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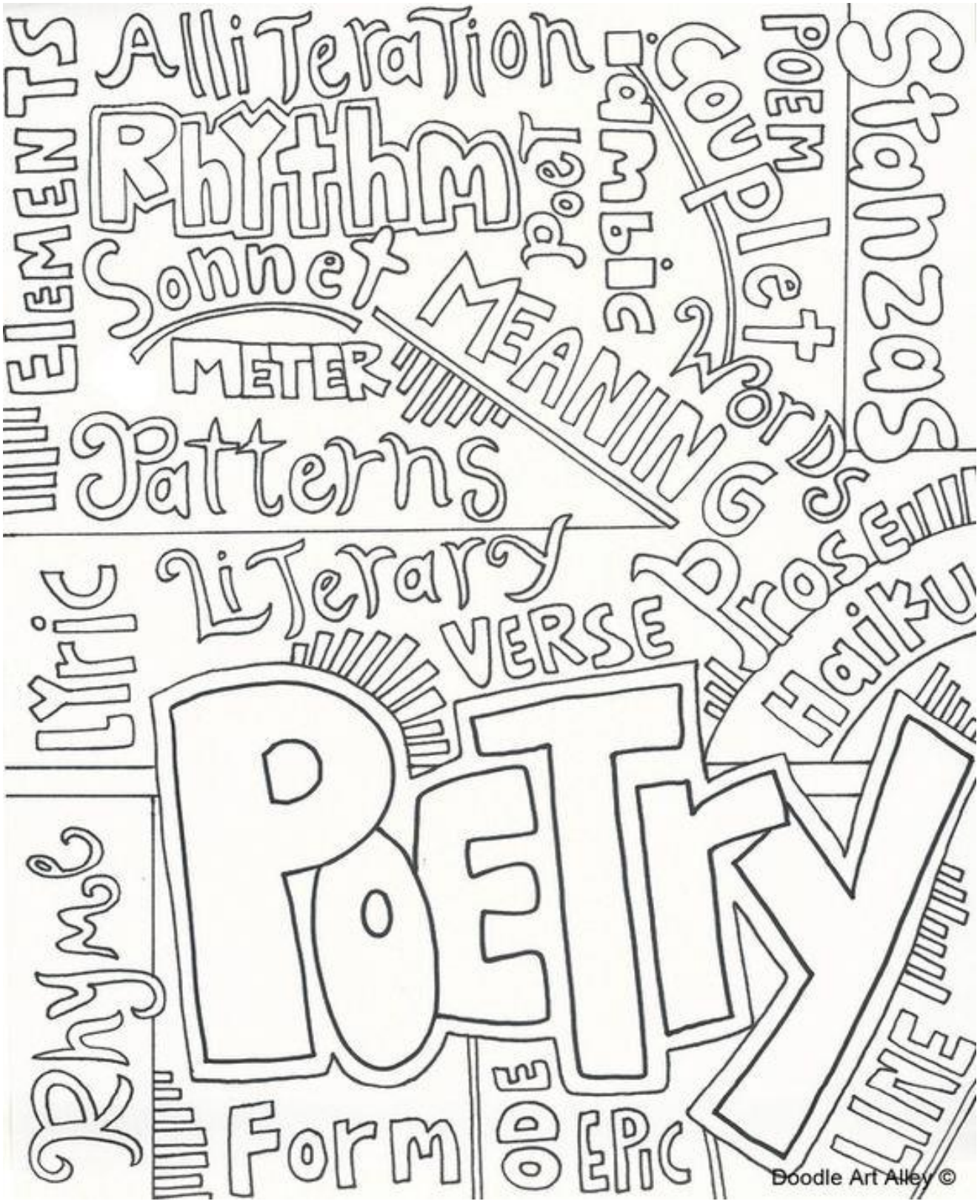
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Neoclassicism

Definition of Neoclassicism

The term Neoclassicism is a combination of two words: *Neo* and *Classic*. The word *neo* has been derived from a Greek word *neo*, which means new, recent, revived, modified, while the word *classic*, according to the Webster Dictionary, refers to the style and works of the ancient authors of Greece and Rome. To combine these words, we get the meaning of *Neoclassicism* as the rebirth and restoration of Classicism. Hence, *Neoclassicism* is the movement in the history of English literature, which laid immense emphasis on revival of the classical spirit. Writers of this period immensely endeavored to follow the footpaths of the writers of the period of Augustus, emperor of Rome, which produced unparalleled writers as Horace, Virgil and Ovid. That is the reason; the age of Pope and Dryden is also called the Augustan Age.

Neoclassical Poetry is a type of poetry, which follows the pattern of poetry authored by the poets of ancient time i.e., Greek and Rome. Pope and Dryden were the leading writers, who deviated from the traditional schools of poetry and sought guidance in the works of ancient Greek and Roman writers.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica:

"Classicism and Neoclassicism, in the arts, historical tradition or aesthetic attitudes based on the art of Greece and Rome in antiquity. In the context of the tradition, Classicism refers either to the art produced in antiquity or to later art inspired by that of antiquity; Neoclassicism always refers to the art produced later but inspired by antiquity. Thus the terms Classicism and Neoclassicism are often used interchangeably."

Neoclassicism flourished roughly between 1660, when the Stuarts returned to the throne, and the 1798 publication of Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads, with its theoretical preface and collection of poems that came to be seen as the

beginning of the Romantic Age. Neoclassicism was also the era of The Enlightenment, which emphasized logic and reason. It was preceded by The Renaissance and followed by the Romantic era.

Stages of Neoclassicism

Regarding English literature, the Neoclassical Age is typically divided into three periods: the Restoration Age (1660-1700), the Augustan Age (1700-1750), and the Age of Johnson (1750-1798).

The Restoration Age

It is called the Restoration Period, as King Charles II restored the monarchy in England in this era. The Restoration Period lasted from 1660-1700. Writers of this age, Dryden and Milton, endeavored to use grand and impressive style, scholarly allusions, and mythology and restrict the intense use of imagination. In the Restoration

Age, in poetry, the classical forms of the heroic couplet and the ode became popular.

The Augustan Age

The Augustan Age is also called the Age of Pope. Pope was the leading poet in this age. Poetry sparkled with the polished couplets of Pope. Mock epic was a common form of verse at that time. The Augustan Age lasted from 1700 to 1750.

The Age of Johnson

The Age of Johnson was a period of transition. It lasted up to 1798, when the Romantic Movement was underway with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge. In the Age of Johnson the greatest literary figure was Johnson himself as poet, critic, novelist, journalist as an embodiment of the ideals of neoclassical period.

Characteristics of Neoclassical Poetry

Adherence to Classical Rules

The neoclassical poets were undoubtedly great adherents of classical rules. They went all-out to revive the Classicism in their poetry by following each and every rule of Classicism. Their highest concern was to adhere to the classical rules and employ them in their poetry as much as possible. That is the reason; neoclassical poetry is also labeled as Pseudo Classical Poetry. Neoclassical poetry tended to be written in a much more elevated manner, using classical models such as epics, odes, and pastorals.

Scholarly Allusions

The neoclassical poets always loved to make use of scholarly allusions in their poetry. As they were all highly educated and well-versed in various fields of studies, they knew a lot about religious, biblical and classical literature. Allusions helped them to convey their message to their

readers effectively and easily. That is why; their poetry is brimming with plentiful allusions to classical writers i.e., Virgil, Horace and Homer. They desired to write in the manner of their classical masters.

The Goddess with a discontented air
Seems to reject him, tho' she grants his pray'r.
A wond'rous Bag with both her hands she binds,
Like that where once Ulysses held the winds.

(Rape of the Lock, Canto IV)

In the above-mentioned lines, the poet has made allusions to Homer's Odyssey.

Rationalism

Rationalism is the most essential feature of neoclassical poetry. Neoclassical poets viewed reason as the mainspring of learning, knowledge and inspiration for their poetry. Neoclassical poetry is a reaction against the renaissance style of poetry. It is a unique outcome of intellect, not fancy

and imagination. Unlike romantic poetry, which is entirely the result of sentiments of the poet, neoclassical poetry is a simulated, fabricated and stereotypical type of poetry. In romantic poetry, sentiments play a vital role in writing of poetry, while in neoclassical poetry; reason and intellect are dominant elements. The neoclassical poets made an effort to disregard imagination, emotion and feelings, while composing their poetry.

Realism

Realism is the hallmark of neoclassical poetry. The neoclassical poets, unlike romantic poets, were not living in their own world of imagination. They were hard realists and they presented the true picture of their society. They didn't turn their eyes from the harsh realities of life. They were keen observers and dwelled upon what they experienced with their open eyes in their poetry. These poets were not escapists like romantic poets, who turned their back to the

harsh realities of life and tried to escape from them with the help of plight of imagination.

Neoclassical poets were men of action and practically lived in the midst of people. That is why; they had a very keen observation of their society. They avoided abstract ideas, imaginative thoughts and idealism in their poetry. Dryden's and Pope's poetry are replete with excellent examples of realism.

When I consider Life, 'tis all a cheat;
Yet, fooled with hope, men favour the deceit;
Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay:
To-morrow's falser than the former day;
Lies worse; and while it says, we shall be blest
With some new joys, cuts off what we possesst.

(Aurang Zeb by John Dryden)

Objectivity

Objectivity is another important feature of neoclassical poetry. As these poets were completely against subjectivity

in poetry, they endeavored hard to write objective poetry. They avoided giving vent to their feelings; rather they dwelt upon the miseries, hardships and problems of the people around them. That is why; we find very little information about the lives of neoclassical poets in their poetry.

Didacticism

Neoclassical poets rebelled against the romantic nature of poetry of the Renaissance Period. Romantic poets loved to compose poetry just for the sake of poetry like John Keats. They tried hard to sidestep morality and didacticism in their poetry. Their foremost purpose was to give vent to their feelings. On the other hand, the neoclassical poets were chiefly concerned with the didactic aspects of their poetry. They endeavored hard to fix the teething troubles of humanity through the magical power of poetry. That is the reason; most of the neoclassical poetry is replete with didacticism to a great deal. Consider the following lines

taken from Alexander Pope's poem An Essay on Man, which is absolutely an excellent example in this regard:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

(An Essay on Man by Alexander Pope)

Concept of Nature

The concept of nature was also an important characteristic of the Neoclassical age. By nature, they never meant the forest nature, but for them, nature meant the general human nature. The general human nature was not what the ordinary men and women felt and thought, but the standard view of human nature as held by Homer and Horace. The Neoclassical writers thought of human nature also was something static and standard, which is the same in all men and remains the same at all times.

Those RULES of old discovered, not devised,
Are Nature still, but Nature Methodized;
Nature, like Liberty, is but restrained
By the same Laws which first herself ordained.

(Essay on Criticism by Alexander Pope)

The neoclassicists directed their concept of man as an individual within a larger social context, seeing human nature as dualistic, flawed, and needing to be curbed by reason and decorum.

Poetic Diction

Poetic diction of neoclassical poetry is completely different from that of romantic poetry. In romantic poetry, the diction is flexible and easy to use, while in the neoclassical poetry, it is restrained, concrete and rigid. The neoclassical poets were fond of using a different language for poetry. They thought that there should be a dividing line between the language of prose and poetry. That is why; they laid emphasis on specific style for poetry. They were of the view

that decorum, specific style and mannerism are the vital elements of poetry. Alexander Pope was very conscious about the language of his poetry. He says in Essay on Criticism:

Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent as more suitable.
A vile Conceit in pompous words express'd
Is like a clown in regal purple dress'd
For diff'rent styles with diff'rent subjects sort,
As sev'ral garbs with country, town, and court.

No Passionate Lyricism

Romantic poetry is popular for its lyrical quality, while neoclassical poetry is lacking in lyrical features due to apathy of the neoclassical poets for passion, feelings and emotions. They looked at the passion with distrust and suspicion. That is the reason; very few lyrics were written in the age of Pope and Dryden. They didn’t give free play to

their imagination; rather they dwelt upon the intellectual aspects of poetry.

Heroic Couplet

Heroic couplet is another hallmark of neoclassical poetry. The neoclassical poets were primarily responsible for reputation of heroic couplets in the history of English literature. They were the champions of heroic couplet. No poet, in the history of English literature, can compete with the mastery of neoclassical poets in handling heroic couplet. They excelled each and every poet in this regard. Chaucer was the first poet, who employed heroic couplet in his poetry. Though many renowned poets of the world tried their hands on heroic couplet, yet Dryden and Pope are the only poets, who outdid everyone in this regard. They are considered as the real masters of heroic couplet. What is most important about these two poets is that they polished the heroic couplet, corrected it, made it regular, more flexible

and a polished medium of poetic expression. His poems like Absalam and Achitopel, Mac Flecnoe and The Medal are all in heroic couplets. Look at the following example:

Good nature and good sense must ever join;
To err is human, to forgive, divine.

(An Essay on Criticism by Alexander Pope)

Mock Epic

A Mock-epic is a long epic poem which is written about a subject that is not really worthy of an epic. Mock epic is the product of Neoclassical age.

Pope's The Rape of Lock is a good example of the Mock-epic poem. The term Mock epic is often applied to other dignified poetic forms. e.g. Thomas Gray's comic, Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat (1748 A.D.)

Neoclassical Poets

English poets from 1660 A.D. to 1798 A.D. are generally known as Neoclassical poets. They are so-called because they had great respect for classical writers and imitated much from them. For them, poetry was an imitation of human life.

John Dryden (1631- 1700)

John Dryden is an English poet, playwright, translator, essayist, and literary theorist. Along with Shakespeare and Milton, he is considered as one of the most influential and greatest representatives of English Literature of the 17th century. He is highly regarded for his critical writings as well as his satirical and didactic poems. Throughout his lengthy, varied career, Dryden fashioned a vital and refined language that served as a foundation for the writers of English prose and verse who followed him.

Dryden was born August 9, 1631, in Northampton-shire, England, to Erasmus Dryden and Mary Pickering, both moderate Puritans. He grew up during the seven-year-long English Civil War, a conflict between the Puritans, who wanted to abolish the monarchy, and the Royalists, who supported the monarchy. A royal scholarship allowed Dryden to attend Westminster School, where he received a classical education and published his first poem.

The Puritans came to power under Oliver Cromwell in 1649, deposing the monarchy and executing King Charles I not a half mile from where Dryden was studying. It is believed that Dryden's lifelong concern for political stability was a result of growing up during the war. In 1650, Dryden began studying at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he earned a bachelor of arts degree. Next, it appears he worked for Cromwell's government, probably in the Office of Latin Secretary along with poets John Milton and Andrew Marvell.

Following Cromwell's death and during the short-lived government of Cromwell's son Richard, Dryden published Heroique Stanza (1658), a group of verses that portray Cromwell as the architect of a great new age. In the following years, Dryden continued to publish politically oriented poems, including the notable Astraea Redux (1660). This poem celebrated Charles II's 1660 return from exile and restoration to the English throne. In 1663 he married Lady Elizabeth Howard and some years later, in 1668, was made poet laureate of England.

In the early 1680's Dryden became a Catholic and then wrote the religious work The Hind and the Panther (1687). In 1688 he returned to writing both for the theatre and critical pieces. Dryden also worked, during this period on a large number of translations of, among others, Theocritus, Horace, Homer, Lucretius, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Ovid and Persius. Dryden died in London on May 1, 1700, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The poetry of Dryden can be divided into three parts-

- Political Satires
- Doctrinal Poems
- The Fables

Absalom and Achitophel

Satire, particularly political satire, became exceedingly popular in Restoration England as a means to address problems and injustices within the government and society as a whole, and John Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel" is one such work.

"Absalom and Achitophel" is a heroic satire written by John Dryden in 1681-1682. Absalom and Achitophel is "generally acknowledged as the finest political satire in the English language". It is also described as an allegory regarding contemporary political events, and a mock heroic narrative. In the prologue, "To the Reader", Dryden states that "the true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction".

On the surface, John Dryden's poem "Absalom and Achitophel" is about the story of David, the third king of Israel, and his illegitimate son Absalom, who rebels against his father and tries to usurp his throne. However, this biblical story is merely an allegory, a form of extended metaphor, for the political events that unfolded in Dryden's time. Absalom and David are veiled metaphors for Charles II of England and his illegitimate son, James Scott, 1st Duke of Monmouth.

In 1678, an alleged Catholic conspiracy to assassinate King Charles II, known as the Popish Plot, swept across England, creating mass anti-Catholic feelings and prompting the Exclusion Crisis of 1679. The Exclusion Crisis lasted until 1681 and attempted to exclude James, King Charles's brother, from royal succession because he was a Roman Catholic rather than a Protestant. After the death of Charles II in 1685, Monmouth and an army of followers attempted to seize the crown from Charles's brother, James II, the next

heir in the line of succession. James was a Roman Catholic, and Monmouth and his Protestant followers opposed a Roman Catholic on the throne. During the summer of 1685, the Monmouth Rebellion fought a sequence of battles against the English military led by John Churchill. Monmouth's army was ultimately defeated at the Battle of Sedgemoor on July 6, and on July 15, the 1st Duke of Monmouth was executed for treason. Monmouth's uncle, James II, ignored the people and Monmouth's pleas for mercy, even after Monmouth vowed to convert to Catholicism. James II remained on the throne until 1688, at which time he was overthrown by William of Orange during the Glorious Revolution. In 1701, the Act of Settlement was passed by Parliament, which officially excluded Roman Catholics from royal succession and mandated that the throne be occupied by Protestants only.

Through the use of satire and allegory in "Absalom and Achitophel," Dryden ultimately argues that the Popish Plot

and the Exclusion Crisis were devious ploys to divert the rightful order of succession and prevent James II from ascending the throne.

Absalom is David's illegitimate son and the protagonist of "Absalom and Achitophel." Achitophel begins to convince Absalom to rebel against David and Absalom agrees to rebel against him. David loses patience with both Absalom and Achitophel and asserts his power as king before the people of Israel and effectively shuts down Absalom's rebellion, but Dryden never does say what becomes of Absalom. Absalom metaphorically represents Charles II's illegitimate son James Scott, the 1st Duke of Monmouth, who rebelled against Charles and the throne in Dryden's time. Through the character of Absalom, Dryden ultimately argues that Charles and his brother James both have a divine right to the crown that is not extended to Monmouth.

Achitophel is deceitful counselor to King David and the antagonist of "Absalom and Achitophel." He encourages

David's son Absalom to rebel against him. Achitophel hates David's brother, the heir presumptive, and he wants to make sure that he never ascends the throne. Dryden's Achitophel represents Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 1st Earl of Shaftesbury, a Member of Parliament during Dryden's time and the main supporter of the Exclusion Bill. Shaftesbury was the founder of the Whig party, which sought to exclude Charles II's brother James from the throne, and he was a major opponent of Charles throughout his reign. What comes of Achitophel is never revealed in Dryden's poem, but historically speaking, Shaftesbury was tried for treason after encouraging Charles's son the Duke of Monmouth, to rebel against the crown, but he was later acquitted. Through Achitophel, Dryden suggests that Charles and James both have just claims to the throne and is not for Shaftesbury, Monmouth, or Parliament to infringe on that power.

Zimri is One of Achitophel's men, a man full of all the wrong opinions. He takes on numerous professions and is obsessed with women. He is prone to railing, praising, and squandering riches; he is characterized by extremes. Dryden describes as a "buffoon" who has tried several professions. In the Bible, Zimri is king of Israel for seven days, but he is no real threat to David or the throne in "Absalom and Achitophel." Zimri likely represents George Villiers, the 2nd Duke of Buckingham, an English statesman and poet who had disgraced himself in war, organized an unsuccessful plot against the government, and was accused of treason. He played an active role within the Popish Plot.

Character of George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham

(from Absalom and Achitophel; II; 544-568)

In the first rank of these did Zimri stand:
A man so various, that he seem'd to be
Not one, but all Mankind's Epitome.
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong;

Was everything by starts, and nothing long:
But in the course of one revolving moon,
Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon:
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking;
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.
Blest madman, who could every hour employ,
With something new to wish, or to enjoy!
Railing and praising were his usual themes;
And both (to show his judgment) in extremes:
So over violent, or over civil,
That every man, with him, was god or devil.
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art:
Nothing went unrewarded, but desert.
Beggar'd by fools, whom still he found too late:
He had his jest, and they had his estate.
He laugh'd himself from court; then sought relief
By forming parties, but could ne'er be chief:
For, spite of him, the weight of business fell
On Absalom and wise Achitophel:
Thus, wicked but in will, of means bereft,
He left not faction, but of that was left.

Mac Flecknoe

Mac Flecknoe is one of the major satires of esteemed English poet John Dryden. It is 217 lines of rhyming couplets in iambic pentameter. The subject of the satire is the unlucky fellow identified here as the "True-blue Protestant Poet T.S," who is none other than Dryden's contemporary and rival, English poet and playwright, Thomas Shadwell. Dryden converted to Catholicism several years after the publication of this poem, which might have something to do with his criticism of Shadwell's religious preference as a gung-ho Protestant. It is also literary satire, and is considered one of the most famous mock-heroic verses in the English tradition. The poem grew out of a longstanding debate that Dryden and Shadwell had over the nature of comedy. During the Restoration, Shadwell was considered a playwright of considerable brilliance, but Dryden did not agree with this assessment. In Dryden’s opinion, Shadwell was a subpar poet and dramatist who believed much too highly of himself.

Mac Flecknoe is the poet-king of the realm of nonsense. After many years as ruler, however, it comes time for him to step down. Ultimately, he chooses his son Thomas Shadwell, a poet of unparalleled dreadfulness, as his successor. Shadwell is the worst writer in all the land, and thus, the perfect man for the job. Upon arriving in the city of August (a.k.a. London), Shadwell is crowned king of the realm of nonsense. Mac Flecknoe himself delivers a brief speech on his son's merits during the coronation. At this point all the action pretty much stops, as the poem devolves into a thinly-veiled, full-force condemnation of Shadwell's writing and character by the speaker. In the end, crowned and ready to rule in his father's footsteps, Shadwell is poised to sink poetry to an even lower level.

Mac Flecknoe

A Satire upon the True-blue Protestant Poet T.S.

All humane things are subject to decay,
And, when Fate summons, Monarchs must obey:

This Fleckno found, who, like Augustus, young
Was call'd to Empire, and had govern'd long:
In Prose and Verse, was own'd, without dispute [5]
Through all the Realms of *Non-sense*, absolute.
This aged Prince now flourishing in Peace,
And blest with issue of a large increase,
Worn out with business, did at length debate
To settle the succession of the State: [10]
And pond'ring which of all his Sons was fit
To Reign, and wage immortal War with Wit;
Cry'd, 'tis resolv'd; for Nature pleads that He
Should onely rule, who most resembles me:
Sh—— alone my perfect image bears, [15]
Mature in dullness from his tender years.
Sh—— alone, of all my Sons, is he
Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But *Sh*—— never deviates into sense. [20]
Some Beams of Wit on other souls may fall,
Strike through and make a lucid interval;
But *Sh*——'s genuine night admits no ray,
His rising Fogs prevail upon the Day:
Besides his goodly Fabrick fills the eye, [25]

And seems design'd for thoughtless Majesty:
Thoughtless as Monarch Oakes, that shade the plain,
And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.

The poem is narrated by the poet (Dryden) in the third-person perspective and is introduced as “A Satire on the True-blue Protestant T.S.,” or Thomas Shadwell. Dryden begins with a lofty commentary on mortality, God, and kings, his introduction to what we can only assume will be an epic of Homeric proportions. As we will soon discover, the entirety of the poem is written in rhymed heroic couplets, typical of the epic style. From this initial couplet, Dryden creates the atmosphere of an epic, a grandiose story of gods and kings, in line with the tradition of poetic big names like Homer or Milton.

This is no epic; it's a satire written in mock-epic form. In these lines we get a sense of the poem's true tone, in all its biting, sarcastic glory. Here's our first appearance from the title character, one Mac Flecknoe, the monarch spoken of in

line 2. This could be a reference to Richard Flecknoe, an earlier English poet likely of Irish origin. Flecknoe was regarded to be a poetaster—basically someone who writes bad poetry—known for having to pay to get his poems published Like Augustus, the first emperor of Rome, Flecknoe's rule was long and successful. But of course Flecknoe's domain isn't Rome, but rather the "realms of Non-sense," of which he is the poet-king. This distinction does not reflect well on his literary talents.

The end of our king's life is near, however, and it is time now for him to declare his successor to the throne. He has been blessed with a "large increase" and he must choose which one of his children will inherit the kingdom. So how will he make this decision? He will choose the heir who is most like the king himself, in wit and poetic ability.

Instead of writing out the full name of "Shadwell," Dryden's original text actually reads "Sh—", implying a certain scatological expletive. It also implies the name of the

writer: Shadwell. Dryden's meter, however, consisting of ten syllable lines, requires a two-syllable word there.

In his supreme dullness and stupidity, it is Shadwell alone who appears fit to inherit the throne from Flecknoe. Let's take a moment to step out of the kingdom of nonsense and back into reality: Shadwell and Dryden were once friends, but their relationship soured over several disagreements. They had divergent political views, as Dryden supported the Stuart monarchy while Shadwell was a member of the opposing party, called the Whigs. They had religious differences, too, given Dryden's Catholic sympathies and Shadwell's Protestantism. They had a running debate over the merits of Shakespeare and his contemporary Ben Jonson; Dryden was a Shakespeare fan, while Shadwell considered himself the leading student and heir to Jonson's legacy . This festering contentiousness between the two writers reached a boiling point when Shadwell published "The Medal of John Bayes" in 1682,

which attacked Dryden head-on. Dryden responded within the year with "Mac Flecknoe."

Back to the realm of nonsense, where Shadwell is undeviatingly daft and impenetrably dense. No beam of intelligence or wit can reach him in his "genuine night." In other words, he's a complete moron. Here, the irony present in Dryden's mock-heroic style becomes especially clear. Dryden drops insult after insult, berating the intelligence and substance of his victim—but in the lofty language and style that might be used to exalt the many virtues of a Homeric hero. He's thoughtless as an oak, Dryden (using a simile) says of Shadwell. We guess he probably had more intellect than a tree.

Alexander Pope (1688–1744)

Alexander Pope was one of the most popular and influential writers of his time. He was writing during what we now call the Enlightenment era, which lasted from about

1660 to around 1800. Enlightenment thinkers emphasized the importance of science and reason and claimed that the world is knowable and testable.

Alexander Pope was a central figure in the Neoclassical movement of the early 18th century. He is acknowledged as a master of the heroic couplet of the Augustan age. He was known for having perfected the rhymed couplet form of his idol, John Dryden, and turned it to satiric and philosophical purposes. His mock epic The Rape of the Lock (1714) derides elite society, while An Essay on Criticism (1711) and An Essay on Man(1733-34) articulate many of the central tenets of 18th-century aesthetic and moral philosophy.

Pope was born on May 21, 1688 to a wealthy Catholic linen merchant, Alexander Pope, and his second wife, Edith Turner. In the same year, the Protestant William of Orange took the English throne. Because Catholics were forbidden to hold office, practice their religion, attend public schools, or

live within ten miles of London, Pope grew up in nearby Windsor Forest and was mostly self-taught, his education supplemented by study with private tutors or priests. At the age of twelve, he contracted spinal tuberculosis, which left him with permanent physical disabilities. He never grew taller than four and a half feet, was hunchbacked, and required daily care throughout adulthood.

His irascible nature and unpopularity in the press are often attributed to three factors: his membership in a religious minority, his physical infirmity, and his exclusion from formal education. However, Pope was bright, precocious, and determined and, by his teens, was writing accomplished verse.

His rise to fame was swift. Publisher Jacob Tonson included Pope's Pastorals, a quartet of early poems in the Virgilian style, in his Poetical Miscellanies (1709), and Pope published his first major work, An Essay on Criticism, at the age of 23. He soon became friends with Whig writers Joseph

Addison and Richard Steele, editors of the Spectator, who published his essays and poems, and the appearance of The Rape of the Lock made him famous in wider circles. In the 1730s, Pope published two works on the same theme: An Essay on Man and a series of “imitated” satires and epistles of Horace (1733-38). An Essay on Man is didactic and wide-reaching and was meant to be part of a larger work of moral philosophy that Pope never finished. Its four sections, or “epistles,” present an aesthetic and philosophical argument for the existence of order in the world, contending that we know the world to be unified because God created it. Thus, it is only our inferior vision that perceives disunity, and it is each man’s duty to strive for the good and the orderly.

Pope’s first mature work, An Essay on Criticism, is a virtuosic exposition of literary theory, poetic practice, and moral philosophy. Bringing together themes and ideas from the history of philosophy, the three parts of the poem

illustrate a golden age of culture, describe the fall of that age, and propose a platform to restore it through literary ethics and personal virtues. The work showcases Pope's mastery of the heroic couplet, in which he was capable of making longer arguments in verse as well as of producing such memorable phrases as "To Err is humane; to Forgive, Divine."

The mock epic The Rape of the Lock made Pope known to a general audience. Based on an actual incident in 1711, when Robert Lord Petre ("The Baron") publicly cut a lock of hair from the head of Arabella Fermor ("Belinda"), and said to have been written at the request of a friend to encourage a rapprochement between the families, the poem nimbly depicts the foibles of high society.

Ode on Solitude

Happy the man, whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,

Content to breathe his native air,
In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
Whose flocks supply him with attire,
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter fire.

Blest, who can unconcernedly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away,
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease,
Together mixed; sweet recreation;
And innocence, which most does please,
With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me die;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie.

The first stanza of Ode on Solitude begins the analogy that will carry through the poem, seen through the life of an anonymous man who is described as being an ideal for happiness. His deepest desires, the narrator notes, extends a few acres of his own land, where he is content to live and work. The inclusion of the word “parental” suggests that the land belongs to this man by inheritance, and therefore belongs solely to him. “Content to breathe his native air” could also be a commentary on being happy with what a person has, rather than constantly wishing for more (although this might not have been quite as significant an idea in 1700 when the poem was written, as it may be interpreted today). The verse structure and rhyming pattern is established here; three lines of eight syllables each, followed by one line of four syllables, rhyming in an ABAB pattern. This persists up until the final two stanzas, at which point the final line lengthens to five syllables.

The second stanza simply means that the man is self-sufficient. His land, now shown to be a farm, provides for all of his needs — his herds provide him with milk, he is able to bake his own bread. In the summer, his trees provide ample shade, and in the winter the wood from those same trees can be lit to keep him warm. He has no need of anything beyond his own land.

While this verse reads strangely, as “bread” and “shade” do not rhyme, it is important to remember that Ode on Solitude was written over three hundred years ago. During this period in Britain, “bread” was pronounced with a longer vowel sound. While word pronunciation is a difficult thing to estimate and predict throughout different eras of history, it makes sense to believe that at one point, “bread” and “shade” could be used as rhymes for one another.

In the third stanza the narrator considered this farmer blessed! Time almost doesn’t have meaning for this man; his world provides for all of his needs. Hours go by, days go by,

years go by, and everything remains the same. The health the man is in at the beginning of this cycle is the health he remains in when it is finished. Peace of mind is normal for him — what is there to trouble him? It seems as though, in a world of peace and quiet, there is absolutely nothing that could disrupt the life of this farmer, and the narrator sees that as a high blessing.

In the fourth stanza, the idea of innocence is introduced, and is a fair way to describe a man who lives his life in isolation; he is innocent, which means he himself probably doesn't appreciate the kind of life he leads in the same way the narrator, author, or reader does. It's a strange idea and casts the character of the farmer in a different light. He could, in fact, be viewed as a naïve and ignorant individual, one who simply doesn't know enough about the world, or he could be viewed as living the ideal life.

In the fifth stanza, the narrator of the poem clearly agrees with the latter of the above sentiments — here he wishes for

escapism and begs for an unseen life, one where he may live in solitude until his dying days, which will come and go, unnoticed, unremarked, and unadorned, perfect life of solitude and peace.

Historical Context

Because of the very mature concepts expressed by Ode on Solitude, particularly the bit about wishing to die alone, many might be surprised to learn that Alexander Pope wrote Ode on Solitude in 1700, at the age of twelve. At the time, Pope had just moved to a small estate by a forest, in a small village far from the main British towns. His family had been forced to live there because of their Catholic faith, and it could be here, in the village now known as Popeswood (named after Pope himself) that the young child found his ideals in solitude, undoubtedly being inspired by his new natural landscape, particularly the Windsor Forest.

It was also at this time that Pope's formal education ended, another unfortunate result of being Catholic at the time. However, instead of giving up on learning altogether, Pope attempted to educate himself, drawing on classical literature, paying particular attention to well-known poets of the era.

With all of this background, it is altogether unsurprising that one of Pope's earliest works would be a very mature poem about solitude. Abandoned largely by the world, it makes sense to think that solace in solitude was an everyday occurrence for the young Alexander Pope. When discussing earlier whether an entirely isolated farmer was a man to be looked down upon for his naivety or respected for his independence, the perspective of Pope is clear — he envies the man. Understanding that Pope was essentially forced out of mainstream society because of his religious beliefs might lead one to believe that Pope would have

viewed total exclusion from that mainstream society as the best thing that could happen to a person.

Pope did not live a life of seclusion but rather was a respected poet during his time, and remains so today. Whether or not he changed his views on solitude is difficult to say. What is clear is that his Ode on Solitude was just the start of what would eventually become a literary career of classical fame and definite ingenuity for the now-famous Alexander Pope.

An Essay On Criticism

"*An Essay on Criticism"* is a didactic poem by Alexander Pope, first published when the author was 22 years old. The poem, written in heroic couplets (or two rhyming lines of iambic pentameter), is heavily influenced by Aristotle's Poetics, Horace's Ars Poetica, and Nicolas Boileau's L'Art Poëtique. It offers a sort of master-class not only in doing criticism but in being a critic: addressed to

those who would rise above scandal, envy, politics and pride to true judgment. The work's brilliantly polished epigrams (e.g., "A little learning is a dang'rous thing," "To err is human; to forgive, divine," and "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread"), while not original, have become part of the proverbial heritage of the English language.

"*An Essay on Criticism*" is a work of both poetry and criticism. Pope attempts in this long, three-part poem to examine neoclassical aesthetics in poetry and argues that the best kind of poetry is that which is closest to his conception of "Nature." He also argues against a separation of form and content, arguing that naturalism in poetry should be reflected in both its form and its content.

Pope's *'Essay on Criticism'* is broken into three different parts. The **first part** opens by describing the ways literary critics can actually cause harm. Pope argues that critics must be both careful and humble when critiquing a piece of literature, for the writing of bad criticism actually hurts poetry

more than the writing of bad poetry does. Pope points out that each critic has his or her own opinion, and, if applied incorrectly, a critic can actually censure a talented writer. However, Pope argues that if a critic is honest, doesn't fall prey to envy and listens to the seeds of understanding that are naturally a part of him or herself, one can become a wise critic. The Greeks came to understand poetry through following the rules of nature, argues Pope, and contemporary critics must do the same. Pope assures that good taste derives from Nature and that critics should imitate the ancient rules established by classical writers.

In the **second part**, Pope lists the many ways in which critics have deviated from these rules. He describes some of the ways that critics develop bad judgment, the chief of which is pride. The key to avoiding this is to know your own faults and limitations. Moreover, critics must study well and focus on conventions passed down from the masters of poetry. Pope warns, however, that critics must be careful of

becoming slaves to the rules and convention that others have developed and to not let the popularity of an author misguide a critic's appreciation of an author's work. One of the products of adhering too closely to conventions is that critics become fascinated with extremes and forget the essential truth that beauty and good poetry are made up of the combination of all of their parts, rather than each part by itself.

In the **third part** of the poem, Pope discusses the characteristics of a good critic, concludes with a short history of literary criticism and a catalog of famous critics. He offers some wisdom that critics should follow. Once again, Pope emphasizes the importance of humility and studying deeply, particularly studying those poets and critics who truly understand poetry and follow nature. Pope then reflects on the ups and downs of literature and literary critics since Greek culture, explaining how the understanding produced

by the Greeks and Romans was lost and is only beginning to be appreciated again.

An Essay On Criticism: Part 1

Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum
[If you have come to know any precept more correct than these, share it with me, brilliant one; if not, use these with me] (Horace, Epistle I.6.67)

PART 1

'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill
Appear in writing or in judging ill;
But, of the two, less dang'rous is th' offence
To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.
Some few in that, but numbers err in this,
Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss;
A fool might once himself alone expose,
Now one in verse makes many more in prose.

'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.
In poets as true genius is but rare,
True taste as seldom is the critic's share;
Both must alike from Heav'n derive their light,

These born to judge, as well as those to write.
Let such teach others who themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well.
Authors are partial to their wit, 'tis true,
But are not critics to their judgment too?

Yet if we look more closely we shall find
Most have the seeds of judgment in their mind;
Nature affords at least a glimm'ring light;
The lines, tho' touch'd but faintly, are drawn right.
But as the slightest sketch, if justly trac'd,
Is by ill colouring but the more disgrac'd,
So by false learning is good sense defac'd;
Some are bewilder'd in the maze of schools,
And some made coxcombs Nature meant but fools.
In search of wit these lose their common sense,
And then turn critics in their own defence:
Each burns alike, who can, or cannot write,
Or with a rival's, or an eunuch's spite.
All fools have still an itching to deride,
And fain would be upon the laughing side.
If Mævius scribble in Apollo's spite,
There are, who judge still worse than he can write.

Some have at first for wits, then poets pass'd,
Turn'd critics next, and prov'd plain fools at last;
Some neither can for wits nor critics pass,
As heavy mules are neither horse nor ass.
Those half-learn'd witlings, num'rous in our isle
As half-form'd insects on the banks of Nile;
Unfinish'd things, one knows not what to call,
Their generation's so equivocal:
To tell 'em, would a hundred tongues require,
Or one vain wit's, that might a hundred tire.

But you who seek to give and merit fame,
And justly bear a critic's noble name,
Be sure your self and your own reach to know,
How far your genius, taste, and learning go;
Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet,
And mark that point where sense and dulness meet.

Nature to all things fix'd the limits fit,
And wisely curb'd proud man's pretending wit:
As on the land while here the ocean gains,
In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains;
Thus in the soul while memory prevails,
The solid pow'r of understanding fails;
Where beams of warm imagination play,
The memory's soft figures melt away.
One science only will one genius fit;
So vast is art, so narrow human wit:
Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
But oft in those, confin'd to single parts.
Like kings we lose the conquests gain'd before,
By vain ambition still to make them more;
Each might his sev'ral province well command,
Would all but stoop to what they understand.

First follow NATURE, and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same:
Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,
Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
At once the source, and end, and test of art.
Art from that fund each just supply provides,
Works without show, and without pomp presides:
In some fair body thus th' informing soul
With spirits feeds, with vigour fills the whole,
Each motion guides, and ev'ry nerve sustains;

Itself unseen, but in th' effects, remains.
Some, to whom Heav'n in wit has been profuse,
Want as much more, to turn it to its use;
For wit and judgment often are at strife,
Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife.
'Tis more to guide, than spur the Muse's steed;
Restrain his fury, than provoke his speed;
The winged courser, like a gen'rous horse,
Shows most true mettle when you check his course.

Those RULES of old discover'd, not devis'd,
Are Nature still, but Nature methodis'd;
Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd
By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.

Hear how learn'd Greece her useful rules indites,
When to repress, and when indulge our flights:
High on Parnassus' top her sons she show'd,
And pointed out those arduous paths they trod;
Held from afar, aloft, th' immortal prize,
And urg'd the rest by equal steps to rise.
Just precepts thus from great examples giv'n,
She drew from them what they deriv'd from Heav'n.
The gen'rous critic fann'd the poet's fire,
And taught the world with reason to admire.
Then criticism the Muse's handmaid prov'd,
To dress her charms, and make her more belov'd;
But following wits from that intention stray'd;
Who could not win the mistress, woo'd the maid;
Against the poets their own arms they turn'd,
Sure to hate most the men from whom they learn'd.
So modern 'pothecaries, taught the art
By doctor's bills to play the doctor's part,
Bold in the practice of mistaken rules,
Prescribe, apply, and call their masters fools.

Some on the leaves of ancient authors prey,
Nor time nor moths e'er spoil'd so much as they:
Some drily plain, without invention's aid,
Write dull receipts how poems may be made:
These leave the sense, their learning to display,
And those explain the meaning quite away.

You then whose judgment the right course would steer,
Know well each ANCIENT'S proper character;
His fable, subject, scope in ev'ry page;
Religion, country, genius of his age:
Without all these at once before your eyes,
Cavil you may, but never criticise.
Be Homer's works your study and delight,
Read them by day, and meditate by night;
Thence form your judgment, thence your maxims bring,
And trace the Muses upward to their spring;
Still with itself compar'd, his text peruse;
And let your comment be the Mantuan Muse.

When first young Maro in his boundless mind
A work t' outlast immortal Rome design'd,
Perhaps he seem'd above the critic's law,
And but from Nature's fountains scorn'd to draw:
But when t' examine ev'ry part he came,
Nature and Homer were, he found, the same.
Convinc'd, amaz'd, he checks the bold design,
And rules as strict his labour'd work confine,
As if the Stagirite o'erlook'd each line.
Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem;
To copy nature is to copy them.

Some beauties yet, no precepts can declare,
For there's a happiness as well as care.
Music resembles poetry, in each

Are nameless graces which no methods teach,
And which a master-hand alone can reach.
If, where the rules not far enough extend,
(Since rules were made but to promote their end)
Some lucky LICENCE answers to the full
Th' intent propos'd, that licence is a rule.
Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,
May boldly deviate from the common track.
Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
Which, without passing through the judgment, gains
The heart, and all its end at once attains.
In prospects, thus, some objects please our eyes,
Which out of nature's common order rise,
The shapeless rock, or hanging precipice.
But tho' the ancients thus their rules invade,
(As kings dispense with laws themselves have made)
Moderns, beware! or if you must offend
Against the precept, ne'er transgress its end;
Let it be seldom, and compell'd by need,
And have, at least, their precedent to plead.
The critic else proceeds without remorse,
Seizes your fame, and puts his laws in force.

I know there are, to whose presumptuous thoughts
Those freer beauties, ev'n in them, seem faults.
Some figures monstrous and misshap'd appear,
Consider'd singly, or beheld too near,
Which, but proportion'd to their light, or place,
Due distance reconciles to form and grace.
A prudent chief not always must display
His pow'rs in equal ranks, and fair array,
But with th' occasion and the place comply,

Conceal his force, nay seem sometimes to fly.
Those oft are stratagems which errors seem,
Nor is it Homer nods, but we that dream.

Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,
Above the reach of sacrilegious hands,
Secure from flames, from envy's fiercer rage,
Destructive war, and all-involving age.
See, from each clime the learn'd their incense bring!
Hear, in all tongues consenting pæans ring!
In praise so just let ev'ry voice be join'd,
And fill the gen'ral chorus of mankind!
Hail, bards triumphant! born in happier days;
Immortal heirs of universal praise!
Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow!
Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,
And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!
Oh may some spark of your celestial fire
The last, the meanest of your sons inspire,
(That on weak wings, from far, pursues your flights;
Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes)
To teach vain wits a science little known,
T' admire superior sense, and doubt their own!

An Essay On Man

"*An Essay on Man*" consists of four epistles, written in heroic couplets. Epistle I examines the nature of man and his place in the universe; Epistle II, man as an individual; Epistle III, man's place in society; and Epistle IV, man's

pursuit of happiness. Pope attempts to warn man against excessive pride, explaining that he is not the center of all things. Though not overtly Christian, the poem champions elements of Christian doctrine, in particular the salvation of man and the greatness of God. Man should accept his place in God's order, which can lead to happy and virtuous lives. On the whole, *An Essay on Man* is an affirmative poem of faith and takes an optimistic view of the world.

An Essay On Man In Four Epistles: Epistle II

I.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.
Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
Chaos of thought and passion, all confus'd;
Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd;

Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

Go, wondrous creature! mount where science guides,
Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides;
Instruct the planets in what orbs to run,
Correct old time, and regulate the sun;
Go, soar with Plato to th' empyreal sphere,
To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;
Or tread the mazy round his follow'rs trod,
And quitting sense call imitating God;
As Eastern priests in giddy circles run,
And turn their heads to imitate the sun.
Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule—
Then drop into thyself, and be a fool!

Superior beings, when of late they saw
A mortal Man unfold all Nature's law,
Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And showed a Newton as we shew an Ape.

Could he, whose rules the rapid comet bind,
Describe or fix one movement of his mind?
Who saw its fires here rise, and there descend,
Explain his own beginning, or his end?
Alas what wonder! Man's superior part
Uncheck'd may rise, and climb from art to art;
But when his own great work is but begun,
What Reason weaves, by Passion is undone.

Trace science then, with modesty thy guide;
First strip off all her equipage of pride;
Deduct what is but vanity, or dress,

Or learning's luxury, or idleness;
Or tricks to show the stretch of human brain,
Mere curious pleasure, or ingenious pain;
Expunge the whole, or lop th' excrescent parts
Of all our Vices have created Arts;
Then see how little the remaining sum,
Which serv'd the past, and must the times to come!

II.

Two principles in human nature reign;
Self-love, to urge, and reason, to restrain;
Nor this a good, nor that a bad we call,
Each works its end, to move or govern all:
And to their proper operation still,
Ascribe all good; to their improper, ill.

Self-love, the spring of motion, acts the soul;
Reason's comparing balance rules the whole.
Man, but for that, no action could attend,
And but for this, were active to no end:
Fix'd like a plant on his peculiar spot,
To draw nutrition, propagate, and rot;
Or, meteor-like, flame lawless through the void,
Destroying others, by himself destroy'd.

Most strength the moving principle requires;
Active its task, it prompts, impels, inspires.
Sedate and quiet the comparing lies,
Form'd but to check, delib'rate, and advise.
Self-love still stronger, as its objects nigh;
Reason's at distance, and in prospect lie:
That sees immediate good by present sense;
Reason, the future and the consequence.
Thicker than arguments, temptations throng,
At best more watchful this, but that more strong.

The action of the stronger to suspend,
Reason still use, to reason still attend.
Attention, habit and experience gains;
Each strengthens reason, and self-love restrains.

Let subtle schoolmen teach these friends to fight,
More studious to divide than to unite,
And grace and virtue, sense and reason split,
With all the rash dexterity of wit:
Wits, just like fools, at war about a name,
Have full as oft no meaning, or the same.
Self-love and reason to one end aspire,
Pain their aversion, pleasure their desire;
But greedy that its object would devour,
This taste the honey, and not wound the flow'r:
Pleasure, or wrong or rightly understood,
Our greatest evil, or our greatest good.

III.

Modes of self-love the passions we may call:
'Tis real good, or seeming, moves them all:
But since not every good we can divide,
And reason bids us for our own provide;
Passions, though selfish, if their means be fair,
List under reason, and deserve her care;
Those, that imparted, court a nobler aim,
Exalt their kind, and take some virtue's name.

In lazy apathy let Stoics boast
Their virtue fix'd, 'tis fix'd as in a frost;
Contracted all, retiring to the breast;
But strength of mind is exercise, not rest:
The rising tempest puts in act the soul,
Parts it may ravage, but preserves the whole.
On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,

Reason the card, but passion is the gale;
Nor God alone in the still calm we find,
He mounts the storm, and walks upon the wind.

Passions, like elements, though born to fight,
Yet, mix'd and soften'd, in his work unite:
These 'tis enough to temper and employ;
But what composes man, can man destroy?
Suffice that reason keep to nature's road,
Subject, compound them, follow her and God.
Love, hope, and joy, fair pleasure's smiling train,
Hate, fear, and grief, the family of pain,
These mix'd with art, and to due bounds confin'd,
Make and maintain the balance of the mind:
The lights and shades, whose well accorded strife
Gives all the strength and colour of our life.

Pleasures are ever in our hands or eyes,
And when in act they cease, in prospect, rise:
Present to grasp, and future still to find,
The whole employ of body and of mind.
All spread their charms, but charm not all alike;
On diff'rent senses diff'rent objects strike;
Hence diff'rent passions more or less inflame,
As strong or weak, the organs of the frame;
And hence one master passion in the breast,
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.

As man, perhaps, the moment of his breath,
Receives the lurking principle of death;
The young disease, that must subdue at length,
Grows with his growth, and strengthens with his strength:
So, cast and mingled with his very frame,
The mind's disease, its ruling passion came;
Each vital humour which should feed the whole,

Soon flows to this, in body and in soul.
Whatever warms the heart, or fills the head,
As the mind opens, and its functions spread,
Imagination plies her dang'rous art,
And pours it all upon the peccant part.

Nature its mother, habit is its nurse;
Wit, spirit, faculties, but make it worse;
Reason itself but gives it edge and pow'r;
As Heav'n's blest beam turns vinegar more sour.
We, wretched subjects, though to lawful sway,
In this weak queen some fav'rite still obey:
Ah! if she lend not arms, as well as rules,
What can she more than tell us we are fools?
Teach us to mourn our nature, not to mend,
A sharp accuser, but a helpless friend!
Or from a judge turn pleader, to persuade
The choice we make, or justify it made;
Proud of an easy conquest all along,
She but removes weak passions for the strong:
So, when small humours gather to a gout,
The doctor fancies he has driv'n them out.

Yes, nature's road must ever be preferr'd;
Reason is here no guide, but still a guard:
'Tis hers to rectify, not overthrow,
And treat this passion more as friend than foe:
A mightier pow'r the strong direction sends,
And sev'ral men impels to sev'ral ends.
Like varying winds, by other passions toss'd,
This drives them constant to a certain coast.
Let pow'r or knowledge, gold or glory, please,
Or (oft more strong than all) the love of ease;
Through life 'tis followed, ev'n at life's expense;
The merchant's toil, the sage's indolence,

The monk's humility, the hero's pride,
All, all alike, find reason on their side.

Th' eternal art educing good from ill,
Grafts on this passion our best principle:
'Tis thus the mercury of man is fix'd,
Strong grows the virtue with his nature mix'd;
The dross cements what else were too refin'd,
And in one interest body acts with mind.

As fruits, ungrateful to the planter's care,
On savage stocks inserted, learn to bear;
The surest virtues thus from passions shoot,
Wild nature's vigor working at the root.
What crops of wit and honesty appear
From spleen, from obstinacy, hate, or fear!
See anger, zeal and fortitude supply;
Ev'n av'rice, prudence; sloth, philosophy;
Lust, through some certain strainers well refin'd,
Is gentle love, and charms all womankind;
Envy, to which th' ignoble mind's a slave,
Is emulation in the learn'd or brave;
Nor virtue, male or female, can we name,
But what will grow on pride, or grow on shame.

Thus nature gives us (let it check our pride)
The virtue nearest to our vice allied:
Reason the byass turns to good from ill,
And Nero reigns a Titus, if he will.
The fiery soul abhorr'd in Catiline,
In Decius charms, in Curtius is divine:
The same ambition can destroy or save,
And make a patriot as it makes a knave.

IV.

This light and darkness in our chaos join'd,
What shall divide? The God within the mind.

Extremes in nature equal ends produce,
In man they join to some mysterious use;
Though each by turns the other's bound invade,
As, in some well-wrought picture, light and shade,
And oft so mix, the diff'rence is too nice
Where ends the virtue, or begins the vice.

Fools! who from hence into the notion fall,
That vice or virtue there is none at all.
If white and black blend, soften, and unite
A thousand ways, is there no black or white?
Ask your own heart, and nothing is so plain;
'Tis to mistake them, costs the time and pain.

V.

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.
But where th' extreme of vice, was ne'er agreed:
Ask where's the North? at York, 'tis on the Tweed;
In Scotland, at the Orcades; and there,
At Greenland, Zembla, or the Lord knows where:
No creature owns it in the first degree,
But thinks his neighbour farther gone than he!
Ev'n those who dwell beneath its very zone,
Or never feel the rage, or never own;
What happier natures shrink at with affright,
The hard inhabitant contends is right.

VI.

Virtuous and vicious ev'ry man must be,
Few in th' extreme, but all in the degree;
The rogue and fool by fits is fair and wise;
And ev'n the best, by fits, what they despise.
'Tis but by parts we follow good or ill,
For, vice or virtue, self directs it still;
Each individual seeks a sev'ral goal;
But heav'n's great view is one, and that the whole:
That counterworks each folly and caprice;
That disappoints th' effect of ev'ry vice;
That, happy frailties to all ranks applied,
Shame to the virgin, to the matron pride,
Fear to the statesman, rashness to the chief,
To kings presumption, and to crowds belief,
That, virtue's ends from vanity can raise,
Which seeks no int'rest, no reward but praise;
And build on wants, and on defects of mind,
The joy, the peace, the glory of mankind.

Heav'n forming each on other to depend,
A master, or a servant, or a friend,
Bids each on other for assistance call,
'Till one man's weakness grows the strength of all.
Wants, frailties, passions, closer still ally
The common int'rest, or endear the tie:
To these we owe true friendship, love sincere,
Each home-felt joy that life inherits here;
Yet from the same we learn, in its decline,
Those joys, those loves, those int'rests to resign;
Taught half by reason, half by mere decay,
To welcome death, and calmly pass away.

Whate'er the passion, knowledge, fame, or pelf,
Not one will change his neighbour with himself.
The learn'd is happy nature to explore,

The fool is happy that he knows no more;
The rich is happy in the plenty giv'n,
The poor contents him with the care of heav'n.
See the blind beggar dance, the cripple sing,
The sot a hero, lunatic a king;
The starving chemist in his golden views
Supremely blest, the poet in his Muse.

See some strange comfort ev'ry state attend,
And pride bestow'd on all, a common friend;
See some fit passion ev'ry age supply,
Hope travels through, nor quits us when we die.

Behold the child, by nature's kindly law,
Pleas'd with a rattle, tickl'd with a straw:
Some livelier plaything gives his youth delight,
A little louder, but as empty quite:
Scarfs, garters, gold, amuse his riper stage,
And beads and pray'r books are the toys of age:
Pleas'd with this bauble still, as that before;
'Till tir'd he sleeps, and life's poor play is o'er!

Meanwhile opinion gilds with varying rays
Those painted clouds that beautify our days;
Each want of happiness by hope supplied,
And each vacuity of sense by Pride:
These build as fast as knowledge can destroy;
In folly's cup still laughs the bubble, joy;
One prospect lost, another still we gain;
And not a vanity is giv'n in vain;
Ev'n mean self-love becomes, by force divine,
The scale to measure others' wants by thine.
See! and confess, one comfort still must rise,
'Tis this: Though man's a fool, yet God is wise.

The subtitle of the second epistle is “Of the Nature and State of Man, with Respect to Himself as an Individual” and treats on the relationship between the individual and God’s greater design.

Here is a section-by-section explanation of the second epistle: **Section I (1-52):** Section I argues that man should not pry into God’s affairs but rather study himself, especially his nature, powers, limits, and frailties.

Section II (53-92): Section II shows that the two principles of man are self-love and reason. Self-love is the stronger of the two, but their ultimate goal is the same.

Section III (93-202): Section III describes the modes of self-love (i.e., the passions) and their function. Pope then describes the ruling passion and its potency. The ruling passion works to provide man with direction and defines man’s nature and virtue.

Section IV (203-16): Section IV indicates that virtue and vice are combined in man's nature and that the two, while distinct, often mix.

Section V (217-30): Section V illustrates the evils of vice and explains how easily man is drawn to it.

Section VI (231-294): Section VI asserts that man's passions and imperfections are simply designed to suit God's purposes. The passions and imperfections are distributed to all individuals of each order of men in all societies. They guide man in every state and at every age of life.

The second epistle adds to the interpretive challenges presented in the first epistle. At its outset, Pope commands man to "Know then thyself," an adage that misdescribes his argument (1). Although he actually intends for man to better understand his place in the universe, the classical meaning of "Know thyself" is that man should look inwards for truth rather than outwards. Having spent most of the first epistle

describing man's relationship to God as well as his fellow creatures, Pope's true meaning of the phrase is clear. He then confuses the issue by endeavoring to convince man to avoid the presumptuousness of studying God's creation through natural science. Science has given man the tools to better understand God's creation, but its intoxicating power has caused man to imitate God. It seems that man must look outwards to gain any understanding of his divine purpose but avoid excessive analysis of what he sees. To do so would be to assume the role of God.

The second epistle abruptly turns to focus on the principles that guide human action. In human nature two principles, self-love and reason, operate often at odds with each other. Neither is entirely good nor bad; when each does its function properly and works in conjunction with the other, good results occur. Pope compares these two principles to the mechanism of a watch; within men self-love is the spring, reason the balance wheel. Without one, man

could not act; without the other, action would be aimless. Without self-love men would vegetate; without reason men would consume themselves in lawless passion. Self-love motivates, inspires, while reason checks, advises. Self-love judges by present good and reason by future consequences. Reason through time acquires power to control impulsive self-love. The passions are modes of self-love good as long as they conform to reason's dictates. One, the Ruling Passion, often dominates all others and determines the character of a man. No virtue arising from any passion can be wholly without value if subdued, as lust may be turned to gentle love, anger to zeal. Although man contains both vice and virtue, Heaven compensates by converting individual defects into the strength of all. Our weaknesses motivate mutual reliance. Since each man is given his due portion of happiness and misery, no one should wish to exchange his state for another's. Each should rest content with his own lot.

The Rape of the Lock

The Rape of the Lock is mock-epic poem in heroic couplets by Alexander Pope. The first version, published in 1712, consisted of two cantos; the final version, published in 1714, was expanded to five cantos. Based on an actual incident and written to reconcile the families that had been estranged by it, *The Rape of the Lock* recounts the story of a young woman who has a lock of hair stolen by an ardent young man. Pope couches the trivial event in terms usually reserved for incidents of great moment—such as the quarrel between the Greeks and the Trojans.

Before publishing *The Rape of the Lock*, two years earlier, at a very fancy party just outside of London, the young Lord Petre had snuck up behind a young lady, Belle Fermor, and snipped off a lock of her hair (literally seizing it by force) without her consent. That actually happened. Neither Belle nor her parents appreciated this assault on her hairstyle, especially since they had been considering Lord

Petre as a potential husband for her. That marriage didn't exactly pan out. Instead, the two families fell out hard with each other.

After a while things got so bad between them that a mutual acquaintance asked the young poet Alexander Pope (who was also good friends with both families) to write a poem that might make the whole affair into something funny. The idea was to end the feud with laughter and good humor.

Pope took the request to write this poem about what happened between two personal friends as an opportunity to show off his education and his considerable talent with meter, rhyme, and allusion. Pope wrote an initial version of the poem in 1712, telling the basic story of Belle and Lord Petre, and then made it twice as long two years later, turning it into a gentle satire on social pretension and vanity. With the expanded version, Pope succeeded in reuniting his friends and in achieving poetic fame.

The Rape of the Lock describes what happened just before (the heroine waking up and getting dressed for the party), during (the card game at the party that she plays, which distracts her) and just after Lord Petre snips off Belle Fermor's hair, but in the most elaborate language and fanciful style possible. Pope takes the trivial crisis of a spoiled society girl losing a piece of her hair to a rich boy's prank, and makes it larger than life by adding in supernatural beings (the Sylphs, fairy-like critters who oversee and comment on the action), and by comparing it to major Classical epics like Homer's Iliad and Odyssey and Virgil's Aeneid.

The Rape of the Lock: Canto 1

Nolueram, Belinda, tuos violare capillos;
Sedjuvat, hoc precibus me tribuisse tuis.
(Martial, Epigrams *12.84)*

1 What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
2 What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
3 I sing—This verse to Caryl, Muse! is due:

This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve my lays.
Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel
A well-bred lord t' assault a gentle belle?
say what stranger cause, yet unexplor'd,
Could make a gentle belle reject a lord?
In tasks so bold, can little men engage,
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage?
Sol thro' white curtains shot a tim'rous ray,
And op'd those eyes that must eclipse the day;
Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knock'd the ground,
And the press'd watch return'd a silver sound.
Belinda still her downy pillow press'd,
Her guardian sylph prolong'd the balmy rest:
'Twas he had summon'd to her silent bed
The morning dream that hover'd o'er her head;
A youth more glitt'ring than a birthnight beau,
(That ev'n in slumber caus'd her cheek to glow)
Seem'd to her ear his winning lips to lay,
And thus in whispers said, or seem'd to say.
"Fairest of mortals, thou distinguish'd care
Of thousand bright inhabitants of air!
If e'er one vision touch'd thy infant thought,
Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught,
Of airy elves by moonlight shadows seen,
The silver token, and the circled green,
Or virgins visited by angel pow'rs,
With golden crowns and wreaths of heav'nly flow'rs,
Hear and believe! thy own importance know,

Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.
Some secret truths from learned pride conceal'd,
To maids alone and children are reveal'd:
What tho' no credit doubting wits may give?
The fair and innocent shall still believe.
Know then, unnumber'd spirits round thee fly,
The light militia of the lower sky;
These, though unseen, are ever on the wing,
Hang o'er the box, and hover round the Ring.
Think what an equipage thou hast in air,
And view with scorn two pages and a chair.
As now your own, our beings were of old,
And once inclos'd in woman's beauteous mould;
Thence, by a soft transition, we repair
From earthly vehicles to these of air.
Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled,
That all her vanities at once are dead;
Succeeding vanities she still regards,
And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.
Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,
And love of ombre, after death survive.
For when the fair in all their pride expire,
To their first elements their souls retire:
The sprites of fiery termagants in flame
Mount up, and take a Salamander's name.
Soft yielding minds to water glide away,
And sip with Nymphs, their elemental tea.
The graver prude sinks downward to a Gnome,
In search of mischief still on earth to roam.
The light coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of air.
Know further yet; whoever fair and chaste

Rejects mankind, is by some sylph embrac'd:
For spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease
Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.
What guards the purity of melting maids,
In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades,
Safe from the treach'rous friend, the daring spark,
The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,
When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,
When music softens, and when dancing fires?
'Tis but their sylph, the wise celestials know,
Though honour is the word with men below.
Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,
For life predestin'd to the gnomes' embrace.
These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,
When offers are disdain'd, and love denied:
Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While peers, and dukes, and all their sweeping train,
And garters, stars, and coronets appear,
And in soft sounds 'Your Grace' salutes their ear.
'Tis these that early taint the female soul,
Instruct the eyes of young coquettes to roll,
Teach infant cheeks a bidden blush to know,
And little hearts to flutter at a beau.
Oft, when the world imagine women stray,
The Sylphs through mystic mazes guide their way,
Thro' all the giddy circle they pursue,
And old impertinence expel by new.
What tender maid but must a victim fall
To one man's treat, but for another's ball?
When Florio speaks, what virgin could withstand,
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?
With varying vanities, from ev'ry part,

They shift the moving toyshop of their heart;
Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.
This erring mortals levity may call,
Oh blind to truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.
Of these am I, who thy protection claim,
A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.
Late, as I rang'd the crystal wilds of air,
In the clear mirror of thy ruling star
I saw, alas! some dread event impend,
Ere to the main this morning sun descend,
But Heav'n reveals not what, or how, or where:
Warn'd by the Sylph, oh pious maid, beware!
This to disclose is all thy guardian can.
Beware of all, but most beware of man!"
He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long,
Leap'd up, and wak'd his mistress with his tongue.
'Twas then, Belinda, if report say true,
Thy eyes first open'd on a billet-doux;
Wounds, charms, and ardors were no sooner read,
But all the vision vanish'd from thy head.
And now, unveil'd, the toilet stands display'd,
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.
First, rob'd in white, the nymph intent adores
With head uncover'd, the cosmetic pow'rs.
A heav'nly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
Th' inferior priestess, at her altar's side,
Trembling, begins the sacred rites of pride.
Unnumber'd treasures ope at once, and here
The various off'rings of the world appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,

And decks the goddess with the glitt'ring spoil.
This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
The tortoise here and elephant unite,
Transform'd to combs, the speckled and the white.
Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux.
Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;
The fair each moment rises in her charms,
Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace,
And calls forth all the wonders of her face;
Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
The busy Sylphs surround their darling care;
These set the head, and those divide the hair,
Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown;
And Betty's prais'd for labours not her own.

Samuel Johnson (1709- 1784)

Samuel Johnson, also known as "Dr. Johnson," was born in Lichfield, Staffordshire, England on September 18, 1709. It is claimed that Samuel Johnson grew up in poverty and that he and his family fought financial battles for the majority of Johnson’s childhood and young adult life. He was born ill with tuberculosis. He faced many physical illnesses

such as almost blind in one eye and deaf in one ear. Despite the physical illnesses, his mind was his strongest part.

His father Michael Johnson was a poor bookseller. At the age of about sixteen, Johnson's father was deeply in debt. To earn money, Johnson began to stitch books for his father, and it is presumable that Johnson spent much time in his father's bookshop reading and building his literary knowledge. The family remained in poverty until the cousin of Johnson's mother, Elizabeth Harriotts, died in February 1728 and left enough money to send Johnson to college. Later in 1728, at age nineteen, Johnson entered Pembroke College, Oxford. A shortage of funds forced Johnson to leave Oxford without a degree and move back home to Lichfield. Johnson attempted to obtain several jobs but failed to be hired because he did not have a degree. Oxford did eventually award him with the degree of Master of Arts. Johnson was also awarded an honorary doctorate in 1765 by Trinity College Dublin and in 1775 by Oxford.

After the death of Alexander Pope in 1744, Samuel Johnson became the prominent figure of the eighteenth century. He didn't write much, but it was his perfection in each of his work that made him popular. Johnson is known for writing profound poetry, fiction, moralizing essays, and political pieces. He wrote *A Dictionary of The English language* and completed the work single-handedly, with only clerical assistance to copy out the illustrative quotations that he had marked in books. Johnson produced several revised editions during his life. This made Samuel Johnson popular in England. His reputation is established but still, he faced many financial difficulties. He was so famous that his writing years are known as the Age of Johnson.

Johnson was also the subject of one of the most famous biographies of all time – James Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), which gives scholars insights into the last period of his life. He wrote many political pamphlets and published a piece of travel writing on visiting Scotland. His

last major work was his *Lives of the Poets*; the longest entries were on Dryden, Milton, Swift, and Pope. In his last years, Johnson suffered from a stroke and other illnesses. He died on September 13th, 1784. He is buried at Westminster Abbey. Boswell wrote, "His death has made a chasm, which not only nothing can fill up, but which nothing has a tendency to fill up. Johnson is dead. Let us go to the next best—there is nobody; no man can be said to put you in mind of Johnson."

Samuel Johnson's *"London"* and *"Vanity of human wishes"* were his most popular poems. His first poem *London* was published in 1738; this poem captures the attention of great poets of the 18th century like Alexander Pope. *London* is a political satire that captures the spirit of Juvenal's third satire which aims at society and culture. Juvenal is a Latin poet of the first and second centuries.

Like *London*, *The Vanity of Human Wishes* is an imitation of the satires of Juvenal. The poem reflects

Juvenal's tenth satire, in which he served the philosophical purpose. The *Vanity of human wishes* has a melancholy tone. This poem is Johnson's first work published with his name, but earlier he was writing anonymously.

It is widely regarded as Johnson's poetic masterpiece and is Johnson's effort to convey the essence of the Christian ethos through verse and imagery. The density of its images and ideas makes *The Vanity of Human Wishes* difficult to interpret even for experienced critics.

London: A Poem
In Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal

———*Quis ineptæ*
Tam patiens Urbis, tam ferreus ut teneat se?
Juv.

1 Though grief and fondness in my breast rebel,
2 When injur'd Thales bids the town farewell,
3 Yet still my calmer thoughts his choice commend,
4 I praise the hermit, but regret the friend,

Who now resolves, from vice and London far,
To breathe in distant fields a purer air,
And, fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore,
Give to St. David one true Briton more.
For who would leave, unbrib'd, Hibernia's land,
Or change the rocks of Scotland for the Strand?
There none are swept by sudden fate away,
But all whom hunger spares, with age decay:
Here malice, rapine, accident, conspire,
And now a rabble rages, now a fire;
Their ambush here relentless ruffians lay,
And here the fell attorney prowls for prey;
Here falling houses thunder on your head,
And here a female atheist talks you dead.
While Thales waits the wherry that contains
Of dissipated wealth the small remains,
On Thames's banks, in silent thought we stood,
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood:
Struck with the seat that gave Eliza birth,
We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth;
In pleasing dreams the blissful age renew,
And call Britannia's glories back to view;
Behold her cross triumphant on the main,

The guard of commerce, and the dread of Spain,
Ere masquerades debauch'd, excise oppress'd,
Or English honour grew a standing jest.
A transient calm the happy scenes bestow,
And for a moment lull the sense of woe.
At length awaking, with contemptuous frown,
Indignant Thales eyes the neighb'ring town.
"Since worth," he cries, "in these degen'rate days,
Wants ev'n the cheap reward of empty praise;
In those curs'd walls, devote to vice and gain,
Since unrewarded science toils in vain;
Since hope but soothes to double my distress,
And ev'ry moment leaves my little less;
While yet my steady steps no staff sustains,
And life still vig'rous revels in my veins;
Grant me, kind heaven, to find some happier place,
Where honesty and sense are no disgrace;
Some pleasing bank where verdant osiers play,
Some peaceful vale with nature's paintings gay;
Where once the harass'd Briton found repose,
And safe in poverty defied his foes;
Some secret cell, ye pow'rs, indulgent give.
Let -------- live here, for -------- has learn'd to live.

Here let those reign, whom pensions can incite
To vote a patriot black, a courtier white;
Explain their country's dear-bought rights away,
And plead for pirates in the face of day;
With slavish tenets taint our poison'd youth,
And lend a lie the confidence of truth.
"Let such raise palaces, and manors buy,
Collect a tax, or farm a lottery,
With warbling eunuchs fill a licens'd stage,
And lull to servitude a thoughtless age.
"Heroes, proceed! What bounds your pride shall hold?
What check restrain your thirst of pow'r and gold?
Behold rebellious virtue quite o'erthrown,
Behold our fame, our wealth, our lives your own.
"To such, a groaning nation's spoils are giv'n,
When public crimes inflame the wrath of Heav'n:
But what, my friend, what hope remains for me,
Who start at theft, and blush at perjury?
Who scarce forbear, though Britain's court he sing,
To pluck a titled poet's borrow'd wing;
A statesman's logic unconvinc'd can hear,
And dare to slumber o'er the Gazetteer;
Despise a fool in half his pension dress'd,

And strive in vain to laugh at H----y's jest.
"Others with softer smiles, and subtler art,
Can sap the principles, or taint the heart;
With more address a lover's note convey,
Or bribe a virgin's innocence away.
Well may they rise, while I, whose rustic tongue
Ne'er knew to puzzle right, or varnish wrong,
Spurn'd as a beggar, dreaded as a spy.
Live unregarded, unlamented die.
"For what but social guilt the friend endears?
Who shares Orgilio's crimes, his fortune shares.
But thou, should tempting villainy present
All Marlb'rough hoarded, or all Villiers spent,
Turn from the glitt'ring bribe thy scornful eye,
Nor sell for gold, what gold could never buy,
The peaceful slumber, self-approving day,
Unsullied fame, and conscience ever gay.
"The cheated nation's happy fav'rites, see!
Mark whom the great caress, who frown on me!
London! the needy villain's gen'ral home,
The common shore of Paris and of Rome;
With eager thirst, by folly or by fate,
Sucks in the dregs of each corrupted state.

Forgive my transports on a theme like this,
I cannot bear a French metropolis.
"Illustrious Edward! from the realms of day,
The land of heroes and of saints survey;
Nor hope the British lineaments to trace,
The rustic grandeur, or the surly grace,
But lost in thoughtless ease, and empty show,
Behold the warrior dwindled to a beau;
Sense, freedom, piety, refin'd away,
Of France the mimic, and of Spain the prey.
"All that at home no more can beg or steal,
Or like a gibbet better than a wheel;
Hiss'd from the stage, or hooted from the court,
Their air, the dress, their politics import;
Obsequious, artful, voluble and gay,
On Britain's fond credulity they prey.
No gainful trade their industry can 'scape,
They sing, they dance, clean shoes, or cure a clap;
All sciences a fasting monsieur knows,
And bid him go to hell, to hell he goes.
"Ah! what avails it, that, from slav'ry far,
I drew the breath of life in English air;
Was early taught a Briton's right to prize,

And lisp the tale of Henry's victories;
If the gull'd conqueror receives the chain,
And flattery subdues when arms are vain?
"Studious to please, and ready to submit,
The supple Gaul was born a parasite:
Still to his int'rest true, where'er he goes,
Wit, brav'ry, worth, his lavish tongue bestows;
In ev'ry face a thousand graces shine,
From ev'ry tongue flows harmony divine.
These arts in vain our rugged natives try,
Strain out with fault'ring diffidence a lie,
And gain a kick for awkward flattery.
"Besides, with justice, this discerning age
Admires their wond'rous talents for the stage:
Well may they venture on the mimic's art,
Who play from morn to night a borrow'd part;
Practis'd their master's notions to embrace,
Repeat his maxims, and reflect his face;
With ev'ry wild absurdity comply,
And view each object with another's eye;
To shake with laughter ere the jest they hear,
To pour at will the counterfeited tear,
And as their patron hints the cold or heat,

To shake in dog-days, in December sweat.
How, when competitors like these contend,
Can surly virtue hope to fix a friend?
Slaves that with serious impudence beguile,
And lie without a blush, without a smile;
Exalt each trifle, ev'ry vice adore,
Your taste in snuff, your judgment in a whore;
Can Balbo's eloquence applaud, and swear
He gropes his breeches with a monarch's air.
"For arts like these preferr'd, admir'd, caress'd,
They first invade your table, then your breast;
Explore your secrets with insidious art,
Watch the weak hour, and ransack all the heart;
Then soon your ill-plac'd confidence repay,
Commence your lords, and govern or betray.
"By numbers here from shame or censure free,
All crimes are safe, but hated poverty.
This, only this, the rigid law pursues,
This, only this, provokes the snarling muse;
The sober trader at a tatter'd cloak,
Wakes from his dream, and labours for a joke;
With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze,
And turn the varied taunt a thousand ways.

Of all the griefs that harass the distress'd,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;
Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous heart,
Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart.
"Has heav'n reserv'd, in pity to the poor,
No pathless waste, or undiscover'd shore;
No secret island in the boundless main?
No peaceful desert yet unclaim'd by Spain?
Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,
And bear oppression's insolence no more.
"This mournful truth is ev'rywhere confess'd,
SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESS'D:
But here more slow, where all are slaves to gold,
Where looks are merchandise, and smiles are sold;
Where won by bribes, by flatt'ries implor'd,
The groom retails the favours of his lord.
"But hark! th' affrighted crowd's tumultuous cries
Roll through the streets, and thunder to the skies;
Rais'd from some pleasing dream of wealth and pow'r,
Some pompous palace, or some blissful bow'r,
Aghast you start, and scarce with aching sight
Sustain the th' approaching fire's tremendous light;
Swift from pursuing horrors take your way,

And leave your little ALL to flames a prey;
Then through the world a wretched vagrant roam,
For where can starving merit find a home?
In vain your mournful narrative disclose,
While all neglect, and most insult your woes.
"Should heav'n's just bolts Orgilio's wealth confound,
And spread his flaming palace on the ground,
Swift o'er the land the dismal rumour flies,
And public mournings pacify the skies;
The laureate tribe in servile verse relate,
How virtue wars with persecuting fate;
With well-feign'd gratitude the pension'd band
Refund the plunder of the beggar'd land.
See! while he builds, the gaudy vassals come,
And crowd with sudden wealth the rising dome;
The price of boroughs and of souls restore,
And raise his treasures higher than before.
Now bless'd with all the baubles of the great,
The polish'd marble, and the shining plate,
Orgilio sees the golden pile aspire,
And hopes from angry Heav'n another fire.
"Could'st thou resign the park and play content,
For the fair banks of Severn or of Trent;

There might'st thou find some elegant retreat,
Some hireling senator's deserted seat;
And stretch thy prospects o'er the smiling land,
For less than rent the dungeons of the Strand;
There prune thy walks, support thy drooping flow'rs,
Direct thy rivulets, and twine thy bow'rs;
And, while thy beds a cheap repast afford,
Despise the dainties of a venal lord:
There ev'ry bush with nature's music rings,
There ev'ry breeze bears health upon its wings;
On all thy hours security shall smile,
And bless thine evening walk and morning toil.
"Prepare for death, if here at night you roam,
And sign your will before you sup from home.
"Some fiery fop, with new commission vain,
Who sleeps on brambles till he kills his man;
Some frolick drunkard, reeling from a feast,
Provokes a broil, and stabs you for a jest.
"Yet ev'n these heroes, mischievously gay,
Lords of the street, and terrors of the way;
Flush'd as they are with folly, youth, and wine,
Their prudent insults to the poor confine;
Afar they mark the flambeau's bright approach,

And shun the shining train, and golden coach.
"In vain, these dangers past, your doors you close,
And hope the balmy blessings of repose:
Cruel with guilt, and daring with despair,
The midnight murd'rer bursts the faithless bar;
Invades the sacred hour of silent rest,
And plants, unseen, a dagger in your breast.
"Scarce can our fields, such crowds at Tyburn die,
With hemp the gallows and the fleet supply.
Propose your schemes, ye senatorian band,
Whose ways and means support the sinking land;
Lest ropes be wanting in the tempting spring,
To rig another convoy for the k--g.
"A single jail, in Alfred's golden reign,
Could half the nation's criminals contain;
Fair justice then, without constraint ador'd,
Held high the steady scale, but dropp'd the sword;
No spies were paid, no special juries known,
Blest age! but ah! how diff'rent from our own!
"Much could I add, -- but see the boat at hand,
The tide retiring, calls me from the land:
Farewell! -- When youth, and health, and fortune spent,
Thou fly'st for refuge to the wilds of Kent;

258 And tir'd like me with follies and with crimes,
259 In angry numbers warn'st succeeding times;
260 Then shall thy friend, nor thou refuse his aid,
261 Still foe to vice, forsake his Cambrian shade;
262 In virtue's cause once more exert his rage,
263 Thy satire point, and animate thy page.

London is a poem of 263 lines by Samuel Johnson, and addresses the corruption and vices prevailing in London. The epigraph from Juvenal, “Quis ineptae [iniquae] / Tam patiens urbis, tam ferreus ut teneat se?” (Juv. 1.30-1) can be translated as “Who is so patient of the foolish [wicked] city, so iron-willed, as to contain himself?”. The opening lines of the poem are controversial, with the poet bidding farewell to his friend who is leaving England. However, the poet has this consolation, that his friend’s retreat to St. David in Wales will keep his friend away from the vices and corruption of the city of London. Thales possibly represents Richard Savage, Johnson's friend who left London to travel to Wales.

London is written in rhyming iambic pentameter couplets. Johnson believed that blank verse could be sustained only by strong images; otherwise, verse needed clear structure and rhyme. His best poetry exemplifies his ideas about prosody; London's heroic couplets follow the model established by Pope. The poem's language is lively and its ideas flow rapidly. Johnson's condemnations are sharply expressed.

The poem describes the various problems of London, including an emphasis on crime, corruption, and the squalor of the poor. To emphasize his message, these various abstract problems are personified as beings that seek to destroy London. Thus, the characters of Malice, Rapine, and Accident "conspire" (line 13) to attack those who live in London.

The city is portrayed as rife with crime, folly, and injustice. King George II is said to be more interested in Hanover than England and London; learning is said to be

unrewarded (a favorite theme of Juvenal); government is said to be grasping while the nation sinks; and the city is characterized as architecturally in bad taste. The satire makes London seem bleak and ugly, but the language is exuberant and makes London's faults seem exciting.

The main emphasis of the poem comes to light on line 177: "SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESSED,". It is the most famous line in the poem (and the only one in capitals) which may be taken as Johnson's motto at this time.

The Vanity of Human Wishes: A Poem
In Imitation of The Tenth Satire of Juvenal

Let observation with extensive view,
Survey mankind, from China to Peru;
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,
And watch the busy scenes of crowded life;
Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate,
O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate,
Where wav'ring man, betray'd by vent'rous pride
To tread the dreary paths without a guide,
As treach'rous phantoms in the mist delude,
Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good.

How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice,
Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant voice,
How nations sink, by darling schemes oppress'd,
When vengeance listens to the fool's request.
Fate wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive dart,
Each gift of nature, and each grace of art,
With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,
With fatal sweetness elocution flows,
Impeachment stops the speaker's pow'rful breath,
And restless fire precipitates on death. (1-20)

But scarce observ'd the knowing and the bold,
Fall in the gen'ral massacre of gold;
Wide-wasting pest! that rages unconfin'd,
And crowds with crimes the records of mankind,
For gold his sword the hireling ruffian draws,
For gold the hireling judge distorts the laws;
Wealth heap'd on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys,
The dangers gather as the treasures rise.
Let hist'ry tell where rival kings command,
And dubious title shakes the madded land,
When statutes glean the refuse of the sword,
How much more safe the vassal than the lord,
Low sculks the hind beneath the rage of pow'r,
And leaves the wealthy traitor in the Tow'r,
Untouch'd his cottage, and his slumbers sound,
Tho' confiscation's vultures hover round. (21-36)

The needy traveller, serene and gay,
Walks the wild heath, and sings his toil away.
Does envy seize thee? crush th' upbraiding joy,
Increase his riches and his peace destroy,
New fears in dire vicissitude invade,
The rustling brake alarms, and quiv'ring shade,
Nor light nor darkness bring his pain relief.
One shews the plunder, and one hides the thief. (37-44)

Yet still one gen'ral cry the skies assails,
And gain and grandeur load the tainted gales,
Few know the toiling statesman's fear or care,
Th' insidious rival and the gaping heir. (45-48)

Once more, Democritus, arise on earth,
With cheerful wisdom and instructive mirth,
See motley life in modern trappings dress'd,
And feed with varied fools th' eternal jest:
Thou who couldst laugh where want enchain'd caprice,
Toil crush'd conceit, and man was of a piece;
Where wealth unlov'd without a mourner died;
And scarce a sycophant was fed by pride;
Where ne'er was known the form of mock debate,
Or seen a new-made mayor's unwieldy state;
Where change of fav'rites made no change of laws,
And senates heard before they judg'd a cause;
How wouldst thou shake at Britain's modish tribe,
Dart the quick taunt, and edge the piercing gibe?
Attentive truth and nature to decry,
And pierce each scene with philosophic eye.
To thee were solemn toys or empty show,
The robes of pleasure and the veils of woe:
All aid the farce, and all thy mirth maintain,
Whose joys are causeless, or whose griefs are vain. (49-68)

Such was the scorn that fill'd the sage's mind,
Renew'd at ev'ry glance on humankind;
How just that scorn ere yet thy voice declare,
Search every state, and canvas ev'ry pray'r. (69-72)

Unnumber'd suppliants crowd Preferment's gate,
Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great;
Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant call,
They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.
On ev'ry stage the foes of peace attend,
Hate dogs their flight, and insult mocks their end.

Love ends with hope, the sinking statesman's door
Pours in the morning worshiper no more;
For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,
To growing wealth the dedicator flies,
From every room descends the painted face,
That hung the bright Palladium of the place,
And smok'd in kitchens, or in auctions sold,
To better features yields the frame of gold;
For now no more we trace in ev'ry line
Heroic worth, benevolence divine:
The form distorted justifies the fall,
And detestation rids th' indignant wall. (73-90)

When first the college rolls receive his name,
The young enthusiast quits his ease for fame;
Through all his veins the fever of renown
Spreads from the strong contagion of the gown;
O'er Bodley's dome his future labours spread,
And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head.
Are these thy views? proceed, illustrious youth,
And virtue guard thee to the throne of Truth!
Yet should thy soul indulge the gen'rous heat,
Till captive Science yields her last retreat;
Should Reason guide thee with her brightest ray,
And pour on misty Doubt resistless day;
Should no false Kindness lure to loose delight,
Nor Praise relax, nor Difficulty fright;
Should tempting Novelty thy cell refrain,
And Sloth effuse her opiate fumes in vain;
Should Beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,
Nor claim the triumph of a letter'd heart;
Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,
Nor Melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade;
Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,

Nor think the doom of man revers'd for thee:
Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
And pause awhile from letters, to be wise;
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.
See nations slowly wise, and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end. (133-162)

Nor deem, when learning her last prize bestows
The glitt'ring eminence exempt from foes;
See when the vulgar 'scape, despis'd or aw'd,
Rebellion's vengeful talons seize on Laud.
From meaner minds, tho' smaller fines content
The plunder'd palace or sequester'd rent;
Mark'd out by dangerous parts he meets the shock,
And fatal Learning leads him to the block:
Around his tomb let Art and Genius weep,
But hear his death, ye blockheads, hear and sleep. (163- 172)

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Enlarge my life with multitude of days,
In health, in sickness, thus the suppliant prays;
Hides from himself his state, and shuns to know,
That life protracted is protracted woe.
Time hovers o'er, impatient to destroy,
And shuts up all the passages of joy:
In vain their gifts the bounteous seasons pour,
The fruit autumnal, and the vernal flow'r,
With listless eyes the dotard views the store,
He views, and wonders that they please no more;
Now pall the tasteless meats, and joyless wines,
And Luxury with sighs her slave resigns.
Approach, ye minstrels, try the soothing strain,
And yield the tuneful lenitives of pain:

No sounds alas would touch th’ impervious ear,
Though dancing mountains witness’d Orpheus near;
Nor lute nor lyre his feeble pow’rs attend,
Nor sweeter music of a virtuous friend,
But everlasting dictates crowd his tongue,
Perversely grave, or positively wrong.
The still returning tale, and ling’ring jest,
Perplex the fawning niece and pamper’d guest,
While growing hopes scarce awe the gath’ring sneer,
And scarce a legacy can bribe to hear;
The watchful guests still hint the last offence,
The daughter’s petulance, the son’s expense,
Improve his heady rage with treach’rous skill,
And mould his passions till they make his will.

Unnumber’d maladies his joints invade,
Lay siege to life and press the dire blockade;
But unextinguish’d Av’rice still remains,
And dreaded losses aggravate his pains;
He turns, with anxious heart and crippled hands,
His bonds of debt, and mortgages of lands;
Or views his coffers with suspicious eyes,
Unlocks his gold, and counts it till he dies.

But grant, the virtues of a temp’rate prime
Bless with an age exempt from scorn or crime;
An age that melts in unperceiv’d decay,
And glides in modest innocence away;
Whose peaceful day Benevolence endears,
Whose night congratulating Conscience cheers;
The gen’ral fav’rite as the gen’ral friend:
Such age there is, and who could wish its end?

Yet ev’n on this her load Misfortune flings,
To press the weary minutes’ flagging wings:
New sorrow rises as the day returns,
A sister sickens, or a daughter mourns.

Now kindred Merit fills the sable bier,
Now lacerated Friendship claims a tear.
Year chases year, decay pursues decay,
Still drops some joy from with'ring life away;
New forms arise, and diff'rent views engage,
Superfluous lags the vet'ran on the stage,
Till pitying Nature signs the last release,
And bids afflicted worth retire to peace.

But few there are whom hours like these await,
Who set unclouded in the gulfs of fate.
From Lydia's monarch should the search descend,
By Solon caution'd to regard his end,
In life's last scene what prodigies surprise,
Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise?
From Marlb'rough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,
And Swift expires a driv'ler and a show.

The teeming mother, anxious for her race,
Begs for each birth the fortune of a face:
Yet Vane could tell what ills from beauty spring;
And Sedley curs'd the form that pleas'd a king.
Ye nymphs of rosy lips and radiant eyes,
Whom Pleasure keeps too busy to be wise,
Whom Joys with soft varieties invite,
By day the frolic, and the dance by night,
Who frown with vanity, who smile with art,
And ask the latest fashion of the heart,
What care, what rules your heedless charms shall save,
Each nymph your rival, and each youth your slave?
Against your fame with fondness hate combines,
The rival batters and the lover mines.
With distant voice neglected Virtue calls,
Less heard and less, the faint remonstrance falls;
Tir'd with contempt, she quits the slipp'ry reign,
And Pride and Prudence take her seat in vain.
In crowd at once, where none the pass defend,

The harmless freedom, and the private friend.
The guardians yield, by force superior plied;
By Int'rest, Prudence; and by Flatt'ry, Pride.
Now Beauty falls betray'd, despis'd, distress'd,
And hissing Infamy proclaims the rest.

Where then shall Hope and Fear their objects find?
Must dull Suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?
Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?
Must no dislike alarm, no wishes rise,
No cries attempt the mercies of the skies?
Enquirer, cease, petitions yet remain,
Which Heav'n may hear, nor deem religion vain.
Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heav'n the measure and the choice.
Safe in his pow'r, whose eyes discern afar
The secret ambush of a specious pray'r.
Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,
Secure whate'er he gives, he gives the best.
Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
Obedient passions, and a will resign'd;
For love, which scarce collective man can fill;
For patience, sov'reign o'er transmuted ill;
For faith, that panting for a happier seat,
Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat:
These goods for man the laws of Heav'n ordain,
These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain;
With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find. (253- 366)

Written in 1749, while Johnson was working on his far-more-famous *Dictionary of the English Language*, this poem

is inspired by the "Tenth Satire," which was written by the Latin poet Juvenal. It's a "satire" because it holds a very unflattering mirror up to humankind. It's a poem that shows us all that's wrong with us, and all that's wrong with our values. *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, is Johnson's most impressive poem as well as the first work published with his name. Some of the definitions Johnson later entered under "vanity" in his *Dictionary* suggest the range of meaning of his title, including "emptiness," "uncertainty," "fruitless desire, fruitless endeavor," "empty pleasure; vain pursuit; idle show; unsubstantial enjoyment; petty object of pride," and "arrogance." The poem is loosely divided up into sections which deal with different kinds of power and ambition. The speaker investigates all the kinds of human beings and their desires and wishes, which ultimately comes to the point of futility.

To justify his point of vanity of human wishes, he brings forth many examples of political, financial, intellectual and

even sexual power, and finally proves that all the desires and wishes to be superior and powerful has nothing to do. All the things are futile and meaningless and these things don't bring peace of mind. In every human wish there is pain and in every desire there is suffering, whether we desire some great or small, the result is after all is same. Johnson supports this argument with the example of a rich traveler whom both the darkness and the light cause the suffering. If it is the day time, he may be looted and if it is the night time he may be theft. The desire to become rich leads us to the suffering.

He supports the vanity of human wishes with the example of the gold. All the human beings love gold, but gold is 'wide wasting pest'. It destroys everyone. The judge destroys the law to collect the gold, people undertake the crimes to collect the same gold. It is because of gold, criminals record increases.

Johnson gives the example of Lord Wolsey to justify the vanity of human wishes. He wanted to acquire power after power so that everyone submit in front of his will. But once he reached to the power everyone hates him. He did not get any followers nor did he get any warmth and affection from people. The desire of absolute power leads him to the public hatred and dislikes. He supports the vanity of human wishes with the example of Swedish king who wanted to conquer the whole world. He has the desire to accumulate all the properties of the world. But having conquered the world he had to end up in the barren land. His desire for power and property leads him to death.

In the concluding part of the poem, Johnson suggests to develop the right frame of the mind. We should not complain against anything. We should control the passion and wills and be loving and mindful to mankind and that is sufficient for our happiness. The only way to get happiness is God.

The ultimate conclusion of the poem is that the only chance at a happy life we have is through God. It's only through our faith in God that we can hope to find peace and contentment. The poem surpasses any of Johnson's other poems in its richness of imagery and powerful conciseness.

Johnson combines the opposites in the poem. Anti-thesis can be found in his lineation, light and darkness, shows and hides, pleasure and pain, are some of the structural anti thesis in the poem in order to give striking conclusions. Whenever he brings anti-thesis, he points to a moral lesson. This poem can be taken as a satire against all those who want to gather the wealth power and property. Since the end is same, the quest of the things is useless.

Death

Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes" deals with the inevitability of death. It's always waiting for us. However, according to Johnson's speaker, our mortality can teach us a lot about how we should live our lives. Part of the reason we

make such stupid decisions is because we forget that, one day, we're going to die. Johnson's speaker suggests that we should turn our attention on the next world, not on this one.

Dreams, Hopes and Plans

"The Vanity of Human Wishes" is a poem about the futility of human striving. We may want money, we may want power, we may want fame but the speaker of this poem suggests that striving after these things is useless. In fact, most of the poem can be read as a "case" that the speaker puts forward for why we shouldn't bother with hoping or dreaming for things.

Religion

Religion is another big theme in "The Vanity of Human Wishes," though the speaker only discusses religious faith explicitly in the final stanza of the poem. Christianity, according to the speaker, is our only hope. It's the only thing

that can save us from the troubles of this world. The poem's emphasis on Christianity is also an important way in which Johnson differs from his literary predecessor, Juvenal. In Juvenal's "Tenth Satire," there is no mention of Christianity.

Power

There's an old saying: "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Power is a big theme in "The Vanity of Human Wishes." The speaker explores all types of power: from political power to sexual power to intellectual power. Johnson's speaker suggests that we're only human, after all. We're not God, and so our pursuit of power is misguided.

Pride

In "The Vanity of Human Wishes," Johnson's speaker dwells on the dangers of pride by demonstrating how it can often corrupt people and lead them to bad ends. Not only that, but the speaker suggests that it's often our pride that

gets in the way of our judgment. When we're too proud, we can't make good decisions.

Romanticism

The Roots of Romanticism

Romantic Movement dates its origin in 1798 A.D. with the publication of Lyrical Ballads. Lyrical Ballads is a collection of poems written and jointly published by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1798. The volume is of such importance that its 1798 publication date is often considered the beginning of the Romantic Period.

The poetry in *Lyrical Ballads* marks a distinct change in both subject matter and style from the poetry of the 18th century. Romanticism began as a rebellion against the principles of classicism. Whereas classicism espoused the literary ideals of ancient Greece and Rome—objectivity,

emotional restraint, and formal rules of composition that writers were expected to follow—romanticism promoted subjectivity, emotional effusiveness, and freedom of expression.

English poets such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Blake, and Lord Byron produced work that expressed spontaneous feelings, found parallels to their own emotional lives in the natural world, and celebrated creativity rather than logic.

Often the term Romantic literature, particularly poetry, evokes the connotation of nature poetry. Although nature is an important component in much Romantic literature, Romanticism is much more than recording the beauties of the natural world. Romanticism is certainly not what modern readers usually think of when we hear the

words romance and romantic; Romanticism does not refer to romantic love.

Romanticism grew from a profound change in the way people in the Western world perceived their place and purpose in life. The early Romantic period thus coincides with what is often called the "age of revolutions"--including, of course, the American (1776) and the French (1789) revolutions--an age of upheavals in political, economic, and social traditions, the age which witnessed the initial transformations of the Industrial Revolution. Events such as the American Revolution in 1776, the French Revolution in 1789, and the Industrial Revolution in the period from about 1760 to sometime between 1820 and 1840 restructured society and the way individuals viewed themselves and their relationship to each other and to the social order.

A revolutionary energy was also at the core of Romanticism, which quite consciously set out to transform

not only the theory and practice of poetry (and all art), but the very way we perceive the world. Some of its major precepts have survived into the twentieth century and still affect our contemporary period.

This extended chronological spectrum (1770-1870) also permits recognition as Romantic the poetry of Robert Burns and William Blake in England, the early writings of Goethe and Schiller in Germany, and the great period of influence for Rousseau's writings throughout Europe.

In terms of borrowing from literary sources, Germany served the Romantic Movement quite as much as France had served the Neoclassical Movement and Italy had served the Renaissance Movement. While the Renaissance Movement began in Italy and Neoclassical Movement in France, the Romantic Movement made its first appearance in Germany. The French writers like Rousseau and German

writers like Kant, Hegel and Schiller had a great impact on the thinking and mindset of the English Romantics.

Rousseau's emphasis on the dignity of man as a man and on nature's influence on the growth of human personality had a tremendous impact on the writers of the Romantic Age in England. Rousseau's Emile and Social Contract were the monuments of Romantic Humanism which emphasized the equal and natural rights of every individual on the one hand and regenerating power of love on the other. Rousseau's slogans like "go back to nature" and "man is born free" became the watch-words of the Romantic Period all over Europe and America. Voltaire's emphasis that God is inseparable from nature, combined with Rousseau's glorification of Nature, as the nursing mother of man gave rise to the ideas of pantheism (God exists everywhere) which we find in the poetry of Wordsworth.

The entire stream of romantic poetry between William Blake and John Keats gives expression to the philosophy of idealism showing various aspects of individualism, spiritualism, and organism.

Characteristics of Romantic Poetry

Medievalism

Rather than looking for forms and subject matter from classical literature, Romantic-era writers prefer nostalgic views of the Middle Ages as a simple, less complicated time not troubled by the complexities and divisive issues of industrialization and urbanization. Often a Romantic medieval vision is not realistic, ignoring the violence and harshness of the Middle Ages with its religious persecution, political wars, poverty among the lower classes in favor of a fairy tale view of knights in shining armor rescuing beautiful damsels in distress. Or, from another perspective, the

castles and mysterious aura of the so-called Dark Ages provide an ideal setting for Gothic literature.

Some Romantic poets felt irritated with the tyranny and ugliness of materialistic life of their age and to avoid the life of uneasy restlessness, they escaped from the problems of the world to a world of beauty and joy which their poetic definitions had pictured. In many ways, Romantic Poetry proved to be the poetry of escape from the sorrows and sufferings of worldly life and their times to the Middle Ages, where they found the eternal bliss.

The enthusiasm for the Middle Ages satisfied the emotional sense of wonder on the one hand and the intellectual sense of curiosity on the other hand.

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not troubled by the complexities and divisive issues of industrialization and urbanization. Often a Romantic medieval vision is not realistic, ignoring the violence and harshness of the Middle Ages with its religious persecution, political wars, poverty among the lower classes in favor of a fairy tale view of knights in shining armor rescuing beautiful damsels in distress. Or, from another perspective, the castles and mysterious aura of the so-called Dark Ages provide an ideal setting for Gothic literature.

Interest in Rural Life

Nature had practically no place in Neo-classical Poetry. A renewed interest in the simple life marked the poetry of the poets of the Romantic Age. In the poetry of Romantic Revival, the interest of poets was transferred from town to rural life and from artificial decorations of drawing rooms to the natural beauty and loveliness of nature.

Nature began to have its own importance in the poetry of this age. Wordsworth was the greatest poet who revealed the physical and spiritual beauty of nature to those who could not see any charm in the wildflowers, green fields and the chirping birds.

Imagination

In his Preface to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth describes the poet as a “man speaking to men” but an individual who is extraordinarily perceptive. Wordsworth believes that the power of the Imagination enables poets to perceive the spiritual dimension found in the ordinary, in, as Coleridge says, all of animate nature. Sensibility allows the poet to understand and to convey the inner being of man and nature.

Belief in the importance of the imagination is a distinctive feature of romantic poets such as John Keats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and P. B. Shelley, unlike the neoclassical poets. Keats said, “I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination- What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth.” For Wordsworth and William Blake the imagination is a spiritual force, is related to morality, and they believed that literature, especially poetry, could improve the world.

In Romantic Poetry, reason and intellect were subdued and their place was taken by imaginations, emotions, and passion. In the poetry of all the Romantic Poets, we find heightened emotional sensibilities and imaginative flights of genius bordering on heavenly heights uncrossed by the poets of the previous age.

Imagination was elevated to a position as the supreme faculty of the mind. This contrasted distinctly with the

traditional arguments for the supremacy of reason. The Romantics tended to define and to present the imagination as our ultimate "shaping" or creative power, the approximate human equivalent of the creative powers of nature or even deity. It is dynamic, an active, rather than passive power, with many functions. Imagination is the primary faculty for creating all art.

Mysticism

Romantic mysticism is the belief that the physical world of nature is a revelation of a spiritual or transcendental presence in the universe. Mysticism is not pantheism (worshipping nature). Romantic writers would worship not the tree, but the spiritual element manifested by the tree. Romantic literature, particularly poetry, is often characterized as nature poetry; mysticism explains the evident love of nature. Romantic writers love nature not only for its beauty

but primarily because it is an expression of spirituality and the Imagination.

Sensibility

In his Preface to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth defined poetry as the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” and “takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility.” Thus Wordsworth identifies sensibility rather than reason as the source of poetry.

The overwhelming emotional reaction to nature seen in Wordsworth’s poetry, the emotional sensitivity to other individuals and their circumstances, particularly those from the lower socio-economic classes, and the supernatural evocation of terror in Gothic literature all are expressions of sensibility.

A feeling of humanitarianism colored the poetry of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron. Thus Romantic Poetry was

marked by intense human sympathy and a consequent understanding of the human heart.

When Jane Austen titled her novel Sense and Sensibility, she set up the dichotomy between rationalism and the emotional enthusiasm that was a reaction, often an exaggerated reaction, to the reason and logic prized in neoclassicism.

Primitivism and Individualism

Arising from two sources, philosophical theories that posit innocence is found in nature and the ideals of democracy, Romanticism values the primitive individual, the person who does not have the artificial manners of high society, the cultivated façade of the aristocracy. Individuals who are closer to nature are better able to recognize and exemplify goodness and spiritual discernment. Wordsworth espouses

the common man and incidents from ordinary life as the appropriate subject for poetry. Romanticism places the individual in the center of life and experience.

Concept of Nature

Nature takes on additional significance for poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge as nature is a source of divine revelation. For others such as Shelley, nature is the means to tapping into the collective power of the human mind. Nature is the source of human innocence and goodness because nature is a manifestation of the Divine.

For Romantic writers, then, the source of poetry is not a conscious crafting of lines of a certain number of syllables in a certain metrical pattern and rhyme scheme. Instead, the source of literature is the inspiration that comes from connecting, through nature, with the divine or the transcendental properties of the human mind. Romantic writers use the term Imagination to refer to this connection.

The power of God to create nature is parallel to the poet's power to create through the Imagination. In his A Defence of Poetry, Percy Bysshe Shelley states that the Imagination "strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms." In his "The Eolian Harp," Coleridge pictures all of nature, including humans, as harps creating music when touched by the breeze of Imagination.

Other Characteristics of Romantic Poetry are represented in William Wordsworth's Preface to Lyrical Ballads. In the 1802 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth includes a Preface, an introductory explanation, to *Lyrical Ballads* to explain his theory of how poetry should be written.

The following points from the Preface delineate the characteristics that make these poems markedly different from poetry of the preceding century:

- **The subject of poetry should be events from the real lives of common people.**

Subjectivity

Wordsworth believes that common, ordinary situations are worthy topics for poems, events such as farmers plowing their fields. He further believes that through the Imagination he could make his audience more aware of the significance of common scenes that they might otherwise take for granted.

- **The language of poetry should be real language spoken by common people.**

Poetic Diction

The poetry of the Romantic movement is in direct contrast to that of Neoclassical. In the 18th century, poetry was governed by set rules and regulations. There were well-prepared lines of poetic composition. Any deviation from the rules was disliked by the teachers of poetic thought. The first thing that we notice in the poetry Romantic age is the

break from the slavery of rules and regulations. The poets of the Romantic Age wrote poetry in freestyle without following any rules and regulations.

Notice also that much of Wordsworth's poetry rejects the uniform stanzas and line lengths that were popular in the 18th century. Much of his poetry is free in form—lines and stanzas of varying lengths in the same poem, more like the "selection of language really used by men."

During the 18th century, many poets used what Wordsworth called "poetic diction," flowery or ornate words for ordinary things such as feathery flock instead of birds or finny tribe instead of fish. Wordsworth protests that people don't use such expressions; therefore poetry shouldn't either.

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

spontaneous way of expressing thoughts in Romantic Poetry.

lyricism

In Romantic Poetry, lyricism predominates and the poets of this school have, to their credit, a number of fine lyrics excelling the heroic couplet of the Neoclassical Age in melody and sweetness of tone. A lyric is a brief poem, expressing emotion, imagination, and meditative thought, usually stanzaic in form.

Ballad

A ballad is a narrative poem or song. Ballads originated as songs that were part of an oral culture, usually simple and regular in rhythm and rhyme. The typical ballad stanza is 4 lines rhyming abab. Because of their simplicity and their role as part of folk culture, ballads were popular with many Romantic writers.

Romantic Ode

As used in the Romantic Period, the ode is a lyric poem longer than usual lyrics, often on a more serious topic, usually meditative and philosophic in tone and subject.

Romanticism and Neoclassicism

Romanticism is a reaction against many facets of Neoclassicism. The following chart lists contrasting views of Neoclassicism and Romanticism.

Neoclassicism	**Romanticism**
use and imitation of literary traditions from ancient Greece and Rome	use and imitation of literary traditions from the Middle Ages (including the medieval romance)
beauty in structure and order	beauty in organic, natural forms
art from applying order to nature	art from inspiration
heroic couplets	lyric poetry
focus on external people	focus on self-expression of the

Neoclassicism	Romanticism
and events	artist
reason	mysticism
Reason leads to spiritual revelation	Nature leads to spiritual revelation
urban (glorifies civilization and technological progress)	rural (sees the evils of civilization and technological progress)
values wit and sophistication	values primitive, simple people
Human nature needs artificial restraints of society	Restraints of society result in tyranny and oppression
the head	the heart

Romantic Poets

In 1798, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge joined together to publish the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads,* a collection of poems that is considered by many to be the definitive starting point of the Romantic Era. While the first edition was published in 1798,

Wordsworth later added more of his poetry and a preface and re-published the work in 1800.

William Wordsworth (1770- 1850)

Wordsworth was born in the Lake District of northern England. Much of his poetry was inspired by the dramatic landscapes of the Lake District. Both Wordsworth's parents died before he was 15, and he and his four siblings were left in the care of different relatives. To deal with the great deal of grief and depression Wordsworth experienced, he indulged in writing poetry. He moved on in 1787 to St. John's College, Cambridge.

The most important thing he did in his college years was to devote his summer vacation in 1790 to a long walking tour through revolutionary France. He became an enthusiast for the ideals of the French Revolution. Upon taking his Cambridge degree—an undistinguished "pass"—he returned in 1791 to France. In December 1792, Wordsworth

had to return to England and was cut off there by the outbreak of war between England and France.

The years that followed his return to England were the darkest of Wordsworth’s life. Unprepared for any profession, rootless, virtually penniless, bitterly hostile to his own country’s opposition to the French, he lived in London and learned to feel a profound sympathy for the abandoned mothers, beggars, children, and victims of England’s wars. This experience brought about Wordsworth's interest and sympathy for the life, troubles, and speech of the "common man." These issues proved to be of the utmost importance to Wordsworth's work.

This dark period ended in 1795 when Wordsworth received a legacy from a close relative and he and his sister Dorothy went to live together without separation. Two years later they moved again, to live near the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was an admirer of Wordsworth's work. They collaborated on 'Lyrical Ballads', published in 1798. This

collection of poems, mostly by Wordsworth but with Coleridge contributing 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', is generally taken to mark the beginning of the Romantic movement in English poetry.

William Wordsworth was an innovative writer who marked the start of the Romantic Period in literature. He was a pioneer of Romanticism and the Poet laureate of England from 1843 till his death in 1850.

I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is one of the most famous and best-loved poems written in the English literature by William Wordsworth. It was written as a lyric poem to capture the bewitching beauty of the wildflowers and express a deeper feeling and emotions of

the poet. It has become an eternal classic for describing the nature and its scenic beauty.

The poem is based on one of Wordsworth's own walks in the countryside of England's Lake District. During this walk, he encountered a long strip of daffodils. In the poem, these daffodils have a long-lasting effect on the speaker, firstly in the immediate impression they make and secondly in the way that the image of them comes back to the speaker's mind later on. "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is a quintessentially Romantic poem, bringing together key ideas about imagination, humanity and the natural world.

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

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

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

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

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

Paraphrase

The poet explains about his one day occasional aimless wandering. The term “wandered” means walking free of their own accord. The poet is referring to himself as the ‘cloud’ in a metaphorical sense of the word. Although the clouds

mostly travel in groups, this cloud prefers singular hovering. However, he clearly mentions his passing through valleys and hills on a routine walk, simplifying the narrative.

The poet comes across a bunch of daffodils fluttering in the air. He's dumbfounded by the beauty of those golden daffodils. Although, yellow would be more suitable for daffodils the poet intends to signify its beauty by using golden color. The daffodils are termed as hosts/ crowd since they are together in a collective bunch. The daffodils are a source of immense beauty for the poet.

The daffodils are firmly perched beside a lake, beneath some trees. It's a windy day overall and the flowers dance and flutter as the wind blows. Let's take a step back for a brief moment to locate the premises of the poet's inspiration. The poet resided in the infamous Lake District, a region rich in scenic locations entailing hills, valleys and lakes. As a result, the location is realistic in its entirety. The poet refers to daffodils dancing, a trait relatable to humans.

The above allegory is a clear and direct referral to our native galaxy Milky Way. The space continuum holds great mystery for our Romantic Era poet as he envisions the daffodils to be in a constant state of wonder as are the stars beyond the reach of humans.

Comparing the daffodils to stars in the sky, the speaker notes how the flowers seem to go on without ending, alongside a bay. The speaker guesses there are ten thousand or so daffodils, all of their heads moving as if they were dancing.

The poet makes an allusion to Milky Way, our galaxy filled with its own planetary solar systems stretched beyond infinity. The lake supposedly has a large area since the daffodils are dispersed along the shoreline. Along the Milky Way's premises lie countless stars which the poet alludes to daffodils fluttering beside the lake.

By ten thousand, he meant a collection of daffodils were fluttering in the air, spellbinding the poet at the beauty of the scene. It’s just a wild estimation at best as he supposes ten thousand daffodils at a glance. The term sprightly comes from sprite which is primarily dandy little spirits people deemed existed in such times. They are akin to fairies.

Near the daffodils, the waves are glinting on the bay. But the daffodils seem more joyful to the speaker than the waves. A poet couldn't help being cheerful, says the speaker, in the cheerful company of the daffodils. The speaker stares at the daffodils slowly, without yet realizing the full extent of the positive effects of encountering them.

After the experience with the daffodils, the speaker often lies on the couch, either absent-minded or thoughtful. It is then that the daffodils come back to the speaker's imaginative memory—access to which is a gift of solitude—

and fills the speaker with joy as his mind dances with the daffodils.

Commentary

Considered one of the most significant examples of Romantic poetry, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” explores the relationship between nature and humanity. In doing so, it makes two key points. Firstly, it argues that humanity is not separate from nature, but rather part of it. And secondly, it suggests that the natural world—and a strong bond with it—is essential to human happiness. Though the reader might be fooled by the suggestion of solitude in the title, this is an optimistic poem with a positive outlook on the world. This happiness is drawn from the speaker’s interaction with nature, in turn encouraging the reader to appreciate the natural majesty that is all around them.

The poem introduces the idea of loneliness in the first line, but the speaker is not really alone at all. The speaker is

in the presence of “a host of golden daffodils,” whose delicate “dancing” in the wind has a long-lasting effect on the speaker’s mind. This set-up introduces a sense of togetherness between humanity (represented by the speaker) and nature (represented by the daffodils). And though this togetherness is partly rendered by the personification of the daffodils that runs throughout the poem—they are “dancing” in every stanza—the speaker pre-emptively flips this personification on its head in the very first line. Here, the speaker compares himself to a natural element: a cloud. So, the human component of the poem is like nature, and the natural component is like humanity. They are, in a word, together.

The poem suggests that this togetherness is something instinctive. It’s clear that the beauty of the daffodils had an instant impact on the speaker—which is why the speaker “gazed and gazed”—but it was only later, when the

experience “flashed” again in the speaker's mind, that the speaker realized its full significance. In this quiet moment, the speaker draws on the experience of the daffodils as an avenue to happiness. That is, everything that the daffodils represent—joy, playfulness, survival, beauty—"fills” the speaker with “bliss” and “pleasure.” In the speaker’s mind, the speaker is again dancing “with the daffodils.” The poem, then, is arguing that communion with nature is not just a momentary joy, but something deeper and long-lasting. The reader is left with the distinct impression that, without these types of experiences with nature, the speaker would be returned to a genuine loneliness only hinted at by the title.

Stanzas 2 and 3 also make it clear to the reader that the togetherness described above is, of course, not solely about daffodils, but rather about nature more generally. “The stars” and “the sparkling waves” are both mentioned, suggesting a series of links between the smaller, less noticeable elements

of the natural world (like the daffodils), humankind (like the speaker), and the wider universe (the stars). All are presented as a part of nature; though they are different, they are all in communion with one another. However, people have to make an effort to notice this and to engage with the natural world like the speaker does. The poem, then, is an argument for active engagement with nature—a message perhaps even more important now than it was at the time, given humanity's wide-ranging effects on the planet it inhabits.

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is a Poem of Nature. As this poem is about the captivating beauty of nature, it has been written from the subjective point of view. It details the poet's encounters with the majestic daffodils in the field beside the lake. The expression of wonder can be felt throughout the poem. The feeling of enjoying the beauty of

nature and its impacts on the human mind can leave the reader desiring to spend more time with nature.

Throughout the poem, Wordsworth engages with themes of nature, memory, and spirituality. These three are tied together as the speaker, Wordsworth himself, moves through a beautiful landscape. He takes pleasure in the sight of the daffodils and revives his spirit in nature. At the same time, Wordsworth explores the theme of memory. The flowers are there to comfort him in real-time but also as a memory from the past.

The Solitary Reaper

Along with “I wandered lonely as a cloud,” “The Solitary Reaper” is one of Wordsworth’s most famous post-Lyrical Ballads lyrics. The poem was inspired by the poet’s trip to Scotland in 1803 with his sister Dorothy Wordsworth. In the

poem, the speaker tries—and fails—to describe the song he heard a young woman singing as she cuts grain in a Scottish field. The speaker does not understand the song, and he cannot tell what it was about. Nor can he find the language to describe its beauty. The poet appreciates its tone, its expressive beauty, and the mood it creates within him, rather than its explicit content, at which he can only guess.

The Solitary Reaper

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 listen'd, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Paraphrase

In the First stanza of "The Solitary Reaper," Wordsworth describes how the Reaper was singing all alone. The poet, while travelling in the Highland valleys, comes across a lonely Highlander reaper girl who is harvesting the crops and singing. She had no one to help her out in the field. So she

was singing to herself. She was singing without knowing that someone was listening to her song. He tries to draw the attention of the passers-by to the girl by calling them to ‘behold her’. The poet urges them to stop there and listen to her song, or to pass by gently without disturbing her in her singing. She was immersed in her work of cutting and binding while singing a melancholy song. For the poet, he is so struck by the sad beauty of her song that the whole valley seems to overflow with its sound.

In the second stanza of “The Solitary Reaper,” the poet compares the young woman’s song with ‘Nightingale’ and ‘Cuckoo’ – the most celebrated birds by the writers and poets for the sweetness of voice. But, here he complains that neither ‘Nightingale’ nor the ‘Cuckoo’ sang a song that is as sweet as hers. He says that no nightingale has sung the song so soothing like that for the weary travelers. For, the song of the girl has stopped him from going about his

business. He is utterly enchanted that he says that her voice is so thrilling and penetrable like that of the Cuckoo Bird, which sings to break the silence in the 'Hebrides' Islands. He symbolically puts forth that her voice is so melodious and more than that of the two birds, known for their voice.

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

In the fourth stanza, the poet decides not to probe further into the theme. He comes to the conclusion that whatever may be the theme of her poem, it is not going to end. Not only her song but also her suffering sounds like a never-ending one. He stays there motionless and listened to her song quite some times. Even when he left and mounted up the hill, the song could no longer be heard from there, but he bore the music, the melody of the solitary reaper's song in his heart. Such was the impression of the song upon his mind.

Commentary

Wordsworth was one of the leading figures of English Romanticism. intense emotion. "The Solitary Reaper" is a clear example of Romantic poetry, since its speaker reflects on a powerful experience of nature. By placing this praise and this beauty in a rustic, natural setting, and by and by

establishing as its source a simple rustic girl, Wordsworth acts on the values of Lyrical Ballads.

The poem's structure is simple—the first stanza sets the scene, the second offers two bird comparisons for the music, the third wonders about the content of the songs, and the fourth describes the effect of the songs on the speaker—and its language is natural and unforced. Additionally, the final two lines of the poem ("Its music in my heart I bore / Long after it was heard no more") return its focus to the familiar theme of memory, and the soothing effect of beautiful memories on human thoughts and feelings.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 - 1834)

Samuel Coleridge is an English lyrical poet, critic, and philosopher and one of the most influential and controversial figures of the Romantic period. His *Lyrical Ballads,* written with William Wordsworth, heralded the English Romantic movement, and his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) is the most

significant work of general literary criticism produced in the English Romantic period. His career as a poet and writer was established after he befriended Wordsworth and together they produced Lyrical Ballads in 1798.

As a child, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was described as a dreamer. He was already an extraordinary reader, and he immersed himself to the point of morbid fascination in romances and Eastern tales such as *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments.* At both school and university he continued to read voraciously, particularly in works of imagination and visionary philosophy.

Early in 1798 Coleridge was preoccupied with political issues. The French Revolutionary government had suppressed the states of the Swiss Confederation, and Coleridge expressed his bitterness at this betrayal of the principles of the Revolution in a poem entitled "France: An Ode."

For most of his adult life he suffered through addiction to opium. His most famous works – 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel' – all featured supernatural themes and exotic images, perhaps affected by his use of the drugs. Throughout his life Coleridge suffered from poor health and probably from poor mental health as well. By the early 1800's he had become addicted to opium. His addiction became so severe that he moved in with a doctor in London who helped him keep his drug use under control.

In his later years, Coleridge delivered a highly successful series of lectures on Shakespeare, wrote respected works of literary theory and criticism, and developed a reputation as an intellectual. His joint publication of "Lyrical Ballads" with William Wordsworth marked the beginning of the Romantic Period in literature.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is the longest major poem by the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, written in 1797–98 and published in 1798 in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Along with other poems in Lyrical Ballads, it is often considered a signal shift to modern poetry and the beginning of British Romantic literature.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner recounts the experiences of a sailor who has returned from a long sea voyage. The mariner stops a man who is on his way to a wedding ceremony and begins to narrate a story. The wedding-guest's reaction turns from impatience to fear to fascination as the mariner's story progresses, as can be seen in the language style: Coleridge uses narrative techniques such as personification and repetition to create a sense of danger, the supernatural, or serenity, depending on the mood in different parts of the poem.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is unique among Coleridge's important works— unique in its intentionally archaic language, its length, its bizarre moral narrative, its strange scholarly notes printed in small type in the margins, its thematic ambiguity, and the long Latin epigraph that begins it, concerning the multitude of unclassifiable "invisible creatures" that inhabit the world. Its peculiarities make it quite atypical of its era; it has little in common with other Romantic works. Rather, the scholarly notes, the epigraph, and the archaic language combine to produce the impression (intended by Coleridge, no doubt) that the "Rime" is a ballad of ancient times. Upon its release, the poem was criticized for being obscure and difficult to read. The use of archaic spelling of words was seen as not in keeping with Wordsworth's claims of using common language.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner has several hallmarks that would later become associated with Romanticism:

elements of the supernatural, a deep sense of history, lots of dramatic images of nature, formal experimentation, and an interest in conversational language, among others. After this poem, Coleridge went on to write more famous poems and publish some important works of literary criticism.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Argument

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.

PART I

1 It is an ancient Mariner,

2 And he stoppeth one of three.

3 'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,

4 Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

5 The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,

6 And I am next of kin;

7 The guests are met, the feast is set:

8 May'st hear the merry din.'

9 He holds him with his skinny hand,

10 'There was a ship,' quoth he.

11 'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'

12 Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

13 He holds him with his glittering eye--

14 The Wedding-Guest stood still,

15 And listens like a three years' child:

16 The Mariner hath his will.

17 The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:

18 He cannot choose but hear;

19 And thus spake on that ancient man,

20 The bright-eyed Mariner.

21 'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,

22 Merrily did we drop

23 Below the kirk, below the hill,

24 Below the lighthouse top.

25 The Sun came up upon the left,

26 Out of the sea came he!

27 And he shone bright, and on the right

Went down into the sea.
Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon--'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.
The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.
The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.
And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.
With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,

The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.
And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.
And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken--
The ice was all between.
The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!
At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.
It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;

The helmsman steered us through!
And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo!
In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.'
'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!--
Why look'st thou so?'--With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.

While "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" departed from Romantic stylistic tendencies, it exemplified many of the genre's themes. The most central of these is the subjectivity of experience and the importance of the individual. The poem is told largely from the Ancient Mariner's perspective,

despite the minor involvement of a separate narrator, who describes the Ancient Mariner and Wedding Guest's actions.

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" also exemplified the Romantic fascination with the holy in nature. Coleridge places the Ancient Mariner out in the open ocean for much of the poem, making him very small and vulnerable in comparison to the forces of nature. The Romantics also went against the earlier trend of championing religious institution and instead locating the spiritual and sublime in nature. Despite the Ancient Mariner's expression of love for communal prayer, his message reveals his belief that the true path to God is through communing with and respecting nature.

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is said to have been inspired by Captain James Cook's voyages, the legend of the Wandering Jew, and especially Captain George Shelvocke's 1726 *A Voyage 'Round the World*, in which he

describes how one of his shipmates shot an albatross that he believed had made the wind disappear.

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" has become an important landmark in the literary canon since its publication, and has also contributed certain phrases to common speech. The most notable of these is the secondary definition of the word "albatross," often used to denote "a constant, worrisome burden" or "an obstacle to success." Also in common usage are the poem's most famous lines: "Water, water, every where, / Nor any drop to drink." The phrase has come to mean any situation in which one is surrounded by the object of one's desire but is unable to partake.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is about three guys who are on their way to a wedding celebration when an old sailor (the Mariner) stops one of them at the door-steps (Who will

be called the Wedding Guest). He uses his mesmerizing eyes to hold all the attention of Wedding Guest and starts telling him a story about the unfortunate and destructive journey that he took. The Guest wants to go to the celebration, but he doesn't seem to pry himself away from this old mariner. The Mariner begins his story.

They leave the port and ship sails down near Antarctica to keep themselves safe from the severe storm. But suddenly they get themselves caught in a deadly foggy course. An albatross shows up to steer them into the fog and provides them good winds, but the mariner decides to shoot it. Soon the sailor loses their wind, and it gets really hot. They run out of the water. Now at this point, everybody blames the Mariner. The ship seems hunted by a cruel spirit, and weird stuff starts appearing, they see the slimy creatures walking on the sea.

Mariner's crew decides to hand the albatross body around his neck to remind him of his grave mistake that he

made. Due to his mistake, everyone is dying due to thirst. Mariner happened to see another ship is sailing at some distance from his ship. He desires and tries to yell out loudly, but his mouth is too dry to yell. To moisten his lips, he sucked his own blood. He thinks that they are safe now. But sadly the ship is a ghost ship and piloted by two spirits. Then starts the game of death.

Who wants to save himself? Who has to be the last member you want to meet on a journey? Everyone dies on the mariner's ship. The guest realizes, "Oh! You are a ghost"! But the Mariner replies him patiently, saying "well I am the only one who didn't die that day." After that, he continues his ballad and says he's on the boat with all the dead bodies full of slimy spirits surrounded by an ocean. Severe, these slimy things are nasty water snakes.

The Mariner falls into sleep, and when he wakes up, it's raining. A storm strikes up in some distance, and he sees all his crew members floating on the water like zombies. Sailors

don’t come back to life. It seems the supernatural spirits and angels fill their bodies and push the boat.

The Mariner hears some voices, saying that how cruelly he killed the albatross and still he has more sufferings. These mysterious voices explain all the situation that how the ship is moving. The Mariner says that he still has the same painful need to tell all the story. That is why he stopped that guest on this very occasion. In the end, Mariner says that he needs to learn how to express his love, how to say prayers, how to live people and many other things. Then he goes back home and wakes up the next day, just like the famous lines go “a sadder and wiser man.”

POETIC DEVICES & LITERARY TERMS

ALLITERATION - is the repetition of initial consonant sounds.

ALLUSION - is a direct or indirect reference to a familiar figure, place or event from history, literature, mythology or the Bible.

APOSTROPHE - a figure of speech in which a person not present is addressed.

ASSONANCE - is a close repetition of similar vowel sounds, usually in stressed syllables.

ATMOSPHERE / MOOD - is the prevailing feeling that is created in a story or poem.

CLICHE - an overused expression that has lost its intended force or novelty.

CONNOTATION - the emotional suggestions attached to words beyond their strict definitions.

CONSONANCE - the close repetition of identical consonant sounds before and after different vowels.

CONTRAST - the comparison or juxtaposition of things that are different

DENOTATION - the dictionary meaning of words.

DISSONANCE - the juxtaposition of harsh jarring sounds in one or more lines.

EXTENDED METAPHOR - an implied comparison between two things which are essentially not alike. These points of comparison are continued throughout the selection.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE - Language used in such a way as to force words out of their literal meanings by emphasizing their connotations to bring new insight and feeling to the subject.

IDIOM - is a term or phrase that cannot be understood by a literal translation, but refers instead to a figurative meaning that is understood through common use.

IMAGERY - is the representation through language of sense experience. The image most often suggests a mental picture, but an image may also represent a sound, smell, taste or tactile experience.

IRONY - is a literary device which reveals concealed or contradictory meanings.

JUXTAPOSITION - is the overlapping or mixing of opposite or different situations, characters, settings, moods, or points of view in order to clarify meaning, purpose, or character, or to heighten certain moods, especially humour, horror, and suspense. also Contrast

METAPHOR - a comparison between two things which are essentially dissimilar. The comparison is implied rather than directly stated.

METER - any regular pattern of rhythm based on stressed and unstressed syllables.

METONYMY - use of a closely related idea for the idea itself.

MOOD - see atmosphere

ONOMATOPOEIA - the use of words which sound like what they mean.

PARADOX - a statement in which there is an apparent contradiction which is actually true.

PERSONIFICATION - giving human attributes to an animal, object or idea.

RHYME - words that sound alike

RHYME SCHEME - any pattern of rhymes in poetry. Each new sound is assigned the next letter in the alphabet.

RHYTHM - a series of stressed or accented syllables in a group of words, arranged so that the reader expects a similar series to follow.

SIMILE - a comparison between two things which are essentially dissimilar. The comparison is directly stated through words such as like, as, than or resembles.

SYMBOL - a symbol has two levels of meaning, a literal level and a figurative level. Characters, objects, events and settings can all be symbolic in that they represent something else beyond themselves.

TONE - is the poet's attitude toward his/her subject or readers. it is similar to tone of voice but should not be confused with mood or atmosphere. An author's tone might be sarcastic, sincere, humorous . . .

VOICE - the creating and artistic intelligence that we recognize behind any speaker.


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