18TH AND 19TH CENTURY POETRY

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18th and 19th century

POETRY

(The Romantic Poetry Era)

POETS

and

POEMS

William Blake was born in London on November 28, 1757, to James, a hosier, and Catherine Blake. Two of his six siblings died in infancy.

William Blake was a precursor of the Romantic Revival in England. In his staunch glorification of the imagination, in his revolt against the bondage and restrictions that society and its institutions imposed on the individual man, in his mysticism and his symbolic interpretation of thought and feeling and his simplicity of expression, Blake indeed is a harbinger of romantic poetry in England. William Blake

William Blake's significance in the Romantic movement came late in the 19th century, after what is officially considered the Romantic period. Born 1757 in London, his recognition as an artist and poet of worth began when Blake was in his sixties.

` Blake's early childhood was dominated by spiritual visions which influenced his personal and working life. A passionate believer in liberty and freedom for all, especially for women, he courted controversy with his views on Church and state.

After following a traditional artistic career as an apprentice engraver he attended the Royal Academy, but he did not take well to the 'stifling' atmosphere and clashed with the ideals of the Academy's founding members, especially Sir Joshua Reynolds.

In 1782 Blake married Catherine Boucher, an inseparable companion he taught to read, write and draw and would aid him in the production of his work.

After leaving the Academy he set himself up as an engraver and illustrator, publishing his own work. His first book, *Poetical Sketches*, was published in 1783. From then on he published everything himself. He produced his most famous works, *Songs of Innocence*(1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794), by engraving both words and pictures on the same plate, his lasting style.

`Although Blake struggled to make a living from his work during his lifetime his influence and ideas are possibly the strongest of all the Romantic poets.

William Blake
"LONDON"

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every black'ning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

Summary

The speaker wanders through the streets of London and comments on his observations. He sees despair in the faces of the people he meets and hears fear and repression in their voices. The woeful cry of the chimney-sweeper stands as a chastisement to the Church, and the blood of a soldier stains the outer walls of the monarch's residence. The nighttime holds nothing more promising: the cursing of prostitutes corrupts the newborn infant and sullies the "Marriage hearse."

Form

The poem has four quatrains, with alternate lines rhyming. Repetition is the most striking formal feature of the poem, and it serves to emphasize the prevalence of the horrors the speaker describes.

***London* Analysis**

Stanza 1

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In the first stanza, the speaker provides setting and tone. The setting can of course be derived from the title, but the first stanza also reveals that the speaker is walking down a street. He says that he "wander[s] down each chartered street". The term "wander" gives some insight into the speaker as well. He appears to be not quite sure of himself, and a bit misguided, if not entirely lost. The use of the

term “chartered” also suggests that the streets he walks are controlled and rigid. He is not walking in a free, open field, but a confined, rigid, mapped out area. The speaker will expound upon this idea later on in *London* . As he walks, he notices something about the faces of the people walking by. There seems to be the marks of weariness in them all. He describes their faces as having “weakness” and “woe”. This sets up the tone as melancholy. The gloom and the sadness seem to seep from the speaker’s voice as he describes the passersby.

Stanza 2
In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg’d manacles I hear

While the first stanza sets up the tone of *London*, the second stanza gives some insight into the speaker’s melancholy feelings toward the people he watches pass him by. The speaker reveals that from the cry of the newborn infant, to the cry of the full grown man, he hears the “mind forg’d manacles”. This gives insight into his despairing view of mankind. The “manacles” are shackles or some kind of chain that keeps a person imprisoned. The fact that these chains are “mind forg’d” reveals that they are metaphorical chains created by the people’s own ideas. The use of the word “ban” reveals that these manacles are placed there by society. A ban, of course, is a restriction given by law. The speaker’s use of words such as “Charterd” “ban” and “manacles” reveal his belief that society metaphorically imprisons people. Suddenly, it becomes apparent that the thoughts, pressures, and ideals of society are under scrutiny here.

Stanza 3
How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

In this stanza of *London,* the speaker digs even deeper into the reasons for his feelings toward humanity. He implies that the shackles worn by the people and inflicted by society have some disastrous results. He begins with the Chimney sweeper. The Chimney sweeper was one of the poorest of society. His life expectancy was threatened because of his line of work. He was consistently dirty and sick. Those of the lowest class were forced into this kind of work in order to provide for their families. Then, the speaker criticizes the church, calling it "blackening" and claiming that even the church "appalls" at the Chimney sweeper. Often, the chimney sweepers were just children. They were small enough to fit down the chimneys. These children were often orphaned children, and the church was responsible for them. This explains why the poet ties the chimney sweepers with the "blackening church".

The speaker then turns his attentions to the "hapless soldier". He has already criticized society, pointed out the misfortunes of the poor and the hypocrisy of the church, and now he will also criticise the government by suggesting that the soldiers are the poor victims of a corrupt government. He reveals his feelings toward war by describing the blood that runs down the palace walls. The palace, of course, is where royalty would have lived. Thus, the speaker accuses the higher up people in his society of spilling the blood of the soldiers in order to keep their comfort of living in a palace.

Stanza 4

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

In the final stanza, the speaker reveals how the corruptness of society attacks innocence. He says that he hears the "youthful Harlot's curse…". The idea of a youthful harlot suggests the level of poverty and corruption, that a girl who was yet a youth would be involved in prostitution. Then, things become even more interesting, as the speaker reveals the object of the Harlot's cursing. She curses at the tears of a newborn baby. This is the ultimate attack upon innocence. The speaker does not reveal whether the harlot is the mother of the baby or not, but he does imply that rather than comforting a crying infant, she curses it. This reveals the hardened heart of the harlot, which represents the hardened heart of society at large. While the innocent shed tears, the perverted attack them.

The last line of *London* reveals the speaker's thoughts on marriage as well. The Harlot, apparently, has "blighted" the "marriage hearse". She has deranged marriage by having sold her body before ever entering into the marriage union. Although the speaker believes that the Harlot has somehow damaged marriage, he also reveals his beliefs about marriage in the first place. The fact that he calls it a "marriage hearse" reveals that he views marriage as death. Overall, the poem has criticized society, the church, prostitution, and even marriage. The innocent baby shedding tears represents those who are innocent in the world. They are few and they are scoffed at. They are also infants, and are not left to be innocent for long. Their innocence is "blasted" by the cry of the perverted.

Commentary

The opening image of wandering, the focus on sound, and the images of stains in this poem's first lines recall the Introduction to *Songs of Innocence*, but with a twist; we are now quite far from the piping, pastoral bard of the earlier poem: we are in the city. The poem's title denotes a specific geographic space, not the archetypal locales in which many of the other *Songs* are set. Everything in this urban space—even the natural River Thames—submits to being "charter'd," a term which combines mapping and legalism. Blake's repetition of this word (which he then tops with two repetitions of "mark" in the next two lines) reinforces the sense of stricture the speaker feels upon entering the city. It is as if language itself, the poet's medium, experiences a hemming-in, a restriction of resources. Blake's repetition, thudding and oppressive, reflects the suffocating atmosphere of the city. But words also undergo transformation within this repetition: thus "mark," between the third and fourth lines, changes from a verb to a pair of nouns—from an act of observation which leaves some room for imaginative elaboration, to an indelible imprint, branding the people's bodies regardless of the speaker's actions.

Ironically, the speaker's "meeting" with these marks represents the experience closest to a human encounter that the poem will offer the speaker. All the speaker's subjects—men, infants, chimney-sweeper, soldier, harlot—are known only through the traces they leave behind: the ubiquitous cries, the blood on the palace walls. Signs of human suffering abound, but a complete human form—the human form that Blake has used repeatedly in the *Songs* to personify and render natural phenomena—is lacking. In the third stanza the cry of the chimney-sweep and the sigh of the soldier metamorphose (almost mystically) into soot on

church walls and blood on palace walls—but we never see the chimney-sweep or the soldier themselves. Likewise, institutions of power—the clergy, the government—are rendered by synecdoche, by mention of the places in which they reside. Indeed, it is crucial to Blake's commentary that neither the city's victims nor their oppressors ever appear in body: Blake does not simply blame a set of institutions or a system of enslavement for the city's woes; rather, the victims help to make their own "mind-forg'd manacles," more powerful than material chains could ever be.

The poem climaxes at the moment when the cycle of misery recommences, in the form of a new human being starting life: a baby is born into poverty, to a cursing, prostitute mother. Sexual and marital union—the place of possible regeneration and rebirth—are tainted by the blight of venereal disease. Thus Blake's final image is the "Marriage hearse," a vehicle in which love and desire combine with death and destruction.

Love's Secret

William Blake, 1757 - 1827

Never seek to tell thy love,
Love that never told can be;
For the gentle wind does move
Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love,
I told her all my heart;
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears,
Ah! she did depart!

Soon as she was gone from me,
A traveler came by,
Silently, invisibly
He took her with a sigh

The Divine Image

BY WILLIAM BLAKE

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew;
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.

QUIZ
The Divine Image
65%average accuracy
40 plays
5th grade
Arts, Fun, English
9 months ago by
ada collins
1SaveCopy and Edit
INSTRUCTOR-LED SESSION
Start a live quiz
ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING
Assign homework

10 questions PREVIEW SHOW ANSWERS
Question 1
20 seconds
Q.
1. To _____, _____, _____ and _____,
answer choices
Mercy, pity, peace and love
Mercy, peace, love and Pity
Mercy , Pity, peace and care
Pity, peace, love and care
Question 2
20 seconds
Q.
1. All _____ in their distress,

answer choices
Praise
Pray
Cry
Tell
Question 3

20 seconds
Q.
And to these _____ of delight
answer choices
attributes
partners
virtues
factors
Question 4
20 seconds
Q.
Return their _____.
answer choices
Hopefulness
Thankfulness
Gratefulness
Heartlessness
Question 5
20 seconds
Q.
Who wrote the poem "The Divine Image"?
answer choices
Seumas O' Suleiman
William Henry Davies
William Blake
William Wordsworth
Question 6
20 seconds
Q.
It has -----stanzas.
answer choices
5
4
3
2
Question 7

20 seconds
Q.
It has -----lines.
answer choices
20
16
10
12
Question 8
30 seconds
Q.
“A human heart” is what figure of speech
answer choices
Simile
Metaphor
Alliteration
Personification
Question 9
20 seconds
Report an issue
Q.
According to the poem, can the human nature be divine?
answer choices
Yes it can

No. it can't
Sometimes
Never
Question 10
20 seconds
Q.
What figure of speech is “For mercy, pity, peace and love is God our father”
answer choices
Simile

Metaphor
Alliteration
Personification

The Sick Rose

BY WILLIAM BLAKE

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.

Ah! Sun-flower

BY WILLIAM BLAKE

Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun:
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the travellers journey is done.

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow:
Arise from their graves and aspire,
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

Infant Sorrow

BY WILLIAM BLAKE

My mother groand! my father wept.
Into the dangerous world I leapt:
Helpless, naked, piping loud;
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my fathers hands:
Striving against my swaddling bands:
Bound and weary I thought best
To sulk upon my mothers breast.

Never Seek to Tell thy Love

BY WILLIAM BLAKE

Never seek to tell thy love
Love that never told can be
For the gentle wind does move
Silently invisibly

I told my love I told my love
I told her all my heart
Trembling cold in ghastly fears
Ah she doth depart

Soon as she was gone from me
A traveller came by
Silently invisibly
O was no deny

♡

To Winter

William Blake

O Winter! bar thine adamantine doors:
The north is thine; there hast thou built thy dark
Deep-founded habitation. Shake not thy roofs,
Nor bend thy pillars with thine iron car.'
He hears me not, but o'er the yawning deep
Rides heavy; his storms are unchain'd, sheathèd
In ribbèd steel; I dare not lift mine eyes,
For he hath rear'd his sceptre o'er the world.

Lo! now the direful monster, whose 1000 skin clings
To his strong bones, strides o'er the groaning rocks:
He withers all in silence, and in his hand
Unclothes the earth, and freezes up frail life.

He takes his seat upon the cliffs,--the mariner
Cries in vain. Poor little wretch, that deal'st
With storms!--till heaven smiles, and the monster
Is driv'n yelling to his caves beneath mount Hecla.

William Wordsworth

***"Lines written in Early Spring"**

***"She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways"**

***"London, 1802"**

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

William Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770, in Cockermouth, Cumberland in England. His father, John, was a lawyer, and he encouraged his 5 children to pursue learning. When Wordsworth's mother Anne died in 1778, young William was sent to attend grammar school away from home.

William was sent to Cambridge, and upon graduation he graveled in Europe for a time, but when the money ran out Wordsworth returned home. He published two poems, *Descriptive Sketches*, and *An Evening Walk*, which were not well received. However, friends arranged for money to allow him to concentrate on his writing.

At this time Wordsworth met poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and the two became firm friends. They collaborated[1] on a volume of Romantic verse called *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), which was notable for its attempt to use ordinary language in a poetic fashion. Later, Coleridge's drug addiction and erratic[2] behavior put an end to their friendship.

Wordsworth's happy home life turned to tragedy when two of his four children died within a year. Shortly thereafter Wordsworth got himself appointed Distributor of Stamps for Westmorland, which brought him enough money to continue writing. Although his poems were critically panned, they were gaining a wide popular readership. He was appointed and still **Poet Laureate** when he died of pleurisy in **1850.**

[1] Work together
[2] Changing in irregular, bad way

William Wordsworth was an early leader of romanticism (a literary movement that celebrated nature and concentrated on human emotions) in English poetry and ranks as one of the greatest lyric poets in the history of English literature.

Lines written in Early Spring'

By **William Wordsworth**

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,[3]
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose[4] tufts,[5] in that green bower,[6]
The periwinkle[7] trailed[8] its wreaths[9];
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:--
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill[10] of pleasure.

The budding[11] twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy[12] air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,

---

[3] To lie or sit back in a relaxed way.
[4] Very brightly colored spring flower.
[5] A short thik group of feathers, grass, trees, etc كتل من العشب أو الأشجار الكثيفة
[6] To bend forward, as a sign of respect or thanking.
[7] العناقية: نبات دائم الخضرة متسلق
[8] Follow a short distance behind.(v.)
[9] A decoration made from flowers arranged in a circle
[10] A strong feeling of excitement and pleasure.
[11] Young flowers still rolled up.
[12] Blowing strongly , cheerfully, freshly

If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament[13]
What man has made of man?

"Lines written in Early Spring"

[13] Expressing feelings of great sadness or disappointment about something,/ regrets

William Wordsworth is one of the Romantic poets who is an embodiment of the literature of the era. This compilation of his selected poetry could very well be represented by one of the poems in it, "Lines Written in Early Spring."

Wordsworth and Romanticism:

Romanticism is a most unique period in literature stemming from the enlightenment and characterized by a deep connection to, and exploration of, nature. Wordsworth is one of the most well known writers of the time. Much of his work was inspired primarily by nature, as well as the changes in philosophical and political thought taking place around him. A common theme in Wordsworth's poetry is the relationship between man and nature. This theme of man versus nature prevails in "Lines Written in Early Spring", as Wordsworth explores the spirit of revolution in the context of a peaceful and natural earth.

Paraphrase

We can think of William Wordsworth as one of the greatest poets to have ever written poetry about one's relationship to nature, man, and remembrance. "Lines written in early spring" is a poem that is both bittersweet and joyous. It consists of three layers: **rebirth**, man's **relation to man**, and **man's valuation[14] of experience.**

The first stanza:

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

The first layer of the poem exists in the very first few stanzas. The speaker describes what nature is doing when it is springtime. The flowers are coming out, surrounded by the "blended notes" the birds are singing - and all of this instills pleasure in the speaker. Yet, even as he enjoys the

[14] Appreciating, knowing its importance

scene, it inspires a melancholy mood and the speaker begins to have dark thoughts about humanity. However, the first stanza's happy mood is changed by its last line, which reads, "Bring sad thoughts to the mind" (line 4)

The Second Stanza:

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Similarly, the second stanza's joyousness is enclosed by the ominous phrase, **"And much it griev'd my heart to think/ What man has made of man"** (lines 7-8). In these first two stanzas, then, there are two forces in tension: we have

the beauty of spring which is abundant[15] all around us, and makes us happy; we also have man's negative relationship to man, whereby we destroy beauty and perpetuate hatred and fear.

The Third Stanza:

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

These thoughts, however, are pushed to the background once the third stanza comes around. The speaker then begins to talk about flowers and how they "enjoy the air [that they] breathe" (line 12).

The fourth stanza:

The birds around me hopped and played,

[15] Too much, more than enough

Their thoughts I cannot measure: --

But the least motion which they made,

It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The fourth stanza works similarly, ending with the speaker's incomprehensibility to understand the amount of pleasure that spring (and nature in general) brings.

The fifth stanza:

The budding twigs spread out their fan,

To catch the breezy air;

And I must think, do all I can,

That there was pleasure there.

The fifth stanza makes way for the final stanza by focusing attention to the word "pleasure" (line 20). We do not explicitly see this word before in the poem, so it is important to note it. However, this "pleasure" is also a

forced one, for the speaker has to "think, do all [he] can/ That there was pleasure there" (line 20). In this stanza he is commenting about the previous stanza in which he is describing how the flowers seem to be enjoying the air that they are breathing. Likewise, the speaker wants to be like the flowers, but he can't, for he is a human.

The sixth and last stanza:

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man

In the last stanza, he asks whether, if it is true that nature is full of pleasure, he then has a good reason to be sad about "what man has made of man": The last stanza illustrates that conclusion. The speaker deduces[16] that he should "lament" (line 23) and feel the way that he feels because of

[16] يستنتج Thinks, comes to know

"what man has made of We can be as happy as the flowers, since we breathe the same air that they do, but we aren't. man" (line 24). We can be as happy as the flowers, since we breathe the same air that they do, but we aren't. And, we aren't happy because of one another.

A Critical analysis of “Lines Written in Early Spring”

The Romantic Framework:

"**Lines Written In Early Spring**" is classic Wordsworth. I like this poem in particular because it typifies English Romantic Verse. Wordsworth's vivid description of nature (which is his trademark) and his lamentations of the current state of mankind fit perfectly INTO a Romantic framework.

The story behind:

The story behind this poem is that it was written by Wordsworth on his return from France. He was in a nervous state of mind, having gone through harrowing

experiences during the French Revolution there. He was ashamed[17] and frustrated by the violence of the whole event, and this disenchantment with regard to humanity is clearly evident in the line '...what man has made of man'

The title:

The structure of the title “Lines Written in Early Spring” is not unusual for Wordsworth. In fact, it is similar to the title of another poem he wrote, “Written in Very Early Youth”. However, what is important about the title of this poem is the word “spring”.

The Form:

"Lines Written in Early Spring" has a rather **simple form**: it is composed of only **six four-line stanzas**, and is written in **iambs** with **an abab rhyme scheme for each stanza.** The simplicity of the poem is representative of the bulk of

[17] Feeling guilty or embarrassed

the rest of Wordsworth's works (and of most Romantic poetry). The simple words and style of the Romantic Movement came from a complete rejection[18] of the flowery, lofty style that was popular in previous years.

Symbolism:

Whether or not spring was in fact the season during which Wordsworth wrote this poem, it is the symbolism of this word that contributes much to the meaning of the poem. In many cultures, spring is **symbolic** for rebirth, or a new beginning. In a way, this is a very accurate description of the atmosphere the time of revolution.

With the American and French Revolutions seen as new beginnings for many, signifying modern thought and a complete reform from the old ways. Spring is also a better time, as it is usually warmth, preceded by a cold winter. However, the fact that the time is specified as early spring

[18] refuse

symbolizes that things are only beginning to get better, and it is still early in the process.

This setting:

The Setting, **the woods** make a perfect harmony. Nature and harmony are pleasant thoughts that are followed by sad thoughts. Perhaps the "sad thoughts" Wordsworth refers to are those brought forth by seeing how everything in nature is at peace, while man cannot be at peace with his fellow man.

Contrast:

Besides for the obvious contrast of what nature intended and what man has done, Wordsworth also adds **another contrast** of Nature versus God. It seems almost as if nature is replacing God or "heaven" symbolically, as human nature is replacing religion and God's moral law. This notion traces back to the **romantic period** stemming from the enlightenment. Wordsworth tries to reconcile the two

through both thought and feeling, in the same manner as reconciling man with nature.

Personification:

Personification is the most common of literary devices used. Examples of this are shown when he writes: "And 'tis my faith that every flower Enjoys the air it breathes" (Stanza 3, Lines 11-12). He is giving a flower the human characteristic of enjoying the air it "breathes". Another example of personification in this poem is when Wordsworth writes: "The budding twigs spread out their fan, To catch the breezy air" (Stanza 5, Lines 17-18). In this verse he is giving budding twigs the human characteristic of spreading out to catch breezy air.

Finally, the speaker is a thoughtful being, a **philosopher** of sorts, and is certainly reasonable.

She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways
BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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

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

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

London, 1802

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

To My Sister

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

It is the first mild day of March:
Each minute sweeter than before
The redbreast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.
There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.
My sister! (’tis a wish of mine)
Now that our morning meal is done,
Make haste, your morning task resign;
Come forth and feel the sun.
Edward will come with you—and, pray,
Put on with speed your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We’ll give to idleness.
No joyless forms shall regulate
Our living calendar:
We from to-day, my Friend, will date
The opening of the year.
Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth:
—It is the hour of feeling.
One moment now may give us more
Than years of toiling reason:
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.
Some silent laws our hearts will make,
Which they shall long obey:
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day.

And from the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our souls:
They shall be tuned to love.
Then come, my Sister! come, I pray,
With speed put on your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

My Heart Leaps Up
William Wordsworth - 1770-1850

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

Yes, It Was The Mountain Echo

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

YES, it was the mountain Echo,
Solitary, clear, profound,
Answering to the shouting Cuckoo,
Giving to her sound for sound!

Unsolicited reply
To a babbling wanderer sent;
Like her ordinary cry,
Like--but oh, how different!

Hears not also mortal Life?
Hear not we, unthinking Creatures!
Slaves of folly, love, or strife--
Voices of two different natures?

Have not 'we' too?--yes, we have
Answers, and we know not whence;
Echoes from beyond the grave,
Recognised intelligence!

Such rebounds our inward ear
Catches sometimes from afar--
Listen, ponder, hold them dear;
For of God,--of God they are.

There was a Boy

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

There was a Boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander! many a time,
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
That they might answer him.—And they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
Of jocund din! And, when there came a pause
Of silence such as baffled his best skill:
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain-torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This boy was taken from his mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
Pre-eminent in beauty is the vale
Where he was born and bred: the churchyard hangs
Upon a slope above the village-school;
And through that churchyard when my way has led
On summer-evenings, I believe that there
A long half-hour together I have stood

Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies!

The Solitary Reaper

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

*"Kubla Khan"

*"The Good, Great Man"

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born in Devon, England, in **1772**. His father, a clergyman, moved his family to London when Coleridge was young, and it was there that Coleridge attended school Christ's Hospital School (as he would later recall in poems such as “Frost at Midnight”). He later attended **Cambridge** but **left** without completing his studies. During the politically charged atmosphere of the late eighteenth century—the French Revolution had sent shockwaves through Europe, and England and France were at war.

Coleridge made a name for himself both as a political radical and as an important young poet; he became one of the most important writers in England. Collaborating with Wordsworth on the revolutionary *Lyrical Ballads* of

1798, Coleridge helped to inaugurate[19] the Romantic era in England

Coleridge became the poet of imagination, exploring the relationships between nature and the mind as it exists as a separate entity. Poems such as “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “Kubla Khan” demonstrate Coleridge’s talent for concocting bizarre, unsettling stories full of fantastic imagery and magic; in poems such as “Frost at Midnight” and “Dejection: An Ode,” he muses explicitly on the nature of the mind as it interacts with the creative source of nature.

Coleridge married in 1795 However, although he continued to write until his death in 1834, Romanticism was always a movement about youth, and today Coleridge is remembered primarily for the poems he wrote while still in his twenties.

However, most of Coleridge's poem conforms too many of the guiding **principles of Romanticism**, but we

[19] Start.

must highlight **a key difference between** Coleridge and his fellow Romantics, specifically **Wordsworth.** Wordsworth, raised in the rustic[20] countryside, saw his own childhood as a time when his connection with the natural world was at its greatest; he revisited his memories of childhood in order to soothe his feelings and provoke his imagination. **Coleridge,** on the other hand, was raised in London, *"pent 'mid cloisters dim,"* and questions Wordsworth's easy identification of childhood with a kind of automatic, original happiness; instead, in this poem he says that, as a child, he "*saw naught lovely but the stars and sky"* and seems to feel the lingering effects of that alienation.[21] In this poem, we see how the pain of this alienation has strengthened Coleridge's wish that his child enjoy an idyllic[22] Wordsworthian upbringing *"by lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags / Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds..."* Rather than seeing the link between

[20] Relating to the village life and farmers.
[21] Being away from his home country, living in other county.
[22] Very happy and peaceful.

childhood and nature as an inevitable, Coleridge seems to perceive it as a fragile, precious, and extraordinary connection, one of which he himself was deprived.

In expressing its **central themes,** "Frost at Midnight" relies on the poet's experience when he sits up late one **winter night thinking**. His observation gives the reader a quick impression of the **scene**, from the "**silent ministry"** of the **frost** to **the cry** of the **owl** and the **sleeping child.**

Coleridge uses **language** that indicates the immediacy of the scene to draw in the reader; for instance, the speaker cries *"Hark!"* upon hearing the owl, as though he were surprised by its call. The objects surrounding the speaker become **metaphors** for the work of the mind and the imagination, so that the fluttering film on the fire grate plunges him into the recollection of his childhood. His memory of feeling trapped in the schoolhouse naturally

brings him back into his immediate surroundings with a surge of love and sympathy for his son.

The final scene of the frost and the icicles, which, forming and shining in silence, mirror the silent way in which the world works upon the mind; this revisitation of winter's frosty forms brings the poem **full circle**.

Kubla Khan

BY SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
  Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
  The shadow of the dome of pleasure
  Floated midway on the waves;

Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Summary

The speaker describes the “stately pleasure-dome” built in Xanadu according to the decree of Kubla Khan, in the place where Alph, the sacred river, ran “through caverns measureless to man / Down to a sunless sea.” Walls and towers were raised around “twice five miles of fertile ground,” filled with beautiful gardens and forests. A “deep romantic chasm” slanted down a green hill, occasionally spewing forth a violent and powerful burst of water, so great that it flung boulders up with it “like rebounding hail.” The river ran five miles through the woods, finally sinking “in tumult to a lifeless ocean.” Amid that tumult, in the place “as holy and enchanted / As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted / By woman wailing to her demon-lover,” Kubla heard “ancestral voices” bringing prophesies of war. The pleasure-dome’s shadow floated on the waves, where the mingled sounds of the fountain and the caves could be heard. “It was a miracle of rare device,”

the speaker says, “A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!”

The speaker says that he once saw a “damsel with a dulcimer,” an Abyssinian maid who played her dulcimer and sang “of Mount Abora.” He says that if he could revive “her symphony and song” within him, he would rebuild the pleasure-dome out of music, and all who heard him would cry “Beware!” of “His flashing eyes, his floating hair!” The hearers would circle him thrice and close their eyes with “holy dread,” knowing that he had tasted honeydew, “and drunk the milk of Paradise.”

Form

The chant-like, musical incantations of “Kubla Khan” result from Coleridge’s masterful use of iambic tetrameter and alternating rhyme schemes. The first stanza is written in tetrameter with a rhyme scheme of ABAABCCDEDE, alternating between staggered rhymes and couplets. The

second stanza expands into tetrameter and follows roughly the same rhyming pattern, also expanded—ABAABCCDDFFGGHIIHJJ. The third stanza tightens into tetrameter and rhymes ABABCC. The fourth stanza continues the tetrameter of the third and rhymes ABCCBDEDEFGFFFGHHG.

Commentary

Along with "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Kubla Khan" is one of Coleridge's most famous and enduring poems. The story of its composition is also one of the most famous in the history of English poetry. As the poet explains in the short preface to this poem, he had fallen asleep after taking "an anodyne" prescribed "in consequence of a slight disposition" (this is a euphemism for opium, to which Coleridge was known to be addicted). Before falling asleep, he had been reading a story in which Kubla Khan commanded the building of a new palace; Coleridge claims that while he slept, he had a fantastic

vision and composed simultaneously—while sleeping—some two or three hundred lines of poetry, “if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or conscious effort.”

Waking after about three hours, the poet seized a pen and began writing furiously; however, after copying down the first three stanzas of his dreamt poem—the first three stanzas of the current poem as we know it—he was interrupted by a “person on business from Porlock,” who detained him for an hour. After this interruption, he was unable to recall the rest of the vision or the poetry he had composed in his opium dream. It is thought that the final stanza of the poem, thematizing the idea of the lost vision through the figure of the “damsel with a dulcimer” and the milk of Paradise, was written post-interruption. The mysterious person from Porlock is one of the most

notorious and enigmatic figures in Coleridge's biography; no one knows who he was or why he disturbed the poet or what he wanted or, indeed, whether any of Coleridge's story is actually true. But the person from Porlock has become a metaphor for the malicious interruptions the world throws in the way of inspiration and genius, and "Kubla Khan," strange and ambiguous as it is, has become what is perhaps the definitive statement on the obstruction and thwarting of the visionary genius.

Regrettably, the story of the poem's composition, while thematically rich in and of itself, often overshadows the poem proper, which is one of Coleridge's most haunting and beautiful. The first three stanzas are products of pure imagination: The pleasure-dome of Kubla Khan is not a useful metaphor for anything in particular (though in the context of the poem's history, it becomes a metaphor for the unbuilt monument of imagination); however, it is a fantastically prodigious descriptive act. The poem becomes

especially evocative when, after the second stanza, the meter suddenly tightens; the resulting lines are terse and solid, almost beating out the sound of the war drums ("The shadow of the dome of pleasure / Floated midway on the waves...").

The fourth stanza states the theme of the poem as a whole (though "Kubla Khan" is almost impossible to consider as a unified whole, as its parts are so sharply divided). The speaker says that he once had a vision of the damsel singing of Mount Abora; this vision becomes a metaphor for Coleridge's vision of the 300-hundred-line masterpiece he never completed. The speaker insists that if he could only "revive" within him "her symphony and song," he would recreate the pleasure-dome out of music and words, and take on the persona of the magician or visionary. His hearers would recognize the dangerous power of the vision, which would manifest itself in his "flashing eyes" and "floating hair." But, awestruck, they would nonetheless

dutifully take part in the ritual, recognizing that “he on honey-dew hath fed, / And drunk the milk of Paradise.”

Literary Devices

The most striking of the many poetic devices in “Kubla Khan” are its sounds and images. One of the most musical of poems, it is full of assonance and alliteration, as can be seen in the opening five lines:

In Xanadu did Kubla KhanA stately pleasure-dome decree:Where Alph, the sacred river, ranThrough caverns measureless to man Down to a sunless sea.

This repetition of *a, e,* and *u* sounds continues throughout the poem with the *a* sounds dominating, creating a vivid yet mournful song appropriate for one intended to inspire its

listeners to cry “Beware! Beware!” in their awe of the poet. The halting assonance in the line “As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing” creates the effect of breathing.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem “Kubla Khan” uses a wide variety of literary devices, including alliteration, assonance, consonance, and onomatopoeia.

Alliteration, or the repetition of the same consonant sounds at the very beginnings of words, appears in numerous lines. Examples include “Kubla Khan” (1), “measureless to man” (4), “sunless sea” (5), “five miles of fertile” (6), and “sunny spots” (11), among many other instances. Since alliteration is so easy to notice, there seems little point in continuing this list.

Assonance, of the repetition of the same vowel sounds, is also a common device of sound used in “Kubla Khan.” Examples include “twice five miles” (6), “fast thick pants”

(18), “swift half-intermitted” (20), “Five miles” (25), and numerous other instances.

Consonance, or the repetition of the same consonant sounds in places other than the beginnings of words, also appears frequently in “Kubla Khan.” Examples include “romantic chasm” (12), “waning moon was haunted” (15), “Amid whose swift half-intermitted” (20), and many other instances.

Finally, onomatopoeia, or the effect in which a word sounds like the thing it describes, appears in such possible examples as “wailing” (16), “fast thick pants” (18), and “Five miles meandering with a mazy motion” (25). Each of these examples is somewhat debatable, whereas there can be no debate about alliteration, consonance, and assonance.

The device most often used in this poem is consonance, or the repetition of the same consonants sounds. Indeed, alliteration is often seen as simply a kind or species of

consonance. Repeated consonant sounds are a common feature of “normal” speech, and such sounds tend to be emphasized even more strongly by poets, especially by Coleridge in a poem as musical as “Kubla Khan.”

Often, in this poem, the devices interact with one another. Thus, one single line --

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion combines assonance ("Five miles"), alliteration ("meandering with amazy motion"), and, arguably, onomatopoeia.

The imagery of “Kubla Khan” is evocative without being so specific that it negates the magical, dreamlike effect for which Coleridge is striving. The “gardens bright with sinuous rills,” “incense-bearing tree,” “forests ancient as the hills,” and “sunny spots of greenery” are deliberately vague, as if recalled from a dream. Such images stimulate a vision of Xanadu bound only by the reader’s imagination.

Try these questions:

1-Imagination in Coleridge's theory is divided into 3 types: Primary, Secondary and Fancy. Discuss...

2-How is "Kubla Khan" a Romantic poem and what are the romantic elements found in that poem?

3-Analyze the supernatural elements in the poetry of Coleridge.

4-Why is "Kubla Khan" called a fragment?

5-What is the main theme in "Kubla Khan"?

6-Discuss supernatural elements in Coleridge's Kubla Khan.

7-Please give some examples of simile and metaphor in "Kubla Khan" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

8-Does "Kubla Khan" reflect Coleridge's definition of a Romantic poet?

9-What is the subject matter of the poem "Kubla Khan?"

The Good, Great Man

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

'How seldom, friend! a good great man inherits
Honour or wealth with all his worth and pains!
It sounds like stories from the land of spirits
If any man obtain that which he merits
Or any merit that which he obtains.'

For shame, dear friend, renounce this canting strain!
What would'st thou have a good great man obtain?
Place? titles? salary? a gilded chain?
Or throne of corses which his sword had slain?
Greatness and goodness are not means, but ends!
Hath he not always treasures, always friends,
The good great man? three treasures, LOVE, and LIGHT,
And CALM THOUGHTS, regular as infant's breath:
And three firm friends, more sure than day and night,
HIMSELF, his MAKER, and the ANGEL DEATH!

Frost at Midnight

BY SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

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.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,

Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering *stranger* ! and as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,

Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!
And so I brooded all the following morn,
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the *stranger's* face,
Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersèd vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God

Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the night-thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

Christabel

BY SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

PART I

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
Tu—whit! Tu—whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.
Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothèd knight;

And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest misletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell.—
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
    What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandl'd were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!

Mary mother, save me now!
(Said Christabel) And who art thou?

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet:—
Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness:
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!
Said Christabel, How camest thou here?
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
Did thus pursue her answer meet:—

My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine:
Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
They choked my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white.
The palfrey was as fleet as wind,
And they rode furiously behind.

They spurred amain, their steeds were white:
And once we crossed the shade of night.
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
I have no thought what men they be;
Nor do I know how long it is
(For I have lain entranced I wis)
Since one, the tallest of the five,
Took me from the palfrey's back,
A weary woman, scarce alive.
Some muttered words his comrades spoke:
He placed me underneath this oak;
He swore they would return with haste;
Whither they went I cannot tell—
I thought I heard, some minutes past,
Sounds as of a castle bell.
Stretch forth thy hand (thus ended she).
And help a wretched maid to flee.

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand,
And comforted fair Geraldine:
O well, bright dame! may you command
The service of Sir Leoline;
And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth and friends withal
To guide and guard you safe and free
Home to your noble father's hall.

She rose: and forth with steps they passed
That strove to be, and were not, fast.
Her gracious stars the lady blest,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel:
All our household are at rest,
The hall as silent as the cell;

Sir Leoline is weak in health,
And may not well awakened be,
But we will move as if in stealth,
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night, to share your couch with me.

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight,
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without,
Where an army in battle array had marched out.
The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.

So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the lady by her side,
Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!
Alas, alas! said Geraldine,
I cannot speak for weariness.
So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel, the mastiff old
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,

Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she uttered yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel.
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,
Pass as lightly as you will!
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying;
But when the lady passed, there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;
And Christabel saw the lady's eye,
And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.
O softly tread, said Christabel,
My father seldom sleepeth well.

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,
And jealous of the listening air
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room,
As still as death, with stifled breath!
And now have reached her chamber door;
And now doth Geraldine press down
The rushes of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air,
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see

The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain,
For a lady's chamber meet:
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel's feet.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim;
But Christabel the lamp will trim.
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright,
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,
Sank down upon the floor below.

O weary lady, Geraldine,
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of virtuous powers;
My mother made it of wild flowers.

And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn?
Christabel answered—Woe is me!
She died the hour that I was born.
I have heard the grey-haired friar tell
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle-bell
Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.
O mother dear! that thou wert here!
I would, said Geraldine, she were!

But soon with altered voice, said she—
'Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!
I have power to bid thee flee.'

Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?
Why stares she with unsettled eye?
Can she the bodiless dead espy?

And why with hollow voice cries she,
'Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me.'

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue—
Alas! said she, this ghastly ride—
Dear lady! it hath wildered you!
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, ' 'tis over now!'

Again the wild-flower wine she drank:
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright:
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a lady of a far countrèe.

And thus the lofty lady spake—
'All they who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befel,
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie.'

Quoth Christabel, So let it be!
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro,
That vain it were her lids to close;
So half-way from the bed she rose,
And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
And slowly rolled her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud,
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast:
Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side—
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;
Ah! what a stricken look was hers!
Deep from within she seems half-way
To lift some weight with sick assay,
And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
Then suddenly, as one defied,
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the Maiden's side!—
And in her arms the maid she took,
Ah wel-a-day!

And with low voice and doleful look
These words did say:
'In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow;
But vainly thou warrest,
For this is alone in
Thy power to declare,
That in the dim forest
Thou heard'st a low moaning,
And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair;
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air.'

THE CONCLUSION TO PART I

It was a lovely sight to see
The lady Christabel, when she
Was praying at the old oak tree.
Amid the jaggèd shadows
Of mossy leafless boughs,
Kneeling in the moonlight,
To make her gentle vows;
Her slender palms together prest,
Heaving sometimes on her breast;
Her face resigned to bliss or bale—
Her face, oh call it fair not pale,
And both blue eyes more bright than clear,
Each about to have a tear.

With open eyes (ah woe is me!)
Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,

Fearfully dreaming, yet, I wis,
Dreaming that alone, which is—
O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,
The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?
And lo! the worker of these harms,
That holds the maiden in her arms,
Seems to slumber still and mild,
As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
O Geraldine! since arms of thine
Have been the lovely lady's prison.
O Geraldine! one hour was thine—
Thou'st had thy will! By tairn and rill,
The night-birds all that hour were still.
But now they are jubilant anew,
From cliffand tower, tu—whoo! tu—whoo!
Tu—whoo! tu—whoo! from wood and fell!

And see! the lady Christabel
Gathers herself from out her trance;
Her limbs relax, her countenance
Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids
Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds—
Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
And oft the while she seems to smile
As infants at a sudden light!

Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,
Like a youthful hermitess,
Beauteous in a wilderness,
Who, praying always, prays in sleep.
And, if she move unquietly,

Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free
Comes back and tingles in her feet.
No doubt, she hath a vision sweet.
What if her guardian spirit 'twere,
What if she knew her mother near?
But this she knows, in joys and woes,
That saints will aid if men will call:
For the blue sky bends over all!

PART II

Each matin bell, the Baron saith,
Knells us back to a world of death.
These words Sir Leoline first said,
When he rose and found his lady dead:
These words Sir Leoline will say
Many a morn to his dying day!

And hence the custom and law began
That still at dawn the sacristan,
Who duly pulls the heavy bell,
Five and forty beads must tell
Between each stroke—a warning knell,
Which not a soul can choose but hear
From Bratha Head to Wyndermere.

Saith Bracy the bard, So let it knell!
And let the drowsy sacristan
Still count as slowly as he can!
There is no lack of such, I ween,
As well fill up the space between.
In Langdale Pike and Witch's Lair,
And Dungeon-ghyll so foully rent,
With ropes of rock and bells of air

Three sinful sextons' ghosts are pent,
Who all give back, one after t'other,
The death-note to their living brother;
And oft too, by the knell offended,
Just as their one! two! three! is ended,
The devil mocks the doleful tale
With a merry peal from Borodale.

The air is still! through mist and cloud
That merry peal comes ringing loud;
And Geraldine shakes off her dread,
And rises lightly from the bed;
Puts on her silken vestments white,
And tricks her hair in lovely plight,
And nothing doubting of her spell
Awakens the lady Christabel.
'Sleep you, sweet lady Christabel?
I trust that you have rested well.'

And Christabel awoke and spied
The same who lay down by her side—
O rather say, the same whom she
Raised up beneath the old oak tree!
Nay, fairer yet! and yet more fair!
For she belike hath drunken deep
Of all the blessedness of sleep!
And while she spake, her looks, her air
Such gentle thankfulness declare,
That (so it seemed) her girded vests
Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.
'Sure I have sinn'd!' said Christabel,
'Now heaven be praised if all be well!'

And in low faltering tones, yet sweet,
Did she the lofty lady greet
With such perplexity of mind
As dreams too lively leave behind.

So quickly she rose, and quickly arrayed
Her maiden limbs, and having prayed
That He, who on the cross did groan,
Might wash away her sins unknown,
She forthwith led fair Geraldine
To meet her sire, Sir Leoline.

The lovely maid and the lady tall
Are pacing both into the hall,
And pacing on through page and groom,
Enter the Baron's presence-room.

The Baron rose, and while he prest
His gentle daughter to his breast,
With cheerful wonder in his eyes
The lady Geraldine espies,
And gave such welcome to the same,
As might beseem so bright a dame!

But when he heard the lady's tale,
And when she told her father's name,
Why waxed Sir Leoline so pale,
Murmuring o'er the name again,
Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine?
Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;

And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.
And thus it chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.
Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother:
They parted—ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining—
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between;—
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,
Stood gazing on the damsel's face:
And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine
Came back upon his heart again.

O then the Baron forgot his age,
His noble heart swelled high with rage;
He swore by the wounds in Jesu's side
He would proclaim it far and wide,
With trump and solemn heraldry,
That they, who thus had wronged the dame,
Were base as spotted infamy!
'And if they dare deny the same,
My herald shall appoint a week,
And let the recreant traitors seek
My tourney court—that there and then
I may dislodge their reptile souls

From the bodies and forms of men!'
He spake: his eye in lightning rolls!
For the lady was ruthlessly seized; and he kenned
In the beautiful lady the child of his friend!

And now the tears were on his face,
And fondly in his arms he took
Fair Geraldine, who met the embrace,
Prolonging it with joyous look.
Which when she viewed, a vision fell
Upon the soul of Christabel,
The vision of fear, the touch and pain!
She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again—
(Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee,
Thou gentle maid! such sights to see?)

Again she saw that bosom old,
Again she felt that bosom cold,
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound:
Whereat the Knight turned wildly round,
And nothing saw, but his own sweet maid
With eyes upraised, as one that prayed.

The touch, the sight, had passed away,
And in its stead that vision blest,
Which comforted her after-rest
While in the lady's arms she lay,
Had put a rapture in her breast,
And on her lips and o'er her eyes
Spread smiles like light!
With new surprise,
'What ails then my belovèd child?
The Baron said—His daughter mild

Made answer, 'All will yet be well!'
I ween, she had no power to tell
Aught else: so mighty was the spell.

Yet he, who saw this Geraldine,
Had deemed her sure a thing divine:
Such sorrow with such grace she blended,
As if she feared she had offended
Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid!
And with such lowly tones she prayed
She might be sent without delay
Home to her father's mansion.
'Nay!
Nay, by my soul!' said Leoline.
'Ho! Bracy the bard, the charge be thine!
Go thou, with sweet music and loud,
And take two steeds with trappings proud,
And take the youth whom thou lov'st best
To bear thy harp, and learn thy song,
And clothe you both in solemn vest,
And over the mountains haste along,
Lest wandering folk, that are abroad,
Detain you on the valley road.

'And when he has crossed the Irthing flood,
My merry bard! he hastes, he hastes
Up Knorren Moor, through Halegarth Wood,
And reaches soon that castle good
Which stands and threatens Scotland's wastes.

'Bard Bracy! bard Bracy! your horses are fleet,
Ye must ride up the hall, your music so sweet,
More loud than your horses' echoing feet!

And loud and loud to Lord Roland call,
Thy daughter is safe in Langdale hall!
Thy beautiful daughter is safe and free—
Sir Leoline greets thee thus through me!
He bids thee come without delay
With all thy numerous array
And take thy lovely daughter home:
And he will meet thee on the way
With all his numerous array
White with their panting palfreys' foam:
And, by mine honour! I will say,
That I repent me of the day
When I spake words of fierce disdain
To Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine!—
—For since that evil hour hath flown,
Many a summer's sun hath shone;
Yet ne'er found I a friend again
Like Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine.

The lady fell, and clasped his knees,
Her face upraised, her eyes o'erflowing;
And Bracy replied, with faltering voice,
His gracious Hail on all bestowing!—
'Thy words, thou sire of Christabel,
Are sweeter than my harp can tell;
Yet might I gain a boon of thee,
This day my journey should not be,
So strange a dream hath come to me,
That I had vowed with music loud
To clear yon wood from thing unblest.
Warned by a vision in my rest!
For in my sleep I saw that dove,
That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,

And call'st by thy own daughter's name—
Sir Leoline! I saw the same
Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,
Among the green herbs in the forest alone.
Which when I saw and when I heard,
I wonder'd what might ail the bird;
For nothing near it could I see
Save the grass and green herbs underneath the old tree.

'And in my dream methought I went
To search out what might there be found;
And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,
That thus lay fluttering on the ground.
I went and peered, and could descry
No cause for her distressful cry;
But yet for her dear lady's sake
I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
When lo! I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck.
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!
I woke; it was the midnight hour,
The clock was echoing in the tower;
But though my slumber was gone by,
This dream it would not pass away—
It seems to live upon my eye!

And thence I vowed this self-same day
With music strong and saintly song
To wander through the forest bare,
Lest aught unholy loiter there.'

Thus Bracy said: the Baron, the while,
Half-listening heard him with a smile;
Then turned to Lady Geraldine,
His eyes made up of wonder and love;
And said in courtly accents fine,
'Sweet maid, Lord Roland's beauteous dove,
With arms more strong than harp or song,
Thy sire and I will crush the snake!'
He kissed her forehead as he spake,
And Geraldine in maiden wise
Casting down her large bright eyes,
With blushing cheek and courtesy fine
She turned her from Sir Leoline;
Softly gathering up her train,
That o'er her right arm fell again;
And folded her arms across her chest,
And couched her head upon her breast,
And looked askance at Christabel
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy;
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,
At Christabel she looked askance!—
One moment—and the sight was fled!
But Christabel in dizzy trance
Stumbling on the unsteady ground
Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound;
And Geraldine again turned round,
And like a thing, that sought relief,
Full of wonder and full of grief,

She rolled her large bright eyes divine
Wildly on Sir Leoline.

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,
She nothing sees—no sight but one!
The maid, devoid of guile and sin,
I know not how, in fearful wise,
So deeply she had drunken in
That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,
That all her features were resigned
To this sole image in her mind:
And passively did imitate
That look of dull and treacherous hate!
And thus she stood, in dizzy trance;
Still picturing that look askance
With forced unconscious sympathy
Full before her father's view—
As far as such a look could be
In eyes so innocent and blue!

And when the trance was o'er, the maid
Paused awhile, and inly prayed:
Then falling at the Baron's feet,
'By my mother's soul do I entreat
That thou this woman send away!'
She said: and more she could not say:
For what she knew she could not tell,
O'er-mastered by the mighty spell.

Why is thy cheek so wan and wild,
Sir Leoline? Thy only child
Lies at thy feet, thy joy, thy pride,
So fair, so innocent, so mild;

The same, for whom thy lady died!
O by the pangs of her dear mother
Think thou no evil of thy child!
For her, and thee, and for no other,
She prayed the moment ere she died:
Prayed that the babe for whom she died,
Might prove her dear lord's joy and pride!
That prayer her deadly pangs beguiled,
Sir Leoline!
And wouldst thou wrong thy only child,
Her child and thine?

Within the Baron's heart and brain
If thoughts, like these, had any share,
They only swelled his rage and pain,
And did but work confusion there.
His heart was cleft with pain and rage,
His cheeks they quivered, his eyes were wild,
Dishonoured thus in his old age;
Dishonoured by his only child,
And all his hospitality
To the wronged daughter of his friend
By more than woman's jealousy
Brought thus to a disgraceful end—
He rolled his eye with stern regard
Upon the gentle minstrel bard,
And said in tones abrupt, austere—
'Why, Bracy! dost thou loiter here?
I bade thee hence!' The bard obeyed;
And turning from his own sweet maid,
The agèd knight, Sir Leoline,
Led forth the lady Geraldine!

THE CONCLUSION TO PART II

A little child, a limber elf,
Singing, dancing to itself,
A fairy thing with red round cheeks,
That always finds, and never seeks,
Makes such a vision to the sight
As fills a father's eyes with light;
And pleasures flow in so thick and fast
Upon his heart, that he at last
Must needs express his love's excess
With words of unmeant bitterness.
Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
Thoughts so all unlike each other;
To mutter and mock a broken charm,
To dally with wrong that does no harm.
Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty
At each wild word to feel within
A sweet recoil of love and pity.
And what, if in a world of sin
(O sorrow and shame should this be true!)
Such giddiness of heart and brain
Comes seldom save from rage and pain,
So talks as it 's most used to do.

A BROKEN FRIENDSHIP - SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Alas! They had been friends in youth;But
whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be worth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.
And thus is chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.
Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother:
They parted - ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from painting -
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
A dreary see now flows between; -
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

Youth and Age

BY SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Verse, a breeze mid blossoms straying,
Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee—
Both were mine! Life went a-maying
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy,
When I was young!

When I was young?—Ah, woful When!
Ah! for the change 'twixt Now and Then!
This breathing house not built with hands,
This body that does me grievous wrong,
O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands,
How lightly then it flashed along:—
Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,
On winding lakes and rivers wide,
That ask no aid of sail or oar,
That fear no spite of wind or tide!
Nought cared this body for wind or weather
When Youth and I lived in't together.

Flowers are lovely; Love is flower-like;
Friendship is a sheltering tree;
O! the joys, that came down shower-like,
Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty,
Ere I was old!
Ere I was old? Ah woful Ere,
Which tells me, Youth's no longer here!
O Youth! for years so many and sweet,
'Tis known, that Thou and I were one,
I'll think it but a fond conceit—
It cannot be that Thou art gone!

Thy vesper-bell hath not yet toll'd:—
And thou wert aye a masker bold!
What strange disguise hast now put on,
To make believe, that thou are gone?
I see these locks in silvery slips,
This drooping gait, this altered size:
But Spring-tide blossoms on thy lips,
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
Life is but thought: so think I will
That Youth and I are house-mates still.

Dew-drops are the gems of morning,
But the tears of mournful eve!
Where no hope is, life's a warning
That only serves to make us grieve,
When we are old:
That only serves to make us grieve
With oft and tedious taking-leave,
Like some poor nigh-related guest,
That may not rudely be dismist;
Yet hath outstay'd his welcome while,
And tells the jest without the smile.

LORD BYRON

*"She Walks in Beauty"

*"When we two parted"

The Life of Lord Byron

About the Age

George Gordon Byron (called Lord Byron), John Keats and Percy Byshe Shelley belong to the second generation of Romantic Poets. Their works exhibit passion and revolutionary zeal. These three writers offer many points of close resemblance. Hence they are often studied together. Byron was born on the eve of the French Revolution and Shelley and Keats were born shortly after that. The situation in England was one of unrest. Agricultural England was giving way to Industrial England. Revolutionary ideas generated by the French Revolution were passionately accepted by some and denounced by others. Political unrest was prevalent in the whole of Europe. Despite that utilitarian philosophy progressed. This philosophy was popularized by Jeremy Bentham who believed in the concept of the "greatest happiness of the greatest number." Liberalism was advocated. The middle class began to have a realistic outlook.

Literature reflected the intensity of the period and the works of these writers were in a sense representative of the times. The Lake Poets (William Wordsworth, S.T. Collridge and Robert Southey) were called the first generation of Romantic Poets. If they set the trend of poetry writing in England, the second generation of poets carried it further. Keats, Shelley and Byron freed poetry from all its restraints. They formed a group by themselves. The intensity of their art was understood by the elite. Byron crossed the boundaries of his country and conquered

Europe with his fiery imagination. Keats and Shelley also won name and fame in the continent.

The period after the French Revolution is called the post Revolutionary era. Byron's was the most articulate voice of this era. He expressed the spirit of the age along with Keats and Shelley The other well known writer was Sir Walter Scott. Scott was an immensely learned man: he had translated works of Goethe and some German ballads. Scottish history often finds place in his works. His characters are often shaped by the environment they are in.

Byron was very much influenced by Scott's works. Both Byron and Shelley (1792-1822) had a low view of public applause and they had a distaste for the British Establishment. John Keats (1795-1921) was much influenced by poets both living and dead. This period also saw the birth of some famous essayists. One such essayist was William Hazlitt (1780-1830) who along with Coleridge is one of the famous literary critics of this age. Hazlitt won fame also as a critic of Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama. Hazlitt's friend 'Elia' Charles Lamb (1775-1834) was also an essayist of great repute. Lamb enjoyed Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. His essays (written under the name of Elia) reveal a Londoner's pleasure with the streets and institutions of London and the attachment to a countryside situated at a distance from the town. Another famous writer of this age was Thomas De Quineey (1785-1859) whose most celebrated work was *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater.*

The Romantics Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Keats, Shelley and Byron defy definition. Their poetry has imaginative spontaneity, and elements of wonder. They reacted against classical standards of balance, order, restraint, proportion and objectivity. The polished wit of the Augustans appeared to the Romantics as shallow and artificial. The Romantics heightened in their works the dignity and simplicity of rural life. Emotions like joy,

dejection, rapture, horror were heighlighted by the Romantics.

The Poet

George Gordon Noel Byron, 6th Baron Byron, was born 22 January 1788 in London and died 19 April 1824 in Missolonghi, Greece.), commonly known simply as Lord Byron, was a British poet and a **leading figure** in **Romanticism.** Amongst Byron's best-known works are the brief poems "*She Walks in Beauty*," *When We Two Parted*, and *"So, we'll go no more a roving*," Byron's notability rests not only on his writings but also on his life, He was among the most famous of the English 'Romantic' poets; his contemporaries included **Percy Shelley** and **John Keats**. He was also a satirist whose poetry and personality captured the imagination of Europe. His major works include *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18) and *Don Juan* (1819-24). He died of fever and exposure while engaged in the Greek struggle for independence.

She Walks in Beauty

1

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes[23] and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed[24] to that tender[25] light
Which heaven to gaudy[26] day denies.

2

One **shade** the more, one **ray** the less,
Had half impaired[27] the nameless grace[28]
Which waves in every raven tress,[29]
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.[30]

3

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,[31]
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!

Lord Byron in 1814.

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[23] **climes**: atmospheres مناخ
[24] **Mellow**: become more relaxed and calm, pleasant, gentle/ become mature
[25] **Tender:** kind/ lovely
[26] **Gaudy**: showy in a vulgar way/too much colored and bright مبهرج
[27] **Impair**: reduce or damage/ make something less good
[28] **Grace**: elegance/ charm
[29] **Tress**: ponytail / hair tied together to the back of the head
[30] **Dwell**: to live in a place
[31] **Eloquent:** expressive, powerful, articulate

The theme:

Lord Byron's opening couplet to "She Walks In Beauty" is among the most memorable and most quoted lines in romantic poetry. The opening lines are effortless, graceful, and beautiful, a fitting match for his poem about a woman who possesses effortless grace and beauty.

Of course it's obvious that this poem is somewhat of a love poem, expressing how beautiful this woman is that Lord Byron is looking at. She combines opposites (or extremes) in perfect proportions in her looks and in her personality. Whether it is a true declaration of love or a statement of admiration (of her beauty) is left to the reader, since it's known that this poem was about his cousin, Mrs. Wilmot, whom he met at a party in a mourning dress of spangled black.

Paraphrase:

Lines 1-2

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;

- An unnamed woman "walks in beauty." This is an odd way of saying that she's beautiful, isn't it? "Walk[ing] in beauty" makes her beauty seem more dynamic – as though it's partly her movement and the spring in her step that make her beautiful. She's not just a pretty face in a portrait; it's the whole living, breathing, "walk[ing]" woman that's beautiful.
- Her beauty is compared to "night." This seems strange – night is dark, right? Aren't beautiful women usually compared to "a summer's day"? (That would be Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, in case you were wondering).

- But the featured woman isn't just compared to any "night," she's compared to a night in a place where there are no clouds and lots of stars. We suppose that means she has a very clear and lovely complexion? Or perhaps being "cloudless" has more to do with her personality – her conscience might be as clear as a "cloudless" sky.
- You see "starry skies" at night, but the brightness of the stars relieves the darkness of the night. This is the first hint of a contrast between light and dark in the poem.
- There's some pretty sweet alliteration in these lines. You might want to head over to the "Symbols" section for more on that before moving forward.

Lines 3-4

And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:

- The contrast between light and dark that was first brought up by the "starry skies" in line 2 is repeated and developed in line 3.
- Everything that is great about both "dark" and "bright" come together in this woman. Essentially, she's got the best of both.
- Her "aspect" can mean both her facial expression and her overall appearance.
- So her whole appearance and especially her "eyes" create some kind of harmony between "dark" and "bright."
- If this seems weird to you, think of a really beautiful person who has dark eyes that always seem to sparkle – or someone whose eye color contrasts with his or her hair color in an attractive way. That's what Byron's talking about – contrast that creates beauty and harmony.

- Byron's setting up a binary, or opposition, between "bright" and "dark," but it's important to realize that neither is considered better or worse than the other. Both have aspects that are "best."

Lines 5-6

Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

- Everything that's great about both "dark and bright" (line 3) is "mellow'd," or toned down to something that's more "tender" and less intense than the light you get during the day.
- Since Byron has been talking about night, try thinking about starlight or moonlight – that would be a "tender light" that is less "gaudy," or bright and blinding, than the light you get during the day.

Lines 7-10

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;

- The balance between "shade" and light in the lady's beauty is so perfect that if you added one more "shade," or took away a single "ray" of light, you'd mess everything up.
- Fiddling with that balance at all would "half impair," or partially damage, the woman's beauty.
- Her beauty and "grace" are so hard to define that they're "nameless." The poet can't quite put his finger on what makes her so "grace[ful]," but he'll give it a try. After all, that's what the poem is doing – attempting to put sentiments into words.

- This "nameless grace" is visible in every lock of her black hair ("every raven tress") and it "lightens" her face.
- Look – more about the contrast of light and dark. The balance between light and dark that creates her "nameless grace" is apparent in both her *dark* hair and in the expression that "*lightens*" her face.

Lines 11-12

Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling place.

- The expression on the woman's face shows how "serenely sweet" her "thoughts" are.
- Her "sweet" expression, the speaker reasons, is an accurate reflection of what's going on inside her mind, which is the "dwelling place" of her thoughts.
- Here we have another binary, or set of contrasts, to keep track of: her *exterior* expression, and her *interior* thoughts.
- The "sweet[ness]" of this lady's expression suggests that her mind is "pure" and innocent.
- "Dear," in this context (and in British English generally), means both precious and valuable.

Lines 13-15
And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,

The woman's smiles and her healthy blushes ("tints") that "glow" on her "cheek" and "brow" are serene and "calm." ("Brow" is just a poetic way of saying forehead.)In other words, she's quiet and rather elegant – she doesn't joke and laugh a lot; she seems to be more of the lovely and regal type.But even though she's quiet and "calm," her "smiles"

and blushes are "eloquent" Her face is very expressive, even if she doesn't say much out loud.

Lines 16-18

But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

But what, exactly, do those "smiles" express? We're so glad you asked: Byron tells us that they reflect all the time that the woman has spent doing good deeds.She's certainly not just a pretty face – she's also kind and good, which is why she's able to look so "calm" and serene: her conscience is at rest.

The woman's serenity and "smiles" also reflect the calmness of her mind. Because she's a good person, her "mind" is at "peace with all below" (everyone on earth).Not only that, but her "love is innocent." This could mean that she's not in love with anyone, or it could mean that she is, but that her love is pure and "innocent" – in other words, that it's not a material love.

Thus "She walks in Beauty" starts with the title: *"She walks in beauty, like the night/Of cloudless climes and starry skies;"* (lines 1-2). These are the first two lines, which are a couple and express that the woman walks in beauty like a cloudless and starring night, that is, the woman is beautiful as a starring night is, too. Byron feels that beauty is something which is dark and light, something apparent and at the same time, something occult.[32]

Furthermore, the third and fourth lines are a couple, too: *"And all that's best of dark and bright/ Meet in her aspect and her eyes:"* (lines 3-4). Here, the author tells us how her face and her eyes are, and the opposition

[32] Occult: obscure/ mysterious

appears again, in the sense that the woman's eyes and face reflect the dark and the light. This is the manner Byron understands beauty: beauty is bright, but also is dark; it is something that is mysterious, but also light, clear; it is something that is apparent, and we can see it with light. And the last lines of the first stanza are another way to express that contrast, that opposition: *"Thus mellow'd to that tender light/ Which heaven to gaudy day denies."* (lines 5-6).

The second stanza starts saying that her beauty is perfect because it is in the right proportion[33]: *"One shade the more, one ray the less,/ Had half impair'd the nameless grace"* (lines 7-8). There is nothing that must be eliminated[34] and nothing that must be added: she is **perfect**. Moreover, we can see the contrast between dark and light again, and it is explained because her beauty is perfect due to the proportion between dark and light, and in that sense, Byron explained that she is the nameless grace:[35] her beauty is so perfect that it cannot have name.

Then, in lines 11, 12, 13 and 14 (third, fourth, fifth and sixth lines of the second stanza), Byron writes some characteristic of the woman's beauty: *"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."*. Byron states that her raven[36] tress and her face are softly illuminated (light). Furthermore, Byron express that her **thoughts** are serene,[37] pure and sweet, and it is normal if we think that her **thoughts** are in relation with her **beauty** (it is pure, sweet, calm, perfect). In that point Byron is arguing that the external beauty is related to

[33] **Proportion**: part/ share/ amount
[34] **Eliminat**e: neglect/ avoid
[35] **Grace**: elegance/ loveliness/ charm / beauty
[36] **Raven**: black and shiny
[37] **Serene**: calm/ peaceful

the internal one. She is beautiful **into herself** as much as she is **outwardly**.

Techniques:

I-Sound techniques

a- Alliteration:

Byron also has demonstrated the use of alliteration by focusing on her mind. "Where thoughts serenely sweet express / How pure, how dear their dwelling place"(lines 11-12). The repetition of the **"s"** sound is soothing because he is describing her **thoughts**. Again, Byron is more focused on this woman's internal features. For alliteration look at thoughts serenely sweet express sounds in 4 words _ the **s** implicit[38] in **x**. Byron would be unlikely to use a heavyweight technique like alliteration without a **good reason**, here he's probably using it to **slow up the motion of the line to let the full sweetness of the sound develop in our inner ear**.

b- Assonance:

There is a spectacular use of assonance in the first verse here:- look at the rime words night, skies, bright, eyes ... **same vowel throughout** ... so the whole stanza rimes (abababab) but assonates /**ai**/ this kind of **double-effect** was highly prized by keats, shelley and Byron, all of whom took the technical side of writing poetry extremely seriously.

[38] **Implicit**: implied/ hidden

c- Rhythm:

“She Walks in Beauty” is a poem made of three stanzas, it is an eighteen-line poem of three six-line stanzas, and the rhyme is ABABAB, CDCDCD, EFEFEF.

c- Rhythm:

The meter is **iambic tetrameter**. But, suddenly we find a kind of **enjambment or a metrical substitution** (a momentary change in the regular meter of the poem.) When **poets** enjamb a line and use a metrical substitution at the beginning of the next line, **they are calling attention to something that is a key to a poem.**

Here Byron substitutes **a trochaic foot** (an accented syllable followed by an unaccented one) for the **iambic foot** at the **start of the fourth line**. **Why?** Because he is putting particular emphasis[39] on that word **"meet."** He is emphasizing that the unique feature of this woman is her ability to contain **opposites**[40] within her; "the best of **dark** and **bright** / meet" in her.

This woman joins together darkness and light, an unlikely pair. They "meet" in her, and perhaps nowhere else besides a starry night. It's also important to note that the joining together can be seen in her "aspect," or appearance, but also in her **"eyes."** A reader might think of the eyes simply as a feature of beauty, but the eyes also have been associated in literature with **the soul**, or the internal aspect of the person: **the eyes reveal the heart.**

II-The Imagery techniques:

a-similes:

[39] **Emphasis**: stress/ importance
[40] **Opposite**التضاد contrary/ reverse :

Byron begins his poem using the **simile** in the first two lines, where Byron compares the beauty with a **cloudless** and **starry night**: “She walks in beauty, like the night/ Of cloudless climes and starry skies” (lines 1-2).

b- Images

Byron's use of **imagery** has allowed us to visualize an atmosphere that surrounds this woman**.** Depending on **images**, Lord Byron describes a **night** (associated[41] with **darkness**) with bright **stars** (**light**) and compares this woman to that night. She brings together these opposites in her beauty and creates a "tender light." Not a light like the daytime, since he describes that as gaudy (showy in a vulgar way), but a light that **"heaven"** doesn't even **honor** the daytime with .

Byron describes light and dark coming together in her appearance (or "aspect"), as in her dark hair ("**tress**") and the light complexion of her face. **Note also**, that Byron says that if this darkness and lightness wouldn't be in the right proportions ("One **shade** the more, one **ray** the less"), her beauty wouldn't be completely ruined[42] as you might expect. He says that she would only be "half impaired," and thus still half magnificent.[43]so, again in (lines 7-10) we find the combination of **opposite images**, "**shade**" and **"ray",** used to create balance in this woman.

The imagery he uses also brings together two opposing forces, darkness and light which works quite well together as one united force. We can visualize a dark sky filled bright stars, a perfect **picture** for an ideal evening, which can be compared to his picture of a perfect woman.

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41 **Associated**: connected / linked/ related
42 **Ruin**: spoil/ destroy يفسد
43 **Magnificent**: beautiful / wonderful/ brilliant

His use of **imagery** allows the **picturing** of an angelic[44] looking woman with dark hair and a light face.

The language techniques:

Furthermore, the language is **simple**. **The poem is easy to understand** because its language is simple and it expresses what the author want to express without using complicate sentences or expressions, to be understand **without difficulty;** as the beauty is simple.

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Finally, we can say that Byron has successfully convinced his readers that this woman is perfect. Even though the descriptions of this woman may have contradictory attributes, the overall portrayal of this woman implies that these attributes have created a perfect balance within her. The use of the opposites darkness and light has helped to create this balance. The language, rhythm, and the use of human characteristics have proved that external and internal beauty can be viewed on the same scale, as well as darkness and light.

Try these questions

1. Why do so many people think of this as a love poem, when the speaker never once mentions being in love?
2. Why does the poet compare the woman to "night" instead of to "day"?
3. The poem emphasizes that the woman's beauty has to do with the harmonious blending of light and dark in her features. Does the speaker believe one better than

[44] **Angelic**: innocent/ like angels / pure

the other? Why or why not, and how can you tell? What do you think?

4. Most critics believe that the woman described in this poem is Byron's cousin by marriage, Lady Wilmot Horton, whom he met at a party the night before writing this piece. If that's true, why doesn't he mention his subject by name? Does your interpretation of the poem change, knowing that it may have been inspired by a specific woman? How so?

When we two parted

By George Gordon Byron

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow--
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame;
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shrudder comes o'er me--
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee so well--
Long, long I shall rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met--
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive

If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee?--
With silence and tears.

Stanzas for Music

BY LORD BYRON (GEORGE GORDON)

There be none of Beauty's daughters
With a magic like thee;
And like music on the waters
Is thy sweet voice to me:
When, as if its sound were causing
The charmed ocean's pausing,
The waves lie still and gleaming,
And the lull'd winds seem dreaming:

And the midnight moon is weaving
Her bright chain o'er the deep;
Whose breast is gently heaving,
As an infant's asleep:
So the spirit bows before thee,
To listen and adore thee;
With a full but soft emotion,
Like the swell of Summer's ocean.

So We'll Go No More a Roving

BY LORD BYRON (GEORGE GORDON)

So, we'll go no more a roving
  So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
  And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath,
  And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
  And love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
  And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a roving
  By the light of the moon.

•

Nature

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage [There is a pleasure in the pathless woods]

George Gordon Byron - 1788-1824

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean--roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin--his control
Stops with the shore;--upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths,--thy fields
Are not a spoil for him,--thou dost arise
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth: —there let him lay.

"I Have Not Loved the World" by Lord Byron

(from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, stanzas 113-114)

I have not loved the world, nor the world me;
I have not flatter'd its rank breath, nor bow'd
To its idolatries a patient knee, --
Nor coin'd my cheek to smiles, -- nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo; in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such; I stood
Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
Had I not filed my mind, which thus itself subdued.

I have not loved the world, nor the world me, --
But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things, -- hopes which will not deceive,
And virtues which are merciful, nor weave
Snares for the failing: I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve;
That two, or one, are almost what they seem, --
That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream.

--George Gordon, Lord Byron

"Deep in my soul"

.

By Lord Byron (1788–1824)

"Deep in my soul that tender secret dwells,
and lost to light for evermore,
Save when to thine my heart responsive swells,
Then trembles into silence as before.350

.2

"There, in its centre, a sepulchral lamp
Burns the slow flame, eternal—but unseen;
Which not the darkness of Despair can damp,
Though vain its ray as it had never been.

.3

"Remember me—Oh! pass not thou my grave
Without one thought whose relics there recline:
The only pang my bosom dare not brave
Must be to find forgetfulness in thine.

.4

"My fondest—faintest—latest accents hear
Grief for the dead not Virtue can reprove;
Then give me all I ever asked—a tear,
The first—last—sole reward of so much love"!

He passed the portal, crossed the corridor,
And reached the chamber as the strain gave o'er:
"My own Medora! sure thy song is sad"—

"In Conrad's absence would'st thou have it glad?
Without thine ear to listen to my lay,
Still must my song my thoughts, my soul betray:

The Storm

By Lord Byron (1788–1824)

THE SKY is changed; and such a change! O night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!

SHELLY

*"Music when Soft Voices Die"

*"Ozymandia"

*"To Words Worth"

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Poet Details

1792–1822

The life and works of Percy Bysshe Shelley exemplify Romanticism in both its extremes of joyous ecstasy and brooding despair. The major themes are there in Shelley's dramatic if short life and in his works, enigmatic, inspiring, and lasting: the restlessness and brooding, the rebellion against authority, the interchange with nature, the power of the visionary imagination and of poetry, the pursuit of ideal love, and the untamed spirit ever in search of freedom—all of these Shelley exemplified in the way he lived his life and live on in the substantial body of work that he left the world after his legendary death by drowning at age twenty-nine.

Shelley belongs to the younger generation of English Romantic poets, the generation that came to prominence while William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were settling into middle age. Where the older generation

was marked by simple ideals and a reverence for nature, the poets of the younger generation (which also included John Keats and the infamous Lord Byron) came to be known for their sensuous aestheticism, their explorations of intense passions, their political radicalism, and their tragically short lives.

While Shelley shares many basic themes and symbols with his great contemporaries, he has left his peculiar stamp on Romanticism: the creation of powerful symbols in his visionary pursuit of the ideal, at the same time tempered by a deep skepticism. His thought is characterized by an insistence on taking the controversial side of issues, even at the risk of being unpopular and ridiculed. From the very beginning of his career as a published writer at the precocious age of seventeen, throughout his life, and even to the present day the very name of Shelley has evoked either the strongest vehemence or the warmest praise, bordering on worship.

More than any other English Romantic writer, with the possible exception of his friend George Gordon, Lord Byron, Shelley's life and reputation have had a history and life of their own apart from the reputation of his various works.

Born on 4 August 1792—the year of the Terror in France—Percy Bysshe Shelley (the "Bysshe" from his grandfather, a peer of the realm) was the son of Timothy and Elizabeth Shelley. As the elder son among one brother, John, and four sisters, Elizabeth, Mary, Margaret, and Hellen, Percy stood in line not only to inherit his grandfather's considerable estate but also to sit in Parliament one day. In his position as oldest male child, young Percy was beloved and admired by his sisters, his parents, and even the servants in his early reign as young lord of Field Place,

the family home near Horsham, Sussex. Playful and imaginative, he devised games to play with his sisters and told ghost stories to an enrapt and willing-to-be-thrilled audience.

When Shelley went up to University College, Oxford, in 1810 he was already a published and reviewed writer and a voracious reader with intellectual interests far beyond the rather narrow scope of the prescribed curriculum. Timothy Shelley, proud of his son and wanting to indulge his apparently harmless interests in literature, could not have foreseen where it might lead when he took Shelley to the booksellers Slatter and Munday and instructed them as follows: “My son here has a literary turn; he is already an author, and do pray indulge him in his printing freaks.”

Music when Soft Voices Die
By Shelly

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the belovèd's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

Theme

The poem entitled "Music when Soft Voices Die" is a short one, yet the theme that it contains is very deep and profound. In this poem, we are told that we cannot forget our loved ones even though they are no longer with us.

Summary

The poem tells us that even after we stop listening to good music, this soft music lingers on in our memories

for a long time to come. Another example that he gives is of flowers like violets, telling us that even after flowers die away, their sweet scent lingers with us for a long time to come.

Giving yet another example, the poet tells us that even after a rose withers away its petals, are scattered on the bed of loved ones in order to make the room sweet scented. In the last, he empresses the central idea asserting that everything and every one that we love can never be forgotten by us even though they are not with us any longer. Therefore, the poet declares that even though his beloved is no longer with him, yet her loving though shall live in his memory and even though the poet will not be able to actively show the love for her, yet in a silent, quite manner, he shall continue to love her as long as he lives.

Conclusion

The conclusion then to draw from these lines is that the

poet feels very rightly so that our loved ones are so precious and dear to us that no matter what happens we cannot forget them.

Poem Analysis

Percy Bysshe Shelley's posthumously published poem "Music When Soft Voices Die" speaks, as many poems do, of death. Shelley's poem focuses on the lasting nature of things, most plausibly the memories of a person even after his/her death. "Music When Soft Voices Die" seems to be a poem that Shelley wrote in reference to the thought of losing someone whom he cares about or the cessation of something Shelley enjoys. It evokes a feeling of bitter-sweetness concerning termination and the permanence of a man and their creations as the memory of them echoes forever in eternity.

Shelley is undeniably choosing in some fashion to focus on termination, be it of art or of body. The rhyme scheme for this poem is AABB, causing the non-rhyming lines to have a direct correlation. The odd number lines (1, 3, 5, and 7) show death and termination (these lines respectively end with “die,” “sicken,” “dead,” and “gone”), while the even number lines (2, 4, 6, 8), show that these brief events live forever. These even number lines all highlight the positive notes of the poem, which is significant as the odd number lines, which highlight the negative points, open this poem but it closes with the even, positive lines. This seems to show that while at first we greet the end of a life, song, poem etc. as with lament, with time we come to accept the end and rejoice that it even happened at all.

The poem compares the death of a human to the dying of music as music “vibrates” and continues to be heard even after the musician is done playing. It also equates this to the lasting “odour” of flowers even after they have

"sickened," or died. This is rich with symbolism, both of the death of a human and the ending of art. In the second stanza Shelley makes the final simile relating the poem's imagery to a human aspect. This stanza seems to be describing the funeral procession and the process of commemoration.

The poem opens with a seemingly happy note that is soon dashed before the end of the first line. The first line introduces the idea of the emotional ups and downs in this poem 2 and shows the notions of art/death and light/dark that are central in the poem. The very first word of the poem, "music," is highly associated with art, facilitating the notion of man's creations playing a role in this poem. This idea of eternity in art is something Shelley has used in other poems such as "Ozymandias" and an idea that Shelley uses lightly in this work. However, the idea that Shelley is also choosing to commemorate the death of a loved one is more evident as the passage goes on.

The first line includes the phrase “soft voices.” The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) lists a plethora of definitions for “soft,” the first being “producing agreeable or pleasant sensations; characterized by . . . quiet enjoyment; of a calm or placid nature.” This almost seems paradoxical as this definition involves the term quiet. With this definition the voices are pleasing, as Shelley and any other poet would hope their memories, poetry, art and other creations would be. The OED also defines soft as it applies to “odour,” which is remarked on in the next line. “Soft” thereby becomes a bridge between these lines and between the sounds and scents, almost akin to synesthesia. Overall, soft creates a pleasant tonation in a darker opening, implying that even in the darkness of the death there is a light and that light comes from the “voices.”

The use of the word “when” is very powerful. “When” can imply a variety of situations and emotions. It can imply an inevitability; Shelley does not say, “If soft

voices die" but rather "when soft voices die." This interpretation speaks to the inevitable termination of all men and all things. "When" can also imply an uncertainty; the speaker does not know definitively when the music will end just as he could not know when he or any others may end. This interpretation furthers the idea of untimely death and the true uncertain impermanence of man. Both of these interpretations are depressing; however, as the poem continues, Shelley makes it clear that though an end is inevitable and uncertain, "memory" causes things to "live within the sense they quicken."

The second line picks up from the negativity but is not as dense with it. Shelley uses the word "vibrate" to describe music and what it does under some circumstances. Vibrate has numerous meanings, one of which is to "resound or continue to be heard" (OED). Shelley wishes to evoke the feeling that the sound does not merely disappear, as when one 3 dies they do not simply cease to be, but rather

continues on in memory. A separate definition of the word vibrate, though, refers to a pendulum and it swinging to and fro (OED). This meaning, now archaic but well known at the time, creates the image of time passing and as time passes so do we. The imagery of a clock tick-tocking on the wall and time passing is a notion we've come to tie to death and our time coming to an end.

The fact that the voices "vibrate in memory" once "soft voices die" is significant. Voices, as inanimate objects, cannot die. "Die" can mean "to lose force, strength" (OED), which is literally what voices do after time in keeping with the imagery of the poem. "Die" can also mean just what it says, in which case the "voices" become metonymic. The voices could represent a lost loved one in general or possibly Shelley himself. If this is the case then the "soft" would be characteristics of a human, meaning that Shelley is portraying them as "placid," "agreeable," and "pleasant." As Shelley was a political revolutionary, it would be hard to

imagine anyone viewing him as placid or agreeable, meaning that with this interpretation, Shelley was not likely referring to himself but rather a lost connection, possibly Keats. Because these “soft voices die” the poem serves as a less direct elegy. This keeps with the idea that Shelley uses this poem to commemorate the loss of someone he cared deeply for.

“Voices” can also be the element of a song and “music,” concurrent with the poem’s imagery. This would mean voices would be associated more with art in this case. Calling the “voices” soft means that the pieces of art are agreeable and pleasant, making this a compliment of the work. It is important that Shelley specifically uses “voices” as “voices” are, by definition, human as opposed to other forms of music such as instruments. Naturally, art, poetry, and music do not “die.” While voices do not die, they do however, ”lose force, strength . . . [and] become ‘dead’, flat, vapid, or inactive” (OED). This would mean the art, poetry,

etc. would become less and less known and more and more obscure, an artist's greatest fear. However, these "soft voices" do "vibrate in the memory," meaning that though not as powerful as the original they are eternal because they are retained in memory. This is true if the "voices" representing humans or art; they are both immortal and eternal in the world of memory.

Shelley expressly uses the word "die," bringing the mind to think of death. But perhaps the even more powerful, yet subtle, use of the word "memory" pushes the point further. It is significant that Shelley even uses "the" when referring to memory, implying that it is not just any memory but "the memory" in which these "soft voices" "vibrate." "The memory" could refer to the public "memory" and world entire, meaning that "soft voices" live forever in fame and success. "The memory" could also mean specifically "the memory "of friends, family, and those met along the journey of life, creating a more personal feel for the poem. Memory

is defined as “commemorating . . . or remembering,” but more specifically the “act of commemoration, especially of the dead,”(the OED specifically cites this poem’s use of the word). Today, and even back then, the phrase ‘in memory of’ or some other iteration is often used to commemorate the death of a loved one. Memory can heavily connote death and certainly does in this instance, in keeping with the theme of this poem.

In the third and fourth lines Shelley is transitioning from appealing to one’s hearing to appealing to smell. The poem describes the way that even once the flowers have “sickened,” or died, they still “live” in memory. Shelley uses the phrase “sweet violets” in the third line. Using “sweet” as a descriptor, Shelley creates a positive feeling to these flowers and contributes to the imagery of the violets “sicken[ing].” He specifically chose violets for their coloration and what violets have come to symbolize. Roses are red, and violets are blue we are taught at a young age. We

have come to contrast the rose, a symbol of life and passion, to the violet, which would logically characterize the opposite. We also come to associate their color, blue, with sadness. When someone is feeling melancholy we say that they are "feeling blue." This glumness is an emotion that we closely associate with the mourning of a departed loved one. John Reismiller of the American Violet Society (AVS) states that violets "were often used as symbols of . . . mourning." Reismiller even specifically cites Shelley's earlier work "On a Faded Violet" to indicate how violets are used "to commemorate the grief of a lost love," the precise theme of this poem. Violets, also, are diminutive and less flagrant than the rose, perhaps indicating that the person or idea being alluded to is less famous or even obscure.

On top of choosing violets, Shelley also states that these violets "sicken." Sicken could mean to become affected with illness. This definition expresses a depressing theme and pervades the idea of death with which this poem is rich.

If the violets “sicken,” then their “odour” would sicken as well and they would not smell as heavenly as before. However it would still “live within the sense they quicken,” where quicken means to enliven (Greenblatt 820). “Odour” could literally mean smell, and this would mean that the violet, even after they have “sickened,” will “live” forever in the memory of the smell. “Odours” could again be a stand in for the departed, where “sicken” means to die and living “in the sense they quicken” would mean surviving in the memory of their loved ones by all the things they “quicken[ed].”

Sicken also has another definition; it also means “to pine with yearning” (OED). Shelley would certainly have been aware of this double meaning (the OED cites Shelley’s earlier use sicken for its definition). The idea that sicken could also mean pine with yearning makes this poem less a depressing narrative on death and more a remembrance and commemoration of the love Shelley felt.

In Shelley's final four lines he emphasizes the passion of the now dead love that will never truly die but instead will "slumber on," living forever in memory. This stanza commemorates a lost loved one and makes it clear the imagery is relating to a human. The poem closes with the notion of eternity of man, and art.

Shelley uses roses to contrast the use of violets earlier. While both are used for mourning and grief, Riklef Kandeler and Wolfram Ullrich point out that roses "are widely used even today as symbols of love and beauty." Additionally, the color red is often associated with life and vitality. The poem points out that the rose is, however, dead. This is in keeping with the theme of the poem, but also shows us that the departed was like a rose to Shelley. Shelley desires to show that the departed was once beautiful, passionate, and vivacious which serves to show the impact of their loss.

The fifth line and sixth lines state that “Rose leaves . . . are heaped for the belovèd’s bed.” Shelley chooses to state rose leaves intentionally rather than the entirety of the rose as line five correlates directly with line seven, meaning Shelley hopes to liken the leaf to the thought. The rose leaf mentioned in line five is a part of the whole rose just as the thoughts mentioned in line seven are a part of the whole person. This means that while the body of the man, just like the body of the rose, may no longer be the thoughts, just as the leaves, remain. And more than that, the “leaves . . . are heaped” atop a “bed,” meaning they are compiled and evident to see. This is strikingly similar to a cemetery, where dead bodies are congregated and marked for eternal remembrance. It is also strikingly similar to a compendium of a man’s thoughts or opus to be read and remembered forever.

The poem’s sixth line states that the rose leaves are “heaped for the belovèd’s bed.” The use of the word beloved

is fairly straightforward and furthers the point of how significant and loved this unnamed person is to the poet. The use of the word “bed,” however, plays a two-fold purpose. In one case, bed could mean the funeral bed that the corpse is lain upon. This could refer to a normal bed, inciting a romantic feeling in the poem and implying that Shelley’s lost one shared some sexual connection with him. That would mean the “belovèd” would be the deceased by this definition’s meaning and that the bed would be a piece of furniture. This fits the theme of death and goes well with the eighth line’s use of the word slumber as the two lines are meant to correlate.

Bed could also be referring to a flowerbed. This meaning causes “belovèd” to mean the exact opposite. Instead of referring to the departed it would refer to the still living. The “belovèd’s bed” would be the flowerbed of the still living flowers, where the flowers of course represent humans. This meaning would be very symbolic, as the leaves

would become compost facilitating the growth of the living flowers in the bed as memories of a loved one would facilitate the growth of those left behind. “Leaves” could refer to the pages of a book. This continues with the imagery of art, particularly a poet’s art written on pages. These pages being “heaped for the belovèd’s bed” would be a commemoration of the departed using their art and creation.

Shelley wrote this poem in 1821, the same year that John Keats, a fellow poet and good friend of Shelley, passed away. On November 29, 1821 he wrote a letter to another close friend, Joseph Severn. Severn was also close to Keats and had actually traveled with Keats to Italy where he died. Keats died of consumption, what we now call tuberculosis, in 7 February of 1821 at the young age of 25. “Music When Soft Voices Die” could very plausibly be inspired by Keats’s death, even though Shelley has additionally written “Adonais” as Keats’s elegy.

In this letter Shelley states, “In spite of his transcendent genius, Keats never was, nor ever will be, a popular poet.” This shows Shelley’s awareness of a poet’s place of permanence in the world. It has been said that a man dies twice, once when he is put in the ground and the second when his name is spoken for the last time. In this aspect, Shelley might have feared that Keats would die young twice. As such, Shelley’s poem addresses the eternity of man in those who survived them and also lightly touches on the eternity of art.

By using “And so” the poem comes to make the simile between the poem’s earlier references and the human aspect, “thy thoughts.” The use of the word “thy” in the seventh line could mean a variety of things. Thy, being an archaic possessive, could mean that “thy thoughts” live on eternally even when you are dead. This would mean that their thoughts, ideas, and concepts would continue to be proliferated even after their death, which would be of

comfort to a poet, and very true as nearly two centuries after his death Shelley's thoughts are still propounded today. The footnotes to the poem, however, indicate a different interpretation. The footnotes state that it means "my thoughts of thee" (Greenblatt 820 n. 3), making the poem less about the impact of one's thoughts, actions, and art on eternity. In addition, the poem then seems to be about the impact a person would have on the memories of all those left behind. In either scenario, the poem still resounds a theme of termination and eternity paradoxically coexisting.

Shelley uses the word "gone," which implies death while not directly stating it. In addition, it can simply imply a departure not necessarily from life but just from the past state of things. This is used in line seven, the last of the odd and negative lines. Gone, however, is far less negative than "die" or "sicken" or "dead," which are used in the previous odd lines. "Gone" can, in fact, even be positive. This is significant because it shows the light at the end of the tunnel

and the acceptance the narrator is coming to have over his grief. In the proceeding line Shelley uses the word “love” to evoke a feeling of caring and to indicate again how dear the departed was to him.

He also uses “slumber,” which serves the purpose 8 of functioning with the imagery of the bed two lines before it and also to further the imagery of death. The OED lists an alternate definition for slumber where it also means “to lie at rest in death or the grave.” All of this furthers the theme of death in the poem. But Shelley does not merely use the word “slumber” but rather uses the phrase “slumber on.” “Slumber on” could mean to continue to slumber, indicating the eternity of “love” which is “slumber[ing] on.” However, “slumber on” could refer to the fact that “love” must “slumber on” something.

The poem states that “love . . . shall slumber on” “thy thoughts,” just as the “rose leaves” are “heap’d for the belovéd’s bed.” This not only serves to associate these two

lines but also creates the imagery of “love” existing atop “thy thoughts.” This would mean that the love of a person, music, etc. exists over the thoughts. This ambiguity is so deep, however, that this engenders more thoughts. This interpretation of “love” “slumbering on” “thy thoughts” could mean that when “thy thoughts” are reminisced upon the “love” is felt for the departed thing, causing a more positive feel of the departed. It could also mean that the “love” being “on” the thoughts is like a blanket, covering over them (working with the bed and slumber imagery) and instead of thinking of the negative “thoughts” and “memories” when that now gone object is thought of only “love” is felt for it.

Ironically, “Music When Soft Voices Die” was published after Shelley’s untimely death. Shelley never could have predicted that he would share such a similar fate to John Keats. As such, it is questionable if he ever realized how much the poem could relate to his own life.

His own music vibrated in the ears of his widowed wife, Mary Shelley, and his violets quickened the senses of all who read his poetry. The poem paints a portrait of the man who wrote it and tells a tale in a short eight lines of loss and art eternalizing them in memory.

To Wordsworth

BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

Ode to the West Wind

BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,

The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

To the Moon

BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

I

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth, —
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

II

Thou chosen sister of the Spirit,
That gazes on thee till in thee it pities ...

To ----

BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

A Lament

BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—Oh, never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—Oh, never more!

Remembrance (Shelley)

1.

Swifter far than summer's flight—
Swifter far than youth's delight—
Swifter far than happy night,
Art thou come and gone—
As the earth when leaves are dead,
As the night when sleep is sped,
As the heart when joy is fled,
I am left lone, alone.

2.

The swallow summer comes again—
The owlet night resumes her reign—
But the wild-swan youth is fain
To fly with thee, false as thou.—
My heart each day desires the morrow;
Sleep itself is turned to sorrow;
Vainly would my winter borrow
Sunny leaves from any bough.

3.

Lilies for a bridal bed—
Roses for a matron's head—
Violets for a maiden dead—
Pansies let MY flowers be:
On the living grave I bear
Scatter them without a tear—
Let no friend, however dear,
Waste one hope, one fear for me.

One Word

BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it;
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother;
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love;
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the heavens reject not, --
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

JOHN KEATS

*"La Belle Dame sans Merci"

John Keats

1795–1821

Joseph Severn's miniature of Keats, 1819

Related Schools & Movements:

Romanticism

John Keats, who died at the age **of twenty-five**, had perhaps the most remarkable career of any English poet. He published only **fifty-four poems**, in three slim volumes and a few magazines. But at each point in his development he took on the challenges of a wide range of poetic forms from the sonnet, to the Spenserian romance, to the Miltonic epic, defining anew their possibilities with his own distinctive fusion of earnest energy, control of conflicting perspectives and forces, poetic self-consciousness, and, occasionally, dry ironic wit. In the case of the English ode he brought its form, in the five great odes of 1819, to its most perfect definition.

English Romantic poet John Keats was born on October 31, 1795, in London. The oldest of four children, he lost both his parents at a young age. His father, a livery-stable keeper, died when Keats was eight; his mother died of tuberculosis six years later. After his mother's death, Keats's maternal grandmother appointed two London merchants, Richard Abbey and John Rowland Sandell, as guardians. Abbey, a prosperous tea broker, assumed the bulk of this responsibility, while Sandell played only a minor role. When Keats was fifteen, Abbey withdrew him from the Clarke School, Enfield, to apprentice with an apothecary-surgeon and study medicine in a London hospital. In 1816 Keats became a licensed apothecary, but he never practiced his profession, deciding instead to write poetry.

Around this time, Keats met Leigh Hunt, an influential editor of the *Examiner*, who published his sonnets "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" and "O Solitude." Hunt also introduced Keats to a circle of literary men, including the poets Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Wordsworth. The group's influence enabled Keats to see his first volume, *Poems by John Keats*, published in 1817. Shelley, who was fond of Keats, had advised him to develop a more substantial body of work before publishing it. Keats, who was not as fond of Shelley, did not follow his advice. *Endymion,* a four-thousand-line erotic/allegorical romance based on the Greek myth of the same name, appeared the following year. Two of the most influential critical magazines of the time, the*Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, attacked the collection. Calling the romantic verse of Hunt's literary circle "the Cockney school of poetry,"*Blackwood's* declared *Endymion* to be nonsense and recommended that Keats give up poetry. Shelley, who privately disliked *Endymion* but recognized Keats's genius,

wrote a more favorable review, but it was never published. Shelley also exaggerated the effect that the criticism had on Keats, attributing his declining health over the following years to a spirit broken by the negative reviews.

Keats spent the summer of 1818 on a walking tour in Northern England and Scotland, returning home to care for his brother, Tom, who suffered from tuberculosis. While nursing his brother, Keats met and fell in love with a woman named Fanny Brawne. Writing some of his finest poetry between 1818 and 1819, Keats mainly worked on “Hyperion," a Miltonic blank-verse epic of the Greek creation myth. He stopped writing “Hyperion” upon the death of his brother, after completing only a small portion, but in late 1819 he returned to the piece and rewrote it as “The Fall of Hyperion” (unpublished until 1856). That same autumn Keats contracted tuberculosis, and by the following February he felt that death was already upon him, referring to the present as his “posthumous existence.”

In July 1820, he published his third and best volume of poetry, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*. The three title poems, dealing with mythical and legendary themes of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance times, are rich in imagery and phrasing. The volume also contains the unfinished “Hyperion," and three poems considered among the finest in the English language, “Ode on a Grecian Urn," “Ode on Melancholy," and “Ode to a Nightingale.” The book received enthusiastic praise from Hunt, Shelley, Charles Lamb, and others, and in August, Frances Jeffrey, influential editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, wrote a review praising both the new book and *Endymion* this greatest achievement, but by that time he had reached an advanced stage of his disease and was too ill to be encouraged.

He continued a correspondence with Fanny Brawne and—when he could no longer bear to write to her directly—her mother, but his failing health and his literary ambitions prevented their getting married. Under his doctor's orders to seek a warm climate for the winter, Keats went to Rome with his friend, the painter Joseph Severn. He died there on February 23, 1821, at the age of twenty-five, and was buried in the Protestant cemetery.)

La Belle Dame sans Merci
BY JOHN KEATS

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna-dew,
And sure in language strange she said—

‘I love thee true’.

She took me to her Elfin grot,
And there she wept and sighed full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lullèd me asleep,
And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!—
The latest dream I ever dreamt
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—‘La Belle Dame sans Merci
Thee hath in thrall!’

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill’s side.

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Summary

The speaker of the poem comes across a "knight at arms" alone, and apparently dying, in a field somewhere. He asks him what's going on, and the knight's answer takes up the rest of the poem. The knight says that he met a beautiful fairy lady in the fields. He started hanging out with her, making flower garlands for her, letting her ride on his horse, and generally flirting like knights do. Finally, she invited him back to her fairy cave. Sweet, thought the knight. But after they were through smooching, she "lulled" him to sleep, and he had a nightmare about all the knights and kings and princes that the woman had previously seduced – they were all dead. And then he woke up, alone, on the side of a hill somewhere.

Paraphrase

Get out the microscope, because we're going through this poem line-by-line.

Analysis

Technical Analysis

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is so full of flowers, it could practically open its own sidewalk kiosk. Most of the flower imagery in the poem has some kind of symbolic weight to it. We usually associate flowers with springtime, with love, and with life, but that's not always the case in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." These flowers can be kind of tricky, but never fear. We are here to help you untangle some of those ambiguous images.

Line 9: Lilies are often associated with death in Western culture, so the "lily" on the knight's forehead doesn't bode well for him. We can also be pretty sure that the knight doesn't have a flower glued to his forehead, so the speaker is employing a metaphor when he says that he "see[s] a lily on thy brow." Besides the association with death, lilies are

pale white, so a slightly less morbid reading of this line would be that the knight isn't dying, but is just sickly pale.

Line 11: Roses are often associated with love in Western culture (hence all the advertisements around Valentine's Day), but the knight's "rose" is "fading" and "wither[ing]." Sounds like a pretty clear metaphor for the end of a romantic relationship. But like the lily, the rose describes the knight's complexion. The rose is "fading" from the knight's "cheeks." So the rose metaphor is doing double duty – it's describing both his "fading" love affair, and his increasingly pale complexion.

Lines 17-18: The knight makes a flower "garland" and "bracelets" for the fairy lady. He decks her out in flowers. If the knight associates flowers with love and life the way we usually do, it's pretty clear that he's totally in love (or at least in lust) with her.

Line 18: A "fragrant zone" is a flower belt – it's another string of flowers that the knight offers the fairy lady. The

beginning and end of the poem seem to take place during autumn or even early winter, but the sequence with the fairy lady seems to be during spring or summer. Does the fairy lady control the seasons? Or does her beauty make the knight think that winter is summer?

Lines 3: "Sedge" is a grass-like plant that grows in marshy, wet ground close to lakes. If all the "sedge" is "wither'd," it's probably close to autumn, right? We usually associate images of autumn and fallen leaves with old age and imminent death, so this doesn't bode well for the knight.

Line 4: Where are all the birds? Have they all migrated south for the winter? Wherever they went, their absence makes the landscape of the poem seem even more desolate than the "wither'd" "sedge."

Line 7: A "granary" is a barn or warehouse used to store grain. The "squirrel" in this line probably doesn't have a literal building to store its nuts, so "granary" is a metaphor for the squirrel's hiding places

that personifies the squirrel by associating it with characteristics and activities usually reserved for humans.

Line 8: If all the crops have been harvested, then the fields are all empty and deserted. If the "sedge" is dead, the birds are gone, and all the crops are harvested, does that mean that the knight and the unnamed speaker are the only two living things in the landscape? There's good news about the image, though: "harvest" suggests planting, fertility, and the cycle of life – after all, the farmers who brought in the harvest are going to plant seeds again in the spring, and the cycle will repeat itself next year.

But it could also be a euphemism for her anatomical "zone" right underneath the belt.

Considering that the poem opens with descriptions of autumn and the "wither[ing]" plants around the lake, it's not surprising that the landscape and the people in it are colorless. But it is surprising when you tally up how many times the poet uses the word "pale," or synonyms for it.

Why does he harp on the paleness? Let's take a look at some examples…

Line 2: The unnamed speaker says that the knight is "palely loitering." We get the point that he's hanging out by the lake without an obvious purpose, and he's "pale." Read this line out loud: notice the repeated L sound in "Alone and palely loitering"? The consonance of the L sound makes the line sound musical (think, "tra-la-la-la-la-la!"), but it also draws our attention to those words, especially to the unusual use of "palely" as an adverb. The word "palely" also creates an internal rhyme with the words "ail thee" from line 1. Associating those words makes it clear that the knight's paleness has to do with whatever it is that is "ail[ing]" him.

Line 9: We hear more about the paleness of the knight when the unnamed speaker uses a flower metaphor to point out the "lily" whiteness of the knight's face.

Lines 37-8: The knight uses the word "pale" three times in two lines. He's describing the dream he had in the fairy lady's cave, and the "pale kings" and "pale warriors" that he saw. They're all "death pale," so now paleness is being explicitly associated with death.

Lines 37-40: The repetition of the word "pale" in this stanza brings out the similarity between that word and the words "all," "belle," and "thrall." This consonance, or repeated sound, associates those words as we read them, making the reader pause to consider how the "belle dame" might be responsible for the "pale[ness]" of "all" the knights she has had "in thrall."

The entire poem could sound like a dream sequence or a fantasy, with all the fairy ladies and "elfin grots." But there's an explicit dream sequence described by the knight at the close of the poem, which brings up questions about consciousness and the nature of reality, and other things that keep us up at night.

Line 33: The word "lulled" is such a sleepy-sounding word that it's almost onomatopoeia: it sounds like what it's supposed to mean.

Lines 34-5: The word "dream" gets repeated three times in two lines. This can't be an accident. Is the knight wanting to insist that the vision he saw was, in fact, a dream, and not a real event? Is he insisting too much?

Line 40: The harsh repetition of the th sound in this line is enough to wake anyone up. The consonance of "Hath thee in thrall!" is what ends the knight's dream. In the next stanza, he sees their mouths open after having "cried" their "warning," and then he wakes up.

Medieval romances often associate women with water, so it's no surprise that Keats borrows from that tradition in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." The problem with women and water, though, is that men who mess around with women end up getting all soggy and wet. According to this

symbolic tradition, men are weakened by their contact with women.

Line 3: Already in this line, the speaker is associating death and "wither[ing]" with a body of water: the "lake." And it's not just any body of water. Lakes, unlike springs or rivers, don't flow (or at least, don't flow quickly), so the water in them stagnates and can grow nasty algae and pond scum.

Line 10: The unnamed speaker notices that the knight's face is "moist" with "fever dew." OK, so he's sweating because he has a fever. But where did he catch the fever? Look where that word "dew" is repeated…

Line 26: The knight says that the fairy lady fed him "manna dew." "Manna" is the heavenly food that the Jewish Scriptures say that the Israelites ate in the wilderness after they escaped from slavery. But why, "dew"? Why is the manna in liquid form? It seems likely that the answer is connected with the rest of the complicated system of metaphor around water and dew in this poem.

Ballad, Iambic Tetrameter Quatrains

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is divided into twelve four-line stanzas, called quatrains. Each of those quatrains rhymes according to an ABCB pattern. For example, take a look at the first stanza: the second line rhymes with the fourth: "loitering" and "sing."

That covers the rhyme, but what about the meter, or the pattern of stressed syllables? The basic meter of the poem is iambic tetrameter. Before you fall asleep at your computer, let us explain: "Iambic" refers to the pattern of unstressed and stressed syllables. One iamb is an unstressed, followed by a stressed syllable: da-DUM. "Tetrameter" tells you how many iambs you'll find per line. "Tetra" means four – so there are four iambs per line. Iambic tetrameter. Check it out in line 1:

"O what / can ail / thee, knight / at arms,

We've put the syllables that you would stress more as you read it in bold face, and we've divided up the four iambs.

But something strange happens in the fourth line of each quatrain. There are only three stressed syllables in the fourth line of each quatrain. This isn't a mistake on Keats's part. The fourth line is consistently shorter. Even if you're not used to counting stressed and unstressed syllables, you can tell just from looking at the page that the fourth line is always shorter. What's the effect of this shift in the rhythm? It's an open question. Feel free to come up with your own answers.

Furthermore, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is a ballad, which is an old-fashioned, folksy style of poem that typically tells a story. Ballads use simple language that

would appeal to less educated people, like farmers and laborers. Ballads were primarily an oral form – people would memorize them and pass them on to their friends and family by memory, rather than from a book. Poets like Keats tried to mimic this style in their written works. Many of the Romantic poets liked the deceptively simple form of the ballad. William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously kicked off their careers (and arguably the whole Romantic literary movement) with their collection of poems called Lyrical Ballads.

SPEAKER

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is in the form of a dialogue between two speakers. The first is the unnamed speaker who comes across a sick, sad knight and pesters him with questions for the first three stanzas. Stanzas 4-12 are the knight's response. There aren't any quotation marks to tip you off to the change in speaker, so you have to pay

attention to notice that the "I" of stanzas 4-12 is different from the "I" of stanzas 1-3.

Having cleared that up, what kind of speaker is the unnamed person who finds the knight? Is it supposed to be the poet himself? Or is it supposed to be the reader? Or an anonymous passerby? We don't know a lot about the speaker, but we can make some guesses based on what he says in those first three stanzas. Whoever it is, he uses old-fashioned language typical of medieval romances (like "thee" and "woe-begone"). He's also very sensitive to the changes of the seasons – he doesn't just say "Hey, knight, why are you hanging out by the lake when it's so cold and dreary?" He uses a lot of rich imagery to describe the seasons. He's also very perceptive of the knight's physical and emotional state. The speaker notices that the knight is "haggard" and depressed-looking, and seems to have a

fever.

The knight uses the same kind of language that the original speaker used. In fact, it's difficult to tell that it's another speaker. Usually, when poets or novelists write dialogue, they try to differentiate between the different speakers by making them sound different. But not so in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." One possible reason for this might have to do with the ballad tradition that Keats was mimicking. Ballads are like folk songs, and they could either be sung or recited by one person, or could be divided up between different people. Having the knight and the original speaker sound the same could just be Keats's way of creating a sense of unity to the poem.

Another possible reason is that the knight is just a figment of the original speaker's imagination. After all, what happens to him is incredible, and the dream sequence at the

end emphasizes the possibility of illusion. If that's the case, the knight would never have spoken, and it would have been the same speaker for the entire poem. There isn't an obvious answer to this question – critics and readers still debate the meaning of the poem today.

SETTING

Where It All Goes Down

Reading "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is like walking into a classic fairy tale. No, we don't mean the Disney kind, with happy, singing mice and twittering birds. We mean the old-school, medieval kind, with bleak landscapes, knights, fairies, and witches. The unnamed speaker at the beginning of the poem seems to have wandered into someone else's fairy tale, too. He's just out on a walk, enjoying the late autumn by a lake, when he sees a "haggard" knight who seems sick and depressed. He asks the knight what's up,

and the knight launches into a long story about how he met a fairy lady in the fields somewhere. Is the knight's story all just a dream? Does the poem take place in a fairy tale, or in the real world? If it takes place partly in both, where's the border? The poem's setting seems designed to throw you off.

SOUND

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci," like most ballads, sounds like a song. The steady rhythm of the words creates an underlying beat, and the rhyme scheme and all the alliterations make layers of sound that work like harmony in music. Even the repetition between the first and last stanza adds to the feeling that it's a song, and not a poem. You could even think of the knight's trippy dream sequence as a kind of bridge or guitar riff. We're not the only ones who think "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" would make a great song – lots of musicians have set it to music, so check out "Best of the Web" for some examples.

WHAT'S UP WITH THE TITLE?

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci" isn't the most obvious title in the world for an English poem, because it's not in English. It's in French and, as those of you in French 1 already figured out, it translates to "The beautiful lady without mercy." But why is the title in French? Why couldn't Keats just title it, "The beautiful lady with a heart of stone"?

Well, as you may have already guessed, the title is an allusion to a much earlier work of literature. It's from a medieval romance by the French poet Alain Chartier. The poem itself has many of the same elements as a medieval romance (knights, fair ladies, fairies, dream sequences…), so by titling the poem with a line from a famous romance, Keats calls up all those associations right from the beginning.

Try these questions:

Why do you think that the fairy lady cries in her cave (line 30)?

Could the knight's entire experience just have been a dream? Would that matter?

Why is the knight able to understand the fairy lady's "language strange" (line 27)?

Who is the unnamed speaker who comes across the knight at the beginning of the poem? The poet, John Keats? The reader? Someone else?

Why does the last stanza echo the first? What is the effect of that?

Ode on Melancholy

BY JOHN KEATS

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;

His soul shalt taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

‘O Sorrow’
By John Keats (1795–1821)

From ‘Endymion’

O SORROW,
Why dost borrow
The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips?—
To give maiden blushes
To the white rose bushes?
Or is’t thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye?—
To give the glow-worm light?
Or, on a moonless night,
To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry?

O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?—
To give at evening pale
Unto the nightingale,
That thou mayst listen the cold dews among?

O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
Heart’s lightness from the merriment of May?—
A lover would not tread
A cowslip on the head,
Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—
Nor any drooping flower
Held sacred for thy bower,
Wherever he may sport himself and play.

To Sorrow
I bade good morrow,
And thought to leave her far away behind;
But cheerly, cheerly,
She loves me dearly;

She is so constant to me, and so kind:
I would deceive her,
And so leave her,
But ah! she is so constant and so kind….

Come then, Sorrow!
Sweetest Sorrow!
Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast:
I thought to leave thee
And deceive thee,
But now of all the world I love thee best.

38. Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil

A Story from Boccaccio

I.

FAIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel!
  Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love's eye!
They could not in the self-same mansion dwell
  Without some stir of heart, some malady;
They could not sit at meals but feel how well
  It soothed each to be the other by;
They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep
But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

II.

With every morn their love grew tenderer,
  With every eve deeper and tenderer still;
He might not in house, field, or garden stir,
  But her full shape would all his seeing fill;
And his continual voice was pleasanter
  To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill;
Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,
She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same.

III.

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch,
  Before the door had given her to his eyes;
And from her chamber-window he would catch
  Her beauty farther than the falcon spies;
And constant as her vespers would he watch,
  Because her face was turn'd to the same skies;
And with sick longing all the night outwear,
To hear her morning-step upon the stair.

IV.

A whole long month of May in this sad plight

Made their cheeks paler by the break of June:
"To morrow will I bow to my delight,
"To-morrow will I ask my lady's boon."—
"O may I never see another night,
"Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune."—
So spake they to their pillows; but, alas,
Honeyless days and days did he let pass;

V.

Until sweet Isabella's untouch'd cheek
Fell sick within the rose's just domain,
Fell thin as a young mother's, who doth seek
By every lull to cool her infant's pain:
"How ill she is," said he, "I may not speak,
"And yet I will, and tell my love all plain:
"If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears,
"And at the least 'twill startle off her cares."

VI.

So said he one fair morning, and all day
His heart beat awfully against his side;
And to his heart he inwardly did pray
For power to speak; but still the ruddy tide
Stifled his voice, and puls'd resolve away—
Fever'd his high conceit of such a bride,
Yet brought him to the meekness of a child:
Alas! when passion is both meek and wild!

VII.

So once more he had wak'd and anguished
A dreary night of love and misery,
If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed
To every symbol on his forehead high;
She saw it waxing very pale and dead,
And straight all flush'd; so, lisped tenderly,
"Lorenzo!"—here she ceas'd her timid quest,
But in her tone and look he read the rest.

VIII.

“O Isabella, I can half perceive
  “That I may speak my grief into thine ear;
“If thou didst ever any thing believe,
  “Believe how I love thee, believe how near
“My soul is to its doom: I would not grieve
  “Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear
“Thine eyes by gazing; but I cannot live
“Another night, and not my passion shrive.

IX.

“Love! thou art leading me from wintry cold,
  “Lady! thou leadest me to summer clime,
“And I must taste the blossoms that unfold
  “In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time.”
So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,
  And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme:
Great bliss was with them, and great happiness
Grew, like a lusty flower in June’s caress.

X.

Parting they seem’d to tread upon the air,
  Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart
Only to meet again more close, and share
  The inward fragrance of each other’s heart.
She, to her chamber gone, a ditty fair
  Sang, of delicious love and honey’d dart;
He with light steps went up a western hill,
And bade the sun farewell, and joy’d his fill.

XI.

All close they met again, before the dusk
  Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
All close they met, all eves, before the dusk
  Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk,
  Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.
Ah! better had it been for ever so,
Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe.

XII.

Were they unhappy then?—It cannot be—
  Too many tears for lovers have been shed,
Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
  Too much of pity after they are dead,
Too many doleful stories do we see,
  Whose matter in bright gold were best be read;
Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse
Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

XIII.

But, for the general award of love,
  The little sweet doth kill much bitterness;
Though Dido silent is in under-grove,
  And Isabella's was a great distress,
Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove
  Was not embalm'd, this truth is not the less—
Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers,
Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

XIV.

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt,
  Enriched from ancestral merchandize,
And for them many a weary hand did swelt
  In torched mines and noisy factories,
And many once proud-quiver'd loins did melt
  In blood from stinging whip;—with hollow eyes
Many all day in dazzling river stood,
To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood.

XV.

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
  And went all naked to the hungry shark;
For them his ears gush'd blood; for them in death
  The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark
Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe
  A thousand men in troubles wide and dark:

Half-ignorant, they turn'd an easy wheel,
That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

XVI.

Why were they proud? Because their marble founts
Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's tears?—
Why were they proud? Because fair orange-mounts
Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs?—
Why were they proud? Because red-lin'd accounts
Were richer than the songs of Grecian years?—
Why were they proud? again we ask aloud,
Why in the name of Glory were they proud?

XVII.

Yet were these Florentines as self-retired
In hungry pride and gainful cowardice,
As two close Hebrews in that land inspired,
Paled in and vineyarded from beggar-spies,
The hawks of ship-mast forests—the untired
And pannier'd mules for ducats and old lies—
Quick cat's-paws on the generous stray-away,—
Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.

XVIII.

How was it these same ledger-men could spy
Fair Isabella in her downy nest?
How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye
A straying from his toil? Hot Egypt's pest
Into their vision covetous and sly!
How could these money-bags see east and west?—
Yet so they did—and every dealer fair
Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

XIX.

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio!
Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon,
And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow,
And of thy roses amorous of the moon,

And of thy lilies, that do paler grow
  Now they can no more hear thy ghittern's tune,
For venturing syllables that ill beseem
The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

XX.

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale
  Shall move on soberly, as it is meet;
There is no other crime, no mad assail
  To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet:
But it is done—succeed the verse or fail—
  To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet;
To stead thee as a verse in English tongue,
An echo of thee in the north-wind sung.

XXI.

These brethren having found by many signs
  What love Lorenzo for their sister had,
And how she lov'd him too, each unconfines
  His bitter thoughts to other, well nigh mad
That he, the servant of their trade designs,
  Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,
When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees
To some high noble and his olive-trees.

XXII.

And many a jealous conference had they,
  And many times they bit their lips alone,
Before they fix'd upon a surest way
  To make the youngster for his crime atone;
And at the last, these men of cruel clay
  Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone;
For they resolved in some forest dim
To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

XXIII.

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant
  Into the sun-rise, o'er the balustrade

Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent
  Their footing through the dews; and to him said,
“You seem there in the quiet of content,
  “Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade
“Calm speculation; but if you are wise,
“Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

XXIV.

“To-day we purpose, ay, this hour we mount
  “To spur three leagues towards the Apennine;
“Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count
  “His dewy rosary on the eglantine.”
Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,
  Bow’d a fair greeting to these serpents’ whine;
And went in haste, to get in readiness,
With belt, and spur, and bracing huntsman’s dress.

XXV.

And as he to the court-yard pass’d along,
  Each third step did he pause, and listen’d oft
If he could hear his lady’s matin-song,
  Or the light whisper of her footstep soft;
And as he thus over his passion hung,
  He heard a laugh full musical aloft;
When, looking up, he saw her features bright
Smile through an in-door lattice, all delight.

XXVI.

“Love, Isabel!” said he, “I was in pain
  “Lest I should miss to bid thee a good morrow:
“Ah! what if I should lose thee, when so fain
  “I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow
“Of a poor three hours’ absence? but we’ll gain
  “Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow.
“Good bye! I’ll soon be back.”—“Good bye!” said she:—
And as he went she chanted merrily.

XXVII.

So the two brothers and their murder'd man
  Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's stream
Gurgles through straiten'd banks, and still doth fan
  Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream
Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan
  The brothers' faces in the ford did seem,
Lorenzo's flush with love.—They pass'd the water
Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

XXVIII.

There was Lorenzo slain and buried in,
  There in that forest did his great love cease;
Ah! when a soul doth thus its freedom win,
  It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace
As the break-covert blood-hounds of such sin:
  They dipp'd their swords in the water, and did tease
Their horses homeward, with convulsed spur,
Each richer by his being a murderer.

XXIX.

They told their sister how, with sudden speed,
  Lorenzo had ta'en ship for foreign lands,
Because of some great urgency and need
  In their affairs, requiring trusty hands.
Poor Girl! put on thy stifling widow's weed,
  And 'scape at once from Hope's accursed bands;
To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,
And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

XXX.

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be;
  Sorely she wept until the night came on,
And then, instead of love, O misery!
  She brooded o'er the luxury alone:
His image in the dusk she seem'd to see,
  And to the silence made a gentle moan,
Spreading her perfect arms upon the air,
And on her couch low murmuring, "Where? O where?"

XXXI.

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long
  Its fiery vigil in her single breast;
She fretted for the golden hour, and hung
  Upon the time with feverish unrest—
Not long—for soon into her heart a throng
  Of higher occupants, a richer zest,
Came tragic; passion not to be subdued,
And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

XXXII.

In the mid days of autumn, on their eves
  The breath of Winter comes from far away,
And the sick west continually bereaves
  Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay
Of death among the bushes and the leaves,
  To make all bare before he dares to stray
From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel
By gradual decay from beauty fell,

XXXIII.

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes
  She ask'd her brothers, with an eye all pale,
Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes
  Could keep him off so long? They spake a tale
Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes
  Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's vale;
And every night in dreams they groan'd aloud,
To see their sister in her snowy shroud.

XXXIV.

And she had died in drowsy ignorance,
  But for a thing more deadly dark than all;
It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance,
  Which saves a sick man from the feather'd pall
For some few gasping moments; like a lance,
  Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall
With cruel pierce, and bringing him again

Sense of the gnawing fire at heart and brain.

XXXV.

It was a vision.—In the drowsy gloom,
  The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot
Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb
  Had marr'd his glossy hair which once could shoot
Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom
  Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
From his lorn voice, and past his loamed ears
Had made a miry channel for his tears.

XXXVI.

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake;
  For there was striving, in its piteous tongue,
To speak as when on earth it was awake,
  And Isabella on its music hung:
Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake,
  As in a palsied Druid's harp unstrung;
And through it moan'd a ghostly under-song,
Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral briars among.

XXXVII.

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright
  With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof
From the poor girl by magic of their light,
  The while it did unthread the horrid woof
Of the late darken'd time,—the murderous spite
  Of pride and avarice,—the dark pine roof
In the forest,—and the sodden turfed dell,
Where, without any word, from stabs he fell.

XXXVIII.

Saying moreover, "Isabel, my sweet!
  "Red whortle-berries droop above my head,
"And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet;
  "Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed
"Their leaves and prickly nuts; a sheep-fold bleat

“Comes from beyond the river to my bed:
“Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,
“And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

XXXIX.

“I am a shadow now, alas! alas!
“Upon the skirts of human-nature dwelling
“Alone: I chant alone the holy mass,
“While little sounds of life are round me knelling,
“And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,
“And many a chapel bell the hour is telling,
“Paining me through: those sounds grow strange to me,
“And thou art distant in Humanity.

XL.

“I know what was, I feel full well what is,
“And I should rage, if spirits could go mad;
“Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss,
“That paleness warms my grave, as though I had
“A Seraph chosen from the bright abyss
“To be my spouse: thy paleness makes me glad;
“Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel
“A greater love through all my essence steal.”

XLI.

The Spirit mourn’d “Adieu!”—dissolv’d, and left
The atom darkness in a slow turmoil;
As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,
Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,
We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft,
And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil:
It made sad Isabella’s eyelids ache,
And in the dawn she started up awake;

XLII.

“Ha! ha!” said she, “I knew not this hard life,
“I thought the worst was simple misery;
“I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife

"Portion'd us—happy days, or else to die;
"But there is crime—a brother's bloody knife!
"Sweet Spirit, thou hast school'd my infancy:
"I'll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes,
"And greet thee morn and even in the skies."

XLIII.

When the full morning came, she had devised
How she might secret to the forest hie;
How she might find the clay, so dearly prized,
And sing to it one latest lullaby;
How her short absence might be unsurmised,
While she the inmost of the dream would try.
Resolv'd, she took with her an aged nurse,
And went into that dismal forest-hearse.

XLIV.

See, as they creep along the river side,
How she doth whisper to that aged Dame,
And, after looking round the champaign wide,
Shows her a knife.—"What feverous hectic flame
"Burns in thee, child?—What good can thee betide,
"That thou should'st smile again?"—The evening came,
And they had found Lorenzo's earthy bed;
The flint was there, the berries at his head.

XLV.

Who hath not loiter'd in a green church-yard,
And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,
Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,
To see skull, coffin'd bones, and funeral stole;
Pitying each form that hungry Death hath marr'd,
And filling it once more with human soul?
Ah! this is holiday to what was felt
When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt.

XLVI.

She gaz'd into the fresh-thrown mould, as though

One glance did fully all its secrets tell;
Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know
Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well;
Upon the murderous spot she seem'd to grow,
Like to a native lily of the dell:
Then with her knife, all sudden, she began
To dig more fervently than misers can.

XLVII.

Soon she turn'd up a soiled glove, whereon
Her silk had play'd in purple phantasies,
She kiss'd it with a lip more chill than stone,
And put it in her bosom, where it dries
And freezes utterly unto the bone
Those dainties made to still an infant's cries:
Then 'gan she work again; nor stay'd her care,
But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

XLVIII.

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,
Until her heart felt pity to the core
At sight of such a dismal labouring,
And so she kneeled, with her locks all hoar,
And put her lean hands to the horrid thing:
Three hours they labour'd at this travail sore;
At last they felt the kernel of the grave,
And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

XLIX.

Ah! wherefore all this wormy circumstance?
Why linger at the yawning tomb so long?
O for the gentleness of old Romance,
The simple plaining of a minstrel's song!
Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,
For here, in truth, it doth not well belong
To speak:—O turn thee to the very tale,
And taste the music of that vision pale.

L.

With duller steel than the Persèan sword
They cut away no formless monster's head,
But one, whose gentleness did well accord
With death, as life. The ancient harps have said,
Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord:
If Love impersonate was ever dead,
Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd.
'Twas love; cold,—dead indeed, but not dethroned.

LI.

In anxious secrecy they took it home,
And then the prize was all for Isabel:
She calm'd its wild hair with a golden comb,
And all around each eye's sepulchral cell
Pointed each fringed lash; the smeared loam
With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,
She drench'd away:—and still she comb'd, and kept
Sighing all day—and still she kiss'd, and wept.

LII.

Then in a silken scarf,—sweet with the dews
Of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby,
And divine liquids come with odorous ooze
Through the cold serpent pipe refreshfully,—
She wrapp'd it up; and for its tomb did choose
A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by,
And cover'd it with mould, and o'er it set
Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet.

LIII.

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,
And she forgot the blue above the trees,
And she forgot the dells where waters run,
And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze;
She had no knowledge when the day was done,
And the new morn she saw not: but in peace
Hung over her sweet Basil evermore,
And moisten'd it with tears unto the core.

LIV.

And so she ever fed it with thin tears,
  Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,
So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
  Of Basil-tufts in Florence; for it drew
Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
  From the fast mouldering head there shut from view:
So that the jewel, safely casketed,
Came forth, and in perfumed leafits spread.

LV.

O Melancholy, linger here awhile!
  O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!
O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle,
  Unknown, Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh!
Spirits in grief, lift up your heads, and smile;
  Lift up your heads, sweet Spirits, heavily,
And make a pale light in your cypress glooms,
Tinting with silver wan your marble tombs.

LVI.

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,
  From the deep throat of sad Melpomene!
Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go,
  And touch the strings into a mystery;
Sound mournfully upon the winds and low;
  For simple Isabel is soon to be
Among the dead: She withers, like a palm
Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm.

LVII.

O leave the palm to wither by itself;
  Let not quick Winter chill its dying hour!—
It may not be—those Baalites of pelf,
  Her brethren, noted the continual shower
From her dead eyes; and many a curious elf,
  Among her kindred, wonder'd that such dower

Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside
By one mark'd out to be a Noble's bride.

LVIII.

And, furthermore, her brethren wonder'd much
Why she sat drooping by the Basil green,
And why it flourish'd, as by magic touch;
Greatly they wonder'd what the thing might mean:
They could not surely give belief, that such
A very nothing would have power to wean
Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay,
And even remembrance of her love's delay.

LIX.

Therefore they watch'd a time when they might sift
This hidden whim; and long they watch'd in vain;
For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift,
And seldom felt she any hunger-pain;
And when she left, she hurried back, as swift
As bird on wing to breast its eggs again;
And, patient as a hen-bird, sat her there
Beside her Basil, weeping through her hair.

LX.

Yet they contriv'd to steal the Basil-pot,
And to examine it in secret place:
The thing was vile with green and livid spot,
And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face:
The guerdon of their murder they had got,
And so left Florence in a moment's space,
Never to turn again.—Away they went,
With blood upon their heads, to banishment.

LXI.

O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away!
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!
O Echo, Echo, on some other day,
From isles Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh!

Spirits of grief, sing not your “Well-a-way!”
  For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die;
Will die a death too lone and incomplete,
Now they have ta’en away her Basil sweet.

LXII.

Piteous she look’d on dead and senseless things,
  Asking for her lost Basil amorously:
And with melodious chuckle in the strings
  Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry
After the Pilgrim in his wanderings,
  To ask him where her Basil was; and why
’Twas hid from her: “For cruel ’tis,” said she,
“To steal my Basil-pot away from me.”

LXIII.

And so she pined, and so she died forlorn,
  Imploring for her Basil to the last.
No heart was there in Florence but did mourn
  In pity of her love, so overcast.
And a sad ditty of this story born
  From mouth to mouth through all the country pass’d:
Still is the burthen sung—“O cruelty,
  “To steal my Basil-pot away from me!”

Fancy

BY JOHN KEATS

Ever let the Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home:
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;
Then let winged Fancy wander
Through the thought still spread beyond her:
Open wide the mind's cage-door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming;
Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting: What do then?
Sit thee by the ingle, when
The sear faggot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night;
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the caked snow is shuffled
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.
Sit thee there, and send abroad,
With a mind self-overaw'd,
Fancy, high-commission'd:—send her!
She has vassals to attend her:
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost;

She will bring thee, all together,
All delights of summer weather;
All the buds and bells of May,
From dewy sward or thorny spray;
All the heaped Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth:
She will mix these pleasures up
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it:—thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear;
Rustle of the reaped corn;
Sweet birds antheming the morn:
And, in the same moment, hark!
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw.
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
The daisy and the marigold;
White-plum'd lillies, and the first
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst;
Shaded hyacinth, alway
Sapphire queen of the mid-May;
And every leaf, and every flower
Pearled with the self-same shower.
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
Meagre from its celled sleep;
And the snake all winter-thin
Cast on sunny bank its skin;
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest;
Then the hurry and alarm

When the bee-hive casts its swarm;
Acorns ripe down-pattering,
While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Every thing is spoilt by use:
Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gaz'd at? Where's the maid
Whose lip mature is ever new?
Where's the eye, however blue,
Doth not weary? Where's the face
One would meet in every place?
Where's the voice, however soft,
One would hear so very oft?
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
Let, then, winged Fancy find
Thee a mistress to thy mind:
Dulcet-ey'd as Ceres' daughter,
Ere the God of Torment taught her
How to frown and how to chide;
With a waist and with a side
White as Hebe's, when her zone
Slipt its golden clasp, and down
Fell her kirtle to her feet,
While she held the goblet sweet
And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh
Of the Fancy's silken leash;
Quickly break her prison-string
And such joys as these she'll bring.—
Let the winged Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home.

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Poetry Presentation Project Assignment:

Each student will teach the class one poem. The poem should be presented in an informative and engaging manner. The presenter's goal is to ensure that ALL students fully understand the meaning of the poem; yet remember that you are TEACHING, not just TELLING the class what the poem means. The presentation will take 10-15 minutes. You may work with a partner and teach two related poems (two poems with a similar theme or two poems by the same author). Partner presentations will take 20-30 minutes. Both partners will receive the same grade and should do the same amount of work. Mrs. Fischer will not referee partnerships; therefore, think carefully before partnering up.

What to DO for your Presentation:

1. Prepare a HANDOUT for your classmates. At a minimum that handout must include the text of the poem. The handout should also include some or all of the following:

a. A 'Motivational' task or activity to get the class interested in your topic. This warm-up should be brief (no more than three minutes).

b. Follow-up Questions for after the class has read the poem.

c. Follow-up Activity for after the discussion of the poem.

d. Be creative! Bring in artwork, an interactive activity, act like a game show host.

1-Think about what lessons your teachers have done over the years that have really excited your interest. Make the class fun. This should not be an ordinary presentation.

2. Read the poem aloud to the class with feeling and clear articulation. Ensure that you are familiar with the poem and can practically recite it by heart. Know what all the words in the poem mean. Bonus points if you can flawlessly recite the poem by heart.

3. Create a **PowerPoint, Smart Board**, or equivalent visual aid to support your lesson. This does not mean that you will be reading from the PowerPoint; it means that the class will have a clear visual aid to help support their understanding of the poem. The PowerPoint should be useful to your classmates; it should not be full of tiny writing which students will not have the time or desire to read.

4. In your discussion with the class, and aided by your PowerPoint, be sure to address the steps to reading poetry. Ensure that the class fully understands the following:

a. How literary elements contribute to the overall meaning of the poem. In other words, you must do more than simply identify the literary elements. You must explain how these elements deepen our understanding of the overall poem and its theme.

b. A full and analytical understanding of the theme. Ensure that all students fully understand the meaning of the poem by the end of the presentation. In order to do this, you must fully understand the meaning of the poem first.

Remember: This is a lesson. Ask the class questions, solicit answers from them. You need not tell them everything they need to know. Help them figure out the answers themselves.

5. Conclude with a summary of the important ideas that you covered in the lesson and possibly with a fun closing activity. You may come up with some type of quick game where students can demonstrate what they learned, a brief reflective writing assignment, etc.

Assessment Grade

Your presentations will be graded based on three main categories: (1) the quality of your ability to present the information, (2) the quality of your analysis, and (3) the quality of the materials you have created for your presentation.

	Yes	No
Preparedness Completely prepared and obviously rehearsed. All materials were submitted in a timely manner. Presenter ready to begin immediately on his/her presentation date/time. The lesson flows smoothly.	○	○
Professional Demeanor Stands up straight; establishes eye contact with the audience during the presentation. The tone of the presentation is professional (not juvenile). The presenter conducts the class with seriousness and maturity.	○	○
Thoroughness of Discussion The poem was effectively discussed and analyzed. The discussion was substantial, interesting, and thorough. All students can now understand the poem.	○	○
Effectiveness of Lesson The poem was taught, not TOLD. The presenter explains the poem and helps the students understand through asking questions and providing analysis. The speaker engages with the class.	○	○
Discussion of Theme The theme is thoroughly analyzed and explained. The presenter shows how the theme relates to the poem as well as how the theme works as a universal idea.	○	○
Discussion of Literary Elements The poem is fully analyzed for the use of literary elements and techniques. This discussion may include: tone, mood, metaphor, simile, personification, symbolism, imagery, rhyme scheme, poem form, etc. Any unfamiliar terms are defined. Examples are provided from the poem, and each example is also discussed in terms of how it adds to the overall MEANING of the poem.	○	○
Quality of the Handout and Power Point The handout with the poem and other information or activity is neat, organized, useful, and submitted in a TIMELY manner. The questions are appropriate and effective in helping the class understand the poem. The Power Point is an effective teaching tool. It helps the students understand the poem. It is visually pleasing, informative, and an effective visual aid for the lesson.	○	○
Relevancy of the "Lesson" The questions and/or activities which the presenter uses to solicit feedback from the class are effective and relevant. The questions and/or activities clearly pertain to the poem and help the students learn how to understand the poem.	○	○