mother died of tuberculosis when he was fourteen and Richard Abbey and Jon Sandell were appointed as the children's guardians. These sad circumstances drew him particularly close to his two brothers, George and Tom, and his sister Fanny.

That same year, Keats left John Clarke to become an apprentice to surgeon and apothecary Thomas Hammond, who was the doctor of his mother’s side of the family. He lived in the attic above Hammond’s practice until 1813.

**Early Work**

Keats wrote his first poem, “An Imitation of Spenser,” in 1814, aged 19. After finishing his apprenticeship with Hammond, Keats enrolled as a medical student at Guy’s Hospital in October 1815. While there, he started assisting senior surgeons at the hospital during surgeries, which was a job of significant responsibility. His job was time-consuming and it hindered his creative output, which caused significant distress. He had ambition as a poet, and he admired the likes of Leigh Hunt and Lord Byron.

He received his apothecary license in 1816, which allowed him to be a professional apothecary, physician, and surgeon, but instead, he announced to his guardian that he would pursue poetry. His first printed poem was the sonnet “O Solitude,” which appeared in Leigh Hunt’s magazine The Examiner. In the summer of 1816, while vacationing with Charles Cowden Clarke in the town of Margate, he started working on “Caligate.” Once that summer was over, he resumed his studies to become a member of the Royal College of Surgeons.

**Calamities**

In the summer of 1818, Keats went on a walking tour in the Lake District (of northern England) and Scotland with his friend Charles Brown, and his exposure and exhaustion on that trip brought on the first symptoms of the tuberculosis of which he was to die. Keats’s brother Tom had been suffering from tuberculosis for some time, and in the autumn of 1818, the poet nursed him through his last illness. Keats battled anxiety and depression in his short life.

**Death & Legacy**

Keats died in Rome on February 23, 1821, He lived a short, difficult life, dying at the age of 26 of tuberculosis with only a three-year-long writing career. His remains rest in Rome’s Protestant cemetery. His tombstone bears the inscription “Here lies One whose Name was writ in Water.” Seven weeks after the funeral, Shelley wrote the elegy Adonais, which memorialized Keats. It contains 495 lines and 55 Spenserian stanzas.

Nonetheless, he left a substantial bulk of work that makes him more than a “poet of promise.” His mystique was also heightened by his alleged humble origins, as he was presented as a lowlife and someone who received a sparse education. His usage of sensual imagery and statements such as “beauty is truth and truth is beauty” made him a forerunner of aestheticism.

Shelley, in his preface to Adonais (1821), described Keats as "*delicate," "fragile," and "blighted in the bud": "a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished ... The bloom, whose petals nipt before they blew / Died on the promise of the fruit*," wrote Shelley.

John Keats wrote sonnets, odes, and epics. Keats is best known for his odes, including “Sleep and Poetry” (1816), “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (1819), “Ode to a Nightingale” (1819), “Hyperion” (1818-19), Endymion (1818). However his early attempts were not successful, he produced three volumes of poetry; they are *Poems (1817); Endymion (1818); Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems (1820).*

1. **Endymion**

Keats' 'Endymion' is a poem representative of the Romantic movement, demonstrating the poet's preoccupation with nature, the reimagining of themes from mythology, and belief in emotion as the surest guide to truth.

*A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:*

*Its loveliness increases; it will never*

*Pass into nothingness; but still will keep*

*A bower quiet for us, and a sleep*

*Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.*

*Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing*

*A flowery band to bind us to the earth,*

*Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth*

*Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,*

*Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways*

*Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,*

*Some shape of beauty moves away the pall*

*From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,*

*Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon*

*For simple sheep; and such are daffodils*

*With the green world they live in; and clear rills*

*That for themselves a cooling covert make*

*'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,*

*Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:*

*And such too is the grandeur of the dooms*

*We have imagined for the mighty dead;*

*All lovely tales that we have heard or read:*

*An endless fountain of immortal drink,*

*Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.*

*Nor do we merely feel these essences*

*For one short hour; no, even as the trees*

*That whisper round a temple become soon*

*Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,*

*The passion poesy, glories infinite,*

*Haunt us till they become a cheering light*

*Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,*

*That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast;*

*They always must be with us, or we die.*

*Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I*

*Will trace the story of Endymion.*

*The very music of the name has gone*

*Into my being, and each pleasant scene*

*Is growing fresh before me as the green*

*Of our own valleys: so I will begin*

*Now while I cannot hear the city's din;*

*Now while the early budders are just new,*

*And run in mazes of the youngest hue*

*About old forests; while the willow trails*

*Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails*

*Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year*

*Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer*

*My little boat, for many quiet hours,*

*With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.*

*Many and many a verse I hope to write,*

*Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,*

*Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees*

*Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,*

*I must be near the middle of my story.*

*O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,*

*See it half finish'd: but let Autumn bold,*

*With universal tinge of sober gold,*

*Be all about me when I make an end.*

*And now, at once adventuresome, I send*

*My herald thought into a wilderness:*

*There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress*

*My uncertain path with green, that I may speed*

*Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.*

# Summary and Analysis

The mythological poem of the English Romantic poet John Keats – four thousand lines about the young love of Endymion and the moon goddess Diana. It’s a kind of hymn to the Beauty, Love, Moon, Muse, and even the chanting of ancient Greece as the “golden age” of humanity. Keats composed Endymion in rhyming couplets of iambic pentameter (or heroic couplets). In April of 1817, John Keats left London to travel around provincial Britain, to work there in seclusion on the poem “Endymion.”

Keats worked on the poem “Endymion” from mid-April of 1817 until the end of November 1817. The poem consists of four books and is the most voluminous work of John Keats (4050 lines) was published around April 27, 1818, as a separate publication (publishers Taylor and Hessey) with the subtitle “a poetic novel”, with a dedication to the memory of Thomas Chatterton”. Endymion had epigraph – a string of 17-the sonnet by Shakespeare:

***“And stretched metre of an antique song”***

Keats creates an original version of Endymion history. Endymion saw in his dream the beautiful goddess of the moon Diana and fell in love. Since then, he is doomed to search for heavenly beauty-truth. Following the concept of uplifting love, the poet leads his hero to the comprehension of the ideal through the cleansing of lovingkindness and compassion. Endymion readily comes to the rescue: standing up in front of Diana for separated Alpheus and Arethusa, returns youth and freedom to Glaucus and resurrects his beloved Scylla, ruined by the spell of cunning Circe, as well as a host of lovers who have met their end in the bottomless depths of the ocean. From hero requires not only physical strength. Endymion is suffering not only from his love for the goddess but also because looking for the ideal he meets the captivating Indian girl. The hero is tormented by pangs of conscience, believing that he is betraying Diana, but it turns out that the temptress of Endymion turned the goddess herself, set heart on experience the earthborn young man who was able to inspire her with love. As Endymion, unknown to himself, remained loyal to his great goddess, Zeus gives him immortality. The image of Endymion appears in the poem as an allegory of the poet, who finds a reward for faithful service to a beauty ideal that is conceived imaginary beauty. The allegorical meaning of the poem emphasizes introductory lines, containing a catchphrase:

***“A thing of beauty is a joy for ever”***

In Endymion, the title character also searches for the source of the joy and due to his discontentment, he faces different situations.

In Endymion Keats takes and embellishes a tolerably familiar story from the Greek mythology, he learnt in Chapman's Homer and through another retelling of the stories available to him. Each book is preceded by a traditional kind of introduction - as Milton uses in Paradise Lost - in which Keats generalizes upon the experience before moving into his story. Book I then describes the isle of Latmos (of which the young Endymion is lord; its most beautiful, fleet, manly and strong figure) and the people assembling to celebrate the rites of Fan in a formal and (for the later Keats, too) preparatory ode, acclaiming the 'ripen'd fruitage', the chuckling linnet' and 'summer completion.' During the subsequent festivity, Endymion, who has been trying to conceal heaviness of spirit, confesses to his sister Poena his consuming love for an unearthly maiden seen in a dream. He determines to search for her on hearing a disembodied whisper which encourages him in the deepest forest. In Book 2 he ranges the land until guided again by the voice, he ventures into a strange vaulted world, an immeasurable distance below ground, where he stumbles on strange visions of Cupid, of Adonais lover of Venus, and is blessed by Venus, goddess of love. The vision fades and he is alone again in tile weird caverns. He is swept up by an eagle that drops him in 'a jasmine bower' where he finds his goddess, briefly enjoys passionate and sensuous love and is alone again. In Book 3 he plunges deep below the ocean to recover his lost Cynthia, the spirit of the moon. He encounters an ancient/man, Glaucus, whom he releases from a spell cast by Circe: thus reanimating the bodies of drowned lovers, and attends the celebratory rites paid by the resurrected crowd to Neptune and Oceanus, gods of the seas. The vision vanishes and in Book 4 he rediscovers his goddess incarnated as an Indian damsel who sings the Ode to Sorrow before she declares her undying love for him and her unattainability for mortal men. Yet again, he is abandoned, but as his sister returns to welcome him back to the solid, human world, the goddess of the moon, alias the Indian damsel, alias Phoebe, alias Cynthia, returns, and 'spiritualizes' Endymion so that he is fit for celestial living." In the last line as well she might say, 'Poena went Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment.'

**Endymion** is an extended narrative poem divided into four books of about one thousand lines each, written mostly in heroic couplets. The title Endymion is named after a figure from Greek myth.  The poem starts with Endymion’s impossible desire to get the love of the goddess Diana (also known as Cynthia). In the end, when he feels love for the mortal Indian maiden, he realizes she is Diana, his immortal desire in mortal disguises. He apprehends the dangers of denying his human nature and learns that he can achieve the abstract ideal only if he accepts the concrete human experience. This is the central idea Keats wants to deliver through this poem. Endymion (A thing of beauty) is usually read as a direct and honest declaration that caters to the main idea that any beautiful thing provides us with continuous pleasure. Even if the beautiful thing fades away, decays, loss, or dies, we never stop loving them despite the adverse situation.

**Major Themes:**

Beauty, adventure and life are the major themes of this poem. Throughout the text, the speaker intends to explain the truth of beauty. To him, beauty is eternal. It enlightens our souls and serves as a beacon of hope during our hard times. He believes if one truly understands the nature of beauty, it never leaves him. With all his definitions and beliefs of beauty, he announces that he is going to perform a grand task: narrate the tale of Endymion. He connects this tale with his life and considers it part of himself. Moreover, he knows he is going to express his ideas thoroughly.

**Literary Devices**

Literary devices are tools used by writers and poets to convey their emotions, feelings, and ideas to the readers. John Keats has also used various literary devices to express his ideas of beauty to the readers. Some of the major literary devices have been analyzed below.

**Enjambment**: It is defined as a thought in verse that does not come to an end at a line break; instead, it continues in the next line. For example,

*“There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress  
My uncertain path with green that I may speed  
Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.”*

**Alliteration**:  such as the sound of /***n***/ in “Of ***n***oble ***n***atures, of the gloomy days,” and the sound of /***c***/ in “That for themselves a ***c***ooling ***c***overt make”.

**Imagery**: For example, “*My little boat, for many quiet hours*”, “*There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress*” and “*An endless fountain of immortal drink.*” The vast use of imagery can be found in the phrase “*flowery bands*”, “*shady boon”, “daffodils in green world”, “clear rills”, grandeur of dooms*” etc. “*Cooling covert*” and “*endless fountain of eternal drink*” are one of the notable examples of imagery used in this poem. This poem received many scornful criticisms after its publication. Though Keats himself noticed the incoherent style, he did not regret writing it.

**Assonance**:  such as the sound of /***i***/ in “***I***ts lovel***i***ness ***i***ncreases; ***i***t w***i***ll never” and the sound of /***o***/ in “The passion p***o***esy, gl***o***ries infinite”.

**Anaphora**:  For example, “***Now while***” in the third stanza is a repeated poem to emphasize the time.

*“****Now while*** *I cannot hear the city’s din;****Now while*** *the early budders are just new.”*

**Symbolism**:  e.g., **Beauty** symbolizes eternal peace and limitless joy here.

**Consonance**:  such as the sound of /n/ in “An endless fountain of immortal drink” and the sounds of /***l***/ and /***s***/ in “Grows ***l***ush in juicy ***s***talks, I’***ll*** smooth***l***y ***s***teer.”

**Metaphor**:  e.g., in the line “***A thing of beauty is a joy for ever***” beauty is a metaphor of ***joy and happiness***. “***Wreathing a flowery band***” is a metaphor for **life**.

**Poetic Devices**

Poetic and literary devices are the same, but a few are used only in poetry. Here is the analysis of some of the poetic devices used in this poem.

**Stanza**: There are three stanzas in this poem, each varies in length.

**Rhyme Scheme**: The poem follows the ABAB rhyme scheme and this pattern continues till the end.

**End Rhyme**: For example, “***year/steer***”, “***write/white***”, “***soon/moon***” and “***all/pall***.”

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. Discuss the cruciform symbiote, parasite. The Pax initiated laws to limit reproduction to prevent overpopulation but what are some of the other ramifications of near immortality on culture, medicine, technology, and religion?
2. Why is Aenea's father, the cybrid, named John Keats and what is his connection to Endymion? Why is the name Endymion significant?
3. What does it mean when Rhadamanth Nemes reveals that there is only one farcater portal and why is this significant?
4. What is the most important theme of Endymion?
5. Compare and contrast Father Captain Federico de Soya's view of Christianity and his observance of the religion to the other Christians described in Endymion.
6. Who is the architect Aenea wishes to study under that she finally encounters in Pennsylvania?
7. What power is Aenea tempted to use in the Sol Draconi System?

**2. Ode on a Grecian Urn**

"Ode on a Grecian Urn" was written by the influential English poet John Keats in 1819. It is a complex, mysterious poem with a disarmingly simple set-up: an undefined speaker looks at a Grecian urn, which is decorated with evocative images of rustic and rural life in ancient Greece.

1. *Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,*
2. *Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,*
3. *Sylvan historian, who canst thus express*
4. *A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:*
5. *What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape*
6. *Of deities or mortals, or of both,*
7. *In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?*
8. *What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?*
9. *What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?*
10. *What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?*
11. *Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard*
12. *Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;*
13. *Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,*
14. *Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:*
15. *Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave*
16. *Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;*
17. *Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,*
18. *Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;*
19. *She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,*
20. *For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!*
21. *Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed*
22. *Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;*
23. *And, happy melodist, unwearied,*
24. *or ever piping songs for ever new;*
25. *More happy love! more happy, happy love!*
26. *For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,*
27. *For ever panting, and for ever young;*
28. *All breathing human passion far above,*
29. *That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,*
30. *A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.*
31. *Who are these coming to the sacrifice?*
32. *To what green altar, O mysterious priest,*
33. *Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,*
34. *And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?*
35. *What little town by river or sea shore,*
36. *Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,*
37. *Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?*
38. *And, little town, thy streets for evermore*
39. *Will silent be; and not a soul to tell*
40. *Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.*
41. *Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede*
42. *Of marble men and maidens overwrought,*
43. *With forest branches and the trodden weed;*
44. *Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought*
45. *As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!*
46. *When old age shall this generation waste,*
47. *Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe*
48. *Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,*
49. *"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all*
50. *Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."*

**Summary**

**Ode on a Grecian Urn** is an ode in which the speaker addresses an engraved urn and expresses his feelings and ideas about the experience of an imagined world of art, in contrast to the reality of life, change, and suffering. As an ode, it also has the unique features that Keats himself established in his great odes. It was first published in 1820, in Annals of the Fine Arts. The poem explores the beauty of art and nature. The poet addresses the piece of pottery from ancient Greek and exercises his expertise to explain the scenes carved on it. Since its publication, it gained immense popularity for its imaginative quality of thoughts expressed in it about art and beauty.

**“Ode on a Grecian Urn”** as a Representative of Life and Beauty: The poet presents urn to understand the transience of life and the quest for beauty. The speaker questions the engraving on the urn and then explicitly explains the images of maidens, lovers, pilgrims, and other creatures carved on it. To him, these people are immortal and free from the clutches of destructive time and fears of demise.

**Major Themes**

Major Themes **in “Ode on a Grecian Urn”:** Beauty of art, destructive nature of time, and transience of life are some of the prominent themes of this ode. Although the urn has passed down through ages, it is unchanged, perfect, and silent. Keats also presents the enchanting, perfect, and immortal world of the urn, as he discusses the destructive nature of the real world and its desires, which cannot be quenched. The famous philosophical doctrine “truth is beauty, beauty truth” conveys an important message that the real beauty of things is in its permanence. He also says that truth is the ultimate beauty of the world, and never perishes.

**Analysis of Literary Devices**

Literary devices are techniques that the writers use to convey their ideas, feelings, and message to the readers. Keats has also used some literary devices in this poem to adore the beauty of urn. The analysis of some of the literary devices used in this poem has been listed below.

1. **Consonance**:  such as the sound of /***l***/ in “Wi***ll*** si***l***ent be; and not a sou***l*** to te***ll***” and /n/ sound in “All breathing human passion far above.”
2. **Symbolism**: Keats has used a lot of symbols in this poem such as, “***plants*** and ***trees***” are the symbols of youth and spring, “***urn***” itself is the symbol of time and life.
3. **Personification**: He has used personifications at several places in the poem. He addresses the ***urn*** as “*bride of quietness*” and “*Sylvan historian*”; “*you soft pipe, play on*” as if pipe and urn are humans that can perform certain acts.
4. **Assonance**: such as the sound of /***o***/ in “M***o***re happy l***o***ve! m***o***re happy, happy l***o***ve!” and /***i***/ sound in “Att***i***c shape! Fair att***i***tude! With brede.”
5. **Metonymy**:  Keats links the man’s heart to his feelings of being “*high sorrowful and cloyed*.”
6. **Synecdoche**: He has used this device to express the downside of natural love as he has used the words, “***burning love***” that is fever and “***parching tongues***” is thirst.
7. **Anaphora**: It refers to the repetition of any word or expression in the initial part of the sentence such as ‘***forever’*** in the first two lines and ‘***happy’*** in the last two lines.

*“****Forever*** *painting and* ***forever*** *young****Forever*** *piping song* ***forever*** *new  
A* ***happy, happy*** *boughs  
More* ***happy*** *love, more* ***happy happy*** *love.”*

1. **Alliteration**: such as the sound of /***n***/ in “Ye k***n***ow on earth, and all ye ***n***eed to k***n***ow. And /***t***/ sound in "***B***eauty is ***t***ruth, ***t***ruth ***b***eauty,—that is all."
2. **Paradox**: He has used paradox in the second stanza, “*Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard*”, “*Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone*”, implying melodies are heard by the spirits and not by the ears.
3. **Apostrophe**: The poet addresses the “***urn***,” the pictures painted on the urn, and the lovers engraved on the urn.

The **literary analysis** unfolds that the poet has sketched a very vivid and realistic picture of the images painted on the urn using the above literary devices.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. Read some of the interpretations of the truth-beauty equation in Harvey T. Lyon's *Keats*' *Well-Read Urn.*Which one of them is the most persuasive?
2. Does the last stanza of the poem flow out of and summarize the preceding stanzas?
3. Why does Keats include the lines on the "deserted village" in the poem?
4. Are unheard melodies sweeter than heard melodies? In what sense can Keats' assertion be true?
5. What does the urn represent for Keats in "Ode on a Grecian Urn"?
6. **Ode to a Nightingale**

The speaker opens with a declaration of his own heartache. He feels numb, as though he had taken a drug only a moment ago. He is addressing a nightingale he hears singing somewhere in the forest and says that his “drowsy numbness” is not from envy of the nightingale’s happiness, but rather from sharing it too completely; he is “too happy” that the nightingale sings the music of summer from amid some unseen plot of green trees and shadows.

*My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:  
‘Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
But being too happy in thine happiness,—  
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees  
In some melodious plot  
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.*

*O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
Cool’d a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!  
O for a beaker full of the warm South,  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
And purple-stained mouth;  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:*

*Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;  
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
And leaden-eyed despairs,  
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.*

*Away! away! for I will fly to thee,  
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:  
Already with thee! tender is the night,  
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
Cluster’d around by all her starry Fays;  
But here there is no light,  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.*

*I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;  
Fast fading violets cover’d up in leaves;  
And mid-May’s eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.*

*Darkling I listen; and, for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Call’d him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy!  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
To thy high requiem become a sod.*

*Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.*

*Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
As she is fam’d to do, deceiving elf.  
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades  
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
Up the hill-side; and now ‘tis buried deep  
In the next valley-glades:  
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?*

**Summary of Ode to a Nightingale**

**“Ode to Nightingale**" is a phenomenal poem that relates life’s sufferings to the briefness of the bird’s song. It was first published in 1819. The poem explores the wonder of life and death. It comprises the experience of the poet, his miseries, and poetic imagination. Its popularity lies in the fact that it represents things related to life, art, literature, and nature and seeks a common relationship among them.

**As a Symbolic of Life and Death**:

The poem explores two main issues: the first is the connection between agony and joy and the second is the connection between life and death.

The poet very artistically draws a comparison between the natural and imaginative world, the world of a nightingale. Saddened, he tries to seek comfort and harmony in his imaginative world, but the pull of his consciousness brings him back to confront the heart-wrenching realities of life. Ultimately, he realizes that only death can offer a permanent escape from pain.  Disturbed by the misfortune of his life, he wants the finest wine and his poetic imagination to throw away the horrific realities of life. His desire to be drunk or unconscious shows that he does not to remember his hardships and sufferings. However, what enchants the reader is his flight of imagination that temporarily takes him away from the odds of life.

**Major Themes:**

***Death, immortality, mortality and poetic imaginations*** are some of the major themes of this ode. Keats says that death is an unavoidable phenomenon. He paints it in both negative and positive ways. On the one hand, its presence sucks the human spirit; while on the other hand, it offers the realm of free eternity. The poet also presents the life and melodious song of the nightingale in juxtaposition. To him, life is mortal, but the song of the nightingale is immortal. It has been a source of enjoyment for centuries and will stay so even after his demise. Though he keeps himself engaged in the beautiful and charming world of imaginations, he cannot stay there for good. Therefore, he accepts that imagination is just a short source of peace.

**Literary Devices**

Literary devices are tools used by writers and poets to convey emotions, ideas, and beliefs. With the help of these devices, they make their texts appealing to the reader. Keats has also used some literary devices in this poem to make it unique and appealing. The analysis of some of the literary devices used in this poem has been given below.

1. **Alliteration**:  e.g. - /**th**/ in “***Th****at* ***th****ou, light-winged Dryad of* ***th****e trees*”.
2. **Simile**:  Keats has used simile in the second stanza, “*Forlorn*! the very word is **like** a *bell*.” Here the poet is comparing forlorn to a bell.
3. **Enjambment**: e.g.

*“My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains.”*

1. **Imagery**: e.g., “*though of hemlock I had drunk*,”, “*Past the near meadows*,”, “*Fast fading violets cover’d up in leaves*.”
2. **Assonance**: such as the sound of /**o**/ in “In some mel**o**dious pl**o**t” and /**i**/ sound in “The vo**i**ce I hear this passing n**i**ght was heard.”
3. **Metaphor**: There are two metaphors in this poem. The first one is used in line eleven, “*for a beaker full of the warm south*”. Here he compares liquid with the southern country weather.
4. **Personification**: Keats has used personification in line twenty-nine, “*where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes*” as if the beauty is human and can see. The second example is in line thirty-six, “*The Queen moon is on her throne*.”
5. **Anaphora**: Keats has repeated the word “**where**” in the following lines to emphasize the existence of his imaginative world. For example:

*“****Where*** *palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,****Where*** *youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;****Where*** *but to think is to be full of sorrow  
And leaden-eyed despairs,****Where*** *Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes.”*

1. **Apostrophe**: The poet has used this device in line sixty-one, “*Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird*.”
2. **Allusions**: Lethe (1) is the river of forgetfulness that comes from Hades, the underworld in Greek mythology; Wolf's bane (2) is a poisonous plant; Proserpine is the Roman Goddess of the underworld--it's important to note that Prosepine was kidnapped by Pluto and forced to stay with him for 6 months out of the year much, in the same way, melancholy forces one to live in spiritual and emotional darkness; Psyche, the mythological lover of Cupid, means soul.

The literary analysis shows that this poem successfully describes Keat’s deep meditations about death under cover of these literary devices.

**Poetic Devices**

Poetic and literary devices are the same, but a few are used only in poetry. Here is the analysis of some of the poetic devices used in this poem.

1. There are eight stanzas in this poem with ten lines in each stanza.
2. **Rhyme** **Scheme**: The poem follows ***ABABCDECDE*** throughout the poem with iambic pentameter.
3. **End Rhyme**: such as in the first stanza the rhyming words are, “*pains”, “drains”, “drunk”, “sunk*.”
4. I**nternal Rhyme**: Internal Rhyme is rhyme within a line such as in the line, “*To toll* ***me*** *back from* ***thee*** *to my sole self*”.
5. **Iambic** **Pentameter**: It is a type of meter consisting of five iambs. The poem comprises iambic pentameter such as, “*My****Heart****aches,****and****a****drowsy******numb****ness****pains***.”
6. **Rhythm**: Keats uses Anglo-Saxon derivatives to create a choppy rhythm. The fits and starts imitate the onset of melancholy--that is, moodiness, hyperactivity followed by loss of desire. The second stanza incorporates alliteration and speeds the poem's rhythm, like an oncoming wave of depression. Keats uses repetition, punctuation, and run-ons to slow the rhythm down. Melancholy, we could say, has set in and is firmly entrenched.

**Study Questions & Discussion**

1. What are the romantic characteristics in his poem "Ode to a Nightingale?"
2. What is the main theme of Ode to a Nightingale?
3. How does the voice of the nightingale affect the poet in Ode to a Nightingale?
4. Trace the imagery in the poem that appeals to the ear.
5. Why do poets sometimes describe the nightingale's song as sad or "plaintive"?
6. What does the nightingale represent in "Ode to a Nightingale"?

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