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M.A. Previous (ENGLISH)

PAPER - III

LITERATURE FROM 1798 TO 1914

MADHYA PRADESH BHOJ (OPEN) UNIVERSITY
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**M.A.English
Previous
LITERATURE FROM 1798 TO 1914**

Paper - III

**Madhya Pradesh BHOJ (Open) UNIVERSITY,
Bhopal**

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M.A PREVIOUS EXAMINATION

PAPER III (Literature from 1798 to 1914)

Unit I (a) Wordsworth : Tintern Abbey; Immorality Ode

(b) Coleridge" Rime of the Ancient Mariner; Kublia Khan

Unit II (a) Shelley : Adonais

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Unit III (a) Tennyson : The Lotos Eaters; Ulysses

(b) Browning : The Last Ride Together : Fraippo Lippi.

Unit IV (a) Hazlitt-The Indian Juggler : on going journey

(b) Lamb; Imperfect Sympathies; Dream Childern ; Bachelor's. Complaint.

Unit V Explanations- Two Pieces for Explanation from each Unit from Unit I to IV to be set and one from each Unit to be attempted.

PAPER III 1798-1914

I. ROMANTICISM: a brief definition

“Romanticism” is a term used to describe the artistic and intellectual movement which was produced in Europe during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This movement was characterized by its individualist postulates and its independence in front of the classic rules. In literature, Romanticism appeared at the end of 18th century in England and Germany, and later in France, Italy and Spain.

The most important Romantic English poets are Lord Byron, Shelley, Keats, William Blake and William Wordsworth, about whom we are going to talk in this essay. In their poems they display many characteristics of Romanticism, such

as:- An emphasis on the emotions, I mean, an emotional and intuitive way of understanding the world.

- They explore the relationship between nature and human life.
- A stress on the importance of personal experiences and a desire to understand what influences the human mind.
- A belief in the power of the imagination.
- An interest in mythological, fantastical, gothic and supernatural themes.
- Social and political idealism
- Love, which was one of the most important values for the Romantics.
- They proclaimed that the most important things are freedom, brotherhood and nature.

2. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

William Wordsworth was born in 1770, in Cockermouth (in the Lake District). With the death of his mother in 1778, his father sent him to Hawkshead Grammar School. After their father's death, the

Wordsworth children were left under the guardianship of their uncles. Although many aspects of his boyhood were positive, he recalled bouts of loneliness and anxiety. It took him a lot of years, and much writing, to recover from the death of his parents and his separation from his siblings.

In 1790 he went to France, where he fell in love with Annette Vallon, and with whom he had a baby. One year later he had to return to England alone because of the war between France and Britain. (In 1793 he met Samuel Taylor Coleridge. They developed a close friendship. Together, they produced "Lyrical Ballads" /1798), an important work in the English Romantic Movement. Moreover, in it we can find one of Wordsworth's most famous poems, "Tintern Abbey".

Wordsworth had for years been making plans to write long philosophical poem in three parts, which he intended to call "The Recluse". He had in 1798-1799 started an autobiographical poem, which

he never named but called the "poem to Coleridge" which would serve as an appendix to "The Recluse". In 1807, his "Poems in Two Volumes" were published, including "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood". In 1814 he published "The Excursion" as the second part of the three-part "The Recluse". He had not completed the first and the third parts, and never would complete them. However, he did write a poetic Prospectus to "The Recluse" in which he lays out the structure and intent of the poem. He died in Rydal Mount in 1850 and was buried at St.Oswald's church in Grasmere. His widow, Mary Hutchinson, published his lengthy autobiographical "poem to Coleridge" as "The Prelude" several months after his death. Though this failed to arouse great interest in 1850, it has since come to be recognised as his masterpiece.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Explain the relationship between the sentimental school and the "Poetry of Melancholy and Death," giving two examples of the latter.
2. What were the effects of the French Revolution on English life, and what other changes affected the society of the period?
3. What forms of literature were most important during the Romantic Period, and which one dominated?
4. Describe romantic nature imagery and symbolism?
5. How were John Locke and Emmanuel Kant related to concepts of the mind and the origin and goal of thought?
6. What is the idea of "organicism" and how does "organic form" relate to ideas about art?
7. What are some of the romantic conceptions of the imagination, in relation to reason, for instance?
8. What was general conception of the poet during the Romantic Period, especially in terms of what motivates the poet and the manner in which the poet produces poetry?
9. What are some of the difficulties in defining the term, "Romanticism"?
10. What is meant by "sensibility"?
11. In "We Are Seven" who is speaking? What is the attitude of the speaker toward the child in each poem? What is it that the child in "We Are Seven" cannot learn?
12. "Lines: Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey":
13. Analyze the poem's structure and major divisions. What is their relation to the subject matter?
14. What mood does the first verse paragraph create, and how would you characterize the imagery here? Is it one of chaos? Of harmony? What is the dominant color mentioned, and why might that be significant?
15. Discuss the "debt" referred to in the second verse paragraph? In this metaphor what is the implication regarding nature and human development?
16. Follow the meaning of the extended metaphor. Explain "loss and abundant recompense."

Unit I Section (a) Poem

Tintern Abbey

Professor Philip Shaw considers the composition of 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey', and explains how Wordsworth uses nature to explore ideas of connection and unity.

This 160-line poem is autobiographical, written in the first person and in the poet's own persona. The poem is subtitled "On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour." It is set at Tintern, a ruined abbey next to the River Wye in the West of England.

In the poem Tintern Abbey the poet has expressed his tender feeling towards nature. He has specially recollected his poetic idea of Tintern Abbey where he had gone first time in 1793. This is his second visit to this place. Wordsworth has expressed his intense faith in nature. William Wordsworth (adsbygoogle = window.adsbygoogle || []).push({}); There is Wordsworth's realization of God in nature. He got sensuous delight in it and it is all in all to him. Tintern Abbey impressed him most when he had first visited this place. He has again come to the same place where there are lofty cliffs, the plots of cottage ground, orchards groves and copses. He is glad to see again hedgerows, sportive wood, pastoral farms and green doors. This lonely place, the banks of the river and rolling waters from their mountain springs present a beautiful panoramic light. The solitary place reminds the poet of vagrant dwellers and hermits' cave. The poem is in five sections. The first section establishes the setting for the meditation. But it emphasizes the passage of time: five years have passed, five summers, five long winters... But when the poet is back to this place of natural beauty and serenity, it is still essentially the same. The poem opens with a slow, dragging rhythm and the repetition of the word 'five' all designed to emphasize the weight of time which has separated the poet from this scene. The following lines develop a clear, visual picture of the scene. The view presented is a blend of wildness and order. He can see the entirely natural cliffs and waterfalls; he can see the hedges around the

fields of the people; and he can see wreaths of smoke probably coming from some hermits making fire in their cave hermitages. These images evoke not only a pure nature as one might expect, they evoke a life of the common people in harmony with the nature. The second section begins with the meditation. The poet now realizes that these 'beauteous' forms have always been with him, deep-seated in his mind, wherever he went. This vision has been "Felt in the blood, and felt alone the heart" that is. It has affected his whole being. They were not absent from his mind like form the mind of a man born blind. In hours of weariness, frustration and anxiety, these things of nature used to make him feel sweet sensations in his very blood, and he used to feel it at the level of the impulse (heart) rather than in his waking consciousness and through reasoning. From this point onward Wordsworth begins to consider the sublime of nature, and his mystical awareness becomes clear. Wordsworth's idea was that human beings are naturally uncorrupted. The poet studies nature with open eyes and imaginative mind. He has been the lover of nature form the core of his heart, and with purer mind. He feels a sensation of love for nature in his blood. He feels high pleasure and deep power of joy in natural objects. The beatings of his heart are full of the fire of nature's love. He concentrates attention to Sylvan Wye – a majestic and worth seeing river. He is reminded of the pictures of the past visit and ponders over his future years. On his first visit to this place he bounded over the mountains by the sides of the deep rivers and the lovely streams. In the past the soundings haunted him like a passion. The tall rock, the mountain and the deep and gloomy wood were then to him like an appetite. But that time is gone now. In nature he finds the sad music of humanity. The third section contains a kind of doubt; the poet is probably reflecting the reader's possible doubts so that he can go on to justify how he is right and what he means. He doubts, for just a moment, whether this thought about the influence of the nature is vain, but he can't go on. He exclaims: "yet, oh! How often, amid the joyless daylight, fretful and unprofitable fever of the world have I turned to thee (nature)" for inspiration and peace of mind. He thanks the 'Sylvan Wye' for the everlasting influence it has imprinted on his mind; his spirit has very often turned to this river for inspiration when he was losing the peace of mind or the path and meaning of life. The river here becomes the symbol of spirituality. Though the poet has become serious and perplexed in the fourth section the nature gives him courage and spirit enough to stand there

with a sense of delight and pleasure. This is so typical of Wordsworth that it seems he can't write poetry without recounting his personal experiences, especially those of his childhood. Here he also begins from the earliest of his days! It was first the coarse pleasures in his 'boyish days', which have all gone by now. "That time is past and all its aching joys are now no more, and all its dizzy raptures". But the poet does not mourn for them; he doesn't even grumble about their loss. Clearly, he has gained something in return: "other gifts have followed; for such loss... for I have learnt to look on nature, not as in the hour of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes the still, sad music of humanity". This is a philosophic statement about maturing, about the development of personality, and of the poetic or philosophic mind as well. So now the poet is able to feel a joy of elevated thought, a sense sublime, and far more deeply interfused. He feels a sense of sublime and the working of a supreme power in the light of the setting sun, in round oceans and in the blue sky. He is of opinion that a motion and a spirit impel all thinking things. Therefore Wordsworth claims that he is a lover of the meadows and of all which we see from this green earth. Nature is a nurse, a guide and the guardian of his heart and soul. The poet comes to one important conclusion: for all the formative influences, he is now consciously in love with the nature. He has become a thoughtful lover of the meadows, the woods and the mountains. Though his ears and eyes seem to create the other half of all these sensations, the nature is the actual source of these sublime thoughts. The fifth and last section continues with the same meditation from where the poet addresses his younger sister Dorothy, whom he blesses and gives advice about what he has learnt. He says that he can hear the voice of his own youth when he hears her speak, the language of his former heart; he can also "read my former pleasure in the soothing lights of thy wild eyes". He is excited to look at his own youthful image in her. He says that nature has never betrayed his heart and that is why they had been living from joy to joy. Nature can impress the mind with quietness and beauty, and feed it lofty thoughts, that no evil tongues of the human society can corrupt their hearts with any amount of contact with it. The poet then begins to address the moon in his reverie, and to ask the nature to bestow his sister with their blessings. Let the moon shine on her solitary walk, and let the mountain winds blow their breeze on her. When the present youthful ecstasies are over, as they did with him, let her mind become the palace of the lovely forms and thought

about the nature, so that she can enjoy and understand life and overcome the vexations of living in a harsh human society. The conclusion to the poem takes us almost cyclically, back to a physical view of the 'steep woods', 'lofty cliffs' and 'green pastoral landscape' in which the meditation of the poem is happening. The poet has expressed his honest and natural feelings to Nature's Superiority. The language is so simple and lucid that one is not tired of reading it again and again. The sweetness of style touches the heart of a reader. This is the beauty of Wordsworth's language. –

The poet opens with the observation that five years have passed since he was last there. He continues with a description of the peaceful landscape. Line 23 marks a transition in time and place. He recalls that in moments of weariness in noisy towns, the memory of this landscape has calmed and restored him in body and mind. These pleasant feelings promote kind and loving actions in life. They also bring with them a more sublime gift: transcendental experiences, beyond the everyday state of consciousness, which William Wordsworth was to refer to in his later poem *The Prelude* (1850) as "spots of time."

The poet describes such an experience as a serene and blessed mood capable of lightening life's burdens. The awareness leads into a state of such deep rest that the breath and heartbeat are suspended, though the mind is wide awake—"we become a living soul." In this joyful and harmonious state, the poet says, sense perception is directed inward. There are no objects of perception for the eye to see. Instead, the perception is opened to the inner spiritual life that informs creation.

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length

Of five long winters! And again I hear

These waters, rolling from their mountain springs

With a soft inland murmur. Once again

Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,

Which on a wild secluded scene impress

Thoughts of more deep seclusion, and connect

The landscape with the quiet of the sky.

Revisiting

Wordsworth's 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour, 13 July 1798' is the climatic poem of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). Although Wordsworth and his circle commonly referred to the poem as 'Tintern Abbey', the significance of the full title is worth considering. Firstly, we are told that the poem is 'written a few miles above Tintern Abbey'. The poem's perspective on the abbey, therefore, is elevated and distant, and perhaps even detached. Secondly, we discover that the poet has been here before: he is 'revisiting' the Wye valley. Thirdly, we are informed that the poem was composed 'during a tour' – written, that is, during the course of a pleasure trip in which several different places of interest are visited. Finally, we learn the poem's exact moment of composition: 13 July 1798.

What should we make of the title's eagerness to establish an exact time and precise place? In the poem's opening lines we learn that the speaker is revisiting the Wye after a period of five years. The man who visited the region during a walking tour from London to North Wales in the summer of 1793 has changed significantly: at that time Wordsworth was an anxious, aimless and disillusioned young man: the father of an illegitimate child to a woman in revolutionary France, the recent author of two unnoticed poems, and a political radical beset with concerns about Britain's entry into the war against France. Looking back on this turbulent period, the opening lines insist that then as now the poet receives a healing influence from nature: just as the 'lofty cliffs ... connect / The landscape with the quiet of the sky', so the disunited perceiver of this scene is rejuvenated and made whole. To some degree, therefore, 'Tintern Abbey' presents absorption in natural beauty as the solution to mental, political and social disconnection.

The imagery of unity and connection in these opening lines is strongly influenced by William Gilpin's concept of the picturesque. In *Observations on the River Wye* (1782) Gilpin notes that 'Many of the furnaces on the banks of the river consume charcoal which is manufactured on the spot, and the smoke (which is frequently

seen issuing from the sides of the hills, and spreading its thin veil over a part of them) beautifully breaks their lines, and unites them with the sky'. With its description of 'wreathes of smoke / Sent up in silence from among the trees' the elevated perspective of 'Tintern Abbey' casts a similar veil over a landscape rapidly succumbing to the effects of industrialisation. Gilpin goes on to document the 'poverty and wretchedness' of the homeless taking shelter in the abbey ruins; an image of social deprivation that the poem seems simultaneously to acknowledge and efface in its mention of 'vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods'.

Description of Tintern Abbey from Observations on the River Wye and several parts of South Wales by William Gilpin

William Gilpin's Observations on the River Wye and several parts of South Wales (1800) describes the picturesque qualities of the ruins of Tintern Abbey, and contrasts them with the miserable living conditions of those who worked nearby.

Like thousands of travellers before him, Wordsworth's perception of the valley and its picturesque centrepiece is informed by the aesthetics of tourism and by the genre of the landscape poem. But 'Tintern Abbey' is distinguished from other writings on this subject written in the late 18th century by its complex integration of landscape description, self-reflection and sheer philosophical ambition. After the opening description the speaker claims that he owes to the memory of his initial visit 'sensations sweet / Felt in the blood and felt along the heart' that have calmed and restored him in difficult times. More daringly he states that the landscape has inspired 'another gift, / Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood / In which the burden of the mystery' of the world is 'lightened' and, with 'an eye made quiet by the power / Of harmony, and the deep power of joy, / We see into the life of things'. Wordsworth, that is, looks beyond surface appearance to gain insight into a deeper level of existence. Distinguishing the 'coarse pleasures' that his younger self took in the forms of nature from the sober reflections of his mature self, the poet states that he has 'felt ... a sense sublime':

Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of the setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man –
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

In contrast to the superficial unity of the picturesque, Wordsworth uses repeated connectives ('And the round ocean, and the living air') as a means of fusing mind and nature in a living whole. The 'sense sublime' that 'rolls though all things', including all 'thinking things' is, as many critics note, a pantheistic life-force, an echo of the 'One Life within us and abroad' celebrated by Coleridge in 'The Eolian Harp' (1795).

The language of my former heart

Here, on this triumphant note, the poem might have ended. But instead the poem introduces a new figure, the poet's sister Dorothy. In Dorothy's 'wild eyes' Wordsworth is able to 'read' his 'former pleasures'. The sister, in whom the poet is able to 'behold ... what I once was', thus serves as a final point of connection between past and present. With Dorothy established as a 'dwelling-place' for recollections of this moment in 1793, Wordsworth concludes 'Tintern Abbey' with a confident assertion of the ability of memory to overcome distinctions of time and space.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Does Wordsworth really use "the real language of men" in "Tintern Abbey," as he claimed he would do in the "Preface to Lyrical Ballads"? Do you think people spoke differently back in 19th-century England?
2. Is the speaker's relationship to nature something that is possible for anyone?

3. Why does the speaker keep referring to Dorothy's "wild eyes" (119, 148)? Why are her eyes wild? Is that supposed to be a good thing?
4. Does the consciousness of the "still, sad music of humanity" (91) have to come from a close relationship with nature, or could it be developed from another source?
5. If the speaker returned to the banks of the Wye for a third time, do you think his impressions would change yet again?
6. Discuss the theme of memory as it runs through poems such as "Tintern Abbey," "Intimations of Immortality," and "The Solitary Reaper." How does Wordsworth believe memory works on the human character? How is memory important in sustaining the connection between the individual and nature?
7. In "I wandered lonely as a cloud," how does Wordsworth achieve the seemingly effortless effect of implying the unity of his consciousness with nature? Does this technique appear in any other Wordsworth lyrics?
8. Think about the series of angry moral sonnets written in 1802, represented here by "The world is too much with us" and "London, 1802." How does Wordsworth express anger? What moral ideal does he uphold? How has England violated that ideal?
9. Compare and contrast "Tintern Abbey" and "Intimations of Immortality." How are they alike? How are they different? Base your analysis on theme, style, and subject.
10. One of Wordsworth's most famous lines is "the child is father of the man," a line that reappears in the epigram of "Intimations of Immortality." How is childhood central to Wordsworth's conception of the self? How is that self affected by the aging process?
11. Discuss the connection between nature and religion in these poems. With a particular eye toward "Tintern Abbey" and "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free," how does Wordsworth imply the connections between God, nature, and the human mind?

Unit I Section (a)

Poem 2. ODE: INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

I.

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore; -
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II

The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose,
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,

That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,

And while the young lambs bound

As to the tabor's sound,

To me alone there came a thought of grief:

A timely utterance gave that thought relief,

And I again am strong:

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep

No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;

I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,

The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,

And all the earth is gay;

Land and sea

Give themselves up to jollity,

And with the heart of May

Doth every Beast keep holiday; -

Thou Child of Joy,

Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy

Shepherd-boy!

IV

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel - I feel it all.
Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While the Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the Children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm: -
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
- But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?

Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

V

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:

The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,

Hath had elsewhere its setting,

And cometh from afar

Not in entire forgetfulness,

And not in utter nakedness,

But trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God, who is our home:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

Shades of the prison-house begin to close

Upon the growing Boy,

But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,

He sees it in his joy;

The Youth, who daily farther from the east

Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,

And by the vision splendid

Is on his way attended;

At length the Man perceives it die away,

And fade into the light of common day.

VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,

Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;
A wedding or a festival,

A mourning or a funeral;
 And this hath now his heart,
 And unto this he frames his song;
 Then will he fit his tongue
 To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
 But it will not be long
 Ere this be thrown aside,
 And with new joy and pride
 The little Actor cons another part;
 Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
 With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
 That Life brings with her in her equipage;
 As if his whole vocation
 Were endless imitation.

VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
 Thy Soul's immensity;
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
 Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
 , deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,

Haunted for ever by the eternal mind, -
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave:
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by;
To whom the grave
Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
Of day or the warm light,
A place of thought where we in waiting lie;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast: -
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
But for those first affections,

Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never,
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts today
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,

Forebode not any severing of our loves!

Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;

I only have relinquished one delight

To live beneath your more habitual sway.

I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,

Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;

The innocent brightness of a new-born Day

Is lovely yet;

The Clouds that gather round the setting sun

Do take a sober colouring from an eye

That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;

Another race hath been, and other palms are won.

Thanks to the human heart by which we live,

Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,

To me the meanest flower that blows can give

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Summary

In the first stanza, the speaker says wistfully that there was a time when all of nature seemed dreamlike to him, "apparelled in celestial light," and that that time is past; "the things I have seen I can see no more." In the second stanza, he says that he still sees the rainbow, and that the rose is still lovely; the moon looks around the sky with delight, and starlight and sunshine are each beautiful. Nonetheless the speaker feels that a glory has passed away from the earth.

In the third stanza, the speaker says that, while listening to the birds sing in springtime and watching the young lambs leap and play, he was stricken with a thought of grief: but the sound of nearby waterfalls, the echoes of the mountains, and the gusting of the winds restored him to strength. He declares that his grief will no longer wrong the joy of the season, and that all the earth is happy. He exhorts a shepherd boy to shout and play around him. In the fourth stanza, he addresses nature's creatures, and says that his heart participates in their joyful festival. He says that it would be wrong to feel sad on such a beautiful May morning, while children play and laugh among the flowers. Nevertheless, a tree and a field that he looks upon make him think of "something that is gone," and a pansy at his feet does the same. He asks what has happened to "the visionary gleam": "Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

In the fifth stanza, he proclaims that human life is merely "a sleep and a forgetting"—that human beings dwell in a purer, more glorious realm before they enter the earth. "Heaven," he says, "lies about us in our infancy!" As children, we still retain some memory of that place, which causes our experience of the earth to be suffused with its magic—but as the baby passes through boyhood and young adulthood and into manhood, he sees that magic die. In the sixth stanza, the speaker says that the pleasures unique to earth conspire to help the man forget the "glories" whence he came.

In the seventh stanza, the speaker beholds a six-year-old boy and imagines his life, and the love his mother and father feel for him. He sees the boy playing with some imitated fragment of adult life, "some little plan or chart," imitating "a wedding or a festival" or "a mourning or a funeral." The speaker imagines that all human life is a similar imitation. In the eighth stanza, the speaker addresses the child as though he were a mighty prophet of a lost truth, and rhetorically asks him why, when he has access to the glories of his origins, and to the pure experience of nature, he still hurries toward an adult life of custom and "earthly freight."

In the ninth stanza, the speaker experiences a surge of joy at the thought that his memories of childhood will always grant him a kind of access to that lost world of instinct, innocence, and exploration. In the tenth stanza, bolstered by this joy, he urges the birds to sing, and urges all creatures to participate in "the gladness of the May." He says that though he has lost some part of the glory of nature and of experience, he will take solace in "primal sympathy," in memory, and in the fact that the years bring a mature consciousness—"a philosophic mind." In the final stanza, the speaker says that this mind—which stems from a consciousness of mortality, as opposed to the child's feeling of immortality—enables him to love nature and natural beauty all the more, for each of nature's objects can stir him to thought, and even the simplest flower blowing in the wind can raise in him "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Form

Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*, as it is often called, is written in eleven variable ode stanzas with variable rhyme schemes, in iambic lines with anything from two to five stressed syllables. The rhymes occasionally alternate lines, occasionally fall in couplets, and occasionally occur within a single line (as in "But yet I *know*, where'er I *go*" in the second stanza).

If "Tintern Abbey" is Wordsworth's first great statement about the action of childhood memories of nature upon the adult mind, the "Intimations of Immortality" ode is his mature masterpiece on the subject. The poem, whose full title is "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," makes explicit Wordsworth's belief that life on earth is a dim shadow of an earlier, purer existence, dimly recalled in childhood and then forgotten in the process of growing up. (In the fifth stanza, he writes, "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.../Not in entire forgetfulness, / And not in utter nakedness, /But trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home....")

While one might disagree with the poem's metaphysical hypotheses, there is no arguing with the genius of language at work in this Ode. Wordsworth consciously sets his speaker's mind at odds with the atmosphere of joyous nature all around him, a rare move by a poet whose consciousness is so habitually in unity with nature. Understanding that his grief stems from his inability to experience the May morning as he would have in childhood, the speaker attempts to enter willfully into a state of cheerfulness; but he is able to find real happiness only when he realizes that "the philosophic mind" has given him the ability to understand nature in deeper, more human terms—as a source of metaphor and guidance for human life. This is very much the same pattern as "Tintern Abbey" 's, but whereas in the earlier poem Wordsworth made himself joyful, and referred to the "music of humanity" only briefly, in the later poem he explicitly proposes that this music is the remedy for his mature grief.

The structure of the Immortality Ode is also unique in Wordsworth's work; unlike his characteristically fluid, naturally spoken monologues, the Ode is written in a lilting, songlike cadence with frequent shifts in rhyme scheme and rhythm. Further, rather than progressively exploring a single idea from start to finish, the Ode jumps from idea to idea, always sticking close to the central scene, but frequently making surprising moves, as when the speaker begins to address the

"Mighty Prophet" in the eighth stanza—only to reveal midway through his address that the mighty prophet is a six-year-old boy.

Wordsworth's linguistic strategies are extraordinarily sophisticated and complex in this Ode, as the poem's use of metaphor and image shifts from the register of lost childhood to the register of the philosophic mind. When the speaker is grieving, the main tactic of the poem is to offer joyous, pastoral nature images, frequently personified—the lambs dancing as to the tabor, the moon looking about her in the sky. But when the poet attains the philosophic mind and his fullest realization about memory and imagination, he begins to employ far more subtle descriptions of nature that, rather than jauntily imposing humanity upon natural objects, simply draw human characteristics out of their natural presences, referring back to human qualities from earlier in the poem.

So, in the final stanza, the brooks "fret" down their channels, just as the child's mother "fretted" him with kisses earlier in the poem; they trip lightly just as the speaker "tripped lightly" as a child; the Day is new-born, innocent, and bright, just as a child would be; the clouds "gather round the setting sun" and "take a sober coloring," just as mourners at a funeral (recalling the child's playing with some fragment from "a mourning or a funeral" earlier in the poem) might gather soberly around a grave. The effect is to illustrate how, in the process of imaginative creativity possible to the mature mind, the shapes of humanity can be found in nature and vice-versa. (Recall the "music of humanity" in "Tintern Abbey.") A flower can summon thoughts too deep for tears because a flower can embody the shape of human life, and it is the mind of maturity combined with the memory of childhood that enables the poet to make that vital and moving connection.

In 1807 William Wordsworth published "Poem in Two Volumes", in which we can find that poem, whose full-name is "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Every Childhood".

Many of Wordsworth's poems, including this, deal with the subjects of childhood and the memory of childhood in the mind of the adult in particular, childhood's lost connection with nature, which

can be preserved only in memory.

In this poem Wordsworth uses a lot of imagination to get his point through to the reader. He wants us to be able to see what he sees and to feel what he feels.

The structure of this poem is unique in Wordsworth's work, I mean, unlike his characteristically fluid, natural spoken monologues, it is written in a songlike cadence with frequent changes in rhyme scheme and rhythm. It is written in eleven variable ode stanzas with variable rhyme schemes, in iambic lines with anything from two to five stressed syllables.

The rhymes occasionally alternate lines: I "There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,

the earth, and every common sight, to me did seem apparelled in celestial light," occasionally fall in couplets:

II "Turn wheresoe'er I may,

by night or day,"

and occasionally occur within a single line:

"But yet I know, where'er I go".

If we analyse the title, we have to say that its full name is "Intimations of Immortality from recollections of early childhood", although it is better known as "Intimations of Immortality". In this poem Wordsworth explains how humans change over time. In fact, when we are a child we are connected with nature, but as we get old we tend to forget nature and become more interested in other responsibilities of adulthood, and that connection with nature stays as recollections of childhood in our memory. So, in my opinion I think that the title of this poem is good and right, because reading it we can guess more or less about

what we are going to be told in the poem; at least we can guess that the poem deals with recollections of something about the childhood.

As we have said before, the poem is divided in eleven stanzas, which we are going to explain one by one. In the first stanza, the author says wistfully and sad that "there was a time" (childhood) when all of nature seemed dreamlike to him ("Apparelled in celestial light"). So, here what is described is the poet's lamentation on not being able to see any more

the glory and the freshness of a dream that his childhood had ("The things which I have seen I now can see no more").

In the second stanza, he says that he still sees the good and beautiful things of nature: the rainbow coming, the rose, the moon, the sunshine... Nevertheless the author feels that a glory has passed

away from the earth.

In the third stanza, while listening to the bird's sing in springtime and watching the young lambs leap and play, he suddenly becomes sad and fearful ("To me alone there came a thought of grief");

but this sadness doesn't last too long, because the sound of nearby waterfalls, the echoes of the mountains... restored him to strength. He ends saying that all the earth is gay, because of that he exhorts a shepherd boy to play around him.

In the fourth stanza, he declares that is impossible to feel sad in such a beautiful May morning, with children playing around him and among the flowers. Although, suddenly, he looks at a tree and a

field which said to each other that something is gone ("both of them speak of something that is gone"). The same is made by a pansy.

Because of that he asked himself what has happened to appearance of nature ("whither is fled the visionary gleam? Where is it now, the glory and the dream?").

In the fifth stanza, Wordsworth says that human beings are asleep and should forget important things ("Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting"). Moreover it is said that human beings live in a purer, more glorious realm before they enter the earth. He says that as children, we still retain some memory of that place, which causes our experience of the earth to be suffused with its magic; but as the baby passes through boyhood and adulthood and into manhood, he sees that magic die.

In the sixth stanza, the author declares that because of earthly materials human beings tend to forget what is need in life ("Forget the glories he hath known, and that imperial palace whence he came").

In the seventh stanza, the author is looking at a six years old boy, and imagines his life and the love that his parents feel for him. Wordsworth describes the way in which a young boy leaves nature,

because he has to deal with adulthood and a whole different kind of life. That is reflected when he sees the boy playing with some imitated fragment of adult life ("little plan or chart", "a weeding or a festival", "a mourning or a funeral"). At the end, the author says that all life is an imitation.

In the eight stanza, the poet addresses the boy as if he was a prophet of the lost truth ("mighty prophet! Seer blest! On whom those truths do rest"). And, rhetorically asks him why he hurries toward an adult life of custom and earthly freight, if he has access to the glories of his origins and to the pure experience of nature.

In the ninth stanza, the author goes back into memories of his childhood - which grant him a kind of access to that lost world of innocence and instinct, to that world with nature.

In the tenth stanza, after that thoughts he has become very happy, because of that he urges the birds to sing, and urges all creatures to participate in what he says "the gladness of the May".

Then, again, he is stricken by the thought that he is old now, but that sadness doesn't last too long because with the thought that he has been with nature all the years makes him happy again, because he has a lot

of recollections of his childhood with the nature so, he can feel the joy like he felt before.

In the final stanza, Wordsworth claims that he will forever be in love with nature and all its beauty; and he will in love with it until the he dies.

So, what we can said after reading that poem is that Wordsworth believed that, upon being born, human beings move from a perfect, idealized realm into the imperfect, un-ideal earth. As children, some

memory of the former purity and glory in which they lived remains, best perceived in the solemn and joyous relationship of the child to the beauties of nature. But as children grow older, the memory fades, and the magic of nature dies. Still, the memory of childhood can offer an important solace, which brings with it almost a kind of re-access to the lost purities of the past. And the maturing mind develops the capability to understand nature in human terms, and to see in it metaphors for human life, which compensate for the loss of the direct connection.

Finally, if we talk about the characteristics of Wordsworth, we can see that there are some of them in that poem. Firstly, nature, in all its forms, was important to Wordsworth, who concentrates on the

ways in which he responds and relates to the world. He uses his poetry to look at the relationship between nature and human life, and to explore the belief that nature can have an impact on our emotional and spiritual lives. That feature is found in the poem, because in it is related the nature with the human being. Moreover, all the poem goes round nature. Secondly, Wordsworth saw imagination as a powerful, active force that works alongside our sense, interpreting the way we view the world and

influencing how we react to events. He believed that a strong imaginative life is essential for our well-being. We can see imagination in the poem when the tree are talking between each other, or when the pansy is also taking.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Can you explain the epode of "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"?
2. In the "Intimations Ode," Wordsworth attempts to reconcile the loss of the "visionary"
3. What are the similarities and differences in Wordsworth's poems, "Ode: Intimation of Immortality"
4. How is childhood central to Wordsworth's conception of self in this poem, and how is that self
5. How does the speaker change between the first and last stanza? (Explain using specific details
6. Please explain the fifth stanza in Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality."
7. What are the figures of speech in the poem of "intimation of immortality"?

Unit I Section (a)

Poem 3 -The World Is Too Much With Us

In "The World is Too Much With Us" Wordsworth is lamenting societies need and greed for money and things. The industrial age was bringing in steam locomotives, machines and factories. He'd lost both parents when he was young and remained close to his sister. He was caught in the middle of political upheavals of France and between France and England. His life by this time must have seemed very noisy and out of control.

The World Is Too Much With Us

The world is too much with us: late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune,
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

In the first lines we immediately see his complaint. The world is often used in writing to refer to the 'ways of the world' or 'worldly'. The words "late and soon" are part of a list continuing in the next line "getting and spending." The line break is for the purpose of the structure of the sonnet. Late and soon refers to the fast pace of the age. "I'm always late but it's much too soon for me" is how I interpret these two words. I much prefer his brevity.

"Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!"

Here he makes a statement that has been the cry of many over the centuries. We let our progress take away the wonders of nature to the point we don't notice it. This does sound like a country boy. The word 'boon' means advantage, or benefit. By putting the words sordid and boon together, he is plainly saying that it is a disgusting or distasteful benefit. These two words cancel out each other in a division which puts our hearts at risk of losing our love for the simple and natural.

"This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune,"

The above four lines emphasize his point. Up-gathered like sleeping flowers is an image he uses to make the point of how the "winds that will be howling at all hours" are internal noises, or the noise of industry at all hours. The noise could be either internal or external, but the simile of the up-gathered flowers indicates that the hours (changes and fast pace) are stealing away harmonious unity with nature.

"It moves us not.--Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;"

This is like an expletive. The above two lines are the venting of his anger. He'd rather be like a pagan, for instance believing in ancient Greek gods celebrating nature, than part of a world that is destroying nature's beauty and calling itself Christian.

He is not saying he doesn't believe in God. Instead he expresses his anger at the world to God and possibly even at God.

"So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

I can picture Wordsworth yelling these lines angrily standing on the shore and shaking a fist. He feels it would be so much simpler to go back the pagan beliefs of the Greeks of giving a sense of divine to all things of nature. Proteus was one of the mythological Greek gods of the sea, and Triton was the son of Poseidon and Aphrodite whose horn was a conch shell for calming or stirring the waters.

Even though Wordsworth felt the need for letting powerful emotions flow

spontaneously on to the page, he also held that poetry needed to have a poetic tone and form. The body of William Wordsworth's works is vast. Many of his poems were published after his death; however, he did publish much during his life as well. He was well educated, traveled extensively, and often dedicated his poetry to people, places and events.

Wordsworth was not the first poet or author to lament man's disrespect for nature. He appreciated the pastoral poem and introduced the age of the Romantic poets along with his friend and mentor Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Wordsworth and Coleridge shared many ideas on poetry, nature, and published together. Wordsworth's reputation grew in England throughout his life because of his many works and their quality. After Robert Southey died in 1846 Wordsworth was named poet Laureate of England, a high honor.

Type of Work

William Wordsworth's "The World Is Too Much With Us" is a lyric poem in the form of a sonnet. In English, there are two types of sonnets, the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean, both with fourteen lines. Wordsworth's poem is a Petrarchan sonnet, developed by the Italian poet Petrarch (1304-1374), a Roman Catholic priest.

A Petrarchan sonnet consists of an eight-line stanza (octave) and a six-line stanza (sestet). The first stanza presents a theme or problem, and the second stanza develops the theme or suggests a solution to the problem. The rhyme scheme of a Petrarchan sonnet is as follows:

First stanza (octave): abba, abba

Second stanza (sestet): cde, cde or another combination such as cdc, cdc. In the case of Wordsworth's poem, the combination is cd, cd, cd.

Composition and Publication

William Wordsworth is believed to have composed the poem in 1802, when the Industrial Revolution was in full flower. No doubt the materialism the revolution engendered was one of the reasons Wordsworth wrote the poem. He published it in 1807 as part of a collection, *Poems in Two Volumes*.

Theme

Society is so bent on making and spending money in smoky factories and fast-paced business enterprises that it ignores the pristine glory of nature, which is a reflection of the divine. This is a universal theme that remains relevant in today's world.

Tone

The tone is angry, modulated with sarcasm and seeming vengefulness. First, the poet scolds society for devoting all its energies to material enterprises and pleasures. While pampering their bodies, he says, people are starving their souls. He next announces sarcastically that he would rather be a pagan; at least then he could appreciate nature through different eyes and even see Proteus rising from the sea—perhaps to wreak vengeance on complacent humankind.

Point of View

Wordsworth presents the poem in first-person plural in the first eight lines and part of the ninth, using *we*, *ours*, and *us*. At the end of the ninth line, he switches to first-person singular, using *I*. Use of first-person plural enables Wordsworth to chastise the world without seeming preachy or sanctimonious, for he is including himself in his reprimand.

Notes

- 1...late and soon: Our fixation on materialism has been a problem in the past and will continue to be a problem in the future.
- 2...sordid boon: shameful gain; tarnished blessing. This phrase is an oxymoron, a form of paradox that juxtaposes contradictory words.
- 3...suckled . . . outworn: Brought up in an outdated religion.
- 4...Proteus: In Greek mythology, a sea god who could change shape at will and who possessed complete knowledge of the past, present, and future.

5...Triton: In Greek mythology, a sea god who had the body of a man and the tail of a fish. He used a conch—the spiral shell of a mollusk—as a trumpet.

Study Questions and Writing Topics

1. Write an essay arguing that Wordsworth's theme remains highly relevant today. Be generous with examples of people "getting and spending" while ignoring—or even abusing—nature.
2. What is a pagan? Read a short biography of Wordsworth, then decide whether he was serious when he wrote that he would rather be a pagan.
3. Protean is an English word derived from the name of the Greek god Proteus (line 13). In an authoritative dictionary, look up protean if you do not know the meaning. Then write a paragraph about a person who has a protean personality.
4. What is the meaning of wreathed in the last line of the poem. Hint: Read the definition of Triton under Notes, above, then look up the word wreathed in an authoritative dictionary.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Why do you think the speaker is upset that people aren't moved by nature? Does he want people to be just like him?
2. Do you think Wordsworth is serious when he uses the sea and the wind as examples of inspiring natural phenomena?
3. Do you think it's fair to criticize people that find other things more interesting than nature?
4. What do you think Wordsworth would say about the destruction of the rainforest, pollution, the global warming, etc.?
5. Is there a way for humanity and nature to co-exist? Can we continue to evolve technologically without having to destroy nature?
6. Do you ever wish you could belong to another religion, culture, or nationality? Which one? How would your life be different?
7. What is the theme of the poem "The World is Too Much With Us"?
8. Why does the speaker, presumably Wordsworth, wish to remain a pagan?
9. How many stanzas are there in "The World is Too Much with Us"?
10. What is the universal theme of "The World Is Too Much With Us"?

Unit I Section (b)**Poem 1- The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is about a man on a voyage by ship, who in one impulsive and heinous act, changes the course of his life – and death. The Mariner faces an inner struggle over the crime he has committed, and must understand his actions and perform his penance. He must also learn to abandon his negative views and openly accept all of Gods' creatures. The voyage now becomes a journey of learning important lessons in accountability, acceptance, forgiveness, and repentance.

After the Mariner kills the Albatross, it is hung around his neck so he can understand the seriousness of his act, but he is incapable of realizing the full implications at this time. The bird was of no danger to the Mariner or the men on the ship, and in fact, was a spiritual guide to safeguard the crew on their excursion. The murder was committed on a whim, with no forethought about the act or the repercussions. The Mariner gives no explanation to the Wedding Guest as to why he killed the bird because he has none. In his essay "The Sad Wisdom of the Mariner," A.M. Buchan writes "The shooting is an act, unpremeditated and unmeant, that nevertheless must be accounted for...." meaning that the Mariner must accept accountability for his actions so he can begin to atone for his sins (97).

The ship and its crew face difficulties as it comes to a halt on the sea. The Mariner is angry at his fate instead of remorseful for his crime, and he curses the sea and the creatures in it. He has not learned to cherish all of Gods' creations and he will pay a price for this. A ship approaches and he is dumbfounded to come face to face with Death and Life-In-Death. With a roll of the dice, Death wins the lives of the crew and, Life-In-Death wins the life of the Mariner. One by

one the men on the ship die, leaving the Mariner alone and frightened. He grieves only for himself, at first, saying "Alone on a wide sea! And never a saint took pity on My soul in agony" (245).

For seven days and seven nights he is forced to spend time in solitary, reflecting on the events that have occurred, the eyes of the dead sailors fixed on him with blame. He states "But oh! More horrible than that Is the curse in a dead man's eye!" indicating he has begun to understand and accept his responsibility for their deaths (245). Once this acceptance begins, his solitude is no longer a punishment, but an opportunity for him to realize the exquisiteness of the universe. As he watches the water snakes he begins to perceive them differently, and suddenly their beauty becomes apparent to him for the first time. They are no longer beastly creatures to be condemned, but are creatures of God's universe to be appreciated and loved. This new insight releases him from his invisible chains and he is able to offer a blessing for the water snakes. The albatross falls from his neck, into the sea, and "He is on the verge of learning that mysterious and omnipotent spirits govern his destiny" (Buchan 98).

The Mariner has begun to broaden his views and acknowledge the spiritual wonder and joys of the universe. He has learned to release his negative views, and by doing so, has set free the spirits of his dead shipmates. Their spirits rise, aiding the Mariner in his journey home, and guiding him to the Hermit. Even though the albatross is no longer hung from his neck, and the ship is back on course home, the Mariner has not found absolution. The Polar Spirits confirm this when they remark "The man hath penance done, And penance more will do" (249). The Mariner has learned another lesson, forgiveness must be asked for, and it must also be earned.

It is the Hermit that he seeks in order to ask exculpation for his transgressions. Though the Albatross is no longer hung around his neck, the Mariner still has the image of its blood in his mind. He pursues the Hermit because "He'll shrive my soul, he'll wash away The Albatross's blood" (251). He feels that if he can have the opportunity to ask for exoneration, he can be released from the inner turmoil he is experiencing. The Hermit asks the Mariner "What manner of man art thou?," (253) giving him the opportunity to admit his sins and ask for his penance. Once he spills his story to the Hermit, a feeling of freedom overcomes him. It is this feeling he will spend endless days and nights seeking. He is forced to spend eternity repeating his story, searching for the person capable of forgiving his sins, though no one can.

The question then is "has the Mariner found redemption?" The answer would be no, he has not. Redemption brings peace and the Mariner has not found this peace. The crime was senseless, which makes it much more difficult for anyone to understand or forgive, even the Hermit. He has been given a permanent penance to perform, wandering the earth and telling his story. While he may experience a brief period of serenity after each story telling, the guilt inevitably returns and he must go through the cycle again. Lessons have been learned, but the Mariner will pay the price of his sin for eternity.

Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is written in a way that the reader is expected to temporarily allow him or herself to believe it to be able to understand it. The poem itself is about a Mariner who is telling his tale of sin and forgiveness by God to a man referred to as the "Wedding Guest." The Mariner is supposedly responsible for the death of all of the crew on his ship because of his killing of a creature which was to bring them the wind that they needed to put power into the sails of the ship. The whole point of the poem is to encourage or convince the reader to believe the tale that Coleridge tells.

Coleridge wrote the poem as a means to induce the reader with what he calls a "willing suspension of disbelief." The poem is written in such a way that the reader is expected to willingly decide to temporarily believe the almost unbelievable story. The reason a person is to make sure that he or she believes it temporarily to be true is because the Mariner in the story is trying to get the point of forgiveness from God across to the reader and if the reader chooses not to believe the story behind the poem then they will not understand the effect of the point of the tale. Coleridge's main point in writing the story was to get people to understand forgiveness by understanding the poem.

The Mariner in the poem is telling his tale to a "Wedding Guest" who has no choice but to listen and to believe. The "Wedding Guest" in the poem represents "everyman" in the sense that "everyone" is to be at the marriage of the Mariner to life. That is, the reader is to follow, live, and participate with the idea of the poem.

Coleridge tells of a Mariner on a ship who makes a sin against God and therefore is cursed. This curse, the killing of an Albatross – one of God's creatures, costs the entire crew on the ship their lives yet he lives so that he can realize what he has done and be given a chance to ask forgiveness for his sin. The deaths occurred when a ship was sighted and on it two women like figures were playing dice and life won the Mariner and death got the crew. Until he began to pray and ask for forgiveness the crew's souls couldn't enter Heaven but once he did the curse was broken, his life was saved, and Angels came down from Heaven and took the crew's souls with them. He had become a saved man.

The whole point of the story becomes clear in the following lines.

"Farewell, farewell! but this I tell

To thee, thou Wedding Guest!

He prayeth well, who loveth well

Both man and bird and beast.

“He prayeth best, who loveth best

All things both great and small:

For the dear God who loveth us,

He made and loveth all.”

The Mariner whose eye is bright,

Whose beard with age is hoar,

Is gone: and now the Wedding Guest

Turned from the bridegroom’s door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,

And is of sense forlorn:

A sadder and a wiser man,

He rose the morrow morn. (610-625)

In these closing lines Coleridge basically sums up the whole poem. Here he is telling the “Wedding Guest” all about how to live a good life with God and to respect all things that God creates (which is everything). The Mariner is doing his teaching of what he learned on his voyage in these lines. It tells how the

"Wedding Guest" left after hearing the entire Mariner's tale and left a wiser man. What this meant is that he left understanding the Mariner's words and learned from the Mariner's mistakes. The Mariner had done his job in retelling his tale.

Coleridge did a good job of writing the poem in a way that the reader would be forced to temporarily believe it without even realizing it. In a certain sense you could say that through the tale he placed the "fear of God" in people that made them more likely to believe the story. When people are fearful of something they have more of a tendency to fall prey to something and Coleridge takes advantage of this in getting his point across. The poem is written in a brilliant way that can curve the reader to think in whatever manner Coleridge wants them to.

The poem was written to try to get people to temporarily believe a story that would not normally be believable and it does just that. Coleridge wanted people to understand the Mariner and to be able to relate to him and to understand him. He conveyed his point of religion to the reader by making the reader subconsciously fall prey to the images and thoughts he instilled in their minds. The poem for the most part does as Coleridge intended and gets the reader to at least understand and believe the tale that the Mariner has to tell.

A Short Synopsis of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

Part I: The Wedding guest, the voyage, stuck in ice, he kills the albatross.

The Mariner stops a wedding guest and forces him, spellbound, to listen to his story. The ship sails south to equator. Wedding guest hears music of wedding beginning. A storm hits the ship and impels it south. They are stuck in ice. An albatross appears and is befriended by the shipmates. A south wind springs up and takes them northward. He kills it with his crossbow.

Part II: They suffer punishment for his crime and are becalmed. The crew at first cry out against him, but then commend him when the fog clears off. They sail

The spell is broken and a sweet breeze blows on him alone. He sees his native country.

The spirits leave the dead bodies and each appears in its own form, full of light. They stand as signals to the land, but make no sound.

A boat is heard coming to him. The Pilot, his boy, and the Hermit are in the boat. He hopes that the Hermit will shrive his soul to wash away the blood of the albatross.

Part VII: The ship sinks but he is saved. He is compelled to wander and tell his tale.

The Hermit who lives in the woods there loves to talk to mariners from far off. The lights of the signal have disappeared, and the boat appears warped, the sails like skeletons. As they approach a rumble is heard under the water. The ship splits and sinks. His body floats and is found and dragged aboard the boat. When he moves his lips they scream. He rows the boat. When they reach land he begs the Hermit to shrive him. The Mariner is overcome by a fit which forces him to tell his tale. Since then, he has had to travel from land to land and tell his tale. He has powers of speech and knows the men to whom he must tell his tale.

The sounds of merriment come from the wedding party within. He tells how sweet it is for him to have company after being alone on the sea and tells the wedding guest to love all thing both great and small. The wedding guest leaves and rose the next morn wiser and sadder.

In his poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", Coleridge adores the power of the memory and the beauty of nature. It's a much talked about lengthy poem that readily comes to mind when the English Romantic poetry is discussed. The poem encompasses the various aspects of aesthetics in its narrative, leaving the reader in awe of nature.

From the title, 'Rime' – which is the archaic spelling for the word 'rhyme' – stands for 'story' in literature. This, however, forms an umbrella for record keeping, accounts, recollection and memories of the historical past in literature. 'Ancient' stands for age, wisdom, experience and encyclopedic knowledge.

amongst other interpretations. A 'Mariner' however, is a pilgrim, a traveler who travels in search of something precious; life itself is a journey. When the interpretations are put side by side, we realize the poem gives us ingenious recollections of a sage with memorable experiences in life.

Coleridge uses the power of storytelling, recollection, and memory to emphasize that all that is of nature and in nature owes its glory to nature. He opens the narrative poem by describing a wedding guest on his way to a wedding when he encounters an ancient mariner who offers to tell him a story. Reluctantly, the guest decides to listen to the sailor, even though he is in full realization of the passage of time. The mariner uses the power of memory to narrate his experience on a particular journey with his crew when they were being followed by an Albatross, a bird of ill-omen. The mariner, without provocation, kills the albatross and was praised by his fellow mariners for an act of bravery although he was severely criticized in the same breath for killing the bird and bringing them bad luck.

With that analogy, Coleridge is able to capture the Romantic ideology of individualism, spontaneity and non-conformity, whereby individuals refuse to submit themselves to the limitations of orthodoxy. He helps readers to understand the advantage of standing alone, as said by Henrik Ibsen that '...the strongest man in the world is the man who stands most alone'.

Coleridge introduces his characters to his life of hallucinations by creating a hallucinatory scene as the mariners go on their journey. The ship encounters lots of tempests which emblemizes things that are not readily visible on the surface.

The use of the sea motif and its description shows the awareness of the beauty of nature by the poet. The poet sees nature as one with mankind, thus, he uses the sea as a representation for mankind, for nature, for humanity. He describes the strength of nature and how untouchable it can be by saying in one of the lines: "Water water everywhere, not a drop to drink".

Believing that we are part and parcel of nature, and that the violation of one is the violation of all, the poet sees the killing of the albatross as a way of violating nature. He believes that nature is pantheistic and sacred, and so it is everyone's

duty to protect it: at the closing of the poem, the mariner, who is a representation of the alter ego of the poet, tells the man, who represents every man, that '...he prayest well, who loveth best both man and animal...for the dear God who maketh all loveth all'

Coleridge uses archaism to adore the majesty of age and the magnitude of experience. He uses Alexander Pope's 'sound must echo sense' technique to relate the entire experience, thus bringing to life the magnetic effect of storytelling.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Who or what is responsible for the curse against the Mariner?
2. Why does the Mariner get to survive to voyage when all the sailors die? After all, he was the one who shot the albatross?
3. What does "Life-in-Death" represent, and what is the result of her winning the dice match with Death?
4. Drum roll, please (Dadadada...). What does the albatross symbolize, and why does the Mariner decide to kill it?
5. Does this seem like a religious or specifically Christian poem? Does it change your perspective at all to learn that Coleridge was considered by many to have radical, free-thinking tendencies?
6. Why do you think this poem has become so famous and influential? Does the poem seem ahead of its time, or does it seem quaint and old-fashioned?
7. Was the wedding guest happy to be stopped? Give reasons for your answer.
8. Describe the ancient mariner.
9. How does the mariner describe the movement of the ship as it sails away from the land?
10. What kind of weather did the sailors enjoy at the beginning of their journey? How has it been expressed in the poem?

Unit I Section (b)

Poem 2 Christabel

Christabel" revolves around the juxtaposition of sin/evil versus religiosity/devoutness, and sexuality versus purity. The obvious characters who represent these juxtapositions are Christabel (who represents devoutness and purity) and Geraldine (who represents sin/evil and sexuality). Christabel frequently prays throughout the poem and one of the most prominent furnishings in her bedroom is the carving of an angel. In addition, Christabel is patiently waiting for and could be seen as "saving" herself for her betrothed knight. In contrast, Geraldine claims that she does not have the strength to praise the Virgin Mary for being rescued by Christabel.

Geraldine likewise represents sin and a lack of devoutness through her serpent-like looks and her hissing noises; this behavior alludes to the snake that tempts Eve in the Garden of Eden. In addition, Geraldine has been roughly "handled" by five strange men and she often exhibits shame and a sense of impurity when she is around Christabel. Christabel's rescuing of Geraldine can be read as a pure woman saving a fallen woman. Although Geraldine is constructed to be Christabel's foil so that her "impurities" can enhance the sense of Christabel's goodness and purity, Geraldine herself interestingly embodies the aforementioned juxtapositions. For instance, although Geraldine symbolizes impurity and evil, she wears a beautiful white robe that symbolizes purity. Furthermore, the scene that exemplifies Geraldine's embodiment of these juxtaposing qualities is the one in which she is praying by Christabel's bed. In the middle of her prayer, Geraldine is overcome by the orgasm-like gestures of her eyes rolling around, the drawing in of her breath, the shivering of her body, and her sudden unclasping of her belt to remove half of her white robe. Thus, sin and sexuality overtake devoutness and purity.

The theme of mysticism, which is prominent in one of Coleridge's most fantastical poems "Kubla Khan," is also prominent in Christabel. Geraldine is overtaken by a mysterious spell several times during the poem, and near the end of the poem, she somehow transfers the effects of the spell to Christabel. Once Christabel physically recovers from the spell, she still seems transformed.

Christabel's kindness and consideration for Geraldine have disappeared and she begs her father to cast Geraldine out of their home. Christabel goes from selfless to selfish. The ways in which the spells taint Geraldine and Christabel suggest the destructive powers of mysticism.

In the essay "Coleridge's 'Christabel' and the Phantom Soul," Anya Taylor claims that the poem is "part of Coleridge's life-long meditation on the vulnerabilities of will and agency" (708). The two young female characters in "Christabel" are certainly vulnerable to the overwhelming powers of the supernatural world.

The theme of the power of nature, which is present in much of Coleridge's work, also appears in "Christabel." For example, Sir Leoline's mastiff immediately senses the evil and danger that Geraldine brings. The mastiff howls when she senses that Christabel is near Geraldine in the woods; the dog angrily moans when Geraldine passes by in Sir Leoline's home. The animal's "sixth sense" suggests the power of the natural world.

Those of you who know me know how much I love the romantic writers, and Coleridge is among my favorites. Although this is considered an "unfinished" poem, it is still too long to include in this post. But for those who need, here is a link to an online version. I recommend you read it if you are not familiar with the poem.

Coleridge opens the poem by establishing the time, which appears to be just past midnight.

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
Tu—whit! Tu—whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

Christabel, a virgin maiden, goes off into the woods alone. She engages in a pagan ritual. She prays at an ancient oak tree, draped with moss and mistletoe.

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

As she is praying, she becomes aware of someone on the other side of the tree. When she looks to see who is there, she encounters a mysterious woman who is described as enchantingly beautiful.

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

The woman tells Christabel her name is Geraldine and convinces her that she was the victim of rape. Christabel takes pity on her and invites her back to the hall where she lives with her father. When they arrive there, Geraldine is unable to cross the threshold. This could be because vampires are unable to enter a home without invitation from the master, or there may be some protective spell guarding against evil. It is only after Christabel helps her across the threshold that she regains her strength.

They crossed the moat, and Christabel

Took the key that fitted well;

A little door she opened straight,

All in the middle of the gate;

The gate that was ironed within and without,

Where an army in battle array had marched out.

The lady sank, belike through pain,

And Christabel with might and main

Lifted her up, a weary weight,

Over the threshold of the gate:

Then the lady rose again,

And moved, as she were not in pain.

Once inside, Christabel offers prayers to the Virgin Mary. She encourages Geraldine to do the same, but she refuses.

So free from danger, free from fear,

They crossed the court: right glad they were.

And Christabel devoutly cried

To the lady by her side.

Praise we the Virgin all divine

Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!

Alas, alas! said Geraldine,

I cannot speak for weariness.

So free from danger, free from fear,

They crossed the court: right glad they were.

When Geraldine enters Christabel's bedchamber, she senses a guardian spirit watching over her. The spirit appears to be that of Christabel's deceased mother. Geraldine banishes the protective spirit, claiming her right to the maid.

But soon with altered voice, said she—

'Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!

I have power to bid thee flee.'

Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?

Why stares she with unsettled eye?

Can she the bodiless dead espy?

And why with hollow voice cries she,

'Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—

Though thou her guardian spirit be,

Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me.'

As Geraldine undresses, Christabel sees the mark of the vampire upon her breast.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,

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

It is then implied that Geraldine drank some of Christabel's blood. Later, when Christabel awakens, she notices the change in Geraldine, who is now fed and strong.

And Christabel awoke and spied
The same who lay down by her side—
O rather say, the same whom she
Raised up beneath the old oak tree!
Nay, fairer yet! and yet more fair!
For she belike hath drunken deep
Of all the blessedness of sleep!
And while she spake, her looks, her air
Such gentle thankfulness declare,
That (so it seemed) her girded vests

Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.

When Christabel brings Geraldine to meet her father, Sir Leoline, he becomes entranced by her. She convinces him that she is the daughter of one of Leoline's old friend, Roland, with whom he had a falling out. Leoline vows to avenge her for the sexual assault, and thereby reestablish the lost friendship with Roland.

Leoline asks Bracy the Bard to convey his message to Roland, but Bracy is reluctant to do so. He had a prophetic dream which led him to believe that there was evil in the hall. This is a long passage, but for me it was the most important in the poem, so I am including it here.

And Bracy replied, with faltering voice,

His gracious Hail on all bestowing!—

'Thy words, thou sire of Christabel,

Are sweeter than my harp can tell;

Yet might I gain a boon of thee,

This day my journey should not be,

So strange a dream hath come to me,

That I had vowed with music loud

To clear yon wood from thing unblest.

Warned by a vision in my rest!

For in my sleep I saw that dove,

That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,

And call'st by thy own daughter's name—

Sir Leoline! I saw the same

Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,
Among the green herbs in the forest alone.
Which when I saw and when I heard,
I wonder'd what might ail the bird;
For nothing near it could I see
Save the grass and green herbs underneath the old tree.
'And in my dream methought I went
To search out what might there be found;
And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,
That thus lay fluttering on the ground.
I went and peered, and could descry
No cause for her distressful cry;
But yet for her dear lady's sake
I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
When lo! I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck.
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!
I woke; it was the midnight hour,

The clock was echoing in the tower,
 But though my slumber was gone by,
 This dream it would not pass away—
 It seems to live upon my eye!
 And thence I vowed this self-same day
 With music strong and saintly song
 To wander through the forest bare,
 Lest aught unholy loiter there.'

What strikes me about this passage is that the bard recognizes the mystical power of poetry. He offers to stay because he knows that the power of his spoken word can banish evil.

Although this is an unfinished poem, I think it ends well and the open ending allows the reader to project his or her own interpretation on what the outcome will be. Christabel, realizing Geraldine's evil nature, entreats her father to banish her from the home. He turns on her, probably from a combination of pride and enchantment. He stubbornly insists on sending Bracy forth, and then departs with Geraldine.

He rolled his eye with stern regard
 Upon the gentle minstrel bard,
 And said in tones abrupt, austere—
 'Why, Bracy! Dost thou loiter here?
 I bade thee hence!' The bard obeyed;
 And turning from his own sweet maid,
 The aged knight, Sir Leoline,

Led forth the lady Geraldine!

I couldn't help seeing Leoline as an incarnation of King Lear. He turns away from the true, loving child and falls prey to the wicked. It is also the weakness of men to fall for the archetypal temptress. He has done what many a man has done before and since.

Coleridge, like his romantic contemporaries, was fascinated by the occult and the supernatural. He definitely draws on those influences in this poem. While it is an "unfinished" piece, it is still very good.

Geraldine: Demon or Divine?

In Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel*, we meet Geraldine, a woman shrouded in mystery. She comes to young Christabel near the beginning of the poem, and for the remainder of the story, Coleridge makes it rather difficult to discern whether she is a benevolent spirit or a malevolent specter. She never makes her intent clear at anytime during the story and an explanation of why she does the odd incantations in the poem is never offered by her or the narrator. So this leaves the decision to the reader as to what would be Geraldine's ultimate purpose in *Christabel*.

When she appears to Christabel, Coleridge's description of Geraldine paints an innocent picture:

"There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone;
The neck that made the white robe wan,
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
And wildly glittered here and there

The gems entangled in her hair"(58-65).

Geraldine is obviously a beautiful woman, almost angelic in appearance, with her white robe and pale complexion. White has always been the color associated with innocence, and it is also linked to virginity in women. The pale skin and bare feet help lend to the innocent look, as most beautiful women in any poem are attributed with pale skin; the bare feet could be an obscure reference to pregnancy, since it is often believed that women who are pregnant are usually seen barefoot. All of these attributes lead the reader at this point to find it hard to believe that Geraldine is anything other than harmless. Coleridge keeps this theme throughout the poem, making Geraldine seem frail and helpless, like when she faints as she crosses the threshold of Christabel's castle: "And Christabel with might and main/Lifted her up, a weary weight,/Over the threshold of the gate:"(130-132). A woman fainting can be interpreted as a weakness due to their weak constitution and frailty. Though this particular fainting spell could signal to the reader that something is amiss, it can also be seen as a result of the trial that Geraldine has supposedly been through at the beginning of the poem.

Geraldine's behavior once she is inside the castle is what makes her appear to be some type of witch or serpent. As soon as she gets inside, strange things start to happen, such as when Christabel attempts to get Geraldine to pray for her own safety: "Alas, alas! Said Geraldine,/I can not speak for weariness."(141-142) and the reaction of the guttered flame in the fireplace: "But when the lady passed, there came/A tongue of light, a fit of flame;"(158-159). These two occurrences cause the reader to carefully reassess Geraldine's apparent benign nature. It is believed that witches could not pray to God or any other saints associated with him and the significance of the flame reacting to her presence is the association of flame and Hell. It was thought that witches made a deal with the devil, and therefore the flame is a representation of Hell and the afterlife that awaits the witch.

Perhaps the oddest happening in the poem is what occurs once Geraldine and Christabel are in Christabel's bedroom. Geraldine seems to be something rather frightening underneath her robe: "Behold! her bosom and half her side--/A sight to dream of, not to tell!/O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!"(252-254).

Though it is not said what Geraldine is like underneath her robes, it must be something great and frightening since the narrator cannot say. Some witches were said to gain a third nipple that allowed their familiar, an animal that was the witch's link to her power, to partake of the witch's blood. Perhaps this is what Christabel saw as Geraldine disrobed, but again, Coleridge never reveals what it was. But though this may shed a bad light on Geraldine, Coleridge clouds the water further by writing: "Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;/Ah! what a stricken look was hers!"(255-256). So now it seems that Geraldine is a monster, but also a monster that seems to be having second thoughts or is perhaps being coerced into what she is doing. After this event, Geraldine proceeds to cast a spell on Christabel: "In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell./Which is lord of thy utterance. Christabel!"(267-268), which places the young maiden into a trance, preventing her from telling anyone, including her own father, about what she sees in Geraldine as the poem progresses. Later on, it seems that Geraldine even has serpentine aspects, further attributing her to Satan: "I know not how, in fearful wise/So deeply has she drunken in/That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,(600-602). In the story of creation in the Bible, Satan takes the form of a snake and instruments the ejection of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, so Geraldine's serpentine metamorphosis further paints a picture of an evil, malevolent spirit.

The evidence in the poem is heavily weighted towards Geraldine being an evil force, but there are several factors that make her look benevolent as well. Before the conclusion to Part II in the poem, the lines read: "And turning from his own sweet maid./The aged knight, Sir Leoline,/Led forth the lady Geraldine!"(653-655) thus showing that Christabel's own father seems to have fallen under Geraldine's spell as he turns his back on his own daughter. It seems that in the end, Geraldine is indeed an ill omen, as she has seemingly removed Christabel from her father's good graces.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss supernaturalism in Coleridge's 'Christabel'.
2. How do meter and point of view contribute to the author's meaning in "Christabel" by Samuel
3. What are the major themes in Coleridge's poems?
4. What are examples of symbolism in "Christabel" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge?
5. Who is the speaker of this quote from Coleridge's poem "Christabel" - "Have pity...
6. How is the 'damsel bright' described in Coleridge's poem "Christabel"?
7. In Coleridge's "Christabel," in which a female figure comes under scrutiny, how does this poem map or not map onto claims made by Mulvey in her famous essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"?

Unit I Section (b)

"Dejection: An Ode"

Summary

The speaker recalls a poem that tells the tale of Sir Patrick Spence: In this poem, the moon takes on a certain strange appearance that presages the coming of a storm. The speaker declares that if the author of the poem possessed a sound understanding of weather, then a storm will break on this night as well, for the moon looks now as it did in the poem. The speaker wishes ardently for a storm to erupt, for the violence of the squall might cure his numb feeling. He says that he feels only a 'dull pain,' "a grief without a pang"—a constant dulling of all his feelings. Speaking to a woman whom he addresses as "O Lady," he admits that he has been gazing at the western sky all evening, able to see its beauty but unable fully to feel it. He says that staring at the green sky will never raise his spirits, for no "outward forms" can generate feelings: Emotions can only emerge from within.

According to the speaker, "we receive but what we give": the soul itself must provide the light by which we may hope to see nature's true beauty—a beauty not given to the common crowd of human beings ("the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd"). Calling the Lady "pure of heart," the speaker says that she already knows about the light and music of the soul, which is Joy. Joy, he says, marries us to nature, thereby giving us "a new Earth and new Heaven, / Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud."

The speaker insists that there was a time when he was full of hope, when every tribulation was simply the material with which "fancy made me dreams of happiness." But now his afflictions press him to the earth; he does not mind the decline of his mirth, but he cannot bear the corresponding degeneration of his imagination, which is the source of his creativity and his understanding of the human condition, that which enables him to construct "from my own nature all the natural man." Hoping to escape the "viper thoughts" that coil around his mind, the speaker turns his attention to the howling wind that has begun to blow. He thinks of the world as an instrument played by a musician, who spins out of the

wind a "worse than wintry song." This melody first calls to mind the rush of an army on the field; quieting, it then evokes a young girl, lost and alone.

It is midnight, but the speaker has "small thoughts" of sleep. However, he hopes that his friend the Lady will be visited by "gentle Sleep" and that she will wake with joyful thoughts and "light heart." Calling the Lady the "friend devoutest of my choice," the speaker wishes that she might "ever, evermore rejoice."

Form

The long ode stanzas of "Dejection" are metered in iambic lines ranging in length from trimeter to pentameter. The rhymes alternate between bracketed rhymes (ABBA) and couplets (CC) with occasional exceptions.

Commentary

In this poem, Coleridge continues his sophisticated philosophical exploration of the relationship between man and nature, positing as he did in "The Nightingale" that human feelings and the forms of nature are essentially separate. Just as the speaker insisted in the earlier poem that the nightingale's song should not be called melancholy simply because it sounded so to a melancholy poet, he insists here that the beauty of the sky before the storm does not have the power to fill him with joy, for the source of human feeling is within. Only when the individual has access to that source, so that joy shines from him like a light, is he able to see the beauty of nature and to respond to it. (As in "Frost in Midnight," the city-raised Coleridge insists on a sharper demarcation between the mind and nature than the country-raised Wordsworth would ever have done.)

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Explain the idea of a good poet according to Samuel Taylor Coleridge.
2. How is hope a bee to the poet in the poem "Youth and Age" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge? Explanatory...
3. How does Samuel Taylor Coleridge resemble other Romantics?
4. Give a practical criticism of "The Nightingale" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.
5. Can you explain Hartley's theory of "associationism", a theory that was crucial in the formation

Unit II Section (a)

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Biography

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at Field Place, Sussex, in 1792, the son of a well-to-do landowner. At the age of ten, he was sent to Syon House Academy near London. There he was bullied and often lonely, but there too he acquired an interest in science, especially astronomy and chemistry, and became an avid reader of juvenile thrillers filled with horrors of various kinds. Shelley reacted to the bullying he was subjected to with violent anger and a determination to devote himself to opposing every form of tyranny.

In 1804, Shelley entered Eton College, where he encountered more of the same bullying he had been subjected to at Syon House. His outbursts of rage and his inability to fight encouraged the other boys to provoke him. He became known as "Mad Shelley" because of his rather unconventional behavior. However, he made a number of friends at Eton and embarked on his literary career. His "Gothic" horror novel, *Zastrozzi*, was published in 1810. In the same year, with his sister, he coauthored a volume of poems, most of them in the Gothic tradition, entitled *Original Poetry by Victor [Shelley] and Cazire [Elizabeth Shelley]*. It was also in 1810 that Shelley began his short career at Oxford University. And, in addition, he published a second Gothic novel of terror, *St. Irvyne*, most of which he had written at Eton. A short volume of poems, *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson*, purporting to be edited by a John Fitz-Victor, was also published by Shelley in 1810. A third publication, a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*, brought Shelley's university career to an abrupt end. On March 25, 1811, he was summoned to appear before the master of University College and, when he refused to admit or deny his authorship of the pamphlet, he was immediately expelled.

Shortly after his expulsion, he eloped to Scotland with Harriet Westbrook, a schoolgirl companion of his sister, Hellen. Shelley's marriage further alienated him from his father, whose pride had been deeply hurt by Shelley's expulsion from Oxford. Shelley and his young wife drifted from one locality to another, living precariously on whatever money they could borrow. Eventually Shelley's father settled an allowance on him. During this period Shelley continued to read incessantly. His reading helped to confirm him in the radical political and social opinions he had acquired.

In February 1812, Shelley and Harriet were in Ireland distributing Shelley's pamphlet, *Address to the Irish People*. In this publication, Shelley urged virtue on the Irish, who were living in misery because of the English Parliament. The remedy for their wrongs, he told the Irish people, was to be found in the practice of sobriety, moderation, and wisdom. As soon as virtue prevailed, government must succumb because government's only excuse for existing was the absence of virtue.

Toward the middle of 1813, Shelley's first poem of any merit, *Queen Mab*, made its appearance. *Queen Mab* incorporated many of Shelley's radical ideas. To Shelley, Christianity was the worst of tyrannies. God was an evil creature of the human mind. Priests, kings, and commerce were sources of evil. Marriage was a form of tyranny. The eating of meat was a cause of human vices.

A major turning point in Shelley's life occurred in July 1814, when he eloped to the continent with Mary Godwin, the daughter of the radical philosopher William Godwin, author of *Political Justice*. Shelley, who did not believe in marriage, had convinced himself that his wife Harriet, now the mother of two children, no longer supplied him with the complete sympathy he craved and that Mary did. It is characteristic of Shelley's sometimes blind idealism that he invited Harriet to live with Mary and himself; she refused, however, but Shelley could never understand her unwillingness to do so. The months that followed were difficult ones for Shelley. The elopement had cost him the loss of old friends, including Mary's father, and he was in constant financial difficulties. He even went so far as to ask Harriet for money to avoid being arrested for debt.

The difficulties of Shelley's life in 1814 and 1815 interfered with the writing of poetry. Not until February 1816, did he publish a poem that was on a par with *Queen Mab*. In that month appeared a volume in which "Alastor" was the major poem. The theme of "Alastor" is that concentration on high ideals has the effect of making the world seem dark and ugly. The volume, however, received little critical notice, and even that was unfriendly.

In May 1816, Shelley and Mary, who had been living in England, left for the Continent. The death of Shelley's wealthy grandfather made Shelley financially independent on an income of £1000 a year, the chief drain on which was the endless necessity of helping Mary's father out of his recurrent financial difficulties. In Switzerland, Shelley met Byron, who had left England only ten days before Shelley. The two developed a warm friendship which lasted until Shelley's death. The months that they spent together in Switzerland were among the happiest in Shelley's life. They found each other's company very stimulating. It was at this time that Byron wrote the third, and best, canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and Mary wrote her famous *Frankenstein*. This almost idyllic period

in Shelley's life came to an end when Shelley had to return to England to take care of money matters in late August, 1816. Two calamities befell him shortly after his return to England: the suicide of Fanny Imlay, Mary's half sister and a member of the Godwin household, and, shortly after, the suicide of his wife Harriet. Shelley tried to gain custody of his two children but was denied it by a decision of the Lord Chancellor. On December 29, 1816, he legalized his association with Mary by marrying her.

Shelley's longest poem, *The Revolt of Islam*, in part a heavily symbolic account of a bloodless revolution, and in part a restatement of the radical social views of *Queen Mab*, was the work of more than half of 1817. It is not only Shelley's longest poem, but it is also one of his least readable poems, partly because of its symbolism and partly because of its structural weakness. Besides writing *The Revolt of Islam* in 1817, Shelley also wrote "Rosalind and Helen," the story of two pairs of lovers, one pair of which appears to be Shelley and Mary, whose love without marriage is justified.

In 1818, Shelley left England for Italy, never to return. During that summer, he occupied himself in reading and translating Plato's *Symposium*. Following a journey to Venice, where Shelley visited Byron, the Shelleys suffered a severe loss in the death of their little daughter, Clara. The death of Clara caused a strain to develop between Shelley and his wife, Mary, who felt that the journey to Venice, which was made on the insistence of Shelley, was responsible for the death of their daughter. Shelley's "Julian and Maddalo," written in the fall of 1818, reflects this tension.

After spending the winter of 1818-19 in Naples, the Shelleys moved on to Rome, where they remained from March to June 1819. The year 1819 proved to be Shelley's *annus mirabilis*. He completed *Prometheus Unbound*, the embodiment of his dream of a brave new world; he composed his play, *The Cenci*, a study in human wickedness which is probably the best play written by a romantic poet; and he began a political pamphlet entitled *A Philosophical View of Reform*, in which he made some practical suggestions for political reforms in England; in addition, he wrote a number of short poems on the political situation in England, which he was convinced bordered on revolution. In these poems, as well as in *Prometheus* and *The Cenci*, oppression is exposed and attacked. 1819 was also a sad year for the Shelleys; their only surviving child, William, died in Rome early in June.

In June 1819, the Shelleys left Rome for Leghorn, where they remained until October. In October, they moved to Florence so that Mary, who was pregnant, could be near a doctor she had confidence in. Mary's last child, Percy Florence, the only one who lived to maturity, was born on November 2. Late in January

1820, the Shelleys were again on the move. This time their destination was Pisa. The Shelleys lived either in or near Pisa until Shelley's death in 1822.

The Cenci was Shelley's last long poem. The poetry that he wrote in Pisa was either short pieces or poems of a few hundred lines. As was his custom, he read continually, partly to keep his mind stimulated and partly because he was a reader by nature. His reading, however, does not seem to have been undertaken as a preparation for writing such a great poem as Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Outstanding among his Pisan poems are "Epipsychidion," a work in which he extols the charms of Emilia Viviani, the young daughter of the governor of Pisa, and *Adonais*, an elegy in which he laments the death of John Keats and, at the same time, attacks the critics who had heaped opprobrium on himself and had, Shelley thought, been the cause of the death of Keats. A good deal of the poetry of his last years is marked by melancholy. Both Shelley and his wife were subject to periodic attacks of depression. The melancholy in Shelley's last poems is probably due to a feeling that a rift had developed between himself and his wife and also to the conviction that his attempt to improve the world through poetry had not succeeded to any noticeable degree. The critics remained hostile.

In spite of Shelley's growing disenchantment with the world, he experienced some of the deepest happiness of his life during his last months. Ironically, this happiness was associated with the boat in which he met his death. At the end of April 1822, the Shelleys and their friends the Williamses rented a house in San Terenzo, a village on the Gulf of Spezia, not far from Pisa. To San Terenzo they brought a boat, the *Don Juan*, built for them in Genoa according to Edward Williams' specifications. Shelley and Williams found the boat completely satisfactory and a constant source of delight. On the eighth of July, as the *Don Juan* was carrying the two friends from Leghorn to San Terenzo, a heavy squall suddenly came up and the *Don Juan* disappeared from sight. Several days later, the bodies of Shelley and Williams were washed up on the shores of the Bay of Lerici. The body of Shelley was cremated and the ashes buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, not far from the grave of Keats.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. How does Shelley's treatment of nature differ from that of the earlier Romantic poets? What connections does he make between nature and art, and how does he illustrate those connections?
2. How and why does Shelley believe poetry to be an instrument of moral good? What impact does this belief have on his poems, if any?
3. Many of Shelley's poems include a climactic moment, an instant when the poet's feelings overwhelm him and overwhelm his poem. What are some of these moments? How do they relate to the poems as wholes? How are they typical of the poetic personality Shelley brings to his writing?
4. Think about Shelley's use of the sonnet form in "England in 1819" and "Ozymandias." How does he shape the form to his own purposes? How does his use of the sonnet form break from the established traditions of the early 1800s?
5. Shelley was a political radical who never shied away from expressing his opinions about oppression and injustice—he was expelled from Oxford in 1811 for applying his radicalism to religion and arguing for the necessity of atheism. What do we learn about Shelley's ideal vision of the human condition, as based on his political poems? With particular attention to "Ode to the West Wind," how might a sense of his social hopes emerge from even a non-political poem?
6. In some ways Shelley is a creature of contradictions: he was an atheist who wrote hymns, a scandalous and controversial figure who argued for ethical behavior, an educated aristocrat who argued for the liberation of humankind, and a sensuous Romantic poet whose fondest hope was that his poems would exert a moral influence over the human imagination. How can one resolve these contradictions? (Are they even resolvable?) How do they manifest themselves in his poetry?
7. Shelley lived a fascinating and turbulent life among fascinating and turbulent people, from Lord Byron, the most famous, controversial, and popular poet of the era, to his wife Mary, the author of Frankenstein. How does a knowledge of Shelley's biography (and early death) affect your appreciation of his

poetry? Or does it affect it at all? Is it necessary to know about Shelley's life and times in order to fully understand the poetry?

Unit II Section (a)

Shelley To a Skylark

The central thematic concerns of Shelley's poetry are largely the same themes that defined Romanticism, especially among the younger English poets of Shelley's era: beauty, the passions, nature, political liberty, creativity, and the sanctity of the imagination. What makes Shelley's treatment of these themes unique is his philosophical relationship to his subject matter—which was better developed and articulated than that of any other Romantic poet with the possible exception of Wordsworth—and his temperament, which was extraordinarily sensitive and responsive even for a Romantic poet, and which possessed an extraordinary capacity for joy, love, and hope. Shelley fervently believed in the possibility of realizing an ideal of human happiness as based on beauty, and his moments of darkness and despair (he had many, particularly in book-length poems such as the monumental *Queen Mab*) almost always stem from his disappointment at seeing that ideal sacrificed to human weakness.

Shelley's intense feelings about beauty and expression are documented in poems such as "Ode to the West Wind" and "To a Skylark," in which he invokes metaphors from nature to characterize his relationship to his art. The center of his aesthetic philosophy can be found in his important essay *A Defence of Poetry*, in which he argues that poetry brings about moral good. Poetry, Shelley argues, exercises and expands the imagination, and the imagination is the source of sympathy, compassion, and love, which rest on the ability to project oneself into the position of another person. He writes,

A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others. The pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. Poetry

enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void forever craves fresh food. Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb.

No other English poet of the early nineteenth century so emphasized the connection between beauty and goodness, or believed so avidly in the power of art's sensual pleasures to improve society. Byron's pose was one of amoral sensuousness, or of controversial rebelliousness; Keats believed in beauty and aesthetics for their own sake. But Shelley was able to believe that poetry makes people and society *better*; his poetry is suffused with this kind of inspired moral optimism, which he hoped would affect his readers sensuously, spiritually, and morally, all at the same time.

Themes

The Heroic, Visionary Role of the Poet

In Shelley's poetry, the figure of the poet (and, to some extent, the figure of Shelley himself) is not simply a talented entertainer or even a perceptive moralist but a grand, tragic, prophetic hero. The poet has a deep, mystic appreciation for nature, as in the poem "To Wordsworth" (1816), and this intense connection with the natural world gives him access to profound cosmic truths, as in "Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude" (1816). He has the power—and the duty—to translate these truths, through the use of his imagination, into poetry, but only a kind of poetry that the public can understand. Thus, his poetry becomes a kind of prophecy, and through his words, a poet has the ability to change the world for the better and to bring about political, social, and spiritual change. Shelley's poet is a near-divine savior, comparable to Prometheus, who stole divine fire and gave it to humans in Greek mythology, and to Christ. Like Prometheus and Christ, figures

of the poets in Shelley's work are often doomed to suffer: because their visionary power isolates them from other men, because they are misunderstood by critics, because they are persecuted by a tyrannical government, or because they are suffocated by conventional religion and middle-class values. In the end, however, the poet triumphs because his art is immortal, outlasting the tyranny of government, religion, and society and living on to inspire new generations.

The Power of Nature

Like many of the romantic poets, especially William Wordsworth, Shelley demonstrates a great reverence for the beauty of nature, and he feels closely connected to nature's power. In his early poetry, Shelley shares the romantic interest in pantheism—the belief that God, or a divine, unifying spirit, runs through everything in the universe. He refers to this unifying natural force in many poems, describing it as the "spirit of beauty" in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and identifying it with Mont Blanc and the Arve River in "Mont Blanc." This force is the cause of all human joy, faith, goodness, and pleasure, and it is also the source of poetic inspiration and divine truth. Shelley asserts several times that this force can influence people to change the world for the better. However, Shelley simultaneously recognizes that nature's power is not wholly positive. Nature destroys as often as it inspires or creates, and it destroys cruelly and indiscriminately. For this reason, Shelley's delight in nature is mitigated by an awareness of its dark side.

The Power of the Human Mind

Shelley uses nature as his primary source of poetic inspiration. In such poems as "The Mask of Anarchy Written on the Occasion of the Massacre at Manchester" (1819) and "Ode to the West Wind," Shelley suggests that the natural world holds a sublime power over his imagination. This power seems to come from a stranger, more mystical place than simply his appreciation for nature's beauty or grandeur. At the same time, although nature has creative power over Shelley

because it provides inspiration, he feels that his imagination has creative power over nature. It is the imagination—or our ability to form sensory perceptions—that allows us to describe nature in different, original ways, which help to shape how nature appears and, therefore, how it exists. Thus, the power of the human mind becomes equal to the power of nature, and the experience of beauty in the natural world becomes a kind of collaboration between the perceiver and the perceived. Because Shelley cannot be sure that the sublime powers he senses in nature are only the result of his gifted imagination, he finds it difficult to attribute nature's power to God: the human role in shaping nature damages Shelley's ability to believe that nature's beauty comes solely from a divine source.

Motifs

Autumn

Shelley sets many of his poems in autumn, including "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and "Ode to the West Wind." Fall is a time of beauty and death, and so it shows both the creative and destructive powers of nature, a favorite Shelley theme. As a time of change, autumn is a fitting backdrop for Shelley's vision of political and social revolution. In "Ode to the West Wind," autumn's brilliant colors and violent winds emphasize the passionate, intense nature of the poet, while the decay and death inherent in the season suggest the sacrifice and martyrdom of the Christ-like poet.

Ghosts and Spirits

Shelley's interest in the supernatural repeatedly appears in his work. The ghosts and spirits in his poems suggest the possibility of glimpsing a world beyond the one in which we live. In "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," the speaker searches for ghosts and explains that ghosts are one of the ways men have tried to interpret the world beyond. The speaker of "Mont Blanc" encounters ghosts and shadows of real natural objects in the cave of "Poesy." Ghosts are inadequate in both poems: the speaker finds no ghosts in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and the ghosts of

Poesy in "Mont Blanc" are not the real thing, a discovery that emphasizes the elusiveness and mystery of supernatural forces.

Christ

From his days at Oxford, Shelley felt deeply doubtful about organized religion, particularly Christianity. Yet, in his poetry, he often represents the poet as a Christ-like figure and thus sets the poet up as a secular replacement for Christ. Martyred by society and conventional values, the Christ figure is resurrected by the power of nature and his own imagination and spreads his prophetic visions over the earth. Shelley further separates his Christ figures from traditional Christian values in *Adonais*, in which he compares the same character to Christ, as well as Cain, whom the Bible portrays as the world's first murderer. For Shelley, Christ and Cain are both outcasts and rebels, like romantic poets and like himself.

Symbols

Mont Blanc

For Shelley, Mont Blanc—the highest peak in the Alps—represents the eternal power of nature. Mont Blanc has existed forever, and it will last forever, an idea he explores in "Mont Blanc." The mountain fills the poet with inspiration, but its coldness and inaccessibility are terrifying. Ultimately, though, Shelley wonders if the mountain's power might be meaningless, an invention of the more powerful human imagination.

The West Wind

Shelley uses the West Wind to symbolize the power of nature and of the imagination inspired by nature. Unlike Mont Blanc, however, the West Wind is active and dynamic in poems, such as "Ode to the West Wind." While Mont Blanc is immobile, the West Wind is an agent for change. Even as it destroys, the wind encourages new life on earth and social progress among humanity.

The Statue of Ozymandias

In Shelley's work, the statue of the ancient Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II, or Ozymandias, symbolizes political tyranny. In "Ozymandias," (1817) the statue is broken into pieces and stranded in an empty desert, which suggests that tyranny is temporary and also that no political leader, particularly an unjust one, can hope to have lasting power or real influence. The broken monument also represents the decay of civilization and culture: the statue is, after all, a human construction, a piece of art made by a creator, and now it—and its creator—have been destroyed, as all living things are eventually destroyed.

Summary : To a Skylark

The speaker, addressing a skylark, says that it is a "blithe Spirit" rather than a bird, for its song comes from Heaven, and from its full heart pours "profuse strains of unpremeditated art." The skylark flies higher and higher, "like a cloud of fire" in the blue sky, singing as it flies. In the "golden lightning" of the sun, it floats and runs, like "an unbodied joy." As the skylark flies higher and higher, the speaker loses sight of it, but is still able to hear its "shrill delight," which comes down as keenly as moonbeams in the "white dawn," which can be felt even when they are not seen. The earth and air ring with the skylark's voice, just as Heaven overflows with moonbeams when the moon shines out from behind "a lonely cloud."

The speaker says that no one knows what the skylark is, for it is unique: even "rainbow clouds" do not rain as brightly as the shower of melody that pours from the skylark. The bird is "like a poet hidden / In the light of thought," able to make the world experience "sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not." It is like a lonely maiden in a palace tower, who uses her song to soothe her lovelorn soul. It is like a golden glow-worm, scattering light among the flowers and grass in which it is hidden. It is like a rose embowered in its own green leaves, whose scent is blown by the wind until the bees are faint with "too much sweet." The skylark's song surpasses "all that ever was, / Joyous and clear and fresh," whether the rain falling on the "twinkling grass" or the flowers the rain awakens.

Calling the skylark "Sprite or Bird," the speaker asks it to tell him its "sweet thoughts," for he has never heard anyone or anything call up "a flood of rapture so divine." Compared to the skylark's, any music would seem lacking. What objects, the speaker asks, are "the fountains of thy happy strain?" Is it fields, waves, mountains, the sky, the plain, or "love of thine own kind" or "ignorance or pain"? Pain and languor, the speaker says, "never came near" the skylark: it loves, but has never known "love's sad satiety." Of death, the skylark must know "things more true and deep" than mortals could dream; otherwise, the speaker asks, "how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?"

For mortals, the experience of happiness is bound inextricably with the experience of sadness: dwelling upon memories and hopes for the future, mortal men "pine for what is not"; their laughter is "fraught" with "some pain"; their "sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." But, the speaker says, even if men could "scorn / Hate and pride and fear," and were born without the capacity to weep, he still does not know how they could ever approximate the joy expressed by the skylark. Calling the bird a "scorner of the ground," he says that its music is better than all music and all poetry. He asks the bird to teach him "half the gladness / That thy brain must know," for then he would overflow with "harmonious madness," and his song would be so beautiful that the world would listen to him, even as he is now listening to the skylark.

Form

The eccentric, songlike, five-line stanzas of "To a Skylark"—all twenty-one of them—follow the same pattern: the first four lines are metered in trochaic trimeter, the fifth in iambic hexameter (a line which can also be called an Alexandrine). The rhyme scheme of each stanza is extremely simple: ABABB.

Commentary

If the West Wind was Shelley's first convincing attempt to articulate an aesthetic philosophy through metaphors of nature, the skylark is his greatest natural

metaphor for pure poetic expression, the "harmonious madness" of pure inspiration. The skylark's song issues from a state of purified existence, a Wordsworthian notion of complete unity with Heaven through nature; its song is motivated by the joy of that uncomplicated purity of being, and is unmixed with any hint of melancholy or of the bittersweet, as human joy so often is. The skylark's unimpeded song rains down upon the world, surpassing every other beauty, inspiring metaphor and making the speaker believe that the bird is not a mortal bird at all, but a "Spirit," a "sprite," a "poet hidden / In the light of thought."

In that sense, the skylark is almost an exact twin of the bird in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale"; both represent pure expression through their songs, and like the skylark, the nightingale "wast not born for death." But while the nightingale is a bird of darkness, invisible in the shadowy forest glades, the skylark is a bird of daylight, invisible in the deep bright blue of the sky. The nightingale inspires Keats to feel "a drowsy numbness" of happiness that is also like pain, and that makes him think of death; the skylark inspires Shelley to feel a frantic, rapturous joy that has no part of pain. To Keats, human joy and sadness are inextricably linked, as he explains at length in the final stanza of the "Ode on Melancholy." But the skylark sings free of all human error and complexity, and while listening to his song, the poet feels free of those things, too.

Structurally and linguistically, this poem is almost unique among Shelley's works; its strange form of stanza, with four compact lines and one very long line, and its lilting, songlike diction ("profuse strains of unpremeditated art") work to create the effect of spontaneous poetic expression flowing musically and naturally from the poet's mind. Structurally, each stanza tends to make a single, quick point about the skylark, or to look at it in a sudden, brief new light; still, the poem does flow, and gradually advances the mini-narrative of the speaker watching the skylark flying higher and higher into the sky, and envying its untrammelled inspiration—which, if he were to capture it in words, would cause the world to listen.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. "To a Skylark" has been criticized as a structurally loose poem; it has been said that the order of some of the stanzas could be changed without making any essential change in the poem. Is the criticism a just and valid one?
2. Shelley, in the first two lines of the poem, denies that the skylark is really a skylark: "Bird thou never wert." Later he admits that the skylark may really be a bird after all: "Teach us, Sprite or Bird, / What sweet thoughts are thine." Is the admission to be considered a weakness in the poem?
3. Is elevating the skylark to the rank of spirit a weakness in the poem?
4. Is "Ode to the West Wind" a better poem than "To a Skylark" in the arrangement of its parts?
5. If Shelley shared half the happiness he feels the skylark possesses, readers would read his poems with greater attention. Do you think he refers to the poems he has written or to the poems he would write? If the latter, what might their subject matter be?

Unit II Section (a)**Poem 2 "Ode to the West Wind"****Summary**

The speaker invokes the "wild West Wind" of autumn, which scatters the dead leaves and spreads seeds so that they may be nurtured by the spring, and asks that the wind, a "destroyer and preserver," hear him. The speaker calls the wind the "dirge / Of the dying year," and describes how it stirs up violent storms, and again implores it to hear him. The speaker says that the wind stirs the Mediterranean from "his summer dreams," and cleaves the Atlantic into choppy chasms, making the "sapless foliage" of the ocean tremble, and asks for a third time that it hear him.

The speaker says that if he were a dead leaf that the wind could bear, or a cloud it could carry, or a wave it could push, or even if he were, as a boy, "the comrade" of the wind's "wandering over heaven," then he would never have needed to pray to the wind and invoke its powers. He pleads with the wind to lift him "as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!"—for though he is like the wind at heart, untamable and proud—he is now chained and bowed with the weight of his hours upon the earth.

The speaker asks the wind to "make me thy lyre," to be his own Spirit, and to drive his thoughts across the universe, "like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth." He asks the wind, by the incantation of this verse, to scatter his words among mankind, to be the "trumpet of a prophecy." Speaking both in regard to the season and in regard to the effect upon mankind that he hopes his words to have, the speaker asks: "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

Form

Each of the seven parts of "Ode to the West Wind" contains five stanzas—four three-line stanzas and a two-line couplet, all metered in iambic pentameter. The rhyme scheme in each part follows a pattern known as *terza rima*, the three-line rhyme scheme employed by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*. In the three-line *terza rima* stanza, the first and third lines rhyme, and the middle line does not; then the end sound of that middle line is employed as the rhyme for the first and third lines

in the next stanza. The final couplet rhymes with the middle line of the last three-line stanza. Thus each of the seven parts of "Ode to the West Wind" follows this scheme: ABA BCB CDC DED EE.

Commentary

The wispy, fluid terza rima of "Ode to the West Wind" finds Shelley taking a long thematic leap beyond the scope of "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and incorporating his own art into his meditation on beauty and the natural world. Shelley invokes the wind magically, describing its power and its role as both "destroyer and preserver," and asks the wind to sweep him out of his torpor "as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!" In the fifth section, the poet then takes a remarkable turn, transforming the wind into a metaphor for his own art, the expressive capacity that drives "dead thoughts" like "withered leaves" over the universe, to "quicken a new birth"—that is, to quicken the coming of the spring. Here the spring season is a metaphor for a "spring" of human consciousness, imagination, liberty, or morality—all the things Shelley hoped his art could help to bring about in the human mind. Shelley asks the wind to be his spirit, and in the same movement he makes it his metaphorical spirit, his poetic faculty, which will play him like a musical instrument, the way the wind strums the leaves of the trees. The thematic implication is significant: whereas the older generation of Romantic poets viewed nature as a source of truth and authentic experience, the younger generation largely viewed nature as a source of beauty and aesthetic experience. In this poem, Shelley explicitly links nature with art by finding powerful natural metaphors with which to express his ideas about the power, import, quality, and ultimate effect of aesthetic expression.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. "To a Skylark" has been criticized as a structurally loose poem; it has been said that the order of some of the stanzas could be changed without making any essential change in the poem. Is the criticism a just and valid one?
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5. If Shelley shared half the happiness he feels the skylark possesses, readers would read his poems with greater attention. Do you think he refers to the poems he has written or to the poems he would write? If the latter, what might their subject matter be?

Unit II Section (a)

Poem 3 Stanzas Written in Dejection near Naples

THE sun is warm, the sky is clear,
 The waves are dancing fast and bright,
 Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
 The purple noon's transparent might:
 The breath of the moist earth is light 5
 Around its unexpanded buds;
 Like many a voice of one delight—
 The winds', the birds', the ocean-floods'—
 The city's voice itself is soft like solitude's.

I see the deep's untrampled floor 10
 With green and purple seaweeds strown;
 I see the waves upon the shore
 Like light dissolved in star-showers thrown.
 I sit upon the sands alone;
 The lightning of the noontide ocean 15
 Is flashing round me, and a tone
 Arises from its measured motion—
 How sweet, did any heart now share in my emotion!

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
 Nor peace within nor calm around; 20
 Nor that content, surpassing wealth,
 The sage in meditation found,
 And walk'd with inward glory crown'd;
 Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.
 Others I see whom these surround— 25
 Smiling they live, and call life pleasure:
 To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

Yet now despair itself is mild,
 Even as the winds and waters are;
 I could lie down like a tired child, 30
 And weep away the life of care
 Which I have borne, and yet must bear,—

Till death like sleep might steal on me,
 And I might feel in the warm air
 My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea 35
 Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

Summary

The day is warm, the sky is clear, the waves sparkle. Blue islands and snow-topped mountains look purple in the midday light. Buds are ready to blossom. The sounds of the winds, the birds, the waves, and of Naples itself blend in pleasant harmony. Shelley sees the seaweed on the ocean bottom and watches the waves dissolve into light as they strike the shore. He sits alone on the sand, observing the sparkling ocean and listening to the sound of the waves. How pleasant all this would be if there were someone with whom he could share the emotion he feels. Unfortunately, Shelley lacks hope, health, peace, calmness, contentment, fame, power, love, and leisure. He sees others who enjoy all these and find life a pleasure. It is otherwise with him. He would like to lie down like a tired child and "weep away the life of care" which he has endured and must continue to endure. Death would steal upon him quietly, turning his warm cheeks cold while the waves continued their monotonous rhythm as consciousness grew fainter. Some might mourn his death just as he will regret the departure of this beautiful day to which his melancholy is in contrast. He is not popular, but nevertheless they might mourn his death while disapproving of his life. The end of this day will not bring mixed feelings to him, however. Since it has been enjoyed, it will live on in his memory.

Analysis

Shelley's state of dejection in "Stanzas" is artistically placed in a sharply contrasting setting that effectively emphasizes the dejection. Shelley implies that no matter how much harmony there may exist between nature and man, man must be in a condition to be able to find pleasure in that harmony. Shelley was far from being in such a condition. Newman Ivey White, the author of the definitive life of Shelley, writes that Shelley was so depressed while in Naples that it is said that he tried to commit suicide (*Shelley*, Vol. II, p. 78). Shelley was in Naples from November 29, 1818, to February 28, 1819. Naples in winter offers a pleasantly warm climate. Naples is at its best, so far as weather is concerned, and Shelley and his wife, Mary, should have been happy there. However, Shelley was in poor health and the delightful winter climate of Naples did not help him. The major cause of his dejection was not his health but his wife's estrangement from him following the death of their daughter Clara on September 24, 1818. Mary seems to have felt that her husband was indirectly

responsible for the death of the child because he had insisted on making a hurried journey in hot weather to Venice at a time when little Clara was sick. The child died shortly after the Shelley family reached Venice.

Other causes undoubtedly contributed to Shelley's death-wish at Naples. His first wife, Harriet Westbrook, and Mary Shelley's half sister, Fanny Inlay, had committed suicide; the courts had taken from him the custody of his two children by Harriet; friends had turned against him; his poetry was neglected by the public and condemned by the critics, and he was plagued by financial and personal problems. Shelley experienced one of the lowest periods of his life while he was in Naples. His desire to free himself by death from his troubles does not necessarily reveal any moral or character weakness but an understandably profound discouragement at a time when everything seemed to be going wrong. Nature, no matter how beautiful, was of little help.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. I need a critical analysis of the poem "The Moon" by Percy Bysshe Shelley.
2. What is the inner meaning of the lines "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of the saddest..."
3. Can anyone provide an analysis of Stanzas-April 1814, by Percy Bysshe Shelley? Composed at...
4. What is the substance of "The Moon" written by Percy Bysshe Shelley?
5. Can you help me write a summary of "A Lament" by Percy Shelley?
6. Is Shelley yielding to self-pity in "Stanzas"?
7. Compare this dejection poem with dejection poems written by other romantic poets.
8. Is a poet necessarily unmanly in complaining about the hardships of his life and wishing it were over?
9. Are poems like "Stanzas" dispiriting to the reader? Explain.
10. Read the account of Shelley's stay in Naples in Newman Ivey White's biography of Shelley.

Unit II Section (a)

Poem 4 The Cloud

The cloud brings rain, moisture, hail, and snow, and gives shade. It is infused with electricity which acts as its guide in the form of lightning accompanied by thunder. When the cloud covers the rising sun, it causes its beams to be spread out over the sky. At evening the cloud floats over the setting sun like a bird; at night, the cloud provides a thin covering for the moon. Where the cloud cover is removed by the wind, the moon and stars are reflected in the earth's bodies of water.

The cloud under certain conditions forms a ring around the sun and the moon. During storms the cloud spreads across the sky like a roof. At other times the rainbow acts as an arch of triumph for the cloud to march under. The cloud, formed in the sky, draws its substance from the earth and water below it and is part of a never-ending cycle in which it alternately disappears and reappears.

Analysis

In "The Cloud," Shelley is again the myth-maker. The cloud is not merely a physical substance but seems to be an immortal minor divinity (such as a naiad or a Nereid, which in classical mythology were associated with water). By employing this form of personification, Shelley is able to endow nature with the powers and attributes of immortals. Thus his cloud is not only capable of changing its form almost at will but is incapable of dying as well: "I change, but I cannot die."

Shelley's cloud is almost bewilderingly multiform. It begins as a gardener watering flowers, changes to a mother or nurse shading a child from the midday sun while the child takes a nap, becomes a bird that shakes dew from its wings to awaken the buds (which are babies rocked to rest on the breast of their mother the earth), and becomes a thresher wielding a flail. It laughs, sifts, sleeps, folds its wings like a bird, puts a girdle around the sun, becomes a roof, marches through a triumphal arch, is a baby daughter, passes "through the pores of the ocean and shores," and tears down an empty tomb. As a divinity, it can be and do a multiplicity of things. Shelley's "The Cloud" is compact with images, which, taken together, give the reader a good account of this natural phenomenon in the language of poetry.

Shelley's "Cloud," although extraordinarily rich in changing imagery, presents no special difficulty except perhaps in the second stanza, in which he makes lightning the pilot of the cloud. What Shelley is saying is that atmospheric

electricity or lightning is formed in the tiny droplets of vapor that make up the clouds. He is merely asserting a familiar fact.

In addition to making lightning the guide of the cloud, Shelley subordinates the lightning to some force in the earth which attracts it. He has his cloud say:

Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains.

Shelley's genii are Moslem spirits that inhabit the earth and exercise supernatural power. Erasmus Darwin, an eighteenth-century poet-scientist, had used the word metaphorically in his *Botanic Garden*, where Shelley probably found it. The Spirit whom the lightning loves seems to be the genii in a singular form, but Shelley is not very clear here. He may have changed from the plural to the singular for the sake of a needed rime: *remains*. The genii are probably meant to poetically present the theory of atmospheric electricity, drawn by the sun from the earth as water vapor, returning to the earth as lightning, dew, frost, and rain. Shelley's genii therefore represents the phenomenon that when an electrically charged cloud approaches the earth's surface, an opposite charge is induced in the earth's surface. When there exists sufficient electrical potential, a lightning flash occurs. Shelley's knowledge of atmospheric electricity, al-though expressed in highly figurative language, is nevertheless accurate.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Is there any reason to believe that Shelley's "The Cloud" is a symbolic poem; that is, not really about clouds but about something else?
2. Is "The Cloud" in any way a confessional poem about Shelley himself?
3. Is there too much imagery in "The Cloud"?
4. Is the imagery always accurate, functional, and effective?
5. Do the rimes occur too frequently in "The Cloud"?

Unit II Section (b)**John Keats**

John Keats was born on October 31, 1795, on the northern outskirts of London. His father was Thomas Keats, manager of the Swan and Hoop, a livery stable, and his mother was Frances Jennings, the daughter of the proprietor of the stables. In 1803, Keats entered John Clarke's school in Enfield, about ten miles from London. Clarke was a liberal and his influence may have contributed to Keats' political development. The school, surprisingly, had a wider curriculum than such prestigious public schools as Eton. There were about seventy-five boys in attendance. Its rural location may have fostered Keats' love of nature. John was popular with the other boys and won a reputation as an able fighter, in spite of his small size, but was not outstanding as a scholar.

On April 15, 1804, John's father was thrown from a horse and died from a skull fracture. His mother then married a bank clerk whom she soon left. Her second husband sold the stables and the four Keats children were left without a home.

In March 1805, John's grandfather died, leaving the children without a male protector. The mother seems to have dropped out of their lives, and so their grandmother, Mrs. Jennings, took them into her house. Their mother reappeared in 1808, but died of tuberculosis in 1810. After his mother's death, Keats developed a love of reading, including the thrillers popular in his time. In his last two or three terms at Enfield he won several prizes and even began a prose translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. At this time he made a friend of Cowden Clarke, eight years his senior, who had been his tutor in his first years at Enfield. Clarke was instrumental in fostering a love of music and poetry in Keats.

Possibly because he had watched his mother die, Keats decided to become a doctor and, in 1811, when he reached the age of sixteen, he was apprenticed to a Dr. Hammond. Not until he was eighteen did he become deeply interested in poetry. It was apparently Cowden Clarke's lending Keats a copy of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* that furnished the stimulus. His first poem was an imitation of Spenser. Keats has often been compared to Spenser in his richness of description.

In 1815, Keats ended his apprenticeship with Dr. Hammond and matriculated at Guy's Hospital for one term (six months). In the beginning, Keats was an industrious student, but in the spring of 1816, he seems to have begun to lose his interest in medicine in favor of poetry. However, he passed his examinations in July 1816, and was qualified to practice as an apothecary and a surgeon.

At this time Keats renewed his friendship with Clarke, met another young poet, John Hamilton Reynolds, and was introduced to the essayist, journalist, and poet

Leigh Hunt, who was impressed by the poetry Keats had written so far. His friendship with Hunt was to have an important effect on his life. Hunt deepened his interest in poetry and made him a liberal in politics. His association with Hunt, however, who was a well-known liberal, brought upon him the hostility of the influential Tory critics.

Early in 1817, Keats gave up medicine for poetry. His career at Guy's Hospital had been a successful one, but his fascination with poetry was stronger, and he had proved, at least to his own satisfaction, that he could write poetry. His modest inheritance would support him, he thought, until he had made his way in poetry. His first volume, published by Shelley's publisher, Oilier, appeared March 3, 1817. It was a mediocre achievement, but it contained "Chapman's Homer." An acute critic should have been able to see, at least on the basis of this one poem, that the author showed promise, but unfortunately no acute and influential critic appeared as Keats' champion. The volume went almost unnoticed. The many new friends he had made since coming to London — Keats had a gift for friendship — were hopeful, but there was little they could do.

Keats now decided to try his hand at a long poem. The result was *Endymion*, an involved romance in the Elizabethan style, in which a mortal, the shepherd Endymion, was wedded to the goddess Diana and won immortal bliss. Keats worked on it from April to November 1817, and it appeared in April 1818. Before the year was over, *Endymion* was harshly reviewed in *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review*. These reviews effectively stopped the sales of the volume. *Endymion*, it must be said, while containing many good lines and passages, is not a good poem, but worse poems now forgotten have won fame and financial rewards for their authors. If *Endymion* had been written by a respected Tory poet, it might have been hailed as a fine poem by *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly*. Keats' politics happened to be the wrong ones in 1818.

An important change in Keats' life was a walking tour that he took through the Lake Country, up into Scotland, and a short trip to Ireland, with one of his friends, Charles Brown, in the summer of 1818. The trip lasted from June to August and reached its terminus in Cromarty, Scotland. The walking tour broadened Keats' acquaintance with his environment and with varieties of people. The hardships which Keats and Brown had to endure, often spending the night on the mud floor of a shepherd's hut, may have weakened Keats' constitution and shortened his life. In Inverness, he developed a sore throat and decided to return to London by boat. The trip itself produced very little poetry.

In September, Keats began a new long poem, *Hyperion*, which he never finished. The blank verse of *Hyperion* revealed that Keats had become a first-class poet.

His firm control of language in *Hyperion* is truly astonishing. *Endymion* and *Hyperion* could have been the work of two different poets.

During the last months of 1818, Keats nursed his brother Tom, who had been stricken with tuberculosis. Tom died on December 1 at the age of nineteen. The three months which Keats spent nursing his brother exposed the already weakened poet to tuberculosis, and, by the spring of 1819, he showed many of the symptoms of the disease — depression, hoarseness, insomnia, and an ulcerated sore throat.

In April and May of 1819, Keats experienced a burst of energy and wrote "Ode to Psyche," "Ode on Melancholy," "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "Ode on Indolence." In January he wrote his most perfect narrative poem, *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

Keats' future was now a problem. He was running out of money — and was in love with a lively and lovely girl, Fanny Brawne. He thought of becoming a ship's surgeon. His friend Brown, who had written a successful play, suggested that they write a tragedy together that might be a financial success. As Keats needed solitude for a lengthy work, on June 27 he left for the Isle of Wight, where he had begun *Endymion*. Brown joined him there and supplied the plot while Keats supplied the words. They spent the summer of 1819 working on *Otho the Great*. During this summer, Keats also wrote his lengthy narrative poem *Lamia*, which he hoped would prove popular. Unfortunately, neither of the legitimate theaters, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, would take a chance on *Otho*, which was a decidedly mediocre work, but not worse than some other plays staged by these two theaters.

After this summer Keats accomplished very little. He worked at *Hyperion* now and then, began a new play (*King Stephen*), began a satire, and wrote his superb "To Autumn." He had very little money left and he was filled with anxieties, but nevertheless he and Fanny Brawne became secretly engaged. In February 1820, Keats had a hemorrhage in his lungs; he began to cough blood and soon became an invalid.

Keats' third and last volume of poetry came out July 1, 1820, when he was staying with the Hunts and recovering from another hemorrhage. Gradually the volume began to receive favorable reviews, including one in the influential *Edinburgh Review*. Nevertheless the volume sold slowly. Keats did not begin to receive attention as a poet until after the romantic period was over.

On the advice of two doctors, Keats decided to go to Italy, a trip that was often a last resort when one was stricken with tuberculosis. John Taylor, who had published Keats' last volume put up the money for the Italian trip. The expected sales of the *Lamia* volume were the security for the loan.

Keats sailed from London on September 17, 1820, and arrived in Naples almost a month later. From there, he travelled to Rome, where he rented an apartment

overlooking the famous "Spanish Steps." There, attended by his painter friend Joseph Severn, he entered the last stages of tuberculosis and died on February 23, 1821. He was buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome near the stately Pyramid of Caius Cestius. On his tombstone appears, at his own request, the words "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." The thousands of visitors who read these words every year are eloquent proof of how greatly he underestimated his poetic achievement.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. What are some of the recurring motifs that appear throughout the six odes? Given the chronological problems with the usual ordering of the odes ("Indolence," often placed first in the sequence, was one of the last odes to be written), to what extent do you think the odes should be grouped as a unified sequence?
2. Taken together, do the odes tell a "story," or do they simply develop a theme? Do you think the speaker is the same in each ode?
3. How does the "Ode on Indolence" anticipate the themes and images of the other five poems? Given the speaker's later confrontations with Love, Ambition, and Beauty—as well as with such themes as mortality and the creative imagination—does the conclusion of the Indolence ode seem ironic?
4. In what ways is "Ode to Psyche" different from the other odes? How do these differences affect the poem's attempt to describe the creative imagination? Why might the speaker want to use his imagination for Psyche's worship?
5. From Psyche's bower to the nightingale's glade to the warm luxury of Autumn, the odes contain some of the most beautiful sensory language in English poetry. But many of the odes intentionally limit the senses they inhabit. With particular reference to "Nightingale" (which suppresses sight) and "Grecian Urn" (which suppresses every sense *but* sight), how do the odes create an abundance of believable sensation even as they limit it?
6. The odes are full of paradoxical and self-contradictory ideas—the attribution of human experience to the frozen figures on the urn, for instance. But the "Ode on Melancholy" builds its entire theme on an apparent paradox—that pleasure and pain are intimately connected and that sadness rests at the core of joy. How does the language of "Melancholy" strengthen that sense of paradox? What does it mean for trophies to be cloudy, pleasure to be aching, a lover's anger to be soothing, and "wakeful anguish" a thing to be desired?
7. On its surface, the ode "To Autumn" seems to be little more than description, an illustration of a season. But underneath its descriptive surface, "To Autumn" is one of the most thematically rich of all the odes. How does Keats manage to embody complex themes in such an apparently simple poem?

Unit II Section (b)

Poem I "Ode to a Nightingale"

Keats is in a state of uncomfortable drowsiness. Envy of the imagined happiness of the nightingale is not responsible for his condition; rather, it is a reaction to the happiness he has experienced through sharing in the happiness of the nightingale. The bird's happiness is conveyed in its singing.

Keats longs for a draught of wine which would take him out of himself and allow him to join his existence with that of the bird. The wine would put him in a state in which he would no longer be himself, aware that life is full of pain, that the young die, the old suffer, and that just to think about life brings sorrow and despair. But wine is not needed to enable him to escape. His imagination will serve just as well. As soon as he realizes this, he is, in spirit, lifted up above the trees and can see the moon and the stars even though where he is physically there is only a glimmering of light. He cannot see what flowers are growing around him, but from their odor and from his knowledge of what flowers should be in bloom at the time he can guess.

In the darkness he listens to the nightingale. Now, he feels, it would be a rich experience to die, "to cease upon the midnight with no pain" while the bird would continue to sing ecstatically. Many a time, he confesses, he has been "half in love with easeful Death." The nightingale is free from the human fate of having to die. The song of the nightingale that he is listening to was heard in ancient times by emperor and peasant. Perhaps even Ruth (whose story is told in the Old Testament) heard it.

"Forlorn," the last word of the preceding stanza, brings Keats in the concluding stanza back to consciousness of what he is and where he is. He cannot escape even with the help of the imagination. The singing of the bird grows fainter and dies away. The experience he has had seems so strange and confusing that he is not sure whether it was a vision or a daydream. He is even uncertain whether he is asleep or awake.

Analysis

The "Ode to a Nightingale" is a regular ode. All eight stanzas have ten pentameter lines and a uniform rhyme scheme. Although the poem is regular in form, it leaves the impression of being a kind of rhapsody; Keats is allowing his thoughts and emotions free expression. One thought suggests another and, in this way, the poem proceeds to a somewhat arbitrary conclusion. The poem impresses the reader as being the result of free inspiration uncontrolled by a preconceived plan.

The poem is Keats in the act of sharing with the reader an experience he is having rather than recalling an experience. The experience is not entirely coherent. It is what happens in his mind while he is listening to the song of a nightingale.

Three main thoughts stand out in the ode. One is Keats' evaluation of life; life is a vale of tears and frustration. The happiness which Keats hears in the song of the nightingale has made him happy momentarily but has been succeeded by a feeling of torpor which in turn is succeeded by the conviction that life is not only painful but also intolerable. His taste of happiness in hearing the nightingale has made him all the more aware of the unhappiness of life. Keats wants to escape from life, not by means of wine, but by a much more powerful agent, the imagination.

The second main thought and the main theme of the poem is Keats' wish that he might die and be rid of life altogether, providing he could die as easily and painlessly as he could fall asleep. The preoccupation with death does not seem to have been caused by any turn for the worse in Keats' fortunes at the time he wrote the ode (May 1819). In many respects Keats' life had been unsatisfactory for some time before he wrote the poem. His family life was shattered by the departure of one brother to America and the death from tuberculosis of the other. His second volume of poetry had been harshly reviewed. He had no gainful occupation and no prospects, since he had abandoned his medical studies. His financial condition was insecure. He had not been well in the fall and winter of 1818-19 and possibly he was already suffering from tuberculosis. He could not marry Fanny Brawne because he was not in a position to support her. Thus the death-wish in the ode may be a reaction to a multitude of troubles and frustrations, all of which were still with him. The heavy weight of life pressing down on him forced "Ode to a Nightingale" out of him. Keats more than once expressed a desire for "easeful Death," yet when he was in the final stages of tuberculosis he fought against death by going to Italy where he hoped the climate would cure him. The death-wish in the ode is a passing but recurrent attitude toward a life that was unsatisfactory in so many ways.

The third main thought in the ode is the power of imagination or fancy. (Keats does not make any clear-cut distinction between the two.) In the ode Keats rejects wine for poetry, the product of imagination, as a means of identifying his existence with that of the happy nightingale. But poetry does not work the way it is supposed to. He soon finds himself back with his everyday, trouble-filled self. That "fancy cannot cheat so well / As she is fam'd to do," he admits in the concluding stanza. The imagination is not the all-powerful function Keats, at times, thought it was. It cannot give more than a temporary escape from the cares of life.

Keats' assignment of immortality to the nightingale in stanza VII has caused readers much trouble. Keats perhaps was thinking of a literal nightingale; more likely, however, he was thinking of the nightingale as a symbol of poetry, which has a permanence.

Keats' evocative power is shown especially in stanza II where he associates a beaker of wine "with beaded bubbles winking at the brim," with sunny France and the "sunburnt mirth" of the harvesters, and in his picture in stanza VII of Ruth suffering from homesickness "amid the alien corn." The whole ode is a triumph of tonal richness of that adagio verbal music that is Keats' special contribution to the many voices of poetry.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Aside from your dreams, have you ever felt like you were in a different reality? What inspired this feeling, and what brought you back to the normal world?
2. Have you ever thought what it would feel like to be an animal of any kind? If you could spend a day in the life of any animal, which would you choose?
3. Have you ever been unable to tell the difference between life and a dream? Have you ever woken up from a dream, and felt that it was real? How do we know that our dreams are not real? (Yes, we're really getting deep here).
4. Are nightingales actually that happy? What could be stressful about the life of a nightingale?
5. Do you think birds have any concept of "beauty"? Do they know that their songs are "beautiful." or is that just a projection of human ideas?
6. What is the explanation of the third stanza of "Ode to a Nightingale."
7. How does Keats characterize the nightingale in "Ode to a Nightingale?"
8. What is a comparison of Keat's poems "Ode to a Nightingale" and "To Autumn"? What do these poems
9. What are five literary devices in the poem "Ode to a Nightingale"?
10. How does Keats' Ode to a Nightingale follow the pastoral tradition?

Unit II Section (b)

Poem 2 "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

Summary and Analysis

Keats' imagined urn is addressed as if he were contemplating a real urn. It has survived intact from antiquity. It is a "sylvan historian" telling us a story, which the poet suggests by a series of questions. Who are these gods or men carved or painted on the urn? Who are these reluctant maidens? What is this mad pursuit? Why the struggle to escape? What is the explanation for the presence of musical instruments? Why this mad ecstasy?

Imagined melodies are lovelier than those heard by human ears. Therefore the poet urges the musician pictured on the urn to play on. His song can never end nor the trees ever shed their leaves. The lover on the urn can never win a kiss from his beloved, but his beloved can never lose her beauty. Happy are the trees on the urn, for they can never lose their leaves. Happy is the musician forever playing songs forever new. The lovers on the urn enjoy a love forever warm, forever panting, and forever young, far better than actual love, which eventually brings frustration and dissatisfaction.

Who are the people coming to perform a sacrifice? To what altar does the priest lead a garlanded heifer? What town do they come from? That town will forever remain silent and deserted.

Fair urn, Keats says, adorned with figures of men and maidens, trees and grass, you bring our speculations to a point at which thought leads nowhere, like meditation on eternity. After our generation is gone, you will still be here, a friend to man, telling him that beauty is truth and truth is beauty — that is all he knows on earth and all he needs to know.

Analysis

Keats has created a Greek urn in his mind and has decorated it with three scenes. The first is full of frenzied action and the actors are men, or gods, and maidens. Other figures, or possibly the male figures, are playing musical instruments. The maidens are probably the nymphs of classical mythology. The men or gods are smitten with love and are pursuing them. Keats, who loved classical mythology, had probably read stories of such love games. In Book II of his *Endymion*, he recounts Alpheus' pursuit of Arethusa, and in Book III he tells of Glaucus' pursuit of Scylla.

The second scene is developed in stanzas II and III. Under the trees a lover is serenading his beloved. In stanza I, Keats confined himself to suggesting a scene by questions. The second scene is not presented by means of questions but by

means of description. We see a youth in a grove playing a musical instrument and hoping, it seems, for a kiss from his beloved. The scene elicits some thoughts on the function of art from Keats. Art gives a kind of permanence to reality. The youth, the maiden, and the musical instrument are, as it were, caught and held permanently by being pictured on the urn. And so Keats can take pleasure in the thought that the music will play on forever, and although the lover can never receive the desired kiss, the maiden can never grow older nor lose any of her beauty. The love that they enjoy is superior to human love which leaves behind "a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd, / A burning forehead, and a parching tongue." The aftermath of human love is satiety and dissatisfaction. In these two stanzas Keats imagines a state of perfect existence which is represented by the lovers pictured on the urn. Art arrests desirable experience at a point before it can become undesirable. This, Keats seems to be telling us, is one of the pleasurable contributions of art to man.

The third scene on Keats' urn is a group of people on their way to perform a sacrifice to some god. The sacrificial victim, a lowing heifer, is held by a priest. Instead of limiting himself to the sacrificial procession as another scene on his urn, Keats goes on to mention the town emptied of its inhabitants by the procession. The town is desolate and will forever be silent.

The final stanza contains the beauty-truth equation, the most controversial line in all the criticism of Keats' poetry. No critic's interpretation of the line satisfies any other critic, however, and no doubt they will continue to wrestle with the equation as long as the poem is read. In the stanza, Keats also makes two main comments on his urn. The urn teases him out of thought, as does eternity; that is, the problem of the effect of a work of art on time and life, or simply of what art does, is a perplexing one, as is the effort to grapple with the concept of eternity. Art's (imagined) arrest of time is a form of eternity and, probably, is what brought the word *eternity* into the poem.

The second thought is the truth-beauty equation. Through the poet's imagination, the urn has been able to preserve a temporary and happy condition of permanence, but it cannot do the same for Keats or his generation; old age will waste them and bring them woe. Yet the pictured urn can do something for them and for succeeding generations as long as it will last. It will bring them through its pictured beauty a vision of happiness (truth) of a kind available in eternity, in the hereafter, just as it has brought Keats a vision of happiness by means of sharing its existence empathically and bringing its scenes to emotional life through his imagination. All you know on earth and all you need to know in regard to beautiful works of art, whether urns or poems about urns, is that they give an

inkling of the unchanging happiness to be realized in the hereafter. When Keats says "that is all ye know on earth," he is postulating an existence beyond earth. Although Keats was not a particularly religious man, his meditation on the problem of happiness and its brief duration in the course of writing "Ode on a Grecian Urn" brought him a glimpse of heaven, a state of existence which his letters show he did think about. In his letter of November 22, 1817, to Benjamin Bailey, he mentioned "another favorite Speculation of mine, that we shall enjoy ourselves here after by having what we called happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone and so repeated."

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Have you ever been happy enough that you felt you could live in that moment forever? If not, did this poem convince you that such moments are possible?
2. What's the deal with the speaker? He's all over the place. He seems to go from curious to nostalgic to lustful to frustrated. If you had to write his fictional life story, what would it say?
3. Why do you think the first critics of Keats's poetry hated it so much?
4. How would you describe the overall tone of the poem? Is it joyful or sad?
5. Is the speaker able to identify with the Ancient Greeks depicted on the urn, or is he merely excited by the "mystery" of their culture and its foreignness. Do you feel like you can identify with life on the urn?
6. Does the speaker understand the scene on the urn?
7. Give a stanza by stanza explanation of Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn."
8. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," what is the meaning of "foster-child of silence and slow time?"
9. What is a good conclusion for the poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn?"
10. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," why does Keats call the urn a "Sylvan historian?"

Unit II Section (b)

Poem 3 "Ode to Psyche"

The poet imagines that he has either seen or dreamed that he has seen the winged goddess Psyche while he was wandering in a forest. She lay in the grass in a grotto made of leaves and flowers in the embrace of Adonis.

He addresses her as the "latest born and loveliest vision far / Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!" Although she is fairer than all other goddesses, there is no temple to her with an altar and a choir of virgins to sing hymns to her. No one plays a musical instrument in her honor nor offers incense to her. No shrine or grove is sacred to her. No oracle or priest serves her. Keats therefore will be her choir, her lute, her incense, her shrine, her grove, her oracle, and her prophet. He will be her priest and build a temple in his mind to her. Thoughts will serve for pine trees and among them will be her sanctuary which his imagination will decorate with flowers of every variety. In her sanctuary there will be a "bright torch" and a window open at night through which her lover, Cupid, may enter.

Analysis

"Ode to Psyche" is the first of a group of odes which Keats composed in April and May 1819. It is one of Keats' best and most significant poems, but it has not gained the interest of readers in the way that his famous "Ode on a Grecian Urn" or "Ode to a Nightingale" have. It does not measure up to them in power of language, beauty of form, or interest of theme.

The goddess Psyche does not belong in the pantheon of classical mythology. She is the creation of Apuleius, the second century A.D. Latin author of *The Golden Ass*. In this novel, he tells the story of Cupid and Psyche. Psyche was a merchant's daughter whose beauty aroused the jealousy of Venus; Venus ordered her son Cupid to make Psyche fall in love with a vile, deformed creature. But Cupid fell in love with her himself and every night would come to her. Eventually, however, Jupiter secured immortality for Psyche and so Cupid was united with her forever.

Keats had read the story in Apuleius and probably had seen reproductions of paintings of Cupid in the bedroom of Psyche. The subject was a very popular one with Renaissance and later artists. Keats' artist friends would have been familiar with it and might have drawn Keats' attention to reproductions.

What interested Keats particularly in the myth was the fact that Psyche, a mortal, achieved immortality through love. In *Endymion*, Keats has his hero achieve immortality through love; in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, Porphyro achieves a kind of immortality through love. Keats' ideal of perfect love was romantic love perpetuated. Psyche had achieved an immortality of erotic love. She had realized

Keats' youthful dream of love. It was inevitable that he should have written his "Ode to Psyche."

Classical antiquity had not worshiped Psyche because it had no knowledge of her before Apuleius invented her. But in a poem, Keats could do on a small scale what classical antiquity had not done. He could build her a shrine in his imagination and, in it, he would leave one window open for Love to enter in just as Cupid, the god of Love in the story told by Apuleius, had entered Psyche's room every night and enjoyed the sweets of love with her.

The "Ode to Psyche" is an important poem among Keats' works because it embodies Keats' ideal of love, an ideal unattainable in this world but possibly attainable hereafter and certainly attainable in the imagination, which can build a shrine to Psyche with a window through which Keats may enter and enjoy a perfect union with the perfect woman. In the story of Psyche, Keats found an ideal vehicle for the expression of one of his profoundest yearnings. The "Ode to Psyche" is a poem about young, warm Keatsian love, much like that in *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

In addition to what the "Ode to Psyche" reveals to the reader about Keats, the poem contains an abundance of imagery felicitously phrased. Flowers are "cool-rooted." "Olympus' faded hierarchy" states succinctly the fate that has overtaken the religion of the Greeks and Romans. "Haunted forest boughs" expresses eloquently the classical practice of peopling nature with hosts of such lesser divinities as nymphs. Pines "murmur" in the wind. Fancy is a botanist-gardener who "breeding flowers, will never breed the same."

Psyche's wings in the ode ("thy lucent fans") are accounted for by the fact that, in Greek, *psyche* is the word for soul, and the soul was often represented as having the wings of a butterfly. Cupid also traditionally had wings.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Write a short poem on the theme of love.
2. What is the difference between a lyric poem, such as "Ode to Psyche," and a ballad?
3. Write an essay explaining how the events in Keats's life influenced his poetry.
4. Write an essay on Keats's use of nature imagery in "Ode to Psyche."
5. In "Ode to Psyche", what does Keats offer to build for Psyche? What is special about his construction, and how does it reflect his worldview?

Unit II Section (b)

Poem 4

"To Autumn"

Autumn joins with the maturing sun to load the vines with grapes, to ripen apples and other fruit, "swell the gourd," fill up the hazel shells, and set budding more and more flowers. Autumn may be seen sitting on a threshing floor, sound asleep in a grain field filled with poppies, carrying a load of grain across a brook, or watching the juice oozing from a cider press. The sounds of autumn are the wailing of gnats, the bleating of lambs, the singing of hedge crickets, the whistling of robins, and the twittering of swallows.

Analysis

"To Autumn" is one of the last poems written by Keats. His method of developing the poem is to heap up imagery typical of autumn. His autumn is early autumn, when all the products of nature have reached a state of perfect maturity. Autumn is personified and is perceived in a state of activity. In the first stanza, autumn is a friendly conspirator working with the sun to bring fruits to a state of perfect fullness and ripeness. In the second stanza, autumn is a thresher sitting on a granary floor, a reaper asleep in a grain field, a gleaner crossing a brook, and, lastly, a cider maker. In the final stanza, autumn is seen as a musician, and the music which autumn produces is as pleasant as the music of spring — the sounds of gnats, lambs, crickets, robins and swallows.

In the first stanza, Keats concentrates on the sights of autumn, ripening grapes and apples, swelling gourds and hazel nuts, and blooming flowers. In the second stanza, the emphasis is on the characteristic activities of autumn, threshing, reaping, gleaning, and cider making. In the concluding stanza, the poet puts the emphasis on the sounds of autumn, produced by insects, animals, and birds. To his ears, this music is just as sweet as the music of spring.

The ending of the poem is artistically made to correspond with the ending of a day: "And gathering swallows twitter in the skies." In the evening, swallows gather in flocks preparatory to returning to their nests for the night.

"To Autumn" is sometimes called an ode, but Keats does not call it one. However, its structure and rhyme scheme are similar to those of his odes of the spring of 1819, and, like these odes, it is remarkable for its richness of imagery. It is a feast of sights and sounds.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Do you think we can know for sure that autumn is a woman in Keats's poem? Does it make a difference what gender he/she is?
2. Do you agree with critics who claim that this poem doesn't really have much to say? Is there a "message" in "To Autumn"? If so, what is it?
3. Why do so many people think the poem is pretty darned perfect?
4. Does the end of the poem provide any resolution? Is there any "conflict" to speak of in the poem?
5. Does this poem challenge any of the traditional associations that people have with autumn, or does it reinforce them? Explain.
6. Does "To Autumn" feel spontaneous, as though Keats jotted it down furiously after taking a walk, or does it feel meticulous and planned?
7. Why is the poem considered to be one of the "great odes"? Could you make an argument that it's not an ode at all?
8. How is nature presented in 'To Autumn' by John Keats?
9. In "To Autumn" by John Keats, where is onomatopoeia used?
10. Describe the person's admiration for autumn in the poem "To Autumn" by John Keats.

Unit III Section (a)

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Biography

Alfred, Lord Tennyson was born August 6, 1809, in Somersby, Lincolnshire, England, where his father was the rector. He was the fourth of twelve children. Alfred was a bright and talented boy, and the fine physique and manly good looks which characterized him as an adult were noticeable even at an early age.

Until he was eleven, Tennyson attended a grammar school in the nearby town of Louth, of which he later had very unhappy memories. From then on, he remained at home, where he studied under the close supervision of his scholarly father. Tennyson demonstrated his literary talents quite early, and by the age of fourteen had written a drama in blank verse and a 6000-line epic poem. He was also interested in the study of science, particularly astronomy and geology. In 1827, a small volume entitled *Poems by Two Brothers*, containing works by Alfred and Charles Tennyson, as well as a few short contributions by Frederick Tennyson, was published in Louth.

In 1828, Tennyson enrolled at Trinity College, Cambridge. Despite his intelligence and good looks, he was excessively shy and was quite unhappy. After a while, however, he joined an informal club known as "the Apostle" which counted among its members the most outstanding young men at the university. Here he was praised highly for his poetry, and he made the acquaintance of Arthur Henry Hallam, a brilliant young man, who was to become his closest and dearest friend. In 1829, Tennyson won the Newdigate Prize for poetry.

In 1830, while Tennyson was still an undergraduate, his volume *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* was published, but it made no significant impression of the reading public. That summer he and Hallam went to Spain with the romantic notion of joining a band of insurgents in the Pyrennes. They successfully delivered a large sum of money collected on behalf of the rebels, but there is no record of their having participated in any military engagement. In 1831, after his return, Tennyson was forced to leave the university without taking his degree, due to the death of his father.

Afterward, Tennyson lived quietly with his family at Somersby. He spent his time working on his poems and engaging in various outdoor sports and activities. Hallam was engaged to one of Tennyson's sisters and spent a great deal of time at the family home, so that the two young men were able to be together often.

In 1832, *Poems by Alfred Tennyson* was published, in which early versions of many of his finest pieces appeared, including "The Lady of Shalott," "The Palace

of Art," "The Lotos-Eaters," "Oenone," and "A Dream of Fair Women." The quality of the poems in the volume was not constant, and many of them were overly sentimental or lacking in polish. As a result, despite the fine lyrics mentioned above, the book received a very harsh critical reaction. Tennyson had never been able to stand criticism of his work, and he was deeply hurt. For a long time he wrote nothing, but he finally resolved to devote himself to the development of his poetic skill.

In 1833, Hallam died suddenly while in Vienna. The shock of this tragic loss affected Tennyson severely. He withdrew completely from all his usual activities and spent his time in mourning and meditation. During his bereavement he thought often about his affection for Hallam and about such problems as the nature of God and the immortality of the soul. During this long period of anguish and grief, Tennyson composed many very moving elegies and lyrics on the death of his beloved friend. These were eventually collected and published in 1850 and are considered one of the greatest elegaic works in English literature, *In Memoriam: A.H.H.*

During the next few years, Tennyson continued to live with his family, which had now moved to London, and to apply himself to his studies and writing. He became engaged to Emily Sellwood, despite the objection of her parents, but felt it was impossible for them to marry because his financial resources were so limited. In 1842, a two-volume collection of his work appeared, containing many revisions of earlier poems, besides a number of excellent new ones, including "Morte d'Arthur," "Ulysses," and "Locksley Hall." At last Tennyson was recognized as one of the leading literary figures of the period and was acclaimed throughout England.

At this time Tennyson lost his small inheritance through a foolish investment and suffered a serious nervous breakdown as a result. Upon his recovery he was provided with an annual pension by the British government. In June 1850, after an engagement of thirteen years, Tennyson and Emily were married. Later that same year Tennyson was appointed to the post of poet laureate, succeeding Wordsworth. Among the most notable poems he wrote while holding that office are the "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington" (1852) and "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854).

Despite his fame, Tennyson remained shy and moved from London to a more secluded home. He worked intently on his Arthurian poems, the earliest of which had been published in the 1832 volume, and the first four *idylls* appeared in 1859. These rapidly became his most popular works, and he continued to revise and add to them until the *Idylls of the King* reached its present form in the edition of 1885.

The remainder of Tennyson's life was uneventful. He and Emily had a son, whom they named Hallam. Tennyson was hailed as the greatest of English poets and was awarded numerous honors; he received an honorary degree from Oxford University in 1885 and was offered the rectorship of Glasgow University. In 1883, he was raised to the peerage by Queen Victoria and was thereafter known as Baron Tennyson of Aldworth. He was the first Englishman to be granted such a high rank solely for literary distinction. Among his friends Tennyson counted such noteworthy people as Albert, the Prince Consort, W. E. Gladstone, the prime minister, Thomas Carlyle, the historian, and Edward FitzGerald, the poet.

All his life Tennyson continued to write poetry. His later volumes include *Maude*, *A Monodrama* (1853), *Enoch Arden* (1864), *Ballads and Poems* (1880), *Tiresias and Other Ballads* (1885), *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* (1886), *Demeter and Other Poems* (1889), and *The Death of Oenone* (published posthumously in 1892). He also wrote a number of historical dramas in poetic form, among which are *Queen Mary* (1875), *Harold* (1877), *Beckett* (1884), and *The Foresters* (1892). Alfred, Lord Tennyson was the most highly regarded poet of his period and the most widely read of all English poets. The quality of his work varied greatly, and much that he wrote is of little interest today, for he included in his poetry themes and subjects that were of intense interest only to the Victorians. Tennyson's thought was often shallow and dealt with matters of fleeting significance, but his technical skill and prosody were unsurpassed. Perhaps the most perceptive evaluation of his work is embodied in Tennyson's own remark to Carlyle:

I don't think that since Shakespeare there has been such a master of the English language as I — to be sure, I have nothing to say.

Tennyson died at Aldworth House, his home in Surrey, on October 6, 1892, at the age of eighty-three. He was buried in the Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey, and the copy of Shakespeare's play *Cymbeline*, which he had been reading on the night of his death, was placed in his coffin.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. If you were at war for ten years, and then spent another ten years trying to get home, would you ever want to leave home again?
2. If you were an adventurous person, would you feel guilty leaving behind your spouse and child? Does Ulysses?
3. In Dante's *Inferno* (Canto XXVI), Ulysses is placed in Hell for eternity. Why does Dante think Ulysses deserves to be punished? Does Tennyson share Dante's opinion?
4. Why can't Ulysses just relax? Why do he feel the need for more and more adventure? What would Dr. Phil say to Ulysses?
5. Is Ulysses serious in this poem? Does he really plan to leave? Could this all be in his head, like in a movie when you find out that a whole series of events has just been a character's daydream?
6. Was Ulysses was a real person? Did the Trojan War really happen?
7. In the poem "Ulysses" by Alfred Lord Tennyson, is Ulysses a heroic or an unheroic figure?
8. The audience of Tennyson's "Ulysses" seems to change in each stanza. Why is this so?
9. What is Ulysses' opinion of retirement?
10. Who will rule the island when Ulysses retires?

Unit III Section (a)

Poem 1-The Lotus Eater

Type of Work

"The Lotus-Eaters" is a lyric poem. However, the first forty-five lines contain narration as well as lyricism.

Publication

The first version of "The Lotus-Eaters" was published by Edward Moxon in London in December 1832 but was printed with a publication year of 1833. The work appeared in a Tennyson collection entitled Poems. The final, extensively revised version of the poem was published by Moxon in an 1842 Tennyson collection with the same title.

Background

Tennyson based the poem on an episode in The Odyssey, Homer's great epic poem recounting the harrowing adventures of the Greek hero Odysseus during his sea voyage home after the Trojan War. (In his writings, Tennyson referred to Odysseus by his Roman name, Ulysses.) Ancient storytellers placed the time of the voyage between 1200 and 1180 BC, during the age of myth and legend. While on the voyage, Odysseus and his crewmen encountered many perils—including monsters and violent storms—and visited strange lands. In one of these lands lived people who consumed the edible parts of the lotus flower. (Lotos was the Greek name for many plants containing substances from which narcotics could be made or extracted.) After several crewmen ate of the lotus, it induced in them a pleasant, trancelike state. Of the incident, Odysseus presents the following account in Book 9 of The Odyssey:

Whosoever of them did eat the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus, had no more wish to ... come back, but there he chose to abide with the lotus-eating men, ever feeding on the lotus, and forgetful of his homeward way. Therefore I led them back to the ships weeping, and sore against their will, and dragged them beneath the benches, and bound them in the hollow barques. But I commanded the rest of my well-

loved company to make speed and go on board the swift ships, lest haply any should eat of the lotus and be forgetful of returning. Right soon they embarked, and sat upon the benches, and sitting orderly they smote the grey sea water with their oars. (Translation by Samuel H. Butcher and Andrew Lang. London: Macmillan, 1879)

Tone

The tone of "The Lotus-Eaters" is melancholic and objective. The atmosphere is surreal, as if the events in the poem are part of a dream.

Setting

The setting is an unidentified land with a surreal, dreamlike atmosphere. In Homer's *Odyssey*, this land was probably along the coast of North Africa.

Summary

While Odysseus and his men are sailing home from Troy, a storm blows them to the shore of a strange land where time stands still and the air seems to breathe like a weary dreamer. There is a full moon in the afternoon sky. Streams are all around, effusing mist, and a sparkling river flows to the sea. In the distance are three snow-capped mountain peaks tinged with the color of the lingering western sun. Beyond the mountains are a valley and meadows, flowers and palm trees.

Pale-faced men approach the crewmen and offer them the flowers and fruit of the lotus tree. After the men eat of the offering, they enter a trancelike state—as if asleep and awake at the same time. They sit down on the beach, dreamy-eyed, envisioning home and wife and child. But one of them says he will cease roaming the seas. Here is his home. And all the rest sing: "Our island home / Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam" (lines 44-45).

And then they sing of the softly lilting music that falls upon their weary eyes and brings restful, peaceful sleep among mosses, creeping ivies, and flowers. Why should they toil and fret, enduring sorrow after sorrow? Why should they wander from one place to the next? Why should they not stay Lotus land, enjoying everlasting calm?

Nature does not toil. Coaxed by the wind, the leaf emerges from its bud and grows in the warmth of the sun, fed by the nighttime dew. The apple, the flower—both mature where they are, never traveling, never toiling. The men ask why they should spend their days in ships on the sea, laboring under the dark blue sky, pursued by death? Is there any peace to be gained by rolling over one wave and another? "Let us alone," they sing. "Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease" (line 98).

How soothing it is for them to sit there half asleep as they eat the lotus and listen to the stream water and one another's quiet talk. How pleasant it is to watch the rippling waters on the beach and to recall old memories of married lives. They were happy then, true; but now all is changed. Their wives are older, their sons are grown, and they would look like ghosts to their families if they return. They wonder whether anyone would remember their feats in the war at Troy. What is past is past. They want to stay where they are. They want to avoid pain and labor. They are sea-weary.

In the land of the lotus, there is quiet contentment on beds of flowers with warm breezes blowing and streams falling into the river from purple hills. The sounds of nature lull rather than disturb. When the wind wafts, the lotus blossoms fall. There's been enough of sea life, tossing and rolling and turning about. The chorus of men says,

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,

In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined

On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind. (lines 153-155)

No longer will they be part of the troubles of the world—hunger, toil, plague, and anguish. It is better to rest on the shore than roam in the ocean. "We will wander no more" (line 173), the men say.

The Lotus-Eaters

By Alfred Lord Tennyson

"Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land,

"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon." 1

In the afternoon they came unto a land

In which it seemed always afternoon.

All round the coast the languid air did swoon, 5

Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.

Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;

And, like a downward smoke, the slender stream

Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke, 10

Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;

And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,

Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.

They saw the gleaming river seaward flow

From the inner land; far off, three mountain-tops, 15

Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,

Stood sunset-flush'd; and, dew'd with showery drops,

Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
 In the red West; thro' mountain clefts the dale 20
 Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
 Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
 And meadow, set with slender galingale;
 A land where all things always seem'd the same!
 And round about the keel with faces pale, 25
 Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
 The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.
 Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
 Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
 To each, but whoso did receive of them 30
 And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
 Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
 On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
 His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
 And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake, 35
 And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

 They sat them down upon the yellow sand.
 Between the sun and moon upon the shore;

And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
 Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore 40
 Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
 Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
 Then some one said, "We will return no more;"
 And all at once they sang, "Our island home
 Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam." 45

CHORIC SONG

I
 There is sweet music here that softer falls
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
 Or night-dews on still waters between walls
 Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
 Music that gentlier on the spirit lies, 50
 Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
 Here are cool mosses deep,
 And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
 And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep, 55
 And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
 And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
 While all things else have rest from weariness?
 All things have rest: why should we toil alone, 60
 We only toil, who are the first of things,
 And make perpetual moan,
 Still from one sorrow to another thrown;
 Nor ever fold our wings,
 And cease from wanderings, 65
 Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
 Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
 "There is no joy but calm!"—
 Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things? 64

III

Lo! in the middle of the wood, 70
 The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
 With winds upon the branch, and there
 Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
 Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
 Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow 75

Falls, and floats adown the air.

Lo! sweeten`d with the summer light,

The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,

Drops in a silent autumn night.

All its allotted length of days 80

The flower ripens in its place.

Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,

Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,

Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea. 85

Death is the end of life; ah, why

Should life all labor be?

Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,

And in a little while our lips are dumb.

Let us alone. What is it that will last? 90

All things are taken from us, and become

Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.

Let us alone. What pleasure can we have

To war with evil? Is there any peace

In ever climbing up the climbing wave? 95

All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence—ripen, fall, and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

V

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem 100
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush⁵ on the height;
To hear each other's whisper'd speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day. 105
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory, 110
With those old faces of our infancy
Heap'd over with a mound of grass.
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!⁶

VI

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives.

And dear the last embraces of our wives 115

And their warm tears; but all hath suffer'd change;

For surely now our household hearths are cold,

Our sons inherit us, our looks are strange,

And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.

Or else the island princes over-bold 120

Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings

Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,

And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.

Is there confusion in the little isle??

Let what is broken so remain. 125

The Gods are hard to reconcile;

'Tis hard to settle order once again.

There is confusion worse than death,

Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,

Long labor unto aged breath, 130

Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars

And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.8

VII

But, propped on beds of amaranth9 and moly,10

How sweet—while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly—

With half-dropped eyelids still, 135
 Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
 To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
 His waters from the purple hill—
 To hear the dewy echoes calling
 From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine— 140
 To watch the emerald-color'd water falling
 Thro' many a woven acanthus-wreath! I divine!
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine.
 Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak, 145
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek;
 All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone;
 Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
 Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is blown.
 We have had enough of action, and of motion we. 150
 Roll'd to starboard,¹² roll'd to larboard,¹³ when the surge was seething free.
 Where the wallowing monster¹⁴ spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.
 Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
 In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined

On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind. 155
 For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
 Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd
 Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:
 Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
 Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
 160
 Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying hands.
 But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
 Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
 Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong:
 Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave¹⁵ the soil, 165
 Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
 Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
 Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd—down in hell
 Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
 Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel. 16 170
 Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
 Than labor in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar,
 O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

Notes

- 1.... Courage . . . soon: Odysseus (Ulysses) is speaking.
- 2.... clomb: Climbed.
- 3.... galingale: Sedge having leaves with rough edges.
- 4.... Why . . . things: Why should a human being, the crowning glory of earthly creation, have to spend his days in toil?
- 5.... myrrh-bush: Source of myrrh, an aromatic resin (sticky substance) used in incense, perfume, and medicinal preparations.
- 6.... those old faces . . . brass: The old faces (friends, acquaintances) are now buried corpses or ashes in an urn.
- 7.... little isle: Greek island of Ithaca, west of mainland Greece. It was the home of Odysseus.
- 8.... pilot-stars: Stars that ship captains use to plot their courses.
- 9.... amaranth: Flowering herb with edible seeds.
- 10...moly: In Greek mythology, an herb with magical properties. Odysseus ate it on one of his adventures to protect himself from the power of a sorceress.
- 11...acanthus-wreath: Wreath made of acanthus, an herb or shrub with spiny leaves and white or purple flowers.
- 12...starboard: The right side of a ship as one looks forward to the bow.
- 13...larboard: The left side of a ship as one looks forward to the bow.
- 14...wallowing monster: Probably a whale.
- 15...cleave: Break up; plow.
- 16...asphodel: Plant in the lily family.

Interpretation and Theme

The poem centers on idle contentment. Whether the author is condemning it, sanctioning it, or remaining neutral is arguable.

One can logically conclude that the purpose of the poem is to deplore a life of doing nothing leisure. Tennyson himself—and his father, the Rev. George Clayton—were both hard workers. When Tennyson wrote the poem, many of the nobility in England and the rest of Europe lived a life of leisure, using their inherited estates to generate income to pay for their fashions, parties, and servants staffs.

Although Tennyson himself had noble ancestry, his father had been disinherited. Consequently, he had to manage money diligently to maintain his large family. (Alfred was one of twelve Tennyson children.) While Alfred was attending Cambridge University, his father died and the youth had to return home to help out. It was not until years later, when he gained fame as a poet, that Tennyson began earning enough money to live comfortably.

Given his background, it seems only natural that Tennyson would frown on an unproductive life of leisure. He may also have frowned on the use of drugs and alcohol as means to escape reality, inasmuch as his financially beleaguered father started to drink heavily when Alfred was a teenager.

On the other hand, one can conclude that Tennyson was endorsing a leisurely life as a way of calling attention to the preoccupation of England's lower and middle classes with their jobs. In the industrial age of the early nineteenth century, many breadwinners were spending long hours in factories, shops, and offices. Life was fast-paced. Industrial centers like London were crowded and smoky. Everyone seemed to be rushing about to put a jingle in his pocket. Life at sea was just as busy. Ships were sailing to the Americas, the East Indies, and elsewhere to expand commerce and build the empire.

That Ulysses' crewmen speak of melancholy and even death as allies only underscores their aversion to a life of toil, tension, and sea travel—and perhaps Tennyson's dissatisfaction with the direction of the British Empire.

It is also possible that Tennyson was merely presenting a lyrical response to the episode about the lotus eaters in *The Odyssey*—or that he was preaching moderation: too much leisure is bad, and too much work is equally bad.

The reader can intelligently argue in favor of any of these themes.

The Lotus Eaters and Christianity

Christians generally regard hard work as beneficial to their spiritual as well as material well-being. But they also believe that good people will enjoy eternal peace and contentment—free of toil and drudgery—after they die. Does the nature of their life in heaven mean that they will be, in effect, lotus-eaters? Tennyson's poem raises this question.

Structure

The poem consists of an introductory section of five stanzas and a "choric song" of eight stanzas.

Meter and End Rhyme

Section 1

Each stanza in the introductory section (first forty-five lines) contains nine lines. The first eight lines of a stanza generally contain ten syllables each—usually in pairs of iambs—and the last line contains twelve or thirteen. The end rhyme in the introductory section follows a definite pattern in each nine-line stanza: abab bcbe c.

Both the meter and end rhyme of each stanza imitate the meter and rhyme pattern in the nine-line stanza that Edmund Spenser (1522-1599) established in his long epic poem, *The Faerie Queene*. Such a stanza came to be known as the Spenserian stanza.

Section 2

The line and stanza length vary in "The Choric Song." The last stanza has the most and longest lines in the poem, perhaps suggesting that the drug in the Lotus

flower is making the men more talkative about their view of life in the workaday world compared with life in Lotus land. There is end rhyme in "The Choric Song," but it also varies. For example, the end rhyme in the first stanza is abab ccc eeee. In the second stanza, on the other hand, it is aaa bcb bcc dcd.

Figures of Speech

Following are among the figures of speech in the poem. For definitions of figures of speech,

Alliteration

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness (line 57)

Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,

Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil. (lines 82-83)

mild-minded melancholy (line 109)

For surely now our household hearths are cold (line 117)

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak

The Lotos blows by every winding creek (lines 145-146)

Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea (line 152)

In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined (line 154)

and the clouds are lightly curl'd

Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world (lines 157-158)

Anaphora

three mountain-tops,

Three silent pinnacles of aged snow (lines 15-16)

Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,

Only to bear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine. (lines 143-144)

Assonance

Give us long rest or death (line 98)

Metaphor

from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep. (line 56)

Comparison of the poppy to a sleeping creature

Nor ever fold our wings (line 64)

Comparison of the crewmen to birds

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Do you think that the sailors could be happy lying around on the beach for the rest of their lives? Does the poem suggest that work might be necessary in order to live a happy life? If so, where?
2. Are the sailors totally hypnotized here? Or is the Lotos just bringing out their true thoughts? Which parts of the poem support your answer?
3. Do you think it's fair to say that this poem is about drugs? Does it make a point about the perils of drug use, or does that not seem like the point at all to you? Why do you think so?
4. Which of the following do you regard as lotus eaters? (1) A wealthy young heiress who spends her money on anything that gives her pleasure. She does not work. (2) People who prefer to live on welfare even though they can work. (They pretend to qualify for benefits.) (3) Saints in heaven. (4) People who use narcotics to escape from the pressures of life.
5. Write an essay arguing that Tennyson's poem was intended to condemn the way some people live.
6. Consumption of mind-altering substances can make people say foolish things. Is this the case with the men who consume the lotus flower?
7. Do you sometimes retreat to your own Lotus land to avoid problems? Does your withdrawal make things better or worse?
8. What is a lotus? Does it have narcotic properties?
9. The poem begins when Odysseus tells his men to have courage. Why must they have courage? What is the threat?
10. Write an essay answering the question raised under The Lotus Eaters and Christianity.

Unit III Section (a)

*Poem 2-ulysses***Complete Text**

*t little profits that an idle king,
 By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
 Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
 Unequal laws unto a savage race,
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.*

*I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
 Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
 Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
 That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
 Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
 Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known; cities of men
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,
 Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
 I am a part of all that I have met;
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
 Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
 For ever and forever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
 As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life*

*Were all too little, and of one to me
 Little remains: but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more,
 A bringer of new things; and vile it were
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
 And this gray spirit yearning in desire
 To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.*

*This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
 To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
 This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
 A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.
 Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
 Of common duties, decent not to fail
 In offices of tenderness, and pay
 Meet adoration to my household gods,
 When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.*

*There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
 There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
 Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
 That ever with a frolic welcome took
 The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
 Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
 Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
 Death closes all: but something ere the end,
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done.*

*Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods,
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows: for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are:
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

Summary

Ulysses (Odysseus) declares that there is little point in his staying home "by this still hearth" with his old wife, doling out rewards and punishments for the unnamed masses who live in his kingdom.

Still speaking to himself he proclaims that he "cannot rest from travel" but feels compelled to live to the fullest and swallow every last drop of life. He has enjoyed all his experiences as a sailor who travels the seas, and he considers himself a symbol for everyone who wanders and roams the earth. His travels have exposed him to many different types of people and ways of living. They have also exposed him to the "delight of battle" while fighting the Trojan War with his nation. Ulysses

declares that his travels and encounters have shaped who he is: "I am a part of all that I have met," he asserts. And it is only when he is traveling that the "margin" of the globe that he has not yet traversed shrink and fade, and cease to goad him.

Ulysses declares that it is boring to stay in one place, and that to remain stationary is to rust rather than to shine; to stay in one place is to pretend that all there is to life is the simple act of breathing, whereas he knows that in fact life contains much novelty, and he longs to encounter this. His spirit yearns constantly for new experiences that will broaden his horizons; he wishes "to follow knowledge like a sinking star" and forever grow in wisdom and in learning.

Ulysses now speaks to an unidentified audience concerning his son Telemachus, who will act as his successor while the great hero resumes his travels: he says, "This is my son, mine own Telemachus, to whom I leave the scepter and the isle." He speaks highly but also patronizingly of his son's capabilities as a ruler, praising his prudence, dedication, and devotion to the gods. Telemachus will do his work of governing the island while Ulysses will do his work of traveling the seas: "He works his work, I mine."

In the final stanza, Ulysses addresses the mariners with whom he has worked, traveled, and weathered life's storms over many years. He declares that although he and they are old, they still have the potential to do something noble and honorable before "the long day wanes." He encourages them to make use of their old age because "'tis not too late to seek a newer world." He declares that his goal is to sail onward "beyond the sunset" until his death. Perhaps, he suggests, they may even reach the "Happy Isles," or the paradise of perpetual summer described in Greek mythology where great heroes like the warrior Achilles were believed to have been taken after their deaths. Although Ulysses and his mariners are not as strong as they were in youth, they are "strong in will" and are sustained

by their resolve to push onward relentlessly: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

A Close Reading of Alfred Tennyson's "Ulysses"

In the second stanza (lines 33-43) of his poem, Alfred Tennyson has Ulysses, in an aside, describe his son, Telemachus, in rather mundane and bland terms. This stanza is made more jarring as it is set between two longer, much more exuberant stanzas in which Ulysses portrays himself as the larger than life character he is. In the first stanza (lines 1-32), the brave and clever Ulysses is an aging king grown dissatisfied with his life and longing for the adventures of his prime which he recounts. In the third stanza (lines 44-70), Ulysses exhorts his old crew to join him as he abandons Ithaca and enthusiastically sets off to be Odysseus once more. Placed between these two stanzas, the second stanza appears to be insulting as Telemachus is portrayed as being less worthy than his father, but is it truly so? I assert that Ulysses is actually praising Telemachus and presenting him to the Ithacans as the better king in what is both said and unsaid.

In the second stanza, Ulysses seems to be condemning Telemachus with faint praise. As he abdicates, he acknowledges "my son, mine own Telemachus" and catalogues his abilities as king in seemingly passive terms: "slow prudence," "soft degrees," "blameless," "common duties," "decent," "offices of tenderness." He even seems to suggest that his son isn't, and never will be, the man his father is: "He works his work, I mine." Not only is Ulysses proclaiming Telemachus as his true and rightful heir but he also is arguing that his son has all the skills required of a good king. Even the apparent attack on Telemachus's manhood, is actually praise which pushes the son out from under the father's shadow. Ulysses thus asserts both his son's unique manhood and admits that he lacks his son's kingly skills and is thus less worthy to rule. Ulysses recognizes that his greatness lies in his achievements as a warrior and an adventurer, as the hero Odysseus. He also recognizes that his son's greatness lies in his ability to govern, a role for which the wise Mentor has thoroughly prepared him in his father's long absence. Furthermore, he realizes that his people need a great king, not a great hero, and he makes that happen.

Tennyson's Ulysses also seems to give short shrift to Telemachus by omitting the son's accomplishments as a man. Ulysses doesn't have to tell the Ithacans these things as they know them all too well. They knew the loyal son who asserted his presumably dead father's kingship and defended it against all usurpers — his mother's suitors and himself included. They knew the dutiful son who journeyed to learn the truth of his father's fate. They knew the faithful son who brought his father home and helped him kill all of the would-be usurpers. By leaving these facts unstated, Ulysses avoids overselling his son, thus undermining his position as king. For the ancient Greeks, true modesty was that one claimed much, and that one deserved much. It's one thing for Ulysses to brag on himself and quite another for him to brag on his son. Telemachus and his accomplishments can speak for themselves. Accordingly, the tone and brevity of the comments are an expression of respect and admiration from a father to his son. Given both what is said and what is unsaid, the second stanza serves as Ulysses's escape from the burdens of kingship. His people can let him go because his departure will allow the ascension of a better king. Thus, the second stanza is the expression of a father's love, respect, and pride for his son.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Why is *Ulysses* known as the most influential novel of the 20th century? What is so revolutionary about it?
2. Can you discern any specific "message" or philosophy from *Ulysses*? If not, do you think there is some lesson to be learned from the numerous juxtapositions and conflicting philosophies presented in the novel?
3. Does *Ulysses* succeed in its goal of elevating the common man or does it come across as literary pandering to lower class people?
4. Are there any benefits to be gained from the difficulty of *Ulysses*? How would it be a different book if it were easier?
5. What do you make of the fact that the people *Ulysses* is about probably could not understand the book?
6. How does *Ulysses* re-work the *Odyssey*? Thematically, how is it similar to the earlier epic, and how does it challenge and re-evaluate early ideas of Homer's?
7. What do Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus have to offer one another? In what ways do they form a surrogate father surrogate son pair, and in what ways does the comparison not work?
8. What is the affect and seeming purpose of the stylistic play in the novel? Is it simply maddening or enthralling or can you discern some reason why Joyce moves through so many different styles?
9. Why is Stephen such an impossible character? What forces make him feel so isolated from the people around him?
10. How does Stephen re-work his intense religious beliefs within an artistic framework?
11. How do Stephen and Bloom address the problem of English oppression in Ireland, and the paired problem of narrow-minded Irish nationalism?
12. Why would Joyce make the protagonist of his book Jewish? What role does Bloom's Jewishness play in the story?
13. With a particular focus on Molly Bloom's adultery, what is the relationship between love and sex in the novel?
14. Why are Stephen and Bloom so passive?
15. Is Molly's soliloquy at the end of the book a piece of feminist writing or not?

16. What is the purpose of all the literary references and allusions in the novel? Does it come across as Joyce showing off, or do you think that the allusions actually contribute to the story in some way?
17. Why is the book so drenched in the particular details of Dublin life? Do these details date it and make it inaccessible to later readers?

Unit III Section (a)

Poem 3- Tears, Idle Tears

Tears, Idle Tears

Type of Work and Publication Year

Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears" is a lyric poem centering on bittersweet memories of the past. Edward Moxon published the poem in London in 1847 as part of a longer work, *The Princess*.

As the speaker looks upon cheerful autumn fields, he longs for bygone days. His feelings rise from the seat of emotion, the heart, and "gather to the eyes" (line 3) as tears. He cannot link the tears to a specific memory, for they are idle tears—tears that he cannot explain. Apparently, it is the past in general that moves him, "the days that are no more (lines 5, 10, 15, and 20)."

The past can hearten, like morning's first light on the sail of a ship returning our friends from the land of the dead. And it can sadden, like evening's last light on the sail of a ship carrying those friends beyond the horizon. "So sad, so fresh" (line 10) are those days of long ago.

How strange and sad it is for a dying man to hear the first chirp of the birds at the dawn of a summer day and watch the sun turn the window into a "glimmering square."

The bygone days are as sweet to us as the memories of kisses from loved ones who have died—as as sweet at those we imagined we bestowed on the lips of a person pledged to another. Memories of those days are as deep as first love and full of regret for what we did or did not do. They are death in life, those days that are long gone.

Theme

The theme of the poem is the pleasing pain of remembering the past.

Verse Format

The predominant verse format of the poem is unrhymed iambic pentameter (blank verse), but several lines do not conform strictly to this pattern. The last two lines of the first stanza demonstrate the metric pattern of most of the lines.

.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

In LOOK...ing ON...the HAP...y AU-...turnn FIELDS

.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

And THINK...ing OF...the DAYS...that ARE...no MORE

However, the first line of the poem—if read with the natural stresses of speech—is not in iambic pentameter. Note the following graphic representations of the stresses as they would usually be spoken.

Example 1

....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6

TEARS...I die...TEARS...I KNOW...not WHAT...they MEAN

Feet: (1) Single stressed syllable, (2) trochee, (3) single stressed syllable, (4) iamb, (5) iamb, (6) iamb

Meter: Hexameter.

Example 2

....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

TEARS...li die...TEARS...I KNOW...not WHAT...they MEAN

Feet: (1) Single stressed syllable, (2) anapest, (3) iamb, (4) iamb, (5) iamb

Meter: Pentameter.

The first line of the second stanza qualifies as iambic pentameter if the reader pronounces glittering as glit-ring. Note the following graphic representation.

.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Fresh AS...the FIRST...beam GLIT...ring ON...a SAIL

Text of the Poem

...Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,

Tears from the depth of some divine despair

Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,

In looking on the happy autumn-fields,

And thinking of the days that are no more.....5

...Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,

That brings our friends up from the underworld,

Sad as the last which reddens over one

That sinks with all we love below the verge;

So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.....10

...Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns

The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds

To dying ears, when unto dying eyes

The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;

So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.....15

...Dear as remembered kisses after death.

And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd

On lips that are for others; deep as love,

Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;

O Death in Life, the days that are no more!.....20

Figures of Speech

.....Following are examples of figures of speech in the poem. For definitions of figures of speech, see Literary Terms.

Alliteration

know not (line 1)

depth of some divine despair (line 2)

Fresh as the first beam (line 6)

friends up from (line 7)

which reddens over one (line 8)

with all we love below the verge (line 9)

So sad, so fresh (line 10)

sad and strange as in dark summer dawns (line 11)

Apostrophe/Paradox

O Death in Life

Apostrophe: The speaker addresses Death.

Paradox: Death in Life

Metaphor

O Death in Life, the days that are no more (line 20)

Comparison of "the days that are no more" to "Death in Life"

Simile

The second stanza compares the freshness of "the days that are no more" (line 10) to the freshness of the "first beam" (line 6). It also compares the sadness of "the days that are no more" to the sadness of "the last [beam] which reddens" (line 8). The simile reads this way: The days that are no more are fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail . . . [and] sad as the last one which reddens. . . .

The third stanza compares the sadness and strangeness of "the days that are no more" (line 15) to the "earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds / To dying ears" (lines 11 and 12). The simile reads this way: The days that are no more are sad and strange . . . as the earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds to dying ears.

The fourth stanza compares "the days that are no more" (line 20) to the dearness of "remembered kisses" (line 16), the sweetness of kisses "by hopeless fancy feigned" (line 17), and the deepness of love (lines 18 and 19). The simile reads this way: The days that are no more are dear as remembered kisses after death . . . and sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd . . . deep as love, deep as first love. . .

Robert Browning, (born May 7, 1812, London—died Dec. 12, 1889, Venice), major English poet of the Victorian age, noted for his mastery of dramatic monologue and psychological portraiture. His most noted work was *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69), the story of a Roman murder trial in 12 books

The son of a clerk in the Bank of England in London, Browning received only a slight formal education, although his father gave him a grounding in Greek and Latin. In 1828 he attended classes at the University of London but left after half a session. Apart from a journey to St. Petersburg in 1834 with George de

Benkhausen, the Russian consul general, and two short visits to Italy in 1838 and 1844, he lived with his parents in London until 1846, first at Camberwell and after 1840 at Hatcham. During this period (1832-46) he wrote his early long poems and most of his plays.

Browning's first published work, *Pauline: A Fragment of a Confession* (1833, anonymous), although formally a dramatic monologue, embodied many of his own adolescent passions and anxieties. Although it received some favourable comment, it was attacked by John Stuart Mill, who condemned the poet's exposure and exploitation of his own emotions and his "intense and morbid self-consciousness." It was perhaps Mill's critique that determined Browning never to confess his own emotions again in his poetry but to write objectively. In 1835 he published *Paracelsus* and in 1840 *Sordello*, both poems dealing with men of great ability striving to reconcile the demands of their own personalities with those of the world. *Paracelsus* was well received, but *Sordello*, which made exacting demands on its reader's knowledge, was almost universally declared incomprehensible.

Encouraged by the actor Charles Macready, Browning devoted his main energies for some years to verse drama, a form that he had already adopted for *Strafford* (1837). Between 1841 and 1846, in a series of pamphlets under the general title of *Bells and Pomegranates*, he published seven more plays in verse, including *Pippa Passes* (1841), *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (produced in 1843), and *Luria* (1846). These, and all his earlier works except *Strafford*, were printed at his family's expense. Although Browning enjoyed writing for the stage, he was not successful in the theatre, since his strength lay in depicting, as he had himself observed of *Strafford*, "Action in Character, rather than Character in Action."

By 1845 the first phase of Browning's life was near its end. In that year he met Elizabeth Barrett. In her *Poems* (1844) Barrett had included lines praising Browning, who wrote to thank her (January 1845). In May they met and soon discovered their love for each other. Barrett had, however, been for many years an invalid, confined to her room and thought incurable. Her father, moreover, was a dominant and selfish man, jealously fond of his daughter, who in turn had come to depend on his love. When her doctors ordered her to Italy for her health and her

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father refused to allow her to go, the lovers, who had been corresponding and meeting regularly, were forced to act. They were married secretly in September 1846; a week later they left for Pisa.

Throughout their married life, although they spent holidays in France and England, their home was in Italy, mainly at Florence, where they had a flat in Casa Guidi. Their income was small, although after the birth of their son, Robert, in 1849 Mrs. Browning's cousin John Kenyon made them an allowance of £100 a year, and on his death in 1856 he left them £11,000.

Browning produced comparatively little poetry during his married life. Apart from a collected edition in 1849 he published only Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day (1850), an examination of different attitudes toward Christianity, perhaps having its immediate origin in the death of his mother in 1849; an introductory essay (1852) to some spurious letters of Shelley, Browning's only considerable work in prose and his only piece of critical writing; and *Men and Women* (1855). This was a collection of 51 poems—dramatic lyrics such as "Memorabilia," "Love Among the Ruins," and "A Toccata of Galuppi's"; the great monologues such as "Fra Lippo Lippi," "How It Strikes a Contemporary," and "Bishop Blougram's Apology"; and a very few poems in which implicitly ("By the Fireside") or explicitly ("One Word More") he broke his rule and spoke of himself and of his love for his wife. *Men and Women*, however, had no great sale, and many of the reviews were unfavourable and unhelpful. Disappointed for the first time by the reception of his work, Browning in the following years wrote little, sketching and modeling in clay by day and enjoying the society of his friends at night. At last Mrs. Browning's health, which had been remarkably restored by her life in Italy, began to fail. On June 29, 1861, she died in her husband's arms. In the autumn he returned slowly to London with his young son.

His first task on his return was to prepare his wife's *Last Poems* for the press. At first he avoided company, but gradually he accepted invitations more freely and began to move in society. Another collected edition of his poems was called for in 1863, but Pauline was not included. When his next book of poems, *Dramatis Personae* (1864)—including "Abt Vogler," "Rabbi Ben Ezra," "Caliban upon

Setebos," and "Mr. Sludge, 'The Medium' "—reached two editions, it was clear that Browning had at last won a measure of popular recognition.

In 1868–69 he published his greatest work, *The Ring and the Book*, based on the proceedings in a murder trial in Rome in 1698. Grand alike in plan and execution, it was at once received with enthusiasm, and Browning was established as one of the most important literary figures of the day. For the rest of his life he was much in demand in London society. He spent his summers with friends in France, Scotland, or Switzerland or, after 1878, in Italy.

The most important works of his last years, when he wrote with great fluency, were the long narrative or dramatic poems, often dealing with contemporary themes, such as *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* (1871), *Fifine at the Fair* (1872), *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* (1873), *The Inn Album* (1875), and the two series of *Dramatic Idyls* (1879 and 1880). He wrote a number of poems on classical subjects, including *Balaustion's Adventure* (1871) and *Aristophanes' Apology* (1875). In addition to many collections of shorter poems—*Pacchiarotto and How He Worked in Distemper* (1876), *Jocoseria* (1883), *Ferishtah's Fancies* (1884), and *Asolando: Fancies and Facts* (1889)—Browning published toward the end of his life two books of unusually personal origin—*La Saisiaz* (1878), at once an elegy for his friend Anne Egerton-Smith and a meditation on mortality, and *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day* (1887), in which he discussed books and ideas that had influenced him since his youth.

While staying in Venice in 1889, Browning caught cold, became seriously ill, and died on December 12. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. What effect does Frederick's conversation with the girl in the park have on him in "Tears, Idle
2. In "Tears, Idle, Tears," in what way does Frederick's mother attempt to cure him?
3. Does Mrs. Dickinson love her son in "Tears, Idle Tears"?
4. In "Tears, Idle Tears," how does Mrs. Dickinson feel about her son?
5. Please can you give a presentation of Mrs. Dickinson in "Tears, Idle Tears."
6. In da short story tears, idle tears by elizabeth bowen, Describe Mrs. Dickinson's relationship with
7. What is the plot summary of "Tears, Idle Tears"?
8. What is the denouement of the story "Tears, Idle Tears," by Elizabeth Bowen? i mean the brief one
9. What is the theme of the story? what does the author want to say?
10. I want to know the epiphany in "Tears, Idle Tears".

Unit III Section (b)

Poem 1-My Last Duchess

"My Last Duchess"

Complete Text

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint

Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,

Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
 —E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
 Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
 The company below, then. I repeat,
 The Count your master's known munificence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretence
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Summary

This poem is loosely based on historical events involving Alfonso, the Duke of Ferrara, who lived in the 16th century. The Duke is the speaker of the poem, and tells us he is entertaining an emissary who has come to negotiate the Duke's

marriage (he has recently been widowed) to the daughter of another powerful family. As he shows the visitor through his palace, he stops before a portrait of the late Duchess, apparently a young and lovely girl. The Duke begins reminiscing about the portrait sessions, then about the Duchess herself. His musings give way to a diatribe on her disgraceful behavior: he claims she flirted with everyone and did not appreciate his "gift of a nine-hundred-years- old name." As his monologue continues, the reader realizes with ever-more chilling certainty that the Duke in fact caused the Duchess's early demise: when her behavior escalated, "[he] gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together." Having made this disclosure, the Duke returns to the business at hand: arranging for another marriage, with another young girl. As the Duke and the emissary walk leave the painting behind, the Duke points out other notable artworks in his collection.

Form

"My Last Duchess" comprises rhyming pentameter lines. The lines do not employ end-stops; rather, they use enjambment—that is, sentences and other grammatical units do not necessarily conclude at the end of lines. Consequently, the rhymes do not create a sense of closure when they come, but rather remain a subtle driving force behind the Duke's compulsive revelations. The Duke is quite a performer: he mimics others' voices, creates hypothetical situations, and uses the force of his personality to make horrifying information seem merely colorful. Indeed, the poem provides a classic example of a dramatic monologue: the speaker is clearly distinct from the poet; an audience is suggested but never appears in the poem; and the revelation of the Duke's character is the poem's primary aim.

Commentary

But Browning has more in mind than simply creating a colorful character and placing him in a picturesque historical scene. Rather, the specific historical setting of the poem harbors much significance: the Italian Renaissance held a particular fascination for Browning and his contemporaries, for it represented the flowering of the aesthetic and the human alongside, or in some cases in the place of, the religious and the moral. Thus the temporal setting allows Browning to again explore sex, violence, and aesthetics as all entangled, complicating and confusing

each other: the lushness of the language belies the fact that the Duchess was punished for her natural sexuality. The Duke's ravings suggest that most of the supposed transgressions took place only in his mind. Like some of Browning's fellow Victorians, the Duke sees sin lurking in every corner. The reason the speaker here gives for killing the Duchess ostensibly differs from that given by the speaker of "Porphyria's Lover" for murdering Porphyria; however, both women are nevertheless victims of a male desire to inscribe and fix female sexuality. The desperate need to do this mirrors the efforts of Victorian society to mold the behavior—sexual and otherwise—of individuals. For people confronted with an increasingly complex and anonymous modern world, this impulse comes naturally: to control would seem to be to conserve and stabilize. The Renaissance was a time when morally dissolute men like the Duke exercised absolute power, and as such it is a fascinating study for the Victorians: works like this imply that, surely, a time that produced magnificent art like the Duchess's portrait couldn't have been entirely evil in its allocation of societal control—even though it put men like the Duke in power.

A poem like "My Last Duchess" calculatedly engages its readers on a psychological level. Because we hear only the Duke's musings, we must piece the story together ourselves. Browning forces his reader to become involved in the poem in order to understand it, and this adds to the fun of reading his work. It also forces the reader to question his or her own response to the subject portrayed and the method of its portrayal. We are forced to consider, Which aspect of the poem dominates: the horror of the Duchess's fate, or the beauty of the language and the powerful dramatic development? Thus by posing this question the poem firstly tests the Victorian reader's response to the modern world—*it asks, Has everyday life made you numb yet?*—and secondly asks a question that must be asked of all art—*it queries, Does art have a moral component, or is it merely an aesthetic exercise?* In these latter considerations Browning prefigures writers like Charles Baudelaire and Oscar Wilde.

At a Glance

- The Duke of this dramatic monologue is entertaining the father of his second bride-to-be and the father's envoy, a courtier of noble birth. The three are negotiating the terms of the marriage contract.
- The Duke shows the commissioned painting of his first wife. The painting is kept hidden behind a curtain that is drawn aside only by the Duke.
- The Duke tells the envoy the tale of his first wife. She was equally pleased by everything and by everybody; her pleasure had a passionate earnestness to it.
- The Duke's story ends with his ambiguous statement that he "gave orders" resulting in his wife's ultimate silence. This suggests she was murdered.
- The Duke discusses his demands for a dowry and his statue of the god Neptune taming a fragile, innocent seahorse. The statue is symbolic of himself and his first young bride.

- Karen P.L. Hardison.

Summary (Masterpieces of World Literature, Critical Edition)

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My Last Duchess

"My Last Duchess" is probably Browning's most popular and most anthologized poem. The poem first appeared in 1842 in *Dramatic Lyrics*, which is contained in *Bells and Pomegranates* (1841-1846). Perhaps the major reason for the fame of "My Last Duchess" is that it is probably the finest example of Browning's dramatic monologue. In it, he paints a devastating self-portrait of royalty, a portrait that doubtless reveals more of the duke's personality than Ferrara intends.

In fact, the irony is profound, for with each word spoken in an attempt to criticize his last duchess, the duke ironically reveals his utterly detestable nature and how far he is from seeing it himself.

Before the subtleties of "My Last Duchess" can be grasped, the basic elements of this dramatic monologue must be understood. The only speaker is the Duke of Ferrara. The listener, who, offstage, asks about the smile of the last duchess in the portrait, is silent during the entire poem. The listener is the emissary of a count and is helping to negotiate a marriage between the count's daughter and the duke. The time is probably the Italian Renaissance, though Browning does not so specify. The location is the duke's palace, probably upstairs in some art gallery, since the duke points to two nearby art objects. The two men are about to join the "company below" (line 47), so the fifty-six lines of the poem represent the end of the duke's negotiating his final terms.

Since the thrust of a Browning dramatic monologue is psychological self-characterization, what kind of man does the duke reveal himself to be? Surely, he is a very jealous man. He brags that he has had the duchess's portrait made by Fra Pandolf. Why would he hire a monk, obviously noted for his sacred art, to paint a secular portrait? The duke admits, "'twas not/ Her husband's presence only, called that spot/ Of joy into the Duchess' cheek" (lines 13-15). Then he notes that "perhaps/ Fra Pandolf chanced to say" (lines 15-16) and provides two exact quotations. The suggestion is strong that he observed the whole enterprise. He gave Fra Pandolf only a day to finish the expensive commissioned art. Pandolf is a painter so notable that the duke drops the artist's name. Probably, he chose Pandolf because, as a man of the cloth, the good brother would have taken a vow of chastity. Yet the duke's jealousy was so powerful that he observed this chaste painter with his wife in order to be sure. Later, the duke implies that the duchess was the kind of woman who had to be watched, for she had a heart "too easily impressed" (line 23), and "her looks went everywhere" (line 24). Yet the evidence that he uses to corroborate this charge—her love of sunsets, the cherry bough with which she was presented, her pet white mule—suggests only that she was a natural woman who preferred the simple pleasures.

The duke's pride and selfishness are also revealed. He is very proud of his family name, for, as he describes his marriage to his last duchess, he states that he gave her "My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name" (line 33). Yet he never once mentions love or his willingness to emerge from his own ego. Instead, he emphasizes that it is his curtain, his portrait, his name, his "commands" (line 45), and his sculpture. Tellingly, within fifty-six lines he uses seventeen first-person pronouns.

Undoubtedly, though, the most dominant feature of the duke's personality is a godlike desire for total control of his environment: "I said/ 'Fra Pandolf' by design" (lines 5-6). Browning reveals this trait by bracketing the poem with artistic images of control. As noted above, the painting of Fra Pandolf portrait reveals how the duke orchestrates the situation. Moreover, even now the duke controls the emissary's perception of the last duchess. Everything that the listener hears about her is filtered through the mind and voice of the duke. The emissary cannot even look at her portrait without the duke opening a curtain that he has had placed in front of the painting.

The final artistic image is most revealing. The last word in the duke's negotiations is further evidence of his desire for control. It compels the emissary to focus attention on another commissioned objet d'art: "Notice Neptune, though/ Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity/ Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!" (lines 54-56). Once again, the commissioned art is a sort of Rorschach test—it reveals a great deal about the personality of the commissioner. The thrust of the art object is dominance—the duke desires to be Neptune, god of the sea, taming a small, beautiful sea creature in what would obviously be no contest. In other words, the duke sees himself as a god who has tamed/will tame his duchess.

As earlier indicated, the duke has always associated his last duchess with beautiful things of nature. Like Neptune, the duke rules his kingdom, Ferrara, with an iron fist. When he grew tired of his last duchess, he says, "I gave commands" (line 45), and her smiles "stopped together" (line 46). Since the duke says that in her portrait the last duchess is "looking as if she were alive" (line 2), the suggestion is strong that, like the god that he would be, the duke has exercised the power over life and death.

The key critical question in "My Last Duchess" focuses on the duke's motivation. Why would a man so obviously desiring marriage to the count's daughter reveal himself in such negative terms? Critics take opposing views: Some characterize him as "shrewd"; others, as "witless." A related critical question considers the duke's impending marriage: Why would a man who has had so much trouble with his first duchess want a second wife?

The answers to both questions seem to lie in the duke's godlike self-image. Interestingly, for a man preoccupied with his nine-hundred-year-old name, nowhere does he mention progeny, and without children there will be no one to carry on the family name. Importantly, he uses a series of terminative images, all emphasizing the end of the cycle of life, to describe his last duchess—the sunset ends the day, the breaking of the bough ends the life of the cherry (also a sexual reference), the white mule is the end of its line (mules then could not reproduce within the breed), and whiteness as a color associated with sterility. Could it be that the duke, since he uses these images, employs his last duchess as a scapegoat and that he is the one who is sterile? Thus, his object in procuring the "fair daughter's self" (line 52) is children. No doubt, for a man who likes commissioned artwork, the "dowry" (line 51) will help defray his expenses. Perhaps the duke, like another Renaissance figure, Henry VIII, will run through a series of brides because he is unable to see the flaws in his own personality.

Stylistically, Browning has written a tour de force. The fifty-six lines are all in iambic pentameter couplets. The couplet form is quite formal in English poetry, and this pattern suggests the formal nature of the duke and control. Interestingly, unlike the traditional neoclassic heroic couplet, where lines are end-stopped, Browning favors enjambment, and the run-on line suggests the duke's inability to control everything—his inability to be a god.

Historically, readers have wondered about two things. Is the duke based on a real person? Some have suggested Vespasiano Gonzaga, duke of Sabbioneta, while others favor Alfonso II, fifth and last duke of Ferrara. Second, in his lifetime Browning was often asked what really happened to the duke's last duchess. Finally, Browning was forced to say, "the commands were that she should be put to death . . . or he might have had her shut up in a convent."

Why Is Fra Pandolf in the Plot?

Browning associates "My Last Duchess" strongly with the fifth duke, Alfonso II d'Este, of the Renaissance duchy of Ferrara by adding the single word "Ferrara" as the poem's epigraph, yet he never specifically states Ferrara is the speaker. This suggestive yet evasive association allows us to think of unstated details from a specific time and incident, such as the Duchess's age, while universalizing the themes that Browning illustrates in the narrative of this dramatic monologue, for example, Arrogance and Insolence; Young Brides; Ironic Conflict.

The Duke, in his monologue, implies that the envoy, agent for an unseen Count, who is accompanying the Duke is looking puzzled and wondering about the expression on the Duchess's face: the "earnest glance" of her eyes and the "spot of joy" in the blush of her cheeks (there is no thought here of her smile, just her eyes and cheeks).

The Duke is entertaining the Count's envoy (a person of high station--not a servant--who negotiates contracts or otherwise represents another's interests) by showing him around the palace. This also has a practical function in that the more the envoy knows about the Count's daughter's future home, the better his advice to the Count can be. At the end of the poem, the Duke reiterates his confidence in the Count; his opinions on the daughter's dowry (which will become the Duke's property); his objective in requesting the marriage.

During the Renaissance, friars and monks, if they had the talent, would engage in the art of painting following the example of the renowned Renaissance painter Fra Angelico. That Browning added an allusion to Fra Angelico through the fictional character of Fra Pandolf develops his theme of Arrogance and Insolence by contributing irony and conflict: the Duke is religious and contributes to a religious monastery (money paid to Pandolf will be collected in the monastery's coffers) yet can give "commands" for his wives removal. Browning clarified for Hiram Corson (see Themes Insight) that by "commands" he meant commands for her murder.

"I said / 'Fra Pandolf' by design": Browning also includes Fra Pandolf to help develop the Duchess's character as well as the Duke's character. The story of the

marriage of Alfonso II of Ferrara is that at twenty-five, he married a fourteen-year-old girl. In Browning's poem, Fra Pandolf was painting the Duchess's traditional wedding portrait. Knowledge of who the painter was proves that the girl was an innocent and misjudged by the Duke, which is confirmed by the items the Duke accuses her with, like "cherries" and sunset. Knowledge of the painter also shows that the Duke is guilty of uncomprehending arrogance and misjudged his bride to a grievous extent.

While it is tempting to think that the Duke occupied himself with watching the day-long painting process, he does not give quotations of what Fra Pandolf said to the Duchess, rather he makes suppositions of what he perchance said: Something as inconsequential as "your cloak is on your wrist." While denouncing his bride for being "Too easily impressed," he denounces himself for unseeing arrogance and folly. Browning's monologue allows the Duke to expose himself as arrogant and insolent through irony and ironic conflict while exonerating the Duchess as a sweet, simple girl who is not jaded and who still enjoys the simple pleasures of life through a still innocent spirit.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Would you be willing to marry the Duke of Ferrara?
2. What else do you think the Duke might have in his gallery, besides the portrait of the Duchess and the bronze statue of Neptune taming a seahorse?
3. Is it significant that the portrait of the Duchess is painted on the wall, instead of on a canvas? Why might a painter work directly on the surface of the wall, instead of on a surface that could be moved?
4. Why doesn't the Duke tell the Duchess directly that her behavior annoys him? What exactly does the Duchess do that drives him so wild?
5. Why does the Duke tell this story about his "last Duchess" to the servant of the man whose daughter he hopes to marry next?
6. Why are the only two named people in the poem, Frà Pandolf and Claus of Innsbruck, painters?
7. Is the Duke in "My Last Duchess" a "Bluebeard"?
8. Please describe the tone of Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess."
9. What is the name of the Duke in "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning?
10. In "My Last Duchess," why is the bronze statue, described in lines 54-56, important to the Duke?

Unit III Section (b)

Poem 2 – Last Ride Together

"Last Ride Together"

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,

Since now at length my fate I know,

Since nothing all my love avails,

Since all, my life seem'd meant for, fails,

Since this was written and needs must be— 5

My whole heart rises up to bless

Your name in pride and thankfulness!

Take back the hope you gave,—I claim

Only a memory of the same,

—And this beside, if you will not blame; 10

Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers,

Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs

When pity would be softening through,

Fix'd me a breathing-while or two 15

With life or death in the balance: right!

The blood replenish'd me again;

My last thought was at least not vain:

I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride, 20
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosom'd, over-bow'd
By many benedictions—sun's 25
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near, 30
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and linger'd—joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.
Then we began to ride. My soul
Smooth'd itself out, a long-cramp'd scroll 35
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?

Had I said that, had I done this,
 So might I gain, so might I miss. 40
 Might she have loved me? just as well
 She might have hated, who can tell!
 Where had I been now if the worst befell?
 And here we are riding, she and I,
 Fail I alone, in words and deeds? 45
 Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
 We rode; it seem'd my spirit flew,
 Saw other regions, cities new,
 As the world rush'd by on either side.
 I thought.—All labour, yet no less 50
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
 Look at the end of work, contrast
 The petty done, the undone vast,
 This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
 I hoped she would love me: here we ride. 55
 What hand and brain went ever pair'd?
 What heart alike conceived and dared?
 What act proved all its thought had been?
 What will but felt the fleshly screen?

We ride and I see her bosom heave. 60

There's many a crown for who can reach.

Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!

The flag stuck on a heap of bones,

A soldier's doing! what atones?

They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones. 65

My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,

Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell

What we felt only; you express'd

You hold things beautiful the best. 70

And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.

'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,

Have you yourself what's best for men?

Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—

Nearer one whit your own sublime 75

Than we who never have turn'd a rhyme?

Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave

A score of years to Art, her slave,

And that's your Venus, whence we turn 80

To yonder girl that fords the burn!

You acquiesce, and shall I repine?

What, man of music, you grown gray

With notes and nothing else to say,

Is this your sole praise from a friend. 85

'Greatly his opera's strains intend,

Put in music we know how fashions end!'

I gave my youth: but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate

Proposed bliss here should sublimate 90

My being—had I sign'd the bond—

Still one must lead some life beyond,

Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.

This foot once planted on the goal,

This glory-garland round my soul, 95

Could I descry such? Try and test!

I sink back shuddering from the quest

Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?

Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so long! 100

What if heaven be that, fair and strong

At life's best, with our eyes upturn'd
 Whither life's flower is first discern'd,
 We, fix'd so, ever should so abide?
 What if we still ride on, we two 105
 With life for ever old yet new,
 Charged not in kind but in degree,
 The instant made eternity.—
 And heaven just prove that I and she
 Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

Robert Browning's "Last Ride Together" is a monologue of a rejected lover that expresses his undying love for his beloved. The dramatic situation appears to be one in which the lover, upon being rejected by his mistress, asks for, and is granted, one last horseback ride with her across a mysterious landscape. The ride, however, seems to stretch out to eternity: there is no sense of time demarcation, but a continuous unfurling of landscape. The poem echoes the 'carpe diem' motif of seizing the present.

The poet dwells on the significance of the present as he concentrates on the ride. He contemplates on why people attach so much significance to the past and future, than focusing on the present. His soul that was hitherto a long "scramped scroll" smoothens itself out. The metaphor connotes living life to the fullest in elation and ecstasy for the moment. The scroll freshens and flutters in the wind in intense euphoria. Why does one get carried away by past actions:

Had I said that, had I done this.

So might I gain, so might I miss.

Why do people leave room for doubts, suspicions, failure, misgivings that haunt the present instead of protecting it, and distracting the same? One should breathe

each moment as though there is no room for regret. "The Last Ride Together" makes profound statements concerning the irrelevance of the past in relation to present emotions and sentiments. More specifically, Browning discusses hopes that have not been fulfilled, and places them in direct contrast to present circumstances. By revealing the idea that sentiments and events of the past often have little effect on future outcomes, Browning suggests that life should not involve dwelling on the past or hoping for the future, but living in the moment.

The lover as he rides with his beloved continues to think about the world. He says that brain and hand cannot go together hand in hand. Conception and execution can never be paired together. Man is not able to make pace with his actions to match with his ambitions. He plans a lot but achieves a little. The lover feels that he has at least achieved a little success by being able to ride with his beloved. He compares himself with a statesman and a soldier. A statesman works hard all his life but all his efforts are merely published in a book or as an obituary in newspapers. Similarly a soldier dies fighting for his country and is buried in the Westminster Abbey, which is his only reward after death. Sometimes an epitaph is raised in his memory but that is all. The lover then compares his lot with that of a poet. He believes that a poet's reward is too small compared with his skills. He composed sweet lyrics, thoughts of emotions of others. views that men should achieve beautiful things in life. But the reward he gets in return is very little and he dies in poverty in the prime of his life. Compared to the poet, the lover considers himself luckier as he has at least achieved the consolation of riding with his lover for the last time. The lover thinks that it would be a heaven on earth for him if he continues to ride with his beloved forever. He wishes that the moment should become everlasting so that they could continue to ride together forever and ever. That would indeed be heavenly bliss for him.

Thus through this poem, Browning expresses the view that, the past is insignificant, and that one may only live in the moment in order to pursue happiness in life. "The Last Ride Together" indicates that life is a long journey that is best played out with a special love. Seeing every day as one's last can really put a new perspective on everyday experiences

and life in general. The juxtapositions of city and ruins, hope for love and a last ride together, both illustrate this idea dramatically. One can learn not to look back on what one hoped for, but only to look forward at what one has.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. What type of a poem is *The Last Ride Together*?
2. Comment on the title of the poem, *The Last Ride Together*.
3. What does the speaker in Browning's *The Last Ride Together* claim from his lady after being rejected by her? Why does he do so?
4. What does the speaker try to mean by "life or death in the balance"?
5. Explain the expression "billowy-bosomed".
6. Explain how the speaker justifies his failure.
7. Explain how the speaker in *Last Ride Together* draws a comparison between his achievement and that of a poet.
8. "But in music we know how fashions end." Where do this line occur? Why does the speaker insert this comment into the poem?
9. What is here referred to by the speaker as "life's flower" and why?
10. Explain the speaker's logic behind this statement.

Unit III Section (b)

Poem 3-Rabbi Ben Ezra

Complete Text

Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be,

The last of life, for which the first was made:

Our times are in His hand

Who saith "A whole I planned,

Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

Not that, amassing flowers,

Youth sighed "Which rose make ours,

Which lily leave and then as best recall?"

Not that, admiring stars,

It yearned "Nor Jove, nor Mars:

Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

Not for such hopes and fears

Annulling youth's brief years,

Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!

Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Iks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!

Be our joys three-parts pain!

Strive, and hold cheap the strain;

Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence,—a paradox

Which comforts while it mocks,—

Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:

What I aspired to be,

And was not, comforts me:

A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

What is he but a brute

Whose flesh has soul to suit,

Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?

To man, propose this test—

Thy body at its best,

How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use:

I own the Past profuse

Of power each side, perfection every turn:

Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn?"

Not once beat "Praise be Thine!

I see the whole design,

I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:

Perfect I call Thy plan:

Thanks that I was a man!

Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do!"

For pleasant is this flesh;

Our soul, in its rose-mesh

Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest;

Would we some prize might hold

To match those manifold

Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say,

"Spite of this flesh to-day

I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"

As the bird wings and sings,

Let us cry "All good things

Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Therefore I summon age

To grant youth's heritage,

Life's struggle having so far reached its term:

Thence shall I pass, approved

A man, for aye removed

From the developed brute; a god though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon

Take rest, ere I be gone

Once more on my adventure brave and new:

Fearless and unperplexed,

When I wage battle next,

What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try

My gain or loss thereby;

Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:

And I shall weigh the same.

Give life its praise or blame:

Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For note, when evening shuts,

A certain moment cuts

The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:

A whisper from the west

Shoots—"Add this to the rest,

Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

So, still within this life,

Though lifted o'er its strife,

Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last..

This rage was right if the main,

That acquiescence vain:

The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

For more is not reserved

To man, with soul just nerved

To act to-morrow what he learns to-day..

Here, work enough to watch

The Master work, and catch

Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth

Should strive, through acts uncouth,

Toward making, than repose on aught found made:

So, better, age, exempt

From strife, should know, than tempt

Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor be afraid!

Enough now, if the Right

And Good and Infinite

Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own

With knowledge absolute,

Subject to no dispute

From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,

Severed great minds from small,

Announced to each his station in the Past!

Was I the world arraigned,

Were they, my soul disdained.

Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now, who shall arbitrate?

Ten men love what I hate,

Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;

Ten, who in ears and eyes

Match me: we all surmise,

They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

Not on the vulgar mass

Called "work," must sentence pass,

Things done, that took the eye and had the price;

O'er which, from level stand,

The low world laid its hand,

Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb

And finger failed to plumb,

So passed in making up the main account:

All instincts immature,

All purposes unsure,

That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed

Into a narrow act,

Fancies that broke through language and escaped;

All I could never be,

All, men ignored in me,

This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,

That metaphor! and feel

Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—

Thou, to whom fools propound,

When the wine makes its round,

"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

Fool! All that is, at all,

Lasts ever, past recall;

Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:

What entered into thee,

That was, is, and shall be:

Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee mid this dance

Of plastic circumstance,

This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:

Machinery just meant

To give thy soul its bent,

Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves,

Which ran the laughing loves

Around thy base, no longer pause and press?

What though, about thy rim,

Skull-things in order grim

Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!

To uses of a cup,

The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,

The new wine's foaming flow,

The Master's lips a-glow!

Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,

Thee, God, who moulded men;

And since, not even while the whirl was worst,

Did I,—to the wheel of life

With shapes and colours rife,

Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

So, take and use Thy work:

Ahead what flaws may lurk,

What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!

My times be in Thy hand!

Perfect the cup as planned!

Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

Summary

The poem is narrated by Rabbi Ben Ezra, a real 12th-century scholar. The piece does not have a clearly identified audience or dramatic situation. The Rabbi begs his audience to "grow old along with [him]" (line 1). He stresses that age is where the best of life is realized, whereas "youth shows but half" (line 6). He

acknowledges that youth lacks insight into life, since it is characteristically so concerned with living in the moment that it is unable to consider the deeper questions.

Though youth will fade, what replaces it is the wisdom and insight of age, which recognizes that pain is a part of life, but which learns to appreciate joy more because of the pain. "Be our joys three parts pain!" (line 34). All the while, one should appreciate what comes, since all aids to our growth towards God, and embrace the "paradox" that life's failure brings success. He notes how, when we are young and our bodies are strong, we aspire to impossible greatness, and he explains that this type of action makes man into a "brute" (line 44).

With age comes acceptance and love of the flesh, even though it pulls us "ever to the earth" (line 63), while some yearn to reach a higher plane. A wise, older man realizes that all things are gifts from God, and the flesh's limitations are to be appreciated even as we recognize them as limitations.

His reason for begging patience is that our life on Earth is but one step of our soul's experience, and so our journey will continue. Whereas youth is inclined to "rage" (line 100), age is inclined to await death patiently. Both are acceptable and wonderful, and each compliments the other.

What complicates the philosophy is that we are wont to disagree with each other, to have different values and loves. However, the Rabbi begs that we not give too much credence to the earthly concerns that engender argument and dissent, and trust instead that we are given by God and hence are fit for this struggle. The transience of time does not matter, since this is only one phase of our existence; we need not grow anxious about disagreements and unrealized goals, since the ultimate truth is out of our reach anyway. Again, failure breeds success. He warns against being distracted by the "plastic circumstance" (line 164) of the present moment.

He ends by stressing that all is part of a unified whole, even if we cannot glimpse the whole. At the same time that age should approve of youth and embrace the present moment, it must also be constantly looking upwards towards a heaven to come and hence simultaneously willing to renounce the present.

Analysis

"Rabbi Ben Ezra" is unique in Browning's oeuvre of dramatic monologues because though it is written from the perspective of a historical figure, it does not contain any clear audience or dramatic situation. As such, it is more a philosophical text than a proper poem. Much of its meaning is dissected in the "Summary" above, though this section will provide some context and simplification.

Rabbi Ben Ezra was a real historical figure of the 12th century, known primarily for his philosophy that suggested good sometimes lies in its opposite (badness, or pain). Browning often takes a figure from the past and uses dramatic irony to propose a conflict between the words and the meaning, but here, lacking any sense of the audience to whom he speaks (a congregation? God? Himself?) or of any stakes (what he hopes to gain), we are merely to dissect the philosophy.

The Rabbi's philosophy is a paradox: the struggles of life hold little meaning since life is but our soul's first step, yet the wise man should appreciate everything about life. He praises old age as the time when our soul reaches best fruition on earth, because only in age can this paradox be appreciated. The Rabbi is willing to admire and appreciate every stage of life, even as he is quick to show the folly of those stages. For instance, youth operates from a place of *carpe diem*, 'seizing the day' constantly, and trying to transcend the limits of the body. The Rabbi notes that with age comes an awareness of the pain and difficulty of life, but he says that a wise man should not be weighted down but rather lightened by that realization. He preaches that we should accept the present, but not let the concerns of the present dominate us. What lies at the center of his creed is patience and complicity to what comes. He does not deny the basic tenet of a *carpe diem* philosophy: time is short and transient; the body does not keep its youth; the world is full of wonderful things to be exploited. But at the same time, he believes that focusing on the ways of the world distracts us from our greater goal, which is to continue growing even in the afterlife.

However, it is important to see that while he praises age as superior, it is only superior because it recognizes the beauty of youth's yearnings. Without the latter, the former does not have the insight to both admire and renounce such actions.

The most important lesson we learn in old age is that we can know nothing and never truly transcend ourselves. By accepting this limitation, we learn to be content and patient as we near death, which is not an end but a release to a greater sphere where our soul may continue to grow.

The Rabbi embraces body and soul, youth and age, death and life, pain and joy, all the while recognizing that the contradictions are the goal. They are beyond our comprehension, and by accepting that can we find true serenity.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. When the speaker questions whether life can succeed in the places that it fails, is he questioning life's failures in the work world (realism) or its failures in the spiritual world (fantastic)?
2. In the second stanza of this passage, the speaker turns things inside out by saying that a man's soul suits his body as well that soul is doing work while the arms and legs play. Does the speaker state this to express his belief that the spirit must be satisfied before anything else?
3. The question the speaker asks at the end of the second stanza asks whether the soul can or cannot function while the body is at its best. Is the speaker questioning this in a spiritual context wondering if someone can go far with no soul? Or is he asking how strong the soul is in comparison to the body?

Unit III Section (c)

Thyrsis

A MONODY, to commemorate the author's friend, ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH, who died at Florence, 1861

[First published in Macmillan's Magazine, April, 1866. Reprinted 1867.]

Thus yesterday, to-day, to-morrow come,

They hustle one another and they pass:

But all our hustling morrows only make

The smooth to-day of God.

From LUCRETIVS, an unpublished Tragedy.

HOW I changed is here each spot man makes or fills!

In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same:

The village-street its haunted mansion lacks,

And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,

And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks; 5

Are ye too changed, ye hills?

See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men

To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays

Here came I often, often, in old days:

Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then. 10

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
 Up past the wood, to where the elm-tree crowns
 The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?
 The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,
 The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames?— 15
 This winter-eve is warm.
 Humid the air: leafless, yet soft as spring,
 The tender purple spray on copse and briars;
 And that sweet City with her dreaming spires,
 She needs not June for beauty's heightening, 20
 Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!
 Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power
 Befalls me wandering through this upland dim;
 Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour,
 Now seldom come I, since I came with him. 25
 That single elm-tree bright
 Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?
 We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,
 Our friend, the Scholar-Gipsy, was not dead;
 While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on. &nbs">
 He loved each simple joy the country yields,

He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,
For that a shadow lower'd on the fields,
Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep. 45

Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his head.
He went: his piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;
He could not wait their passing, he is dead! 50

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor,
With blossoms, red and white, of fallen May, 55

And chestnut-flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the next garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I. 60
Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on.

Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
 Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
 Sweet-William with its homely cottage-smell, 65
 And stocks in fragrant blow;
 Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
 And open, jasmine-muffled lattices.
 And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
 And the full moon, and the white evening-star. 70
 He hearkens not! light comer, he is flown! 2
 What matters it? next year he will return,
 And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,
 With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
 And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways, 75
 And scent of hay new-mown.
 But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see!
 See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,
 And blow a strain the world at last shall heed—
 For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee. 3 80
 Alack, for Corydon no rival now!—
 But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,
 Some good survivor with his flute would go,

Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate.

And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow, 85

And relax 4 Pluto's brow.

And make leap up with joy the beauteous head

Of Proserpine, among whose crown'd hair

Are flowers, first open'd on Sicilian air,

And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead, 90

O easy access to the hearer's grace

When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!

For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,

She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,

She knew each lily white which Euna yields, 95

Each rose with blushing face:

She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.

But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!

Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirr'd!

And we should tease her with our plaint in vain, 100

ell! wind-dispers'd and vain the words will be,

Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour

In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill!

Who, if not I, for questing here hath power?

- I know the wood which hides the daffodil, 105
 I know the Fyfield tree,
 I know what white, what purple fritillaries
 The grassy harvest of the river-fields,
 Above by Ensham, down by Sandford. yields,
 And what sedg'd brooks are Thames's tributaries: 110
 I know these slopes: who knows them if not I?—
 But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
 With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,
 Where thick the cowslips grew, and, far descried,
 High tower'd the spikes of purple orchises, 115
 Hath since our day put by
 The coronals of that forgotten time,
 Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,
 And only in the hidden brookside gleam
 Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime. 120
 Where is the girl, who, by the boatman's door,
 Above the locks, above the boating throng,
 Unmoor'd our skiff, when, through the Wytham flats,
 Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among,
 And darting swallows, and light water-gnats, 125

We track'd the shy Thaines shore?

Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell

Of our boat passing heav'd the river-grass,

Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass?—

They all are gone, and thou art gone as well. 130

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night

In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.

I see her veil draw soft across the day.

I feel her slowly chilling breath invade

The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey: 135

I feel her finger light

Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;

The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew.

The heart less bounding at emotion new.

And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again. 140

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short

To the unpractis'd eye of sanguine youth;

And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,

The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,

Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare! 145

Unbreachable the fort

Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall.,
 And strange and vain the earthly tunnoil grows,
 And near and real the charm of thy repose,
 And night as welcome as a friend would fall. 150

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
 Of quiet;—Look! adown the dusk hill-side,
 A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
 As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!
 From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come— 155
 Quick, let me fly, and cross

Into yon further field!—'Tis done; and see,
 Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
 The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
 Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree! 160

I take the omen! Eve lets down her veil,
 The white fog creeps from bush to bush about,
 The west unflushes, the high stars grow bright,
 And in the scatter'd farms the lights come out.
 I cannot reach the Signal-Tree to-night, 165

Yet, happy omen, hail!
 Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno vale

(For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep
 The morningless and unawakening sleep
 Under the flowery oleanders pale), 170
 Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our Tree is there!—
 Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,
 These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,
 That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him.
 To a boon southern country he is fled, 175
 And now in happier air,
 Wandering with the great Mother's train divine
 (And purer or more subtle soul than thee,
 I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see!)
 Within a folding of the Apennine, 180
 Thou'st hearest the immortal strains of old.
 Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
 In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king.
 For thee the Lityerses song again
 Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing; 185
 Sings his Sicilian fold,
 His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes.
 And how a call celestial round him rang

And heavenward from the fountain-brink he sprang,
 And all the marvel of the golden skies. 190
 There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
 Sole in these fields; yet will I not despair;
 Despair I will not, while I yet descry
 'Neath the soft canopy of English air
 That lonely Tree against the western sky. 195
 Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,
 Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
 Fields where soft 6 sheep from cages pull the hay,
 Woods with anemonies in flower till May.
 Know him a wanderer still; then why not me? 200
 A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
 Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
 This does not come with houses or with gold,
 With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;
 'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold. 205
 But the smooth-slipping weeks
 Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
 Out of the heed of mortals he is 7 gone,
 He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;

Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired. 210

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wert bound,

Thou wanderest with me for a little hour,

Men gave thee nothing, but this happy quest,

If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee power,

If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest. 215

And this rude Cumner ground,

Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet fields,

Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful time,

Here was thine height of strength, thy golden prime;

And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields. 220

What though the music of thy rustic flute

Kept not for long its happy, country tone,

Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note

Of men contention-tost, of men who groan,

Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and tired thy throat— 225

It fail'd, and thou wast 8 mute;

Yet hadst thou always visions of our light,

And long with men of care thou couldst not stay.

And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,

Left human haunt, and on alone till night. 230

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!

'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,

Thyrsis, in reach of sheep-bells is my home!

Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar,

Let in thy voice a whisper often come, 235

To chase fatigue and fear:

Why faintest thou? I wander'd till I died.

Roam on! the light we sought is shining still.

Dost thou ask proof? Our Tree yet crowns the hill,

Our Scholar travels yet the loved hillside. 240

Note 1. THYRSIS. Throughout this Poem there is reference to another piece, The Scholar Gipsy, printed in the first volume of the Author's Poems Poems, a new edition, 1853]. [Arnold.]

Motto first inserted in 1867. [back]

Note 2. flown] gone 1866. [back]

Note 3. Corydon and Thyrsis contend against one another in song in Virgil's sixth Eclogue; Thyrsis is defeated. [back]

Note 4. relax] unbend 1866. [back]

Note 5. 181-91. Daphnis, a Greek shepherd, was blinded by a nymph whose love he would not return; he afterwards had his sight restored and was carried up to heaven by Hermes. Another Daphnis was rescued by Hercules from Lityerses, a Phrygian king who made all travellers enter into a reaping match with him and killed those whom he vanquished. The 'Lityerses song' was a dirge sung over the dead bodies of the unfortunate travellers. Arnold has apparently blended these two stories. [back]

Note 6. soft] the 1866. [back]

Note 7. he is] is he 1866. [back]

Note 8. wast] wert 1866. [back]

Thyrsis is a pastoral elegy written by Matthew Arnold to honor his friend Arthur Hugh Clough, who died in 1861. It is one of the greatest elegies in English literature, equal in stature to John Milton's "Lycidas" (1638) and Percy Bysshe Shelley's Adonais (1821). Thyrsis is 240 lines long, divided into twenty-four ten-line stanzas. All the lines are in iambic pentameter, except the sixth line of each stanza, which is in iambic trimeter. The rhyme scheme for each stanza is abcbadeed. The stanzaic form of Thyrsis is thus a slight variation on the ten-line stanza John Keats developed for his odes ("Ode to a Nightingale," 1820, for example). Keats's slightly different rhyme scheme is ababdecde. The lines of Keats's stanzas are in iambic pentameter, except for the eighth line, which like Arnold's tenth is in iambic trimeter.

Clough and Arnold attended both Rugby School and Oxford University together, but while Clough was acknowledged as a bright star, Arnold was perceived as a dandy. It was not until his first volume of poems was published—a collection with a definite elegiac tone—that Arnold's friends and family realized his extravagant style of dress was a mask he wore to face the alien Victorian world outside academia and to cope with having a famous father, the headmaster of Rugby. Clough did not do as well at Balliol College, Oxford, as at Rugby. He graduated with second-class honors, telling Arnold's father that he had failed. However, he was awarded a fellowship at Oriel College. Several years later, he resigned his position, partly over reservations about accepting the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church. Clough traveled on the Continent for a time, returned to England, and accepted a rather dull position in the Education Office. Clough died in Florence in 1861. Arnold began his elegy shortly thereafter, but he did not complete and publish it until 1866.

Thyrsis is set in the countryside around Oxford, where Arnold and Clough had taken many walks in happier days. An elm tree on a hill came to have meaning for both of them. They agreed that, as long as the tree stood, the "Scholar-Gypsy"

was still alive, roaming the Cumnor Hills near Oxford. The Scholar-Gypsy was a legendary seventeenth century Oxford scholar who, growing impatient with the learning of his day, was said to have left Oxford to live among the gypsies and learn their lore. According to the story, the scholar said that he would return once he had mastered the gypsies' lore, but he never did, and he passed out of time into the realm of myth: From the seventeenth century into the nineteenth century, people would claim to have seen the Scholar-Gypsy wandering about the region. He would appear without warning and just as suddenly be gone. He became for Arnold and Clough a symbol of a sacred search for an unattainable truth. Arnold wrote a poem relating this tale around 1851, and it forms a kind of companion piece to *Thyrsis*. Arnold felt that Clough, in leaving Oxford, had impatiently abandoned the search for truth, and this feeling came to have a dominant effect on his elegy to Clough.

Summary

The speaker of "*Thyrsis*" is out in the Oxford countryside, the same setting as "*The Scholar-Gipsy*." He and his friend *Thyrsis* once visited this area often, and he laments how it seems to have changed so much. Where they once saw only pastoral beauty here - a vale, a path, and more - now the landscape is dotted with the city of Oxford.

He looks for an old elm-tree that they used to admire, and which they connected to the Scholar-Gipsy. They had always believed that the scholar-gipsy would survive as long as they tree was around (see summary and analysis of "*The Scholar-Gipsy*" for backstory).

As he laments not visiting this area often anymore, the speaker also criticizes *Thyrsis* for having left, "of his own will." Though he loved the area, he was drawn elsewhere, and now is dead. (The death relates to the allusion Arnold is making to Virgil - see the Analysis for more detail.) While the speaker knows his current despair might wax and wane with the seasons, *Thyrsis* will nevermore return.

Though *Thyrsis* was defeated in battle by Corydon, the speaker blames *Thyrsis* for his own death. Stanzas 9 and 10 recall the Sicilian tradition of playing a sad song on a pipe when a shepherd died, so that in Hades, Proserpine (*Persephone*)

would return the dead to life. However, Arnold knows that since Proserpine has never been to England, it is futile to try and call on her.

During the next several stanzas, the speaker walks through the countryside, lamenting all he has lost since Thyrsis has gone. He recalls a girl who once helped them with their boat, and is sad to realize she has disappeared as well. During the lament, he becomes overwhelmed with the world's problems in the larger sense.

In stanzas 16 and 17, the speaker's mood brightens as he sees a group of jovial hunters ride into town. Finally, he sees the elm-tree he was searching for, which confirms that the scholar-gypsy must still be alive, on his quest for truth.

In this brighter mood, the speaker tries to mend his hateful opinions on Thyrsis. He decides that when Thyrsis left, it was not to abandon the search for truth. Instead, he was continuing to seek truth, but had to become a wanderer because the world would not allow him to search otherwise.

Analysis

"Thyrsis" can be quite difficult to understand without guidance, since it is rooted both in an extended allusion to Virgil's poetry and in Arnold's own life. In Virgil's Seventh Eclogue, Thyrsis lost a singing match to Corydon, and died. Whereas Virgil implies that the gods are to blame for the man's death, Arnold alters the myth to blame Thyrsis himself.

This shift is central, and connects to the poem's autobiographical quality. Matthew Arnold wrote "Thyrsis" to commemorate the life of his friend Arthur Hugh Clough, who died in 1861, after having left Oxford many years before. The walking tour described in "Thyrsis" is based on Arnold's 1861 re-visit to the Oxford countryside, to think through his friend's life and their relationship.

What he sees there reflects some of his most common themes, especially when the poem is read in the light of "The Scholar-Gipsy." First, Arnold laments how much the area has changed. Two of his complaints mirror those made in other poems. The most immediate is simply the power of time, which Arnold frequently mentions as a force greater than humans can control. But more poignantly, Arnold sees in the countryside the way the modern world robs nature of its pastoral

wonder. The world has not only changed - this might only induce nostalgia. Instead, it has changed for the worse - this induces a great sadness and anger.

Despite the poem's length, it is bookended by an explicit quest: to find the elm. By relating the elm to the scholar-gypsy, Arnold makes the countryside a clear symbol for truth and transcendence. The scholar-gypsy is praised in his eponymous poem for having eschewed the world in favor of a search for truth. That he is deemed a madman means little to him; only the search matters. Arnold's tone grows more frantic and desperate as this poem progresses and he cannot find the elm, reflecting his fear that he will not locate the majestic wonder that nature can bring. Perhaps it is too late for transcendence, and the quest for truth is futile if the elm is gone and the scholar-gypsy is therefore dead.

This desperation is also expressed through the speaker's feelings about Thyrsis, who is clearly meant to represent Clough. Most of the poem criticizes Clough, rather than honors his memory. Instead of lamenting his death, Arnold suggests that Clough gave up, that he chose to give in to the world rather than persevere in the quest he and Arnold were leading towards a greater existence. Now that Clough has died, there - no possibility that Clough will ever resume the quest with his friend.

To better understand this relationship, it is useful to understand the real world context surrounding it. In Victorian England, the brotherhood between a man and his friend was extremely important; since women were not educated, they could not typically offer men a certain form of intellectual companionship. This deep fraternal love between Arnold and Clough was why Arnold was so devastated when Clough died, and also why he was so resentful when he abandoned their "quest."

So Arnold feels betrayed. Since few others were even attempting to understand the scholar-gypsy's quest for truth in a world that was becoming increasingly artificial, the relationship was particularly valuable to the poet. The fact that Clough has recently died only heightens the feelings of betrayal, at least until he comes to terms with it at the end.

This shift is largely effected by the re-discovery of the elm tree. A symbol of both their friendship and their ongoing quest for truth, the fact that it remains suggests that some things are constant. It is steadfast; it perseveres. Faced with that fact, Arnold is able to believe that perhaps his friend did not betray him, but rather only changed the form of his quest. He continued to search, only in a different way. Or put another way, it is wrong for Arnold to criticize Clough when he should be criticizing the world. The latter will change as the landscape has, but the relationship between the men will remain steadfast, as the elm does. And in a larger symbolic sense, it means that the quest for truth - that of both the scholar-hipsy and Arnold himself - is worth continuing.

This poem is long, at 240 lines, and written almost like an epic. Its length adds greatly to its content, since it focuses on a life and a journey, rather than one set instance in time. The rhyme scheme in each stanza is set and consistent, as is the constant use of iambic pentameter. However, the sixth line of every stanza is written in iambic trimeter instead. This interruption of something unusual represents the suddenness of Clough's death, and how it immediately and unexpectedly impacted Arnold's life. And yet the regularity of this unique form only reminds us that no matter how unexpected things might become, we might always find constancy in those most important relationships.

Unit IV Section (a)**The Wasteland. T.S. Eliot.****About the author**

Thomas Stearns Eliot (September 26, 1888 - January 4, 1965), was an Anglo-American poet, dramatist, and literary critic. Eliot was born into a prominent Unitarian Saint Louis, Missouri family; his fifth cousin, Tom Eliot, was Chancellor of Washington University, and his grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot, was the school's founder. Eliot's major work shows few signs of St. Louis, but there was, in his youth, a Prufrock furniture store in town. Following his graduation from Harvard University in 1909, T.S. Eliot made his life and literary career in Britain, following the curtailment of a tour of Germany by the outbreak of World War I. After the War, in the 1920s, he would spend time with other great artists in the Montparnasse Quarter in Paris, France where he would be photographed by Man Ray. He dabbled in Buddhism and studied Sanskrit and was a student of G. I. Gurdjieff. Through the influence of Ezra Pound he came to prominence with the publication of a poem, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, in 1915. His style was very fresh and modernist. In 1922 came the publication of Eliot's long poem *The Waste Land*. Composed during a period of enormous personal difficulty for Eliot—his ill-fated marriage to Vivien Haigh-Wood was already foundering, and both he and Vivien suffered from precarious health—*The Waste Land* offered a bleak portrait of post-World War I Europe, sometimes laced with disgust, but also hesitantly gesturing towards the possibility of (religious?) redemption. Despite the

famous difficulty of the poem—its slippage between satire and prophecy, its abrupt and unannounced changes of speaker, location and time, its elegaic but intimidating summoning up of a vast and dissonant range of cultures and literatures—the poem has nonetheless become a familiar touchstone of modern literature. Here are some of its perhaps most famous phrases: "April is the cruellest month"; "I will show you fear in a handful of dust"; "Shantih shantih shantih." Ezra Pound contributed greatly to the poem with his editorial advice (the facsimile edition of the original manuscript with Pound's queries and corrections, published in 1971, is essential reading for admirers of the poem); in

acknowledgement. Eliot later dedicated the poem to him: "For Ezra Pound, 'Il miglior fabbro'" (the better craftsman). Eliot's later work, following his conversion to Anglicanism on June 29, 1927, is often but by no means exclusively religious in nature. This includes such works as *The Hollow Men*, *Ash-Wednesday*, *The Journey of the Magi*, and *Four Quartets*. Eliot considered *Four Quartets* to be his masterpiece, as it draws upon his vast knowledge of mysticism and philosophy. It consists of four poems, "Burnt Norton," "The Dry Salvages," "East Coker," and "Little Gidding." Each of these runs to several hundred lines total and is broken into five sections. Although they resist easy characterization, they have many things in common: each begins with a rumination on the geographical location of its title, and each meditates on the nature of time in some important respect— theological, historical, physical, and on its relation to the human condition. A reflective early reading suggests an inexact systematicity among them: they approach the same ideas in varying but overlapping ways, although they do not necessarily exhaust their questions. "Burnt Norton" asks what it means to consider things that aren't

the case but might have been. We see the shell of an abandoned house, and Eliot toys with the idea that all these "merely possible" realities are present together, but invisible to us: All the possible ways people might walk across a courtyard add up to a vast dance we can't see; Children who aren't there are hiding in the bushes. Eliot's plays, mostly in verse, include *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1953) and *The Elder Statesman* (1958). *Murder in the Cathedral* is a frankly religious piece about the death of St Thomas Becket. He confessed to being influenced by, among others, the works of 17th century preacher, Lancelot Andrewes. Later, he was appointed to the committee formed to produce the "New English" translation of the Bible. In 1939 he published a book of poetry for children, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, which after his death became the basis of the hit West End and Broadway musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber, *Cats*. On November 4, 1948, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. After his death, his body was cremated and, according to Eliot's wishes, the ashes taken to St Michael's Church in East Coker, the village from which Eliot's ancestors emigrated to America. A simple plaque commemorates him. As a note of trivia,

late in his life, Eliot became somewhat of a penpal with comedian Groucho Marx. Eliot even requested a portrait of the comedian, which he then proudly displayed in his home. "The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock" is a greatly quoted and referenced piece. References have appeared in *Hill Street Blues* and *The Long Goodbye* by private-eye novelist Raymond Chandler. 1. The Burial of the Dead. 2. A Game of Chess. 3. The Fire Sermon. 4. Death by Water. 5. What the Thunder Said.

The Waste Land, T. S. Eliot's masterpiece, is a long, complex poem about the psychological and cultural crisis that came with the loss of moral and cultural identity after World War I. When it was first published, the poem was considered radically experimental. Eliot dispenses with traditional verse forms and instead juxtaposes sordid images of popular culture with erudite allusions to classical and ancient literature and myths. The title is indicative of Eliot's attitude toward his contemporary society, as he uses the idea of a dry and sterile wasteland as a metaphor for a Europe devastated by war and desperate for spiritual replenishment but depleted of the cultural tools necessary for renewal.

The poem is deliberately obscure and fragmentary, incorporating variant voices, multiple points of view, and abrupt shifts in dramatic context. The motif of moral degeneration, however, is prevalent throughout the poem, the premise being that contemporary Europe, obsessed with novelty, trends, materialism, and instant gratification, lacks the faith and substance to reaffirm its cultural heritage, to reestablish the sense of order and stability that historical continuity once provided. In an attempt to counter the cultural deficit of the present with the rich cultural heritage of the past, Eliot combines images from pagan rituals and religious texts with ancient fertility rituals and allusions to legends of the Grail. These images of ceremony and tradition are set against bleak images of modern life, where spiritual death breeds cultural death, and the ashen landscape reflects a barren world void of transcendental value.

Describing a series of failed encounters between various men and women, Eliot creates composites of fertility archetypes who ironically are incapable of offering spiritual nourishment to a dying world. The characters drift in and out of meaningless relationships; the men and women are impotent, shallow, vain,

excruciatingly ordinary. Culture is reduced to common clichés; the well of redemption becomes a "dull canal." The world is filled with "a heap of broken images" where "the dead tree gives no shelter." The only salvation appears to be in personal responsibility, self-control, and a faith in cultural continuity based on common Western European values.

The poem is an elitist document. Eliot provides copious footnotes, and the text is loaded with difficult literary, historical, and anthropological allusions; it is meant to be understood only by a few. As an account of the dilemma faced by the West of its being threatened by the loss of its privileged, white, patriarchal position of cultural dominance in the first half of the twentieth century, *The Waste Land* is indispensable.

The Waste Land

By T. S. Eliot

FOR EZRA POUND
IL MIGLIOR FABBRO

I. The Burial of the Dead

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding

A little life with dried tubers.

Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee

With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,

And went on in sunlight. into the Hofgarten,

And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.

Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.

And when we were children, staying at the arch-duce's,

My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,

And I was frightened. He said, Marie,

Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.

In the mountains, there you feel free.

I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief.

And the dry stone no sound of water. Only

There is shadow under this red rock,

(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

Frisch weht der Wind

Der Heimat zu

Mein Irisch Kind,

Wo weilest du?

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
"They called me the hyacinth girl."
—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
Oed' und leer das Meer.

Madame Sososttris, famous clairvoyante,
Had a bad cold, nevertheless

Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
The lady of situations.

Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.

I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.

Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,

Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:

One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City,

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,

I had not thought death had undone so many.

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet,
 Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
 To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
 'With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
 There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: "Stetson!
 "You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
 "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
 "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
 "Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
 "Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
 "Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
 "You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable.—mon frère!"

II. A Game of Chess

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
 Glowed on the marble, where the glass
 Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
 From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
 (Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
 Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra

Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air
That freshened from the window, these ascended
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
Huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice

And still she cried, and still the world pursues,

"Jug Jug" to dirty ears.

And other withered stumps of time

Were told upon the walls; staring forms

Leaned out. leaning, hushing the room enclosed.

Footsteps shuffled on the stair.

Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair

Spread out in fiery points

Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

"My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.

"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.

"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?

"I never know what you are thinking. Think."

I think we are in rats' alley

Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"

The wind under the door.

"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"

Nothing again nothing.

"Do

"You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember

"Nothing?"

I remember

Those are pearls that were his eyes.

"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"

But

O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag—

It's so elegant

So intelligent

"What shall I do now? What shall I do?"

"I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street

"With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?"

"What shall we ever do?"

The hot water at ten.

And if it rains, a closed car at four.

And we shall play a game of chess,

Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said—

I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.

He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you

To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.

You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,

He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.

And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert.

He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,

And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.

Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.

Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said.

Others can pick and choose if you can't.

But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.

You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.

(And her only thirty-one.)

I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face.

It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.

(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)

The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been the same.

You are a proper fool, I said.

Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,

What you get married for if you don't want children?

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Well, that Sunday Albert was home. they had a hot gammon,

And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.

Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.

Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

III. The Fire Sermon

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf

Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind

Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.
And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;
Departed, have left no addresses.
By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . .
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song.
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.
A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him.
White bodies naked on the low damp ground

And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water
Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!

Twit twit twit

Jug jug jug jug jug jug

So rudely forc'd,

Tereu

Unreal City

Under the brown fog of a winter noon

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant

Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants

C.i.f. London: documents at sight,

Asked me in demotic French

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see

At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,

The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.

Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,

On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—

I too awaited the expected guest.
He, the young man carbuncular, arrives.

A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
One of the low on whom assurance sits
As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unrequited, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.
(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
Bestows one final patronising kiss,
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .
She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover:

Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:

"Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."

When lovely woman stoops to folly and

Paces about her room again, alone,

She smooths her hair with automatic hand,

And puts a record on the gramophone.

"This music crept by me upon the waters"

And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.

O City city, I can sometimes hear

Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,

The pleasant whining of a mandoline

And a clatter and a chatter from within

Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls

Of Magnus Martyr hold

Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

The river sweats

Oil and tar

The barges drift

With the turning tide

Red sails

Wide

To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.

The barges wash

Drifting logs

Down Greenwich reach

Past the Isle of Dogs.

Weialala leia

Wallala leialala

Elizabeth and Leicester

Beating oars

The stern was formed

A gilded shell

Red and gold

The brisk swell

Rippled both shores

Southwest wind

Carried down stream

The peal of bells

White towers

Weialala leia

Wallala leialala

"Trams and dusty trees.

Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew

Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees

Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe."

"My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart

Under my feet. After the event

He wept. He promised a 'new start.'

I made no comment. What should I resent?"

"On Margate Sands.

I can connect

Nothing with nothing.

The broken fingernails of dirty hands.

My people humble people who expect

Nothing."

la la

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning

O Lord Thou pluckest me out

O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

IV. Death by Water

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,

Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell

And the profit and loss.

A current under sea

Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell

He passed the stages of his age and youth

Entering the whirlpool.

Gentile or Jew

O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,

Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

V. What the Thunder Said

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces

After the frosty silence in the gardens

After the agony in stony places

The shouting and the crying

Prison and palace and reverberation

Of thunder of spring over distant mountains

He who was living is now dead

We who were living are now dying

With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock

Rock and no water and the sandy road

The road winding above among the mountains

Which are mountains of rock without water

If there were water we should stop and drink

Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think

Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand

If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses

If there were water

And no rock

If there were rock

And also water

And water

A spring

A pool among the rock

If there were the sound of water only

Not the cicada

And dry grass singing

But sound of water over a rock

Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees

Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop

But there is no water

Who is the third who walks always beside you?

When I count, there are only you and I together

But when I look ahead up the white road

There is always another one walking beside you

Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded

I do not know whether a man or a woman

—But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air

Murmur of maternal lamentation

Who are those hooded hordes swarming

Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth.

Ringed by the flat horizon only

What is the city over the mountains

Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air

Falling towers

Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

Vienna London

Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one.
Only a cock stood on the rooftree
Co co rico co co rico
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust

Bringing rain

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
Then spoke the thunder

Datta What have we given?

My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
In our empty rooms

DA

Dayadhvam: I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only

We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus

DA

Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands

I sat upon the shore

Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon—O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.

Datta. Dayadhvani. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih

The Waste Land: T. S. Eliot's as a Journey of Realization and Revelation

The Waste Land, by T. S. Eliot, appeared at a time when European society was not quite

sure what to do with itself. Europe had just emerged from World War I, a war which had

traumatized the continent and its society. Many felt the world was chaotic and inhumane. A

sense of disillusionment and cynicism became pronounced and nihilism grew in popularity. This

was also a time of personal difficulty for Eliot due to his failing marriage and the disorder of his

nerves. Eliot expressed all of these feelings in his poem. In fact, The Waste Land soon became

known as "the work that best expressed the mood of a postwar generation disillusioned by the

loss of ideals and faith in progress" (Dupree 7). The Waste Land does not, however, express only

despair in the condition of modern society. Conscious of its actual degradation, Eliot sought a

means to escape it. He did a great deal of research concerning fertility rituals and myths and

indicated that "his reading in these and similar studies provided a way of seeing behind present-

day actions a substratum of past beliefs and practices that, though now lost to consciousness,

continue to inform our daily lives in hidden but significant ways" (Dupree 8). As Delmore

Schwartz states, "Eliot's theme is the rehabilitation of a system of beliefs, known but now

discredited" (209). Eliot felt that man needed to be brought back to these old beliefs, but was

wary of stating this openly, fearing a direct approach would prevent the poem from being read.

The modern man had become too hardened to accept Christian principles directly and, instead, must gradually be made aware of his condition. In order to achieve this, Eliot chronicled his journey of realization and revelation in the form of *The Waste Land*, using the protagonist of the poem to represent his own passage to spiritual awareness and to convince man of the degradation of society and the need for reform.

The poem begins with the protagonist musing on spring:

April is the cruelest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain.

Winter kept us warm, covering

Earth in forgetful snow, feeding

A little life with dried tubers. (1, 1-7)²

This passage is an indication of the extent of the degradation of man. He has sunken so low into

depravity that he prefers to live a life of ignorance and to disregard the fact that he is living a

half-life. April, the month in which spring begins, is no longer a joyous time in which new life is

celebrated, but a cruel time of rebirth that reminds man that his own life is terribly empty.

The protagonist then addresses man directly, stating, "you know only / a heap of broken

images, where the sun beats, / and the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, / and the

dry stone no sound of water" (1, 21-24). He then invites us into "the shadow of this red rock" (1,

26), an allusion to the Book of Isaiah, in which the Messiah's future coming is likened to "an

hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as

the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (KJV Bible, Isa. 32:2). Under this red rock, he will

show the way to escape the mundane life man has brought upon himself.

The speaker then recalls the time he first realized the emptiness of his life. In the

springtime, he says, he gave his lover hyacinths. Looking at her, with her arms full of flowers and her hair dripping wet, he expected to see happiness and fulfillment, but saw nothing. At this point, he realizes that true joy cannot be found in transitory things. The world holds nothing for him- "Oed' und leer das Meer" (I, 42)-desolate and empty is the sea, It is possible that Eliot came to this same realization through a similar cause, as he and his wife had a very unhappy relationship.

The protagonist then takes us on a journey through society, a journey that illustrates the full extent of human degradation and spiritual emptiness. In the first scene of "A Game of Chess," a wealthy couple is shown at home, living meaningless lives composed of dull routines.

Their relationship is forced and artificial, each so self-absorbed that neither can communicate with the other.

In the second scene of this section, the extent of degradation is further revealed. A woman is in a pub discussing with a group of friends the advice she gave her friend Lil when Lil's husband, Alfred, was discharged from military service. She says she pointed out that Alfred,

having been in the service for four years, "wants a good time" and told Lil, "if you don't give it to him, there's others will"(II, 148-149). She then rebuked Lil for looking "so antique" (II, 156), and

Lil replied that it was because she had an abortion. She had already given birth to five children and did not want more. In this scene, sex is reduced to a duty a wife must perform to please her

husband, and children are an obligation, not a joy. In "The Fire Sermon," the depravity of man is further illustrated. A woman is shown in her apartment eating dinner with her lover. Their encounter after dinner is described thusly:

The time is now propitious, as he guesses.

The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
 Endeavours to engage her in caresses
 Which still are unproved, if undesired
 Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
 Exploring hands encounter no defense;
 His vanity requires no response,

And makes a welcome of indifference. (III, 235-242)

When he leaves, "her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass: 'Well now that's done: and

I'm glad it's over.'"(III, 252) This attitude of indifference can be seen as even more

depraved than

lust and expresses the apathetic attitude of many after the war.

However, there is still hope. Sometimes, the protagonist can hear "the pleasant whining

of a mandoline" (III, 261) near the walls of Magnus Martyr, a church "where

fishmen lounge at

noon" (III, 263). This brief glimpse of hope is an indication of the source of a

meaningful life.

The "fishmen" remind us of Jesus' disciples, the "fishers of men" (KJV Bible,

Matt. 4:19), who

were exhorted to journey throughout the earth, telling men of the gospel of Christ

and the way to

salvation.

In "Death by Water," the way of escape from the degradation of society is

revealed. The

protagonist tells us of Phlebas the Phoenician, who experienced death by water,

which can be

seen as a representation of baptism, the shedding of the sinful nature, and the

acceptance of the

"Living Water" (KJV Bible, John 7:38) of Christ. Phlebas is now dead to the

world. He has

forgotten "the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell / and the profit and the loss"

(IV, 313-314). He

is no longer affected by the sin of modern society but lives separate from it. The

narrator then

addresses the reader: "Gentile or Jew / O you who turn the wheel and look to

windward, /

Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you" (IV, 319-321). With

this address, the

narrator reminds us that we are as mortal as Phlebas, and we also require this "Living Water."

This passage is a direct contrast to "The Fire Sermon" quenching the fires of lust with the "Living Water" that provides spiritual cleansing. To truly experience life, our sinful nature must die.

The protagonist concludes by explaining his own realization that, like "Jerusalem Athens

Alexandria" (V, 374), modern society is deteriorating: "London Bridge is falling down" (V, 426).

At this time, he has a decision to make: "Shall I at least set my lands in order?" (V, 425) Will he

avoid the decay of society and abandon his meaningless life for one with significance? His

decision is evident in the last stanza of the poem. Amid the madness of the ruin of society, the

protagonist finds "Shantih shantih shantih" (V, 433)-a peace that passes understanding. Like

Phlebas, he has chosen to bid farewell to his dishonest, worldly self and surrender to the Living

Water that has the power to quench the fires of corruption. It is through this passage that Eliot

suggests his own discovery and his decision to experience the peace that passes understanding by

surrendering the corrupt part of himself. The poem, composed of seemingly fragmented ideas

and stream-of-consciousness thoughts, ends on a note of peace, a peace that Eliot has attained

and wishes modern man to experience.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. How does Eliot describe the physical "Waste Land" in this poem? What are some of its main features, and how are they connected to the symbolic wasteland that Western culture has become for Eliot?
2. Why does Eliot choose to conclude this poem by discussing the Hindu values of giving, compassion, and self-control? According to the poem, what can we learn from these values?
3. What does Eliot mean in the final moments of the poem when he writes, "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (431)? What are the fragments? What are the ruins? And what does shoring mean, anyway?
4. Why does Eliot tell us in a footnote that the blind prophet Tiresias is the most important character in the poem? How is Tiresias best suited to narrate "The Waste Land"? Do you think the speaker of the poem is always Tiresias, who is both a man and a woman and lives many different lives?
5. On the whole, how much hope does Eliot allow us to have in this poem? Is it all purely, "We're done, and it's a shame," or is there the possibility for something good to happen in the future?
6. How much does "The Waste Land" still apply today? Do we still face any of the problems Eliot talks about in this poem, or would he be overjoyed to be alive today and to see how far we've come?
7. Does the poem show any sympathy for the woman in the pub in lines 139-172, or for the young woman in lines 222-248? Are they still redeemable as characters, or is Eliot simply using them as examples of how far we've sunk as a society?
8. Is it really possible for today's readers to get behind what Eliot is doing in this poem, or are we too invested in pop culture to care about his supposedly elitist ideas anymore?
9. Is there any upside to thinking the way Eliot does? Is his thinking undemocratic? Does he expect everyone to be as smart as he is? What are the upsides and downsides of living in a modern world where important decisions tend to be made by applause meters instead of experts?
10. Is there something to Eliot's theory that life makes more sense when everyone knows the same stories? For example, have you ever compared your life to an

Unit IV Section (b)
W.B Yeats

Poem 1 The Second coming

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;

Surely the Second Coming is at hand.

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out

When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi

Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,

A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,

Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it

Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
 The darkness drops again; but now I know
 That twenty centuries of stony sleep
 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle.
 And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,

Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Summary

The speaker describes a nightmarish scene: the falcon, turning in a widening "gyre" (spiral), cannot hear the falconer. "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold"; anarchy is loosed upon the world; "The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned." The best people, the speaker says, lack all conviction, but the worst "are full of passionate intensity." Surely, the speaker asserts, the world is near a revelation; "Surely the Second Coming is at hand." No sooner does he think of "the Second Coming," then he is troubled by "a vast image of the *Spiritus Mundi*, or the collective spirit of mankind: somewhere in the desert, a giant sphinx ("A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze as blank and pitiless as the sun") is moving, while the shadows of desert birds reel about it. The darkness drops again over the speaker's sight, but he knows that the sphinx's twenty centuries of "stony sleep" have been made a nightmare by the motions of "a rocking cradle." And what "rough beast," he wonders, "its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

Form

"The Second Coming" is written in a very rough iambic pentameter, but the meter is so loose, and the exceptions so frequent, that it actually seems closer to free verse with frequent heavy stresses. The rhymes are likewise haphazard; apart from the two couplets with which the poem opens, there are only coincidental rhymes in the poem, such as "man" and "sun."

Commentary

Because of its stunning, violent imagery and terrifying ritualistic language, "The Second Coming" is one of Yeats's most famous and most anthologized poems: it

is also one of the most thematically obscure and difficult to understand. (It is safe to say that very few people who love this poem could paraphrase its meaning to satisfaction.) Structurally, the poem is quite simple—the first stanza describes the conditions present in the world (things falling apart, anarchy, etc.), and the second surmises from those conditions that a monstrous Second Coming is about to take place, not of the Jesus we first knew, but of a new messiah, a “rough beast,” the slouching sphinx rousing itself in the desert and lumbering toward Bethlehem. This brief exposition, though intriguingly blasphemous, is not terribly complicated; but the question of what it should signify to a reader is another story entirely.

Yeats spent years crafting an elaborate, mystical theory of the universe that he described in his book *A Vision*. This theory issued in part from Yeats's lifelong fascination with the occult and mystical, and in part from the sense of responsibility Yeats felt to order his experience within a structured belief system. The system is extremely complicated and not of any lasting importance—except for the effect that it had on his poetry, which is of extraordinary lasting importance. The theory of history Yeats articulated in *A Vision* centers on a diagram made of two conical spirals, one inside the other, so that the widest part of one of the spirals rings around the narrowest part of the other spiral, and vice versa. Yeats believed that this image (he called the spirals “gyres”) captured the contrary motions inherent within the historical process, and he divided each gyre into specific regions that represented particular kinds of historical periods (and could also represent the psychological phases of an individual's development).

“The Second Coming” was intended by Yeats to describe the current historical moment (the poem appeared in 1921) in terms of these gyres. Yeats believed that the world was on the threshold of an apocalyptic revelation, as history reached the end of the outer gyre (to speak roughly) and began moving along the inner gyre. In his definitive edition of Yeats's poems, Richard J. Finneran quotes Yeats's own notes:

The end of an age, which always receives the revelation of the character of the next age, is represented by the coming of one gyre to its place of greatest expansion and of the other to its place of greatest contraction... The revelation [that] approaches will... take its character from the contrary movement of the interior gyre...

In other words, the world's trajectory along the gyre of science, democracy, and heterogeneity is now coming apart, like the frantically widening flight-path of the falcon that has lost contact with the falconer; the next age will take its character not from the gyre of science, democracy, and speed, but from the contrary inner gyre—which, presumably, opposes mysticism, primal power, and slowness to the

episode of a TV show in order to have your experience make sense to someone else? Is this still a valuable way of relating to one another?

science and democracy of the outer gyre. The "rough beast" slouching toward Bethlehem is the symbol of this new age; the speaker's vision of the rising sphinx is his vision of the character of the new world.

This seems quite silly as philosophy or prophecy (particularly in light of the fact that it has not come true as yet). But as poetry, and understood more broadly than as a simple reiteration of the mystic theory of *A Vision*, "The Second Coming" is a magnificent statement about the contrary forces at work in history, and about the conflict between the modern world and the ancient world. The poem may not have the thematic relevance of Yeats's best work, and may not be a poem with which many people can personally identify; but the aesthetic experience of its passionate language is powerful enough to ensure its value and its importance in Yeats's work as a whole.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Why do you think Yeats put so many confusing symbols in the poem? Many poets, when they use symbolism, try to make everything relate to each other. But what does falconing have to do with a sphinx or a "blood-dimmed tide," and what does either of them have to do with a sphinx and the "indignant desert birds"? Most people who read this poem want to make these things correspond to something real in the world. But we have to consider that Yeats did not want his poem to be interpreted in this way.
2. How would you explain the poem's relationship to the Bible? Most of the symbols are very general and timeless, like something out of the Book of Revelation. But it's also easy to tell that this is not the Bible. For one thing, Christ doesn't show up at the end, but a "rough beast." Does the poet sound like a religious man, and, if so, what kind?
3. Why does Yeats think of history as this swirling vortex, the gyre? Because the gyre moves further and further from its center, does it mean that things are always getting worse? It should be mentioned that Yeats's idea was highly original and not shared by everyone. There are still plenty of people, even today, who think that history is linear (except for a few blips like wars), and that society is constantly improving itself.
4. Is it possible that the appearance of the "rough beast" could be good for the world, in the end? After all, if the world is already so violent that "innocence is drowned," things can't get much direr. Maybe Yeats thinks it's like tearing down an old building in order to put up a new one. But, then again, there's nothing in the poem about society rebuilding itself.
5. Do you think the poem could apply to the entire world, or is it only intended for Christian Europe? People in other civilizations, for example the Middle East, have found this to be a very compelling poem, and they have made it fit into their own views of history. Maybe it speaks most directly to people with an "apocalyptic" outlook, who think that big, sweeping changes are on the horizon.
6. What is the "best" and the "worst" in the poem "The Second Coming"?
7. What is the main theme of William Butler Yeats' poem "The Second Coming"?

8. How is "The Second Coming" a prophetic poem?
9. What is the "vast image" he sees in "The Second Coming"?
10. In which poem W.B. Yeats can be seen as a "dreamy" poet?

Unit IV Section (b)

W.B Yeats

Poem 2 The Tower

The Tower-text

W. B. Yeats, 1865 - 1939

I

What shall I do with this absurdity—
O heart, O troubled heart—this caricature,
Decrepit age that has been tied to me
As to a dog's tail?

Never had I more

Excited, passionate, fanatical
Imagination, nor an ear and eye
That more expected the impossible—
No, not in boyhood when with rod and fly,
Or the humbler worm, I climbed Ben Bulbin's back
And had the livelong summer day to spend.
It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack,
Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend
Until imagination, ear and eye,
Can be content with argument and deal
In abstract things; or be derided by
A sort of battered kettle at the heel.

II

I pace upon the battlements and stare
On the foundations of a house, or where

Tree, like a sooty finger, starts from earth;
And send imagination forth
Under the day's declining beam, and call
Images and memories
From ruin or from ancient trees,
For I would ask a question of them all.

Beyond that ridge lived Mrs. French, and once
When every silver candlestick or scone
Lit up the dark mahogany and the wine,
A serving-man, that could divine
That most respected lady's every wish,
Ran and with the garden shears
Clipped an insolent farmer's ears
And brought them in a little covered dish.

Some few remembered still when I was young
A peasant girl commended by a song,
Who'd lived somewhere upon that rocky place,
And praised the colour of her face,
And had the greater joy in praising her,
Remembering that, if walked she there,
Farmers jostled at the fair
So great a glory did the song confer.

And certain men, being maddened by those rhymes,
Or else by toasting her a score of times,
Rose from the table and declared it right
To test their fancy by their sight;
But they mistook the brightness of the moon

For the prosaic light of day—
Music had driven their wits astray—
And one was drowned in the great bog of Cloone.

Strange, but the man who made the song was blind;
Yet, now I have considered it, I find
That nothing strange; the tragedy began
With Homer that was a blind man,
And Helen has all living hearts betrayed.
O may the moon and sunlight seem
One inextricable beam.
For if I triumph I must make men mad.

And I myself created Hanrahan
And drove him drunk or sober through the dawn
From somewhere in the neighbouring cottages.
Caught by an old man's juggleries
He stumbled, tumbled, fumbled to and fro
And had but broken knees for hire
And horrible splendour of desire;
I thought it all out twenty years ago:

Good fellows shuffled cards in an old bawn:
And when that ancient ruffian's turn was on
He so bewitched the cards under his thumb
That all but the one card became
A pack of hounds and not a pack of cards,
And that he changed into a hare.
Hanrahan rose in frenzy there
And followed up those baying creatures towards—

O towards I have forgotten what—enough!
 I must recall a man that neither love
 Nor music nor an enemy's clipped ear
 Could. he was so harried, cheer;
 A figure that has grown so fabulous
 There's not a neighbour left to say
 When he finished his dog's day:
 An ancient bankrupt master of this house.

Before that ruin came, for centuries,
 Rough men-at-arms, cross-gartered to the knees
 Or shod in iron, climbed the narrow stairs.
 And certain men-at-arms there were
 Whose images, in the Great Memory stored,
 Come with loud cry and panting breast
 To break upon a sleeper's rest
 While their great wooden dice beat on the board.

As I would question all, come all who can;
 Come old, necessitous, half-mounted man;
 And bring beauty's blind rambling celebrant:
 The red man the juggler sent
 Through God-forsaken meadows; Mrs. French,
 Gifted with so fine an ear;
 The man drowned in a bog's mire,
 When mocking Muses chose the country wench.

Did all old men and women, rich and poor,
 Who trod upon these rocks or passed this door,

Whether in public or in secret rage
As I do now against old age?
But I have found an answer in those eyes
That are impatient to be gone;
Go therefore; but leave Hanrahan,
For I need all his mighty memories.

Old lecher with a love on every wind,
Bring up out of that deep considering mind
All that you have discovered in the grave,
For it is certain that you have
Reckoned up every unforeknown, unseeing
Plunge, lured by a softening eye,
Or by a touch or a sigh,
Into the labyrinth of another's being:

Does the imagination dwell the most
Upon a woman won or a woman lost?
If on the lost, admit you turned aside
From a great labyrinth out of pride.
Cowardice, some silly over-subtle thought
Or anything called conscience once;
And that if memory recur, the sun's
Under eclipse and the day blotted out.

III

It is time that I wrote my will;
I choose upstanding men
That climb the streams until
The fountain leap, and at dawn

Drop their cast at the side
Of dripping stone: I declare
They shall inherit my pride,
The pride of people that were
Bound neither to Cause nor to State,
Neither to slaves that were spat on,
Nor to the tyrants that spat.
The people of Burke and of Grattan
That gave, though free to refuse—
Fried, like that of the morn.
When the headlong light is loose,
Or that of the fabulous horn,
Or that of the sudden shower
When all streams are dry,
Or that of the hour
When the seaman must fix his eye
Upon a fading gleam,
Flat out upon a long
Last reach of guttering stream
And there sing his last song,
And I declare my faith:
I mock Plotinus' thought
And cry in Plato's teeth,
Death and life were not
Till man made up the whole,
Made lock, stock and barrel
Out of his bitter soul,
Aye, sun and moon and star, all,
And further add to that
That, being dead, we rise.

Dream and so create
Translunar Paradise.
I have prepared my peace
With learned Italian things
And the proud stones of Greece,
Poet's imaginings
And memories of love,
Memories of the words of women,
All those things whereof
Man makes a superhuman
Mirror-resembling dream

As at the loophole there
The daws chatter and scream,
And drop twigs layer upon layer,
When they have mounted up,
The mother bird will rest
On their hollow top,
And so warm her wild nest.

I leave both faith and pride
To young upstanding men
Climbing the mountain-side,
That under bursting dawn
They may drop a fly;
Being of that metal made
Till it was broken by
This sedentary trade.

Now shall I make my soul,

Compelling it to study
 In a learned school
 Till the wreck of body,
 Slow decay of blood,
 Testy delirium
 Or dull decrepitude,
 Or what worse evil come—
 The death of friends, or death
 Of every brilliant eye
 That made a catch in the breath—
 Seem but the clouds of the sky
 When the horizon fades,
 Or a bird's sleepy cry
 Among the deepening shades.

Summary and Analysis of The Tower

The speaker decries the absurdity of the contrast between his old body and his young spirit. He feels more passionate and inspired than ever - even more so than when he was a boy and went fishing in the mountains of Western Ireland. Nevertheless, he feels he must say goodbye to poetry and choose reason instead: it is more becoming to his age. He walks to and fro atop a castle and looks out over the countryside. He sees where the wealthy Mrs. French once lived. Her servant, who knew her wishes well, once cut off the ears of a rude farmer and brought them to her on a covered dish.

When the speaker was young, some men spoke of a legendary peasant girl, who was the most beautiful in the area. One drunk man talked of her often, and in the middle of a drinking session got up to seek her out. He mistook the moon for her lovely face, and drowned in a lake. The man who told the speaker these songs was blind, like Homer.

The girl may well be mistaken for the sun or moon, because, says the speaker, she has betrayed all living men. The speaker himself created Hanrahan twenty years ago. The character was destined to stumble through villages, lamed. When it was the speaker's turn at cards, he shuffled the pack into a pack of hounds, which then turned into a hare. Hanrahan followed these creatures—The speaker interrupts his own story, crying "enough!" He must remember a man so distraught that neither love nor music nor clipped ears could make him feel better. This man is a ruined master of the house. Before the house went to ruin, servants dressed for war came to the house. The speaker questioned them all, wondering whether they raged against age as he now does. They give no satisfactory answer. The speaker is happy to be left with Hanrahan. He calls up Hanrahan, from the knowledgeable dead, to tell him whether one thinks more often of a woman won or lost. A woman, once lost, is an irretrievable mistake.

The speaker draws up his will, leaving men who fish tirelessly his pride. His pride is not political, or tied up with slaves or tyrants, but that of Grattan and Burke. His pride is as refreshing as an unexpected shower, as poignant as a swansong. He mocks Plato and Plotinus. He is prepared to die with a combination of ancient poetry and of the love of women, both of which make man a superhuman. He leaves his faith and pride to these young fishermen. He will now prepare his body and his mind for death, or, worse, the death of those whom he has loved.

Analysis

In one of the most complicated poems of his career, Yeats tries to come to terms with his age and with the changes his country is undergoing. "The Tower" is presented in a fragmented style, a proto-modernist device that shows Yeats' move away from romantic Irish mythology toward a sparser approach. This change was partially affected by his friendship with Ezra Pound, who encouraged Yeats to

seek out alternatives to the flowery language that characterized his earlier collections.

The idea of manhood and youth is introduced in the first stanza through the representation of the speaker: a young man. This image is pastoral, with the young man fishing in the fertile streams of Ireland. The iconic mountain of Ben Bulbin tells the reader that this is western Ireland, where Yeats used to vacation during summers away from London. The speaker's turn to Plato and reason seems forced. Put together with the narrative element of cutting off the farmer's ears, the implication is that the speaker's decision is unnatural and made in a top-down fashion. The poet can impose rules on himself, just as the rich can on the poor.

The lovely peasant girl, whom the speaker also refers to as Helen (as in Helen of Troy), is undoubtedly Maude Gonne. Gonne, a revolutionary who was the great love of Yeats' life, did not return his love. She appears often in Yeats' poetry, often symbolized by or associated with a moon: something lovely, feminine, untouchable, and capable of causing madness. The peasant who drowns in pursuit of her is proof of her power.

The speaker breaks away from the narrative of the girl to present a new character who meets a similarly grim fate. This is yet another modernist device. The speaker breaks down the illusion that the poem is or could be truthful, and displays his ability to create characters at will. Hanrahan is an intertextual character, appearing in other Yeats works. He is an Irish peasant everyman, suffering the afflictions of lameness (whether physical or moral) and alcoholism that were rampant in early 20th-century Ireland. Hanrahan shows a flash of glory, however, in the transfiguration of cards into a pack of hounds. This is an allusion to Cuchulain's (a famous hero of Irish mythology) hounds, which were part of his army. These are quickly turned into a hare, an object of English-style hunting, so the peasant's empowerment is all too brief.

The hare symbol transitions into a description of a great house. In Ireland, a large ruined or empty house always refers to the Protestant Ascendancy: English families that lived in Ireland and formed a ruling elite. Most of these manors were destroyed by the IRA during the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921. In "The Tower," ghosts of warlike men haunt the house, and it is these ghosts, as well as other people who were old in the speaker's childhood, that he queries about age. They do not wish to answer, so he dismisses their memory, saying he needs only Hanrahan to answer. The poem finishes with the question of Maude Gonne again. Even a reader who does not know the biographical details can read in the title of the poem that Yeats is in mourning over a lost woman. The phallic image is as lonely as can be.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. There are many images of discord and unrequited love in this collection. Where are the examples of harmony and union? How does Yeats think these might be achieved?
2. Leaving aside "Nineteen Hundred Ninety Nine" and "Meditations in a Time of Civil War," which of these poems comments on contemporary political problems in Ireland?
3. What purpose does the extreme use of enjambment in "Sailing to Byzantium" serve? What other literary devices does Yeats use in this poem?
4. Using "All Saint's Day" as a starting point, discuss Yeats' allegiance to theosophy and his use of religious imagery in this collection.
5. Many of these poems struggle with Yeats' own aging. "Among Schoolchildren" alone addresses the aging of the woman he loves. How does the tone differ?
6. Compare and contrast the mythological and realistic imagery in "A Man Young and Old." Is there any pattern in the juxtaposition of the two?
7. "Meditations in a Time of Civil War" is first and foremost about political change, but it is also about a shift away from the pastoral. Analyze the difference between war and progress imagery in this poem.
8. Does "Leda and the Swan" condone the act of rape in the name of the birth of history? Greatness?
9. Trace the biblical and historical references in "Wisdom." Does Yeats suggest we must move beyond or constantly refer to history in order to be wise?
10. Does any character other than children allow the speaker to reflect on himself?

Unit IV Section (b)

W.B Yeats

Poem 3 "Byzantium"

"Byzantium"-Text

W. B. Yeats. "Byzantium" from *The Poems of W. B. Yeats: A New Edition*, edited by Richard J. Finneran. Copyright 1933 by Macmillan Publishing Company, renewed © 1961 by Georgie Yeats. Reprinted with the permission of A. P. Watt, Ltd. on behalf of Michael Yeats.

Source: *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1989)

Summary

At night in the city of Byzantium, "The unpurged images of day recede." The drunken soldiers of the Emperor are asleep, and the song of night-walkers fades after the great cathedral gong. The "starlit" or "moonlit dome," the speaker says, disdains all that is human—"All mere complexities, / The fury and the mire of human veins." The speaker says that before him floats an image—a man or a shade, but more a shade than a man, and still more simply "an image." The speaker hails this "superhuman" image, calling it "death-in-life and life-in-death." A golden bird sits on a golden tree, which the speaker says is a "miracle"; it sings aloud, and scorns the "common bird or petal / And all complexities of mire or blood."

At midnight, the speaker says, the images of flames flit across the Emperor's pavement, though they are not fed by wood or steel, nor disturbed by storms. Here, "blood-begotten spirits come," and die "into a dance, / An agony of trance, / An agony of flame that cannot sing a sleeve," leaving behind all the complexities and furies of life. Riding the backs of dolphins, spirit after spirit arrives, the flood broken on "the golden smithies of the Emperor." The marbles of the dancing floor

break the "bitter furies of complexity," the storms of images that beget more images, "That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea."

Form

The pronounced differences in "Byzantium"'s line lengths make its stanzas appear very haphazard; however, they are actually quite regular: each stanza constitutes eight lines, and each rhymes AABBCDDC. Metrically, each is quite complicated; the lines are loosely iambic, with the first, second, third, fifth, and eighth lines in pentameter, the fourth line in tetrameter, and the sixth and seventh line in trimeter, so that the pattern of line-stresses in each stanza is 55545335.

Commentary

We have read Yeats's account of "Sailing to Byzantium"; now he has arrived at the city itself, and is able to describe it. In "Sailing to Byzantium" the speaker stated his desire to be "out of nature" and to assume the form of a golden bird: in "Byzantium," the bird appears, and scores of dead spirits arrive on the backs of dolphins, to be forged into "the artifice of eternity"—ghostlike images with no physical presence ("a flame that cannot singe a sleeve"). The narrative and imagistic arrangement of this poem is highly ambiguous and complicated; it is unclear whether Yeats intends the poem to be a register of symbols or an actual mythological statement. (In classical mythology, dolphins often carry the dead to their final resting-place.)

In any event, we see here the same preference for the artificial above the actual that appeared in "Sailing to Byzantium"; only now the speaker has encountered actual creatures that exist "in the artifice of eternity"—most notably the golden bird of stanza three. But the preference is now tinged with ambiguity: the bird looks down upon "common bird or petal," but it does so not out of existential necessity, but rather because it has been coerced into doing so, as it were—"by the

moon embittered." The speaker's demonstrated preoccupation with "fresh images" has led some critics to conclude that the poem is really an allegory of the process by which fantasies are rendered into art, images arriving from the "dolphin-torn, the gong-tormented sea," then being made into permanent artifacts by "the golden smithies of the Emperor." It is impossible to say whether this is all or part of Yeats's intention, and it is difficult to see how the prevalent symbols of the afterlife connect thematically to the topic of images (how could images be dead?). For all its difficulty and almost unfixed quality of meaning—the poem is difficult to place even within the context of *A Vision*—the intriguing imagery and sensual language of the poem are tokens of its power; simply as the evocation of a fascinating imaginary scene, "Byzantium" is unmatched in all of Yeats.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. One of the important themes in Yeats's writing is his exploration of the relationship between the natural and the artificial, and particularly the relationship between nature and art. With particular reference to the two Byzantium poems, describe how Yeats characterizes this relationship. Does he prefer the natural to art, or art to nature?
2. Some of Yeats's least accessible poems are his works of visionary history, which often incorporate themes from *A Vision* and seem, on the surface, thematically irrelevant to contemporary readers. How can these poems best be understood—in other words, should they be read today strictly for their magnificent language, or is there a way in which they embrace more universal elements of human experience than their occult, mythological frame of reference might imply? (Think especially about "Leda and the Swan" and "The Second Coming.")
3. If you have read John Keats's great "Ode to a Nightingale," compare it to Yeats's equally great "Sailing to Byzantium." In what ways does the Yeats poem seem designed to refute the Keats poem? How does the singing golden bird differ from Keats's singing nightingale?
4. "Adam's Curse" is one of Yeats's finest early poems, and one of his simplest and most moving love poems. How does the style of the poem mirror its explicit statement about beauty? How does it connect the labor of living with weariness in life and in love?
5. Compare and contrast "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," a very early poem by Yeats, with "The Circus Animals' Desertion," written not long before he died. What, if anything, do these poems have in common? How are they different? What does each poem say about the human heart, and how does the difference between those statements indicate Yeats's development as a poet?
6. "The Irish Airman foresees his Death" is a good example of the way in which Yeats combines the political with the personal and the mystical. How does the airman's involvement in World War I relate to his "lonely impulse of delight," and what does the "lonely impulse of delight" say about his understanding of the war? What does the poem itself seem to say about the war?

Unit IV Section (b)

W.B Yeats

Poem 4 "Sailing to Byzantium"

"Sailing to Byzantium-Text

I

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing

For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,

But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

W. B. Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium" from *The Poems of W. B. Yeats: A New Edition*, edited by Richard J. Finneran. Copyright 1933 by Macmillan Publishing Company, renewed © 1961 by Georgie Yeats. Reprinted with the permission of A. P. Watt, Ltd. on behalf of Michael Yeats.

Source: *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1989)

Summary

The speaker, referring to the country that he has left, says that it is "no country for old men": it is full of youth and life, with the young lying in one another's arms, birds singing in the trees, and fish swimming in the waters. There, "all summer long" the world rings with the "sensual music" that makes the young neglect the old, whom the speaker describes as "Monuments of unageing intellect."

An old man, the speaker says, is a "paltry thing," merely a tattered coat upon a stick, unless his soul can clap its hands and sing; and the only way for the soul to learn how to sing is to study "monuments of its own magnificence." Therefore, the speaker has "sailed the seas and come / To the holy city of Byzantium." The speaker addresses the sages "standing in God's holy fire / As in the gold mosaic

of a wall," and asks them to be his soul's "singing-masters." He hopes they will consume his heart away, for his heart "knows not what it is"—it is "sick with desire / And fastened to a dying animal," and the speaker wishes to be gathered "Into the artifice of eternity."

The speaker says that once he has been taken out of the natural world, he will no longer take his "bodily form" from any "natural thing," but rather will fashion himself as a singing bird made of hammered gold, such as Grecian goldsmiths make "To keep a drowsy Emperor awake," or set upon a tree of gold "to sing / To lords and ladies of Byzantium / Or what is past, or passing, or to come."

Form

The four eight-line stanzas of "Sailing to Byzantium" take a very old verse form: they are metered in iambic pentameter, and rhymed ABABABCC, two trios of alternating rhyme followed by a couplet.

Commentary

"Sailing to Byzantium" is one of Yeats's most inspired works, and one of the greatest poems of the twentieth century. Written in 1926 and included in Yeats's greatest single collection, 1928's *The Tower*, "Sailing to Byzantium" is Yeats's definitive statement about the agony of old age and the imaginative and spiritual work required to remain a vital individual even when the heart is "fastened to a dying animal" (the body). Yeats's solution is to leave the country of the young and travel to Byzantium, where the sages in the city's famous gold mosaics (completed mainly during the sixth and seventh centuries) could become the "singing-masters" of his soul. He hopes the sages will appear in fire and take him away from his body into an existence outside time, where, like a great work of art, he could exist in "the artifice of eternity." In the astonishing final stanza of the poem, he declares that once he is out of his body he will never again appear in the

form of a natural thing; rather, he will become a golden bird, sitting on a golden tree, singing of the past ("what is past"), the present (that which is "passing"), and the future (that which is "to come").

A fascination with the artificial as superior to the natural is one of Yeats's most prevalent themes. In a much earlier poem, 1899's "The Lover Tells of the Rose in His Heart," the speaker expresses a longing to re-make the world "in a casket of gold" and thereby eliminate its ugliness and imperfection. Later, in 1914's "The Dolls," the speaker writes of a group of dolls on a shelf, disgusted by the sight of a human baby. In each case, the artificial (the golden casket, the beautiful doll, the golden bird) is seen as perfect and unchanging, while the natural (the world, the human baby, the speaker's body) is prone to ugliness and decay. What is more, the speaker sees deep spiritual truth (rather than simply aesthetic escape) in his assumption of artificiality; he wishes his soul to learn to sing, and transforming into a golden bird is the way to make it capable of doing so.

"Sailing to Byzantium" is an endlessly interpretable poem, and suggests endlessly fascinating comparisons with other important poems—poems of travel, poems of age, poems of nature, poems featuring birds as symbols. (One of the most interesting is surely Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," to which this poem is in many ways a rebuttal: Keats writes of his nightingale, "Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird! / No hungry generations tread thee down"; Yeats, in the first stanza of "Sailing to Byzantium," refers to "birds in the trees" as "those dying generations.") It is important to note that the poem is not autobiographical; Yeats did not travel to Byzantium (which was renamed Constantinople in the fourth century A.D., and later renamed Istanbul), but he did argue that, in the sixth century, it offered the ideal environment for the artist. The poem is about an imaginative journey, not an actual one.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Does Byzantium sound like a place where you'd want to spend any time?
2. Is Byzantium an actual place in the poem, or is it a mental state? What reasons do you have for your opinion?
3. What does our speaker think of nature? Is it a good thing? A bad and scary thing? Why?
4. What's so great about art, anyway? What function does it serve for the speaker of the poem?
5. What is the thesis of the poem "Sailing to Byzantium" by William Butler Yeats?
6. Describe the criticism of modern life in the first stanza of "Sailing to Byzantium".
7. Critical appreciation of Yeats' 'Sailing to Byzantium'.
8. "The artifice of eternity" in sailing to Byzantium, what does the word "artifice" mean?
9. How did the author use the diction and literary devices in the poem "Sailing to Byzantium"?
10. What is the theme and the tone of the poem "Sailing to Byzantium"?

Unit IV Section (b)

W.B Yeats

Poem 2 The Lake Isle of Innisfree

"The Lake Isle of Innisfree" – Text

The Lake Isle of Innisfree-TEXT

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.
And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.
I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

Source: The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (1989)

Summary

The poet declares that he will arise and go to Innisfree, where he will build a small cabin "of clay and wattles made." There, he will have nine bean-rows and a beehive, and live alone in the glade loud with the sound of bees ("the bee-loud glade"). He says that he will have peace there, for peace drops from "the veils of morning to where the cricket sings." Midnight there is a glimmer, and noon is a purple glow, and evening is full of linnet's wings. He declares again that he will arise and go, for always, night and day, he hears the lake water lapping "with low

sounds by the shore." While he stands in the city, "on the roadway, or on the pavements grey," he hears the sound within himself, "in the deep heart's core."

Form

"The Lake Isle of Innisfree" is written mostly in hexameter, with six stresses in each line, in a loosely iambic pattern. The last line of each four-line stanza shortens the line to tetrameter, with only four stresses: "And live alone in the beeloud glade." Each of the three stanzas has the same ABAB rhyme scheme. Formally, this poem is somewhat unusual for Yeats: he rarely worked with hexameter, and every rhyme in the poem is a full rhyme; there is no sign of the half-rhymes Yeats often prefers in his later work.

Commentary

"The Lake Isle of Innisfree," published in Yeats's second book of poems, 1893's *The Rose*, is one of his first great poems, and one of his most enduring. The tranquil, hypnotic hexameters recreate the rhythmic pulse of the tide. The simple imagery of the quiet life the speaker longs to lead, as he enumerates each of its qualities, lulls the reader into his idyllic fantasy, until the penultimate line jolts the speaker—and the reader—back into the reality of his drab urban existence: "While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey." The final line—"I hear it in the deep heart's core"—is a crucial statement for Yeats, not only in this poem but also in his career as a whole. The implication that the truths of the "deep heart's core" are essential to life is one that would preoccupy Yeats for the rest of his career as a poet; the struggle to remain true to the deep heart's core may be thought of as Yeats's primary undertaking as a poet.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Do you think the speaker will ever make it to Innisfree? Why or why not?
2. What do you think is so terrible about wherever the speaker is now that makes him so itching to leave?
3. From the description of the ideal Innisfree, do you think the speaker has ever been there? Why?
4. For Pete's sake, dude, just build the house. What, if anything, do you think is keeping the speaker from reaching Innisfree? Why hasn't he already up and gone?
5. Do you think the speaker is really serious about wanting to go to Innisfree, or do you think this is just a passing daydream?
6. What's with the form of the poem? Do the quatrains (four-line stanzas) and rhymes contribute to the meaning in any way?
7. Why does the speaker want peace so badly? And why does peace come "dropping slow"? If he's so hungry for some quiet time, why can't he just make that happen in the city?
8. What kind of world does the poet want to create and why?
9. What is a character sketch of Peter Gilligan from the poem "The Ballad of Father Gilligan"?
10. How would you describe the particular appeal of this escapist poem "The Lake Isle of Innisfree"?

Unit IV Section (a)

The Wasteland. T.S. Eliot.

About the author

Thomas Stearns Eliot (September 26, 1888 - January 4, 1965), was an Anglo-American poet, dramatist, and literary critic. Eliot was born into a prominent Unitarian Saint Louis, Missouri family; his fifth cousin, Tom Eliot, was Chancellor of Washington University, and his grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot, was the school's founder. Eliot's major work shows few signs of St. Louis, but there was, in his youth, a Prufrock furniture store in town. Following his graduation from Harvard University in 1909, T.S. Eliot made his life and literary career in Britain, following the curtailment of a tour of Germany by the outbreak of World War I. After the War, in the 1920s, he would spend time with other great artists in the Montparnasse Quarter in Paris, France where he would be photographed by Man Ray. He dabbled in Buddhism and studied Sanskrit and was a student of G. I. Gurdjieff. Through the influence of Ezra Pound he came to prominence with the publication of a poem, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, in 1915. His style was very fresh and modernist. In 1922 came the publication of Eliot's long poem *The Waste Land*. Composed during a period of enormous personal difficulty for Eliot—his ill-fated marriage to Vivien Haigh-Wood was already foundering, and both he and Vivien suffered from precarious health—*The Waste Land* offered a bleak portrait of post-World War I Europe, sometimes laced with disgust, but also hesitantly gesturing towards the possibility of (religious?) redemption. Despite the

famous difficulty of the poem—its slippage between satire and prophecy, its abrupt and unannounced changes of speaker, location and time, its elegaic but intimidating summoning up of a vast and dissonant range of cultures and literatures—the poem has nonetheless become a familiar touchstone of modern literature. Here are some of its perhaps most famous phrases: "April is the cruellest month"; "I will show you fear in a handful of dust"; "Shantih shantih shantih." Ezra Pound contributed greatly to the poem with his editorial advice (the facsimile edition of the original manuscript with Pound's queries and corrections, published in 1971, is essential reading for admirers of the poem); in

acknowledgement. Eliot later dedicated the poem to him: "For Ezra Pound, 'Il miglior fabbro'" (the better craftsman). Eliot's later work, following his conversion to Anglicanism on June 29, 1927, is often but by no means exclusively religious in nature. This includes such works as *The Hollow Men*, *Ash-Wednesday*, *The Journey of the Magi*, and *Four Quartets*. Eliot considered *Four Quartets* to be his masterpiece, as it draws upon his vast knowledge of mysticism and philosophy. It consists of four poems, "Burnt Norton," "The Dry Salvages," "East Coker," and "Little Gidding." Each of these runs to several hundred lines total and is broken into five sections. Although they resist easy characterization, they have many things in common: each begins with a rumination on the geographical location of its title, and each meditates on the nature of time in some important respect— theological, historical, physical, and on its relation to the human condition. A reflective early reading suggests an inexact systematicity among them; they approach the same ideas in varying but overlapping ways, although they do not necessarily exhaust their questions. "Burnt Norton" asks what it means to consider things that aren't

the case but might have been. We see the shell of an abandoned house, and Eliot toys with the idea that all these "merely possible" realities are present together, but invisible to us: All the possible ways people might walk across a courtyard add up to a vast dance we can't see; Children who aren't there are hiding in the bushes. Eliot's plays, mostly in verse, include *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1953) and *The Elder Statesman* (1958). *Murder in the Cathedral* is a frankly religious piece about the death of St Thomas Becket. He confessed to being influenced by, among others, the works of 17th century preacher, Lancelot Andrewes. Later, he was appointed to the committee formed to produce the "New English" translation of the Bible. In 1939 he published a book of poetry for children, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, which after his death became the basis of the hit West End and Broadway musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber, *Cats*. On November 4, 1948, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. After his death, his body was cremated and, according to Eliot's wishes, the ashes taken to St Michael's Church in East Coker, the village from which Eliot's ancestors emigrated to America. A simple plaque commemorates him. As a note of trivia,

late in his life, Eliot became somewhat of a penpal with comedian Groucho Marx. Eliot even requested a portrait of the comedian, which he then proudly displayed in his home. "The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock" is a greatly quoted and referenced piece. References have appeared in Hill Street Blues and The Long Goodbye by private-eye novelist Raymond Chandler. 1. The Burial of the Dead. 2. A Game of Chess. 3. The Fire Sermon. 4. Death by Water. 5. What the Thunder Said.

The Waste Land, T. S. Eliot's masterpiece, is a long, complex poem about the psychological and cultural crisis that came with the loss of moral and cultural identity after World War I. When it was first published, the poem was considered radically experimental. Eliot dispenses with traditional verse forms and instead juxtaposes sordid images of popular culture with erudite allusions to classical and ancient literature and myths. The title is indicative of Eliot's attitude toward his contemporary society, as he uses the idea of a dry and sterile wasteland as a metaphor for a Europe devastated by war and desperate for spiritual replenishment but depleted of the cultural tools necessary for renewal.

The poem is deliberately obscure and fragmentary, incorporating variant voices, multiple points of view, and abrupt shifts in dramatic context. The motif of moral degeneration, however, is prevalent throughout the poem, the premise being that contemporary Europe, obsessed with novelty, trends, materialism, and instant gratification, lacks the faith and substance to reaffirm its cultural heritage, to reestablish the sense of order and stability that historical continuity once provided. In an attempt to counter the cultural deficit of the present with the rich cultural heritage of the past, Eliot combines images from pagan rituals and religious texts with ancient fertility rituals and allusions to legends of the Grail. These images of ceremony and tradition are set against bleak images of modern life, where spiritual death breeds cultural death, and the ashen landscape reflects a barren world void of transcendental value.

Describing a series of failed encounters between various men and women, Eliot creates composites of fertility archetypes who ironically are incapable of offering spiritual nourishment to a dying world. The characters drift in and out of

meaningless relationships; the men and women are impotent, shallow, vain, excruciatingly ordinary. Culture is reduced to common clichés; the well of redemption becomes a "dull canal." The world is filled with "a heap of broken images" where "the dead tree gives no shelter." The only salvation appears to be in personal responsibility, self-control, and a faith in cultural continuity based on common Western European values.

The poem is an elitist document. Eliot provides copious footnotes, and the text is loaded with difficult literary, historical, and anthropological allusions; it is meant to be understood only by a few. As an account of the dilemma faced by the West of its being threatened by the loss of its privileged, white, patriarchal position of cultural dominance in the first half of the twentieth century, *The Waste Land* is indispensable.

The Waste Land

By T. S. Eliot

FOR EZRA POUND
IL MIGLIOR FABBRO

I. The Burial of the Dead

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain.

Winter kept us warm, covering

Earth in forgetful snow, feeding

A little life with dried tubers.

Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee

With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,

And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,

And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.

Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.

And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's,

My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,

And I was frightened. He said, Marie,

Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.

In the mountains, there you feel free.

I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,

And the dry stone no sound of water. Only

There is shadow under this red rock,

(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),

And I will show you something different from either

Your shadow at morning striding behind you

Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;

I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

Frisch weht der Wind

Der Heimat zu

Mein Irisch Kind,

Wo weilest du?

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago:

"They called me the hyacinth girl,"

—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,

Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not

Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither

Living nor dead, and I knew nothing.

Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

Oed' und leer das Meer.

Madame Sosotris, famous clairvoyante,
Had a bad cold, nevertheless
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
The lady of situations.
Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.
I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.
Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:

One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City,

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,

I had not thought death had undone so many.

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,

And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.

Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,

To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours

With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.

There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: "Stetson!

"You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!

"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,

"Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?

"Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?

"Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,

"Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!

"You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"

II. A Game of Chess

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air

That freshened from the window, these ascended
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
Huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
"Jug Jug" to dirty ears.
And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; staring forms
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.

Footsteps shuffled on the stair.

Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair

Spread out in fiery points

Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

"My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.

"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.

"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?

"I never know what you are thinking. Think."

I think we are in rats' alley

Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"

The wind under the door.

"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"

Nothing again nothing.

"Do

"You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember

"Nothing?"

I remember

Those are pearls that were his eyes.

"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"

But

O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag—

It's so elegant

So intelligent

"What shall I do now? What shall I do?"

"I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street

"With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?

"What shall we ever do?"

The hot water at ten.

And if it rains, a closed car at four.

And we shall play a game of chess,

Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said—

I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.

He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you

To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.

You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,

He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.

And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,

He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,

And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.

Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.

Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said.

Others can pick and choose if you can't.

But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.

You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.

(And her only thirty-one.)

I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face.

It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.

(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)

The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been the same.

You are a proper fool, I said.

Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,

What you get married for if you don't want children?

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,

And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.

Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.

Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

III. The Fire Sermon

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf

Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind

Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,

Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends

Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.

And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;

Departed, have left no addresses.

By the waters of Lemman I sat down and wept . . .

Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,

Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.

But at my back in a cold blast I hear

The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation

Dragging its slimy belly on the bank

While I was fishing in the dull canal

On a winter evening round behind the gashouse

Musing upon the king my brother's wreck

And on the king my father's death before him.

White bodies naked on the low damp ground

And bones cast in a little low dry garret,

Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.

But at my back from time to time I hear

The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring

Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.

O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter

And on her daughter

They wash their feet in soda water

Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!

Twit twit twit

Jug jug jug jug jug jug

So rudely forc'd.

Tereu

Unreal City

Under the brown fog of a winter noon

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant

Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants

C.i.f. London: documents at sight,

Asked me in demotic French

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel

Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back

Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits

Like a taxi throbbing waiting,

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,

Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see

At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives

Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,

The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights

Her stove, and lays out food in tins.

Out of the window perilously spread

Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,

On the divan are piled (at night her bed)

Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dug

Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—

I too awaited the expected guest.

He, the young man carbuncular, arrives.

A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare.

One of the low on whom assurance sits

As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once:
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.
(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
Bestows one final patronising kiss,
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .
She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:

"Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."

When lovely woman stoops to folly and

Paces about her room again, alone,

She smooths her hair with automatic hand,

And puts a record on the gramophone.

"This music crept by me upon the waters"

And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.

O City city, I can sometimes hear

Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,

The pleasant whining of a mandoline

And a clatter and a chatter from within

Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls

Of Magnus Martyr hold

Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

The river sweats

Oil and tar

The barges drift

With the turning tide

Red sails

Wide

To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.

The barges wash

Drifting logs

Down Greenwich reach

Past the Isle of Dogs.

Weialala leia

Wallala leialala

Elizabeth and Leicester

Beating oars

The stern was formed

A gilded shell

Red and gold

The brisk swell

Rippled both shores

Southwest wind

Carried down stream

The peal of bells

White towers

Weialala leia

Wallala leialala

"Trams and dusty trees.

Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew

Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees

Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe."

"My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart

Under my feet. After the event

He wept. He promised a 'new start.'

I made no comment. What should I resent?"

"On Margate Sands.

I can connect

Nothing with nothing.

The broken fingernails of dirty hands.

My people humble people who expect

Nothing."

la la

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning

O Lord Thou pluckest me out

O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

IV. Death by Water

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,

Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell

And the profit and loss.

A current under sea

Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell

He passed the stages of his age and youth

Entering the whirlpool.

Gentile or Jew

O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,

Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

V. What the Thunder Said

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces

After the frosty silence in the gardens

After the agony in stony places

The shouting and the crying

Prison and palace and reverberation

Of thunder of spring over distant mountains

He who was living is now dead

We who were living are now dying

With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock

Rock and no water and the sandy road

The road winding above among the mountains

Which are mountains of rock without water

If there were water we should stop and drink

Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think

Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand

If there were only water amongst the rock

Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit

Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit

There is not even silence in the mountains

But dry sterile thunder without rain

There is not even solitude in the mountains

But red sullen faces sneer and snarl

From doors of mudcracked houses

If there were water

And no rock

If there were rock

And also water

And water

A spring

A pool among the rock

If there were the sound of water only

Not the cicada

And dry grass singing

But sound of water over a rock

Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees

Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop

But there is no water

Who is the third who walks always beside you?

When I count, there are only you and I together

But when I look ahead up the white road

There is always another one walking beside you

Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded

I do not know whether a man or a woman

—But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air

Murmur of maternal lamentation

Who are those hooded hordes swarming

Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth

Ringed by the flat horizon only

What is the city over the mountains

Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air

Falling towers

Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

Vienna London

Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one.
Only a cock stood on the rooftree

Co co rico co co rico

In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust

Bringing rain

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves

Waited for rain, while the black clouds

Gathered far distant, over Himavant.

The jungle crouched, humped in silence.

Then spoke the thunder

Datta: what have we given?

My friend, blood shaking my heart

The awful daring of a moment's surrender

Which an age of prudence can never retract

By this, and this only, we have existed

Which is not to be found in our obituaries

Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider

Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor

In our empty rooms

DA

Dayadhvani: I have heard the key

Turn in the door once and turn once only

We think of the key, each in his prison

Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison

Only at nightfall, a the real rumours

Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus

DA

Danyata: The boat responded

Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar

The sea was calm, your heart would have responded

Gaily, when invited, beating obedient

To controlling hands

I sat upon the shore

Fishing, with the arid plain behind me

Shall I at least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina

Quando fiam uti chelidon—O swallow swallow

Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie

These fragments I have shored against my ruins

Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih

The Waste Land: T. S. Eliot's as a Journey of Realization and Revelation

The Waste Land, by T. S. Eliot, appeared at a time when European society was not quite sure what to do with itself. Europe had just emerged from World War I, a war which had traumatized the continent and its society. Many felt the world was chaotic and inhumane. A sense of disillusionment and cynicism became pronounced and nihilism grew in popularity. This was also a time of personal difficulty for Eliot due to his failing marriage and the disorder of his nerves. Eliot expressed all of these feelings in his poem. In fact, The Waste Land soon became known as "the work that best expressed the mood of a postwar generation disillusioned by the

loss of ideals and faith in progress" (Dupree 7). The Waste Land does not, however, express only despair in the condition of modern society. Conscious of its actual degradation, Eliot sought a means to escape it. He did a great deal of research concerning fertility rituals and myths and indicated that "his reading in these and similar studies provided a way of seeing behind present-day actions a substratum of past beliefs and practices that, though now lost to consciousness, continue to inform our daily lives in hidden but significant ways" (Dupree 8). As Delmore Schwartz states, "Eliot's theme is the rehabilitation of a system of beliefs, known but now discredited" (209). Eliot felt that man needed to be brought back to these old beliefs, but was wary of stating this openly, fearing a direct approach would prevent the poem from being read.

The modern man had become too hardened to accept Christian principles directly and, instead, must gradually be made aware of his condition. In order to achieve this, Eliot chronicled his journey of realization and revelation in the form of *The Waste Land*, using the protagonist of the poem to represent his own passage to spiritual awareness and to convince man of the degradation of society and the need for reform.

The poem begins with the protagonist musing on spring:

April is the cruelest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain.

Winter kept us warm, covering

Earth in forgetful snow, feeding

A little life with dried tubers. (1, 1-7)²

This passage is an indication of the extent of the degradation of man. He has sunken so low into

depravity that he prefers to live a life of ignorance and to disregard the fact that he is living a

half-life. April, the month in which spring begins, is no longer a joyous time in which new life is

celebrated, but a cruel time of rebirth that reminds man that his own life is terribly empty.

The protagonist then addresses man directly, stating, "you know only / a heap of broken

images, where the sun beats, / and the dead tree gives no shelter. the cricket no relief. / and the

dry stone no sound of water" (1, 21-24). He then invites us into "the shadow of this red rock" (1,

26), an allusion to the Book of Isaiah, in which the Messiah's future coming is likened to "an

hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as

the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (KJV Bible, Isa. 32:2). Under this red rock, he will

show the way to escape the mundane life man has brought upon himself.

The speaker then recalls the time he first realized the emptiness of his life. In the springtime, he says, he gave his lover hyacinths. Looking at her, with her arms full of flowers

and her hair dripping wet, he expected to see happiness and fulfillment, but saw nothing. At this

point, he realizes that true joy cannot be found in transitory things. The world holds nothing for

him- "Oed' und leer das Meer" (1, 42)-desolate and empty is the sea. It is possible that Eliot came

to this same realization through a similar cause, as he and his wife had a very unhappy

relationship.

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to this same realization through a similar cause, as he and his wife had a very unhappy

relationship.

The protagonist then takes us on a journey through society, a journey that illustrates the full extent of human degradation and spiritual emptiness. In the first scene of "A Game of Chess," a wealthy couple is shown at home, living meaningless lives composed of dull routines.

Their relationship is forced and artificial, each so self-absorbed that neither can communicate with the other.

In the second scene of this section, the extent of degradation is further revealed. A woman is in a pub discussing with a group of friends the advice she gave her friend Lil when

Lil's husband, Alfred, was discharged from military service. She says she pointed out that Alfred,

having been in the service for four years, "wants a good time" and told Lil, "if you don't give it to

him, there's others will" (II, 148-149). She then rebuked Lil for looking "so antique" (II, 156), and

Lil replied that it was because she had an abortion. She had already given birth to five children

and did not want more. In this scene, sex is reduced to a duty a wife must perform to please her

husband, and children are an obligation, not a joy.

In "The Fire Sermon," the depravity of man is further illustrated. A woman is shown in

her apartment eating dinner with her lover. Their encounter after dinner is described thusly:

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,

The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,

Endeavours to engage her in caresses

Which still are unreprieved, if undesired

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;

Exploring hands encounter no defense;

His vanity requires no response,

And makes a welcome of indifference. (III, 235-242)

When he leaves, "her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass: 'Well now that's done: and

I'm glad it's over'." (III, 252) This attitude of indifference can be seen as even more depraved than

lust and expresses the apathetic attitude of many after the war.

However, there is still hope. Sometimes, the protagonist can hear "the pleasant whining

of a mandoline" (III, 261) near the walls of Magnus Martyr, a church "where fishermen lounge at

noon" (III, 263). This brief glimpse of hope is an indication of the source of a meaningful life.

The "fishmen" remind us of Jesus' disciples, the "fishers of men" (KJV Bible, Matt. 4:19), who

were exhorted to journey throughout the earth, telling men of the gospel of Christ and the way to

salvation.

In "Death by Water," the way of escape from the degradation of society is revealed. The

protagonist tells us of Phlebas the Phoenician, who experienced death by water, which can be

seen as a representation of baptism, the shedding of the sinful nature, and the acceptance of the

"Living Water" (KJV Bible, John 7:38) of Christ. Phlebas is now dead to the world. He has

forgotten "the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell / and the profit and the loss" (IV, 313-314). He

is no longer affected by the sin of modern society but lives separate from it. The narrator then

addresses the reader: "Gentile or Jew / O you who turn the wheel and look to windward, /

Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you" (IV, 319-321). With this address, the

narrator reminds us that we are as mortal as Phlebas, and we also require this "Living Water."

This passage is a direct contrast to "The Fire Sermon" quenching the fires of lust with the "Living Water" that provides spiritual cleansing. To truly experience life, our sinful nature must die.

The protagonist concludes by explaining his own realization that, like "Jerusalem Athens

Alexandria" (V, 374), modern society is deteriorating: "London Bridge is falling down" (V, 426).

At this time, he has a decision to make: "Shall I at least set my lands in order?" (V, 425) Will he

avoid the decay of society and abandon his meaningless life for one with significance? His

decision is evident in the last stanza of the poem. Amid the madness of the ruin of society, the

protagonist finds "Shantih shantih shantih" (V, 433)-a peace that passes understanding. Like

Phlebas, he has chosen to bid farewell to his dishonest, worldly self and surrender to the Living

Water that has the power to quench the fires of corruption. It is through this passage that Eliot

suggests his own discovery and his decision to experience the peace that passes understanding by

surrendering the corrupt part of himself. The poem, composed of seemingly fragmented ideas

and stream-of-consciousness thoughts, ends on a note of peace, a peace that Eliot has attained

and wishes modern man to experience.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. How does Eliot describe the physical "Waste Land" in this poem? What are some of its main features, and how are they connected to the symbolic wasteland that Western culture has become for Eliot?
2. Why does Eliot choose to conclude this poem by discussing the Hindu values of giving, compassion, and self-control? According to the poem, what can we learn from these values?
3. What does Eliot mean in the final moments of the poem when he writes, "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (431)? What are the fragments? What are the ruins? And what does shoring mean, anyway?
4. Why does Eliot tell us in a footnote that the blind prophet Tiresias is the most important character in the poem? How is Tiresias best suited to narrate "The Waste Land"? Do you think the speaker of the poem is always Tiresias, who is both a man and a woman and lives many different lives?
5. On the whole, how much hope does Eliot allow us to have in this poem? Is it all purely, "We're done, and it's a shame," or is there the possibility for something good to happen in the future?
6. How much does "The Waste Land" still apply today? Do we still face any of the problems Eliot talks about in this poem, or would he be overjoyed to be alive today and to see how far we've come?
7. Does the poem show any sympathy for the woman in the pub in lines 139-172, or for the young woman in lines 222-248? Are they still redeemable as characters, or is Eliot simply using them as examples of how far we've sunk as a society?
8. Is it really possible for today's readers to get behind what Eliot is doing in this poem, or are we too invested in pop culture to care about his supposedly elitist ideas anymore?
9. Is there any upside to thinking the way Eliot does? Is his thinking undemocratic? Does he expect everyone to be as smart as he is? What are the upsides and downsides of living in a modern world where important decisions tend to be made by applause meters instead of experts?

10. Is there something to Eliot's theory that life makes more sense when everyone knows the same stories? For example, have you ever compared your life to an episode of a TV show in order to have your experience make sense to someone else? Is this still a valuable way of relating to one another?

Unit IV Section (b)

W.B Yeats

Poem 1 The Second coming

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
 Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
 Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
 The darkness drops again; but now I know
 That twenty centuries of stony sleep
 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
 And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
 Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Summary

The speaker describes a nightmarish scene: the falcon, turning in a widening "gyre" (spiral), cannot hear the falconer; "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold"; anarchy is loosed upon the world; "The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned." The best people, the speaker says, lack all conviction, but the worst "are full of passionate intensity." Surely, the speaker asserts, the world is near a revelation; "Surely the Second Coming is at hand." No sooner does he think of "the Second Coming," then he is troubled by "a vast image of the *Spiritus Mundi*, or the collective spirit of mankind: somewhere in the desert, a giant sphinx ("A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze as blank and pitiless as the sun") is moving, while the shadows of desert birds reel about it. The darkness drops again over the speaker's sight, but he knows that the sphinx's twenty centuries of "stony sleep" have been made a nightmare by the motions of "a rocking cradle." And what "rough beast," he wonders, "its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

Form

"The Second Coming" is written in a very rough iambic pentameter, but the meter is so loose, and the exceptions so frequent, that it actually seems closer to free verse with frequent heavy stresses. The rhymes are likewise haphazard; apart from the two couplets with which the poem opens, there are only coincidental rhymes in the poem, such as "man" and "sun."

Commentary

Because of its stunning, violent imagery and terrifying ritualistic language, "The Second Coming" is one of Yeats's most famous and most anthologized poems; it is also one of the most thematically obscure and difficult to understand. (It is safe to say that very few people who love this poem could paraphrase its meaning to satisfaction.) Structurally, the poem is quite simple—the first stanza describes the conditions present in the world (things falling apart, anarchy, etc.), and the second surmises from those conditions that a monstrous Second Coming is about to take place, not of the Jesus we first knew, but of a new messiah, a "rough beast," the slouching sphinx rousing itself in the desert and lumbering toward Bethlehem. This brief exposition, though intriguingly blasphemous, is not terribly complicated; but the question of what it should signify to a reader is another story entirely.

Yeats spent years crafting an elaborate, mystical theory of the universe that he described in his book *A Vision*. This theory issued in part from Yeats's lifelong fascination with the occult and mystical, and in part from the sense of responsibility Yeats felt to order his experience within a structured belief system. The system is extremely complicated and not of any lasting importance—except for the effect that it had on his poetry, which is of extraordinary lasting importance. The theory of history Yeats articulated in *A Vision* centers on a diagram made of two conical spirals, one inside the other, so that the widest part

of one of the spirals rings around the narrowest part of the other spiral, and vice versa. Yeats believed that this image (he called the spirals "gyres") captured the contrary motions inherent within the historical process, and he divided each gyre into specific regions that represented particular kinds of historical periods (and could also represent the psychological phases of an individual's development).

"The Second Coming" was intended by Yeats to describe the current historical moment (the poem appeared in 1921) in terms of these gyres. Yeats believed that the world was on the threshold of an apocalyptic revelation, as history reached the end of the outer gyre (to speak roughly) and began moving along the inner gyre. In his definitive edition of Yeats's poems, Richard J. Finnegan quotes Yeats's own notes:

The end of an age, which always receives the revelation of the character of the next age, is represented by the coming of one gyre to its place of greatest expansion and of the other to its place of greatest contraction... The revelation [that] approaches will... take its character from the contrary movement of the interior gyre...

In other words, the world's trajectory along the gyre of science, democracy, and heterogeneity is now coming apart, like the frantically widening flight-path of the falcon that has lost contact with the falconer; the next age will take its character not from the gyre of science, democracy, and speed, but from the contrary inner gyre—which, presumably, opposes mysticism, primal power, and slowness to the science and democracy of the outer gyre. The "rough beast" slouching toward Bethlehem is the symbol of this new age: the speaker's vision of the rising sphinx is his vision of the character of the new world.

This seems quite silly as philosophy or prophecy (particularly in light of the fact that it has not come true as yet). But as poetry, and understood more broadly than as a simple reiteration of the mystic theory of *A Vision*, "The Second Coming" is

a magnificent statement about the contrary forces at work in history, and about the conflict between the modern world and the ancient world. The poem may not have the thematic relevance of Yeats's best work, and may not be a poem with which many people can personally identify; but the aesthetic experience of its passionate language is powerful enough to ensure its value and its importance in Yeats's work as a whole.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Why do you think Yeats put so many confusing symbols in the poem? Many poets, when they use symbolism, try to make everything relate to each other. But what does falconing have to do with a sphinx or a "blood-dimmed tide," and what does either of them have to do with a sphinx and the "indignant desert birds"? Most people who read this poem want to make these things correspond to something real in the world. But we have to consider that Yeats did not want his poem to be interpreted in this way.
2. How would you explain the poem's relationship to the Bible? Most of the symbols are very general and timeless, like something out of the Book of Revelation. But it's also easy to tell that this is not the Bible. For one thing, Christ doesn't show up at the end, but a "rough beast." Does the poet sound like a religious man, and, if so, what kind?
3. Why does Yeats think of history as this swirling vortex, the gyre? Because the gyre moves further and further from its center, does it mean that things are always getting worse? It should be mentioned that Yeats's idea was highly original and not shared by everyone. There are still plenty of people, even today, who think that history is linear (except for a few blips like wars), and that society is constantly improving itself.
4. Is it possible that the appearance of the "rough beast" could be good for the world, in the end? After all, if the world is already so violent that "innocence is drowned," things can't get much direr. Maybe Yeats thinks it's like tearing down an old building in order to put up a new one. But, then again, there's nothing in the poem about society rebuilding itself.
5. Do you think the poem could apply to the entire world, or is it only intended for Christian Europe? People in other civilizations, for example the Middle East, have found this to be a very compelling poem, and they have made it fit into their own views of history. Maybe it speaks most directly to people with an "apocalyptic" outlook, who think that big, sweeping changes are on the horizon.
6. What is the "best" and the "worst" in the poem "The Second Coming"?
7. What is the main theme of William Butler Yeats' poem "The Second Coming"?

8. How is "The Second Coming" a prophetic poem?
9. What is the "vast image" he sees in "The Second Coming"?
10. In which poem W.B. Yeats can be seen as a "dreamy" poet?

Unit V Section (a)**Philip Larkin****Philip Larkin- a brief biography**

On August 9, 1922, Philip Larkin was born in Coventry, England. He attended St. John's College, Oxford. His first book of poetry, *The North Ship*, was published in 1945 and, though not particularly strong on its own, is notable insofar as certain passages foreshadow the unique sensibility and maturity that characterizes his later work.

In 1946, Larkin discovered the poetry of Thomas Hardy and became a great admirer of his poetry, learning from Hardy how to make the commonplace and often dreary details of his life the basis for extremely tough unsparing, and memorable poems. With his second volume of poetry, *The Less Deceived* (1955), Larkin became the preeminent poet of his generation, and a leading voice of what came to be called "The Movement," a group of young English writers who rejected the prevailing fashion for neo-Romantic writing in the style of Yeats and Dylan Thomas. Like Hardy, Larkin focused on intense personal emotion but strictly avoided sentimentality or self-pity.

In 1964, he confirmed his reputation as a major poet with the publication of *The Whitsun Weddings*, and again in 1974 with *High Windows*: collections whose searing, often mocking, wit does not conceal the poet's dark vision and underlying obsession with universal themes of mortality, love, and human solitude. Deeply anti-social and a great lover and published critic of American jazz, Larkin never married and worked as a librarian in the provincial city of Hull, where he died on December 2, 1985.

In May 1941, Philip Larkin was the treasurer of the Oxford University English Club and in that capacity had to take the visiting speaker George Orwell out to dinner after he had addressed the membership on the subject of "Literature and Totalitarianism." Larkin's main recollection: "We took Dylan Thomas to the Randolph and George Orwell to the not-so-good hotel. I suppose it was my first essay in practical criticism."

Nudged and intrigued by this potential meeting of minds, I once attempted a comparison and contrast between Larkin and Orwell, as exemplars of a certain style of "Englishness." Both men had an abiding love for the English countryside and a haunting fear of its obliteration at the hands of "developers." (Here I would cite Larkin's poem "Going, Going" and Orwell's novel *Coming Up for Air*.) Both were openly scornful of Christianity but maintained a profound respect for the scripture and the Anglican liturgy, as well as for the masterpieces of English ecclesiastical architecture. (See Larkin's poem "Church Going" and the same Orwell novel, as well as numberless letters and reviews.) They each cherished the famous English affection for animals and were revolted by any instances of human cruelty to them. (Here consult Larkin's poem "Myxomatosis," about the extermination of the country's rabbit population, as well as at least one Orwell work that's too obvious to require mentioning.)

In somewhat different ways, Orwell and Larkin were phlegmatically pessimistic and at times almost misanthropic, not to say misogynistic. Both also originated from dire family backgrounds that inculcated prejudice against Jews, the colored subjects of the British Empire, and the working class. Orwell's detested father was a servant of the Empire who specialized in the exceptionally nasty subdivision that traded opium between India and China, and Larkin's detested father was a professional civil servant who came to admire the "New Germany" of the 1930s, attended Nuremberg rallies, and displayed Nazi regalia in his office. But these similarities in trait and background produced radically different conclusions. Orwell educated himself, not without difficulty, out of racial prejudice and took a stalwart position on the side of the workers. Larkin energetically hated the labour movement and was appalled at the arrival of immigrants from the Caribbean and Asia. Orwell traveled as widely as his health permitted and learned several foreign languages, while Larkin's insularity and loathing for "abroad" were almost parodic. In consequence, Orwell has left us a memory that elevates English decency to one of humanity's versions of grace under pressure, whereas the publication of Larkin's *Selected Letters* in 1992, and a biography by Andrew Motion in 1993, posthumously drenched the poet in a tide of cloacal filth and petty bigotry that was at least somewhat self-generated.

I now wish I had understood enough to push my earlier comparison a little further. For there is another aspect of "Englishness," netted in discrepant ways by Harold Pinter and Monty Python, in which both men had a share. This is the world of wretched, tasteless food and watery drinks, dreary and crowded lodgings, outrageous plumbing, surly cynicism, long queues, shocking hygiene, and dismal, rain-lashed holidays, continually punctuated by rudeness and philistinism. In Orwell's early fiction, all this is most graphically distilled in *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying*, but it is an essential element of the texture of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and was quarried from the "down and out" journalism of which he produced so much. A neglected aspect of the general misery, but very central once you come to notice it, is this: we are in a mean and chilly and cheerless place, where it is extraordinarily difficult to have sex, let alone to feel yourself in love. Orwell's best shorthand for it was "the W.C. and dirty-handkerchief side of life."

Larkin's own summary was, if anything, even more dank: he once described the sexual act as a futile attempt to get "someone else to blow your own nose for you." These collected letters reflect his contribution to a distraught and barren four-decade relationship with Monica Jones, an evidently insufferable yet gifted woman who was a constant friend and intermittent partner (one can barely rise to saying mistress, let alone lover) until Larkin's death in 1985. During that time, he strove to keep her to himself while denying her the marriage that she so anxiously wanted, betrayed her with other women sexually, and eagerly helped Kingsley Amis to employ her as the model for the frigid, drab, and hysterical Margaret Peel in *Lucky Jim*.

On an initial scrutiny, *Letters to Monica* struck me as rather thickening the squalid atmosphere of some of the preceding accounts. But so unalleviated—I almost wrote artless—is its tone that the material takes on a certain integrity and consistency. Not unlike Larkin's paradoxical infatuation with jazz, it helps furnish a key to his muse. The key in both cases—which is why artless would be such a mistake—is that about suffering, he was seldom wrong. The dismal paltriness of the suffering doesn't really qualify this verdict.

One of his ways of keeping Monica while keeping her at bay—they did not cohabit until very near the end, finally forced into mutual dependence by

decrepitude on his part and dementia on hers: perhaps the least romantic story ever told—was to make an over-full confession of his own inadequacies as a male. "I'm sorry our lovemaking fizzled out," he writes after a disappointing provincial vacation in 1958. "I am not a highly-sexed person." This comes after a letter in which he invites her to consider their affair in the light of "a kind of homosexual relation, disguised: it wdn't surprise me at all if someone else said so." And even earlier—it is not as if this is the record of a hot thing cooling—he writes, in December 1954, "If it were announced that all sex wd cease as from midnight on 31 December, my way of life wouldn't change at all." This naturally prompts one to review one of his best-known poems, "Annus Mirabilis":

Sexual intercourse began

In nineteen sixty-three

(Which was rather late for me) -

Between the end of the Chatterley ban

And the Beatles' first LP.

The lines can easily be read as a non-literal satire on the exuberant 1960s in general. The less-quoted succeeding verse is arguably more revealing:

Up till then there'd only been

A sort of bargaining,

A wrangle for a ring,

A shame that started at sixteen

And spread to everything.

In Larkin's mind, marriage was invariably a trap set by females: a ring in exchange for some perfunctory sex and then a lifetime of domestic servitude and—even more appalling—the rearing of children. Once again the poetry is

unambiguous. "The Life With a Hole in It" conveys the cringe with greater complexity, but "Self's the Man" is not unrepresentative:

He married a woman to stop her getting away

Now she's there all day.

And the money he gets for wasting his life on work

She takes as her perk

To pay for the kiddies' clebber and the drier ...

Even "The Whitsun Weddings," in which he manages to write with some tendresse about a famous northern-English nuptial tradition, closes with an extremely melancholy metaphor of energy mutated into futility, or possibly potency into liquefaction: "A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower / Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain." And as for the thought of parenthood, not just by or from oneself, but even of oneself, we need look no further than the celebrated poem that probably convinced his admirer Margaret Thatcher that he wasn't the family-values type. "This Be the Verse" opens by saying, "They fuck you up, your mum and dad / They may not mean to, but they do"; and it closes by advising, "Get out as early as you can / And don't have any kids yourself." There are virtually no references to children in Larkin that are not vivid with revulsion, the word kiddies being the customary form the automatic shudder takes.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. What is a summary of "The North Ship" by Philip Larkin?
2. In what way was Philip Larkin a Movement poet ?
3. What is the theme of the poem "The Trees"?elaborate on your views
4. What is the tone of "Days" by Philip Larkin? Optimistic or pessimistic?
5. What themes does Philip Larkin's poem "Seventy feet down" explore?
6. What is movement poetry? Would you consider Philip Larkin to be a movement poet?
7. What does Philip Larkin try to convey in his poem "A study of Reading Habits"?
8. What are the themes covered in "Cut Grass" by Philip Larkin?
9. Is Larkin an "uncommon poet for the common man" as he has been called?
10. Please comment on the theme of the poem "Wants" by Philip Larkin.
11. Is the poet Philip Larkin a modernist?
12. Is Philip Larkin an anti-romantic poet?
13. Is Philip Larkin a poet of The Movement? If so, what are the reasons supporting this?Discuss

Unit V Section (a)**Philip Larkin****Poem I- The Whitsun Wedding****The Whitsun Weddings poem and Analysis**

The poem *The Whitsun Weddings* by Philip Larkin is about the poet's journey to London in a train. The day is a Whitsun Day on which the British Government frees marriage taxes for one day. Therefore the day fascinates people belonging to the lower economic class because they cannot afford the payment of marriage taxes on other days. The poem on the surface level is a description of these experiences of that particular day.

In the beginning the poet seems to be showing a kind of hatred for marriage or the newly married couples. Therefore, his description of physical appearances of those couples and their relatives is full of mockery. But towards the end of the poem, the poet realizes the importance of marriage. This time he realizes marriage to fertility ("the arrow shower" and "rain") and thus to the continuity of the human race. The new knowledge contradicts his previous attitude towards marriage, it results in a kind of irony which affects the poet himself, therefore, the poem becomes self ironic.

In the first and the second stanza, the poet describes his past experiences when he was traveling in a train. These two stanzas are full of panoramic description of the scenes; that pass by as the train moves forward. The description shows that the poet is beginning his journey from the country area to a city that is London. The important moment in the poem comes when newly married couples board on the train. These newly married couples are accompanied by their relatives and they certainly belong to a lower economic class. The description of their physical experiences with the words and phrases like "pomaded girls", "parodies of fashion" suggest that they are from the lower economic class. In each station and platform the poet witnesses the flow of such newly married couples. The poet virtually being an unmarried man is full of disgust for marriage with the arrival of those people and the poet undergoes mystifying experiences of suffocation. He is put in

an uneasy situation and starts mocking the appearances of those married couples and their relatives.

The poet after the description of the wedding couples and their relatives once again focuses on scenes outside landscape. The description can be contrasted to the description of the landscape. The turning point in the poem comes at the end shown by the lines "A sense of falling, like an arrow shower sent out of sight, somewhere becomes rain". In these lines the poet expresses his realization of importance of marriage. The poem suddenly becomes ironic because his realization contradicts his previous attitude towards marriage. In these lines "arrow, showers" and "rain" relate marriage to fertility and to the continuity of life. Therefore the ultimate knowledge about marriage is finally achieved by the poet.

Although Philip Larkin turned down the office of Britain's poet laureate following the death of John Betjeman in 1984 (it ended up going to Ted Hughes), Larkin had already inherited Betjeman's cultural place in Britain and was one of the country's most popular poets. Three of his poems, including "The Whitsun Weddings," appear in *The Nation's Favourite Poems* (BBC, 1996), an anthology of the 100 most popular poems in the UK; only T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats have more.

Larkin was Britain's poet laureate of disappointment. His cynicism was softened only by his skepticism, which only rarely admitted any expression of new possibility, as in his late poem "The Trees": "Last year is dead, they seem to say. Begin afresh, afresh, afresh." (For Larkin, there's as much emphasis on the word "seem" as "afresh.") But Larkin was more famous for his satiric stanzas. It's a good bet that those who know anything of poetry in Britain—as well as many who don't—know by heart the opening stanza of "This Be the Verse":

They fuck you up, your mum and dad

They may not mean to, but they do.

They fill you with the faults they had

And add some extra just for you.

Larkin's popularity seemed to grow from this disabused temperament, which captures the feelings of those who think they do not like poetry, as well as those who think they do. It was Larkin, after all, who ended his poem "A Study of Reading Habits" with the lines "Get stewed: / Books are a load of crap."

Yet for all his meanness, there is also irreverent wit and a melancholy mitigated by his resolve to look at life as it is. Readers came to trust him: his poems have a sense of psychological scale, candor, and a thorough ease with metrical forms that place Larkin firmly in a British poetic tradition. If his vision is elegiac, one of gradual diminishment, it is also one of rich and nuanced emotional response. Larkin is a great poet of middle age, whose instinct for social satire amplifies his sense of poignancy. Betjeman describes Larkin's work as "tenderly observant"; that he could also be bracing and acerbic implies his complexity. (Robert Pinsky's description of the poems as "sour, majestic refusals" captures it well.) In its harmony of change and loss played against the melody of the poem's wedding narrative, "The Whitsun Weddings" (1958) shows this contradiction to great effect. The poem may be Larkin's best.

Whitsun, or Whit Sunday, is the seventh Sunday after Easter (Pentecost), deep into spring, when people often marry. During the '50s, it was also an opportune weekend to wed because of financial advantages afforded by the British tax code and, as a long weekend, a good one for holiday traveling. This may explain why Larkin saw so many wedding parties during an actual train ride in 1955, which gave him the germ of the poem.

That Whitsun, I was late getting away:

Not till about

One-twenty on the sunlit Saturday

Did my three-quarters-empty train pull out,

All windows down, all cushions hot, all sense

Of being in a hurry gone. We ran

Behind the backs of houses, crossed a street
Of blinding windscreens, smelt the fish-dock; thence
The river's level drifting breadth began,
Where sky and Lincolnshire and water meet.

The opening, so characteristic of Larkin, is conversational yet rhythmically firm, announcing the anecdotal mode and quickly establishing the sensation of the city's hurrying bustle dropping away with the train's departure. In the "river's level drifting breadth," Larkin creates an image of continuity between sky and city and water that the train itself mimics; it is the central image of the poem, the form of an unfolding movement that connects distinct locations and points of time.

All afternoon, through the tall heat that slept
For miles inland,
A slow and stopping curve southwards we kept.
Wide farms went by, short-shadowed cattle, and
Canals with floatings of industrial froth;
A hothouse flashed uniquely: hedges dipped
And rose: and now and then a smell of grass
Displaced the reek of buttoned carriage-cloth
Until the next town, new and nondescript,
Approached with acres of dismantled cars.

Larkin manages the easy naturalness of his voice so flawlessly that one hardly notices the poem's rhyming stanza structure (ABABCDECDE), a kind of shortened sonnet (the quatrain is Shakespearean, the sestet Petrarchan). Keats invented this stanza for his summer odes, and Larkin's formal allusion evokes the summer season, its redolent promise and pastoral sweetness. Just as Keats never loses sense, in the summer odes, that abundance comes from the process of mutation, of organic breakdown, in Larkin there is never any sweetness without much sour. The fantasy of the pastoral landscape, its farms and hedges, gains grittier reality with the "floatings of industrial froth," like the plumpness of Keats' sensual imagery and musical phrasing in "To Autumn" turned rancid: the smell of grass competes with the stale smell of the cloth seats inside the train carriage. Such pungent realism goes a long way in setting the stage for the plausible yet fantastic coincidence of coming upon a sequence of wedding parties:

At first, I didn't notice what a noise

The weddings made

Each station that we stopped at: sun destroys

The interest of what's happening in the shade,

And down the long cool platforms whoops and skirls

I took for porters larking with the mails,

And went on reading. Once we started, though,

We passed them, grinning and pomaded, girls

In parodies of fashion, heels and veils,

All posed irresolutely, watching us go

I find "what's happening in the shade" a little strange, I have to say. Larkin's initial confusion that the girls are actually men—that is, "porters larking with the mails"—becomes somewhat charged in the crossed wires of homonym. To what degree one can read the "larking" as the Larkin only a Freudian would dare imply,

yet to anyone listening to the sounds the poem makes, Larkin's pun on his own name appears like a signature hidden in a painted shrub. But I marvel at Larkin's suave mastery with the modulations of verse movement, the way the run and pause driving each line generates rhythmic tension.

Verse movement is like the muscular contraction in the athletic body of the poem; one place to pay attention to it is at the ends of lines. Larkin's sentence runs over the boundary where the line ends in the first three lines, then again in the fifth and eighth, pausing in between to create a complex rhythm. (Larkin, an enthusiast for New Orleans and swing-era jazz, has a hot feel for rhythm; all his poems swing, and swing hardest at the ends of lines.)

As each line unfolds, Larkin also controls the release of information: one line adds to the image of another without becoming overloaded by too much detail. The technique is classical: clarity, concision, and balance of image, action, and statement. But the style is all his own. The image of the grinning and pomaded girls "in parodies of fashion" is classic Larkin, demonstrating his flair for making vivid and distinct even those shared characteristics that turn individual figures into "types." One finds it again in the fourth stanza, in "mothers loud and fat," "an uncle shouting smut," and in the perms, gloves, and fake jewelry to which people seem grotesquely reduced:

As if out on the end of an event

Waving goodbye

To something that survived it. Struck, I leant

More promptly out next time, more curiously,

And saw it all again in different terms:

The fathers with broad belts under their suits

And seamy foreheads; mothers loud and fat;

An uncle shouting smut; and then the perms,
The nylon gloves and jewelry-substitutes,
The lemons, mauves, and olive-ochers that
Marked off the girls unreally from the rest.

This fourth stanza introduces a new formal event to the poem. Where previously the syntax of the poem stopped or paused at the end of each stanza, here it runs over the stanza boundary quite violently, in the middle of a phrase, in order to complete the syntax in the first line of the next one (the fifth). No accident, the poem repeats the move twice, in the same position, in subsequent stanzas: the effect establishes an expectation of overrunning (the speaker is in a moving train, after all):

Yes, from cafes
And banquet-halls up yards, and bunting-dressed
Coach-party annexes, the wedding-days
Were coming to an end. All down the line
Fresh couples climbed aboard: the rest stood round:
The last confetti and advice were thrown,
And, as we moved, each face seemed to define
Just what it saw departing: children frowned
At something dull: fathers had never known
Success so huge and wholly farcical:
The women shared
The secret like a happy funeral;

While girls, gripping their handbags tighter, stared
At a religious wounding. Free at last,
And loaded with the sum of all they saw,
We hurried towards London, shuffling gout of steam.
Now fields were building-plots, and poplars cast
Long shadows over major roads, and for
Some fifty minutes, that in time would seem
Just long enough to settle hats and say
I nearly died,
A dozen marriages got under way.

Larkin's genius for abstracting from experience is heightened in this poem, in which his talents so brilliantly serve the narrative of a simple discovery: that each unique wedding party is in truth like all the other wedding parties gathering that day, a perception only the poet realizes, because he is in the privileged position of witnessing each one. He is the single consciousness of the poem; just as sky and Lincolnshire and water meet along the visual line of the river, so all the Whitsun weddings meet along the train-line and the line of consciousness that belongs to the poet, a paradoxical still point moving through time and space.

To even a casual reader of the social satire at which Larkin excels, the frowning children, the proud fathers, the sentimental girls are all genuinely funny, but their depiction also displays their humanity, common with the poet's own: "Free at last, / And loaded with the sum of all they saw, / We hurried towards London." What they have seen, the poet too has seen; and as "they" become "we" in the collective hurrying, they join him, and so are joined to him.

The poem refuses any sentimentality suggested by such a formulation, however, by insisting on each individual's separateness, not unlike the way each passenger arrives at his or her own destination, alongside the others on the train:

They watched the landscape, sitting side by side

—An Odeon went past, a cooling tower,

And someone running up to bowl—and none

Thought of the others they would never meet

Or how their lives would all contain this hour.

I thought of London spread out in the sun,

Its postal districts packed like squares of wheat:

It's here that Larkin creates a kind of heightened platform for the drama of his statement "There we were aimed" (the opening sentence of the final stanza). It's a dramatic moment in the speech-act of the poem:

There we were aimed. And as we raced across

Bright knots of rail

Past standing Pullmans, walls of blackened moss

Came close, and it was nearly done, this frail

Traveling coincidence; and what it held

Stood ready to be loosed with all the power

That being changed can give. We slowed again,

And as the tightened brakes took hold, there swelled

A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower

Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain.

The train, now "aimed" at its London destination, becomes an arrow; and whose arrow could it be, on a day of so many weddings, but Cupid's? Cupid's arrow, which changes indifference to desire, carries a valence greater than even the god can know: for what begins as indifference and turns to love also turns to new forms of neglect, of difficulty, of disappointment ("And as the tightened brakes took hold, there swelled / A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower / Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain."). Keats' apprehension of the swelling autumn fruits turns, in Larkin's poem, to an experience of vertigo. Yet the power of this final image lies not in the Romantic allusion, but in how Larkin uses a cliché, a shower of arrows.

In classical mythology, Cupid never fires a shower of arrows; he takes aim and shoots one at a time. In this poem, the arrows of Eros become the arrows of Mars—the arrows of war, shot by a body of archers. (Larkin claims he discovered the idea in Laurence Olivier's film of Henry V.) Larkin takes the dead image of the arrow-shower and revivifies it by turning it into an image of real rain. While the poem implies the inevitable disappointment of love, the arrows of rain is a visionary image of expansion and release; and it's an irony to say so, because the transformation takes place "out of sight." Somewhere, the poem says, an arrow-shower is becoming rain; if love is turning somewhere to disappointment, the arrows of war are changing somewhere into a source of life. Where the fact of the rain is mundane, even all too routine, the transformation is startling, even magical.

In Larkin, the heroic gesture never stands; it is always re-scaled to the domestic. Here the technology of war is re-naturalized, just as each human life on the train (itself an arrow) leaves the bow only to dissolve midair into falling rain. (The rhyme of "train" and "rain" charges the correspondence at a subconscious acoustic level.) All things return to the conditions of nature; if the process entails loss, it is paradoxically a redeeming loss, for the process of losing has in it the wonder of mutation, which is a source of poetry itself.

"The Whitsun Weddings" is a deceptively leisurely sounding poem in eight ten-line stanzas. The title refers to the British tradition of marrying on the weekend of Whitsunday or Pentecost (the seventh Sunday after Easter) to take advantage of the early summer "bank holiday" or long weekend. The rhyme scheme

(ababdecde) and meter (the second line of each stanza has four syllables; all the others have ten syllables each) are highly structured but unobtrusive.

The first-person speaker, who seems to be identified with Philip Larkin himself, is on his way by train from Lincolnshire to London for the weekend. He has no apparent connection with or interest in wedding; at the outset. The first two stanzas describe a normal journey through the countryside on a hot afternoon. The train is nearly empty, and the speaker watches the landscape indifferently, happy only to be on his way "away."

In the third stanza, the speaker begins to notice "the weddings." He admits that he misunderstood the noise at first, taking it for "porters larking with the mails," but as the train pulls out of the station he watches the wedding parties left behind, the brides and grooms having boarded the train. The fourth, fifth, and sixth stanzas turn to the details of those groups that are left behind. They are clearly identified as lower-middle-class, presenting simultaneously funny and poignant appearances: girls in "parodies of fashion" and "jewellery-substitutes," "mothers loud and fat." The speaker becomes more and more interested, and he keeps seeing "it all again in different terms." In stanza 6, he moves from the surface details to the significance of the weddings for the fathers, women, and girls. The train, "Free at last," "hurrie[s] towards London."

In the last two stanzas, the speaker watches the newlyweds inside the train and again assumes his superiority by noting that "a dozen marriages got under way./and none/ Thought of the others they would never meet." The speaker, however, despite his sense that he is the only one to notice the connections among all the couples, sympathizes strongly with them. He attributes to them the potential "power/ That being changed can give," and he himself has also been changed.

The Whitsun Weddings Themes

This poem invites the reader to learn along with the speaker about the depth and value of what may appear to be trivial and even outmoded ways of doing things. What the speaker first found ludicrous about the wedding parties—their predictable sameness—becomes for him an important indication of the continuity

of the process by which individual humans are changed but the human race goes on. Ironically, the speaker of the poem is changed along with the newlyweds as he gradually modifies his initial satirical condescension and recognizes the importance of tradition.

The traditions in the poem include not only the wedding days and the general roles played by family members but also the particular poignancy of marriage for women. Throughout the poem, females appear most affected by the weddings. They especially experience the "religious wounding" (both sexually and psychologically) because, as at a "happy funeral," the bride dies (losing her name and, in the Renaissance sense of the word, her virginity). The women especially impress the speaker with their knowledge of "the secret" and seem to sum up within their experience much important knowledge of human life and value. Through their "deaths," they are reborn as wives with new names, and with the potential for renewing the race itself by bearing the next generation of children.

These specific traditions and continuities also form a part of a larger web of meaning in this poem. An entire land and culture—"sky and Lincolnshire and water"—is the setting of the poem, and the title, by placing the poem in the cycle of the year without specifying a particular year, gives the poem a sense of timelessness. Just as the natural world renews itself every year, so does the human race change and renew itself. For the detached, cynical nonparticipant in the rituals, recognizing and appreciating them brings salutary change and a deeper understanding of the world.

Although Philip Larkin turned down the office of Britain's poet laureate following the death of John Betjeman in 1984 (it ended up going to Ted Hughes), Larkin had already inherited Betjeman's cultural place in Britain and was one of the country's most popular poets. Three of his poems, including "The Whitsun Weddings," appear in *The Nation's Favourite Poems* (BBC, 1996), an anthology of the 100 most popular poems in the UK; only T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats have more.

Larkin was Britain's poet laureate of disappointment. His cynicism was softened only by his skepticism, which only rarely admitted any expression of new possibility, as in his late poem "The Trees": "Last year is dead, they seem to say, /

Begin afresh, afresh, afresh." (For Larkin, there's as much emphasis on the word "seem" as "afresh.") But Larkin was more famous for his satiric stanzas. It's a good bet that those who know anything of poetry in Britain—as well as many who don't—know by heart the opening stanza of "This Be the Verse":

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.

They may not mean to, but they do.

They fill you with the faults they had

And add some extra just for you.

Larkin's popularity seemed to grow from this disabused temperament, which captures the feelings of those who think they do not like poetry, as well as those who think they do. It was Larkin, after all, who ended his poem "A Study of Reading Habits" with the lines "Get stewed: / Books are a load of crap."

Yet for all his meanness, there is also irreverent wit and a melancholy mitigated by his resolve to look at life as it is. Readers came to trust him; his poems have a sense of psychological scale, candor, and a thorough ease with metrical forms that place Larkin firmly in a British poetic tradition. If his vision is elegiac, one of gradual diminishment, it is also one of rich and nuanced emotional response. Larkin is a great poet of middle age, whose instinct for social satire amplifies his sense of poignancy. Betjeman describes Larkin's work as "tenderly observant"; that he could also be bracing and acerbic implies his complexity. (Robert Pinsky's description of the poems as "sour, majestic refusals" captures it well.) In its harmony of change and loss played against the melody of the poem's wedding narrative, "The Whitsun Weddings" (1958) shows this contradiction to great effect. The poem may be Larkin's best.

Whitsun, or Whit Sunday, is the seventh Sunday after Easter (Pentecost), deep into spring, when people often marry. During the '50s, it was also an opportune weekend to wed because of financial advantages afforded by the British tax code and, as a long weekend, a good one for holiday traveling. This may explain why Larkin saw so many wedding parties during an actual train ride in 1955, which gave him the germ of the poem.

That Whitsun, I was late getting away;

Not till about

One-twenty on the sunlit Saturday

Did my three-quarters-empty train pull out,

All windows down, all cushions hot, all sense

Of being in a hurry gone. We ran

Behind the backs of houses, crossed a street

Of blinding windscreens, smelt the fish-dock; thence

The river's level drifting breadth began,

Where sky and Lincolnshire and water meet.

The opening, so characteristic of Larkin, is conversational yet rhythmically firm, announcing the anecdotal mode and quickly establishing the sensation of the city's hurrying bustle dropping away with the train's departure. In the "river's level drifting breadth," Larkin creates an image of continuity between sky and city and water that the train itself mimics; it is the central image of the poem, the form of an unfolding movement that connects distinct locations and points of time.

All afternoon, through the tall heat that slept

For miles inland,

A slow and stopping curve southwards we kept.

Wide farms went by, short-shadowed cattle, and

Canals with floatings of industrial froth;

A hothouse flashed uniquely: hedges dipped

And rose: and now and then a smell of grass

I find "what's happening in the shade" a little strange, I have to say. Larkin's initial confusion that the girls are actually men—that is, "porters larking with the mails"—becomes somewhat charged in the crossed wires of homonym. To what degree one can read the "larking" as the Larkin only a Freudian would dare imply, yet to anyone listening to the sounds the poem makes, Larkin's pun on his own name appears like a signature hidden in a painted shrub. But I marvel at Larkin's suave mastery with the modulations of verse movement, the way the run and pause driving each line generates rhythmic tension.

Verse movement is like the muscular contraction in the athletic body of the poem: one place to pay attention to it is at the ends of lines. Larkin's sentence runs over the boundary where the line ends in the first three lines, then again in the fifth and eighth, pausing in between to create a complex rhythm. (Larkin, an enthusiast for New Orleans and swing-era jazz, has a hot feel for rhythm; all his poems swing, and swing hardest at the ends of lines.)

As each line unfolds, Larkin also controls the release of information: one line adds to the image of another without becoming overloaded by too much detail. The technique is classical: clarity, concision, and balance of image, action, and statement. But the style is all his own. The image of the grinning and pomaded girls "in parodies of fashion" is classic Larkin, demonstrating his flair for making vivid and distinct even those shared characteristics that turn individual figures into "types." One finds it again in the fourth stanza, in "mothers loud and fat," "an uncle shouting smut," and in the perms, gloves, and fake jewelry to which people seem grotesquely reduced:

As if out on the end of an event

Waving goodbye

To something that survived it. Struck, I leant

More promptly out next time, more curiously,

And saw it all again in different terms:

The fathers with broad belts under their suits
And seamy foreheads; mothers loud and fat;
An uncle shouting smut; and then the perms,
The nylon gloves and jewelry-substitutes,
The lemons, mauves, and olive-ochers that
Marked off the girls unreally from the rest.

This fourth stanza introduces a new formal event to the poem. Where previously the syntax of the poem stopped or paused at the end of each stanza, here it runs over the stanza boundary quite violently, in the middle of a phrase, in order to complete the syntax in the first line of the next one (the fifth). No accident, the poem repeats the move twice, in the same position, in subsequent stanzas; the effect establishes an expectation of overrunning (the speaker is in a moving train, after all):

Yes, from cafes
And banquet-halls up yards, and bunting-dressed
Coach-party annexes, the wedding-days
Were coming to an end. All down the line
Fresh couples climbed aboard: the rest stood round;
The last confetti and advice were thrown,
And, as we moved, each face seemed to define
Just what it saw departing: children frowned
At something dull: fathers had never known
Success so huge and wholly farcical;

The women shared
 The secret like a happy funeral;
 While girls, gripping their handbags tighter, stared
 At a religious wounding. Free at last,
 And loaded with the sum of all they saw,
 We hurried towards London, shuffling gout of steam.
 Now fields were building-plots, and poplars cast
 Long shadows over major roads, and for
 Some fifty minutes, that in time would seem
 Just long enough to settle hats and say
 I nearly died,
 A dozen marriages got under way.

Larkin's genius for abstracting from experience is heightened in this poem, in which his talents so brilliantly serve the narrative of a simple discovery: that each unique wedding party is in truth like all the other wedding parties gathering that day, a perception only the poet realizes, because he is in the privileged position of witnessing each one. He is the single consciousness of the poem; just as sky and Lincolnshire and water meet along the visual line of the river, so all the Whitsun weddings meet along the train-line and the line of consciousness that belongs to the poet, a paradoxical still point moving through time and space.

To even a casual reader of the social satire at which Larkin excels, the frowning children, the proud fathers, the sentimental girls are all genuinely funny, but their depiction also displays their humanity, common with the poet's own: "Free at last, / And loaded with the sum of all they saw, / We hurried towards London." What they have seen, the poet too has seen; and as "they" become "we" in the collective hurrying, they join him, and so are joined to him.

The poem refuses any sentimentality suggested by such a formulation, however, by insisting on each individual's separateness, not unlike the way each passenger arrives at his or her own destination, alongside the others on the train:

They watched the landscape, sitting side by side

—An Odeon went past, a cooling tower,

And someone running up to bowl—and none

Thought of the others they would never meet

Or how their lives would all contain this hour.

I thought of London spread out in the sun,

Its postal districts packed like squares of wheat:

It's here that Larkin creates a kind of heightened platform for the drama of his statement "There we were aimed" (the opening sentence of the final stanza). It's a dramatic moment in the speech-act of the poem:

There we were aimed. And as we raced across

Bright knots of rail

Past standing Pullmans, walls of blackened moss

Came close, and it was nearly done, this frail

Traveling coincidence; and what it held

Stood ready to be loosed with all the power

That being changed can give. We slowed again,

And as the tightened brakes took hold, there swelled

A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower

Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain.

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In classical mythology, Cupid never fires a shower of arrows; he takes aim and shoots one at a time. In this poem, the arrows of Eros become the arrows of Mars—the arrows of war, shot by a body of archers. (Larkin claims he discovered the idea in Laurence Olivier's film of Henry V.) Larkin takes the dead image of the arrow-shower and revivifies it by turning it into an image of real rain. While the poem implies the inevitable disappointment of love, the arrows of rain is a visionary image of expansion and release; and it's an irony to say so, because the transformation takes place "out of sight." Somewhere, the poem says, an arrow-shower is becoming rain; if love is turning somewhere to disappointment, the arrows of war are changing somewhere into a source of life. Where the fact of the rain is mundane, even all too routine, the transformation is startling, even magical.

In Larkin, the heroic gesture never stands; it is always re-scaled to the domestic. Here the technology of war is re-naturalized, just as each human life on the train (itself an arrow) leaves the bow only to dissolve midair into falling rain. (The rhyme of "train" and "rain" charges the correspondence at a subconscious acoustic level.) All things return to the conditions of nature; if the process entails loss, it is paradoxically a redeeming loss, for the process of losing has in it the wonder of mutation, which is a source of poetry itself.

Short and Long Questions:

1. What are the distinctive qualities of Larkin's poetry? Refer to a number of poems in your answer.
2. How far do Larkin's poems reflect their time and how far do they articulate issues relevant to a contemporary or a future audience? You should refer in detail to at least three poems in *Whitsun Weddings*.
3. Discuss the significance of the documentary quality of Larkin's poetry in *Whitsun Weddings*.
4. Discuss the effectiveness and significance of Larkin's evocation of place in his poetry. Refer to at least three poems in your answer.
5. Larkin has been criticised for a lack of sympathy in his poetry. Based on your reading of the *Whitsun Weddings* collection of poems, how fair is this criticism?
6. Is Larkin's poetry modern, or just universal in its subject matter and concerns? Discuss with reference to poems in this anthology.
7. 'Larkin can sound casual and informal but is essentially a formalist in his poetry.' Discuss in detail the purpose and effect of Larkin's poetic technique in any one or two poems of your choice in this collection.
8. Analyse and discuss *Whitsun Weddings*, bringing out the features of the poem which seem to you characteristic of Larkin's achievements as a poet.
9. Discuss Larkin's treatment of the theme of *time* in poems in this anthology. You should focus on two poems, but may refer to others as appropriate.
10. How does Larkin's poetry reflect the period and the cultural conditions in which he wrote? Refer to at least three poems in your answer.

Unit V Section (a)

Philip Larkin

Poem 2- Church Going

Church Going – Poem and explanation

Once i am sure there's nothing going on
I step inside letting the door thud shut.
Another church: matting seats and stone
and little books; sprawlings of flowers cut
For Sunday brownish now; some brass and stuff
Up at the holy end; the small neat organ;
And a tense musty unignorable silence
Brewed God knows how long. Hatless I take off
My cylce-clips in awkward revrence
Move forward run my hand around the font.
From where i stand the roof looks almost new--
Cleaned or restored? someone would know: I don't.
Mounting the lectern I peruse a few
hectoring large-scale verses and pronouce
Here endeth much more loudly than I'd meant
The echoes snigger briefly. Back at the door
I sign the book donate an Irish sixpence

Reflect the place was not worth stopping for.
Yet stop I did: in fact I often do
And always end much at a loss like this
Wondering what to look for; wondering too
When churches fall completely out of use
What we shall turn them into if we shall keep
A few cathedrals chronically on show
Their parchment plate and pyx in locked cases
And let the rest rent-free to rain and sheep.
Shall we avoid them as unlucky places?
Or after dark will dubious women come
To make their children touch a particular stone;
Pick simples for a cancer; or on some
Advised night see walking a dead one?
Power of some sort or other will go on
In games in riddles seemingly at random;
But superstition like belief must die
And what remains when disbelief has gone?
Grass weedy pavement brambles butress sky.
A shape less recognisable each week
A purpose more obscure. I wonder who

Will be the last the very last to seek
This place for whta it was; one of the crew
That tap and jot and know what rood-lofts were?
Some ruin-bibber randy for antique
Or Christmas-addict counting on a whiff
Of grown-and-bands and organ-pipes and myrrh?
Or will he be my representative

Bored uninformed knowing the ghostly silt
Dispersed yet tending to this cross of ground
Through suburb scrub because it held unspilt
So long and equably what since is found
Only in separation--marriage and birth
And death and thoughts of these--for which was built
This special shell? For though I've no idea
What this accoutred frowsty barn is worth
It pleases me to stand in silence here;
A serious house on serious earth it is
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet
Are recognisd and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete

Since someone will forever be surprising
 A hunger in himself to be more serious
 And gravitating with it to this ground
 Which he once heard was proper to grow wise in
 If only that so many dead lie round.

Written the same summer as "Toads," "Church Going" also first appeared in Larkin's remarkable little book *The Less Deceived*. Each of the two much-admired poems illustrates the book's emphatic focus on relative disillusionment. The punning title "Church Going" is typically Larkinesque, implying both "attending church" and "the vanishing church." A further irony is that Larkin's "church goer" is a sole drop-in to whom the empty edifice is alien and puzzling, not supportive or enlightening.

As sobriety varies from playfulness, the persona of "Church Going" varies from that of "Toads." Yet the loneliness and dissociation from human company that one perceives in the speaker and the recognition that he contemplates an important modern dilemma tie him to the "toad-dominated" worker. One added strength of "Church Going" is its firm grounding in a concrete setting and situation, allowing Larkin's skeptical preachment about the irrelevance of the church to occur without much offense, from the ironic opening phrase onward: "I am sure there's nothing going on/ . . . inside." Eventually the speaker wonders "who/ Will be the last, the very last, to seek/ This place for what it was." Imagery of a church in ruins dominates the poem at its climax: "Grass, weedy pavement, brambles, buttress, sky." (Conjured images of Tintern Abbey, or other stereotypically English ruins, here summarize the coming fate of churches in England that the speaker sees.) The balanced melancholy of the poem finds the church, though a "place . . . not worth stopping for," to be nonetheless "A serious house on serious earth" that pulls people toward it, a place "proper to grow wise in/ If only that so many dead lie round." The imaginative range of the poem, moving as it does from the concrete to the abstract and universal, from "disbelief" to a future time when even that may be a forgotten human stage, gives it distinction and significance.

Formally "Church Going" is like an ode, a stanzaic lyric poem that develops and...

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. What is the overall impression of organized religion that this poem gives you? Why do you feel that way?
2. According to the speaker of the poem, what are some of the differences between religion and superstition?
3. How does the meter and rhyme scheme contribute to the themes that Larkin explores in the poem? (Hint: Check out "Form and Meter" for more on this.)
4. Why do you think Larkin title this poem "Church Going"?
5. Why does the speaker focus so much on the physical aspects of the church (i.e., the building itself and the "stuff" inside it)?
6. How does that natural world figure in here? How might nature relate to religion in this poem?
7. Discuss the religious element in Philip Larkin's poem Church Going and its significance.
8. What is the meaning of the first stanza of "Church Going" by Philip Larkin?
9. What happens in the last stanza of Church Going by Philip Larkin?
10. "Here endeth"-explain the expression from church going by larkincritical analysis
11. Critically comment on the themes of the poem "Church Going" by Philip Larkin. Themes.
12. Critically comment on the title of the poem "Church Going" by Larkin.
13. Write an introduction of the poem "Church Going" by Larkin.
14. Analyze each stanza in detail of "Church Going" by Philip Larkin.stanza wise analysis

Unit V Section (a)

Philip Larkin

Poem 3-Days

Days - Philip Larkin

What are days for?

Days are where we live.

They come, they wake us

Time and time over.

They are to be happy in:

Where can we live but days?

Ah, solving that question

Brings the priest and the doctor

In their long coats

Running over the fields.

With great humor, Philip Larkin addresses the rather serious question of what happens when we die? What happens when we are quite literally out of time? Not out of time just in the sense of being dead, but being outside of time, outside of days. As Larkin says, where can we live but days? Days are all we have. What's outside of them? Well, the doctor will rush over to see if you are indeed out of days, and the priest will come to pray over you and see that your time outside of days is blessed.

These are big questions to be sure, but Larkin doesn't seem terribly concerned with them. That's not for him to figure out, and it's not for us to worry about, so what's next is somewhat futile, if endlessly fascinating. I like that the phrase

"solving that question" is used to mean dying. It's a funny if grim way to think about life, as if it's a question that needs answering. Inescapably, the only answer to life is death. That's just a fact, but why worry so much? Days are where we live.

Larkin's 'Days': Realization Of Human Limits

What is human's position in the universe? Many people have tried to answer this question, be it scientists, astrologist, or religious leaders, all try to explain the position of human civilization. Poet Philip Larkin has an answer of his own, as well as an observation. "Where can we live but days?" is the central question raised by Larkin's poem "Days" which revolves around the theme realization of human limits. Larkin uses rhetorical questions and metaphors to bring out the message of his poem.

The opening line "what are days for?" makes a striking start for the answers to follow: "days are where we live". The word "where" suggests its a place in a static form that confines us. They "wake" human beings, showing that humans are passive in the relationship and implies that humans have little control over days. It seems humans have come to the conclusion that "they are to be happy in", to make the best out of a situation in a passive voice. The "priest and the doctor" were there to solve the question, yet they ran over the fields instead of answering it directly. "Running" creates a sense of urgency, implying that humans are racing against time to find meaning.

Metaphors also play an integral part in conveying the theme. "Days" is used as a synonym for time, the priest and the doctor representatives of social beliefs. For the former, time is depicted through one of its measurements, a miniature reflection. If days are "where we live in", human beings are living in a small part of the vast concept of Time, contrasting human's limitations. The latter represents the ideologies that humans succumb to while trying to explain the universe. It shows that there's an innate desire of humanity to rationalize or conceptualize life

through religion or science, but they may not reflect the reality. Humans accept adequate, but may not be satisfying explanations of life.

"Days" by Philip Larkin is about the realization of human limits: how humans and time have an unequal relationship and the civilization's struggle to understand the universe.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. What is the tone of "Days" by Philip Larkin? Optimistic or pessimistic?
2. What are the themes covered in "Cut Grass" by Philip Larkin?
3. Please comment on the theme of the poem "Wants" by Philip Larkin.
4. What does Philip Larkin try to convey in his poem "A study of Reading Habits"?
5. What is a summary of "The North Ship" by Philip Larkin?

Unit V Section (b)**W.H. Auden****Poems****1. Prologue****2. Watch Any Day****3. Sir, No Man's Enemy****4. Miranda's Song****W. H. Auden**

Wystan Hugh Auden, known more commonly as W. H. Auden, (February 21, 1907 – September 29, 1973) was an English poet and one of the most influential poets of the twentieth century. Younger than William Butler Yeats and T.S. Eliot, the two titans who had dominated English turn-of-the-century verse, Auden assimilated the techniques of these and the other modernists, becoming a master of poetry that was both rigorously formal and radically new.

Auden was a poet of prodigious talent and output, living at a time of immense transition both in the world at large and in the poetic scene in particular. During the decades in which he lived, the ambitious, Modern poetry of Ezra Pound, Eliot, and Yeats would give way to a flood of contemporary poetic schools—from the Confessionalism of Robert Lowell to the formalism of Philip Larkin to the postmodernism of John Ashbery—all of which have competed for dominance in poetry ever since. Auden lived right at the center of this major sea-change in poetic development; his double-life as a British and American citizen only heightened his impact on the Anglophone world; and his influence, both as a beacon of poetry's traditional past and a harbinger of its radical future, is virtually unmatched by any other twentieth-century poet. He lived a double-life in another sense: His interests changed dramatically, as he turned from his early political orientation to a more inward focus as a result of a religious epiphany.

Like Robert Frost, Auden was one of the last great poets who possessed a thorough mastery of form. Legend has it that Auden's friends would often ask him, on a dare, to compose a poem on a particular subject, with all sorts of ridiculous formal constraints (it must be in trochaic pentameter; it must be written in the form of a sixteenth century sestina; the second line must end with "chicken") and not only would Auden have the poem ready in 24 hours, but, more often than not, it would be a quality poem.

Life

Wystan Hugh Auden was born in York and spent his early childhood in Harborne, Birmingham, where his father, Dr. George Auden, was the school medical officer for Birmingham and Professor of Public Health at the University of Birmingham. From the age of eight Auden was sent away to boarding schools, first to St. Edmund's School in Surrey, and later to Gresham's School in Norfolk, but he returned to Birmingham for the holidays. He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford University, but took only a third-class degree. After Oxford his parents offered to him the chance to spend a year abroad. Auden chose Berlin, opting for Germany over the more fashionable Paris, and his time spent there would fill him with a love of the German language that would extend its influence into his poetry.

On returning to England, he taught at two boys' schools from 1930 to 1935. In 1935 Auden made a marriage of convenience to Erika Mann, daughter of the great German novelist Thomas Mann, in order to provide her with a British passport to escape the Third Reich. Although the couple never lived together, they remained friends and never bothered to divorce. During this time in Britain, Auden began his poetic career in earnest, quickly becoming a major rising star on the literary scene; in particular he gained fame by writing a number of poems and plays warning of the dangers of totalitarianism, which won him great acclaim among British critics and poets. Among the most important products of this early period of Auden's career are the plays written with his friend Christopher Isherwood *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935), *The Ascent of F6* (1936), and *On the Frontier* (1938), which were staged by an experimental theater company to which Auden belonged. All of Auden's work during this phase of his career is marked by his

political activism, and one of the most harrowing poems ever written on a political theme, "Epitaph of a Tyrant", closes with a description of tyranny in two haunting lines: "When he laughed, respectable senators burst with laughter / And when he cried the little children died in the streets."

In addition to poetry and plays, Auden was also prolific during this period as a letter-writer and essayist, producing a work of lyrical journalism *Letters from Iceland*, (1937) and another piece on the war in China entitled *Journey to a War* (1939). While traveling to and from China, Auden and Christopher Isherwood crossed through the United States, and in 1939 Auden decided to move to America permanently. This move away from England, just as the Second World War was starting, was seen by many as a betrayal by the political writers who had supported him earlier, and his poetic reputation suffered briefly as a result. Soon after arriving in New York, he gave a public reading with Isherwood and Louis MacNeice.

In 1940, Auden returned to the Anglican faith of his childhood when he joined the Episcopal Church of the United States; he was influenced in this reconversion partly through reading Søren Kierkegaard and Reinhold Niebuhr. His conversion influenced his work significantly as he abandoned explicitly political themes in favor of exploring Biblical parables and heavily allegorical poems on Christian themes, recalling the late poetry of T.S. Eliot. His theology in his later years evolved from the highly inward and psychologically-oriented Protestantism in the early 1940s through a more Catholic-oriented interest in the significance of the body and in collective ritual in the later 1940s and 1950s, and finally to the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer, famous for his principled opposition to the Nazi party that led to his execution, was influenced by another twentieth century German theologian, Karl Barth. Barth held that all belief in a supernatural God should be regarded as a superstition that needed to be outgrown in the modern world; Auden memorialized Bonhoeffer in his poem "Friday's Child," a poem highly representative of Auden's late, theological poetry, the first stanza of which is quoted below:

He told us we were free to choose
But, children as we were, we thought---
"Paternal Love will only use Force in the last resort..."

Having spent the war years in the United States, Auden became a naturalized citizen in 1946, but returned to Europe during the summers starting in 1948, first to Italy then to Austria. From 1956 to 1961, Auden was Professor of Poetry at Oxford University, a post that required him to give only three lectures each year, so he spent only a few weeks at Oxford during his professorship. During the last year of his life he moved back from New York to Oxford, and he died in Vienna in 1973. He was buried near his summer home in Kirchstetten, Austria.

Analysis of Auden's Work

Auden wrote a considerable body of criticism and essays as well as co-authoring some drama with his friend Christopher Isherwood, but he is primarily known as a poet. Auden's work is characterized by exceptional variety, ranging from such rigorous traditional forms as the villanelle to original yet intricate forms. Auden displayed remarkable technical and verbal skills regardless of form. He was also partly responsible for re-introducing Anglo-Saxon accentual meter to English poetry. Auden was one of the most prolific writers of his time, and his output of both poetry and prose is enormous. Through this vast quantity of produced work, a number of various themes can be seen emerging in Auden's oeuvre.

Auden always saw himself as a northerner and had a lifelong allegiance to the high limestone moorland of the North Pennines in County Durham, Northumberland and Cumbria, in particular an allegiance with the poignant remains of the once-thriving lead mining industry emerges as a major theme in his verse. Auden called the North Pennines his "Mutterland" and his "great good place." He first went north (to Rookhope, County Durham) in 1919 and the Pennine landscapes excited a visionary intensity in the twelve-year-old Wystan worthy of William Wordsworth; it was on this trip that Auden experienced the epiphany that led him to become an artist, when he idly dropped a pebble down a well. Auden had been raised in a predominantly scientific, not literary, household, and as a young man at Oxford he had intended initially to become a mining engineer. Auden's interest in the mining country of England and frequent preoccupation with it in his poetry is a sign not only of Auden's Wordsworthian love of untamed nature, but also of a deeply scientific bent in his own personality which surfaced throughout his works as he constantly sought some degree of

Auden's importance to his fellow artists and writers is in some degree comparable with that of Ezra Pound to an earlier generation. In addition to being a prolific poet and writer in his own right, Auden was also a prominent friend and correspondent with a number of the rising stars of his own times, including James Merrill and Philip Larkin. His legacy as one of the most important poets of Modernism is indisputable, and he continues to be one of the major luminaries for poets writing today.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. How does Auden contrast the limestone landscape with other landscapes in "In Praise of Limestone"?
2. How does Auden characterize Spain's yesterday, today, and tomorrow in "Spain"?
3. Compare Auden's elegies to Yeats, Freud, and Bonhoeffer.
4. Who are the enemies in "Ode V"?
5. How are Thetis's expectations and the reality of the images on the shield in "The Shield of Achilles" contrasted?
6. What roles does Nature play in Auden's poems?
7. How does Auden deal with religion in his poems?
8. What does the framing element in "For the Time Being" of the modern Christmas accomplish?
9. How do the different characters in "For the Time Being" view the imminent Incarnation?
10. For what does "In Memory of Sigmund Freud" commend Freud?

Unit V Section (b)

W.H. Auden

Poem I. Prologue

Analysis of poem Prologue

friend is claimed to have given Bernstein the idea to write music based on *The Age of Anxiety* in a letter:

What do you think of the 'Anxiety' idea? There is so much musical-subtlety in it, and those various metres brought about by the different roads the couples take and their differing means of transportation, to say nothing of the moods, and the separateness that becomes Oneness under alcohol and/or libidinal urges. You mentioned it being good ballet material, yes, but I think, first, it should be composed as music by itself and therefore protect it from being too obvious program music, and then if some clever choreographer can put the musical composition to work, with what added quality good music may give to the themes and material, well and good. I would rather have 'it' in the concert hall, where it can be less 'handled' than in the ballet school where many different talents brush it up. It's too good a thing for many hands.[1]

When beginning to write the piece, Bernstein stated that Auden's poem was "one of the most shattering examples of pure virtuosity in the history of English poetry" and that a "composition of a symphony based on *The Age of Anxiety* acquired an almost compulsive quality." [2] Having won the Pulitzer Prize in 1948, "*The Age of Anxiety*" Bernstein lauded the piece, saying "When I first read the book I was breathless." Bernstein worked on the composition "in Taos, Philadelphia, Richmond, Mass., in Tel-Aviv, in planes, in hotel lobbies..." [3] Though titled as such, "*The Age of Anxiety*" bucks the traditional form of a symphony. Instead of a conventional four-movement, exclusively orchestral work, Bernstein scored it for solo piano and orchestra, and divided the piece into six subsections – mirroring Auden's text – split equally into two parts that are performed without pause. [4] He completed the piece on March 20, 1949 in New York City. Unsatisfied with the ending of the composition, Bernstein revised it in 1965 to

firmly establish his idea for the true ending. The work was dedicated to and commissioned by Serge Koussevitzky who was preparing to end his 25-year career conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

In accordance with Auden's "Prologue," the poem begins with four lonely individuals (three men and one woman) in a bar, each reflecting on his or her own disquietude while acknowledging the presence of the others. Musically, a plaintive clarinet duet signals the beginning of the characters' journey, with a long descending scale signaling their retreat to a shared unconscious.[6] It is here that the characters begin discussing life in each of their own point of views, moving onto the "The Seven Ages." Here, Bernstein composed a set of variations that are unique in the fact that, rather than all sharing the same melody or thematic material like a traditional theme and variations would, each variation plays on the material from the variation immediately before it. This gives the work a constantly shifting landscape that is reminiscent of the past but progressing for the future. It then proceeds to "The Seven Stages," that tells the tale of the same "group [embarking] on a collective dream, one of even more heightened awareness, attempting to rediscover the deeper meaning of their own humanity." [7] Emulating the characters conflicting ideals and desires, Bernstein weaves a frantic and confused musical tapestry that shows the characters trying desperately to find what they are searching for, but falling short, though becoming closer because of their experience. This brings the first half of the piece to a dramatic and abrupt close.

The second half of the piece opens with "The Dirge", a theme, first introduced by the solo piano, based on a 12-tone row that gives way to a contrasting middle section, reminiscent of Brahms' romanticism.[8] In the poem, the four travel to the women's apartment by cab, mourning the loss of their fallen "Dad" figure. Once they arrive at the apartment, the four are determined to have a party, but refuse to take the attention away from any of the others, and all opt to turn in for the night.[9] "The Masque" is a speedy piano solo that is accompanied by syncopated rhythms in various percussion instruments. It is joined by the rest of the orchestra for a time before the piano drops out entirely, becoming "traumatized" as it tries to come to terms with its "escapist living." [10] The energy from "The Masque" fades and the entire orchestra comes into repeat the

bars it has been playing before, now joined by the strings and starting "The Epilogue." Here, echoes of the "Prologue" resound while the new 4 note theme is contemplated by the reminiscent piano soloist. Answering the orchestra's calls for clarity, a solo piano cadenza, added in 1965, revisits the journey of the characters, and is taken up by the full orchestra, which builds to a radiant close. The listener, as well as the reader, finds that "what is left, it turns out, is faith."

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Do you think it's important to balance pride in your accomplishments with humility? Does the speaker in this poem seem to be doing a good job of striking that balance? What parts of the poem support your answer?
2. Do you feel like we encourage men and women to be equally competitive today? How would you compare our attitudes about competition to what you read in this poem?
3. Have you ever felt like you couldn't do something simply because of who you are? Where does a message like that come from? What might the speaker have to say about that?
4. Do people have to be equal in order to be happy? How do you think the speaker of this poem would answer that question?
5. Is the speaker of this poem someone you'd like to hang out with? Do you feel like you got to know her in these 48 lines? What parts of the poem support your answer?
6. How does Bradstreet picture her relationship to du Bartas?
7. How does she conceive and describe her poetic muse?
8. What does this poem reveal about Bradstreet's view of herself and her role as a woman and a poet?

Unit V Section (b)

W.H. Auden

Poem 3. Sir, No Man's Enemy

Poem

Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all
But will his negative inversion, be prodigal:
Send to us power and light, a sovereign touch
Curing the intolerable neural itch,
The exhaustion of weaning, the liar's quinsy,
And the distortions of ingrown virginity.
Prohibit sharply the rehearsed response
And gradually correct the coward's stance;
Cover in time with beams those in retreat
That, spotted, they turn though the reverse were great;
Publish each healer that in city lives
Or country houses at the end of drives;
Harrow the house of the dead; look shining at
New styles of architecture, a change of heart.
sir, no mans enemy

W. H. Auden is considered to be both a controversial and influential poet. He was raised in an Anglo-Catholic household, which is where he first fell in love with music and language. The title of this poem is widely known as "Petition,"

but that title wasn't added until later collections; Auden's early poems appeared without titles (Greenblatt 2422). A petition is an earnest request or entreaty; in this poem Auden is petitioning God to help change the state of humanity, which has declined considerably, in his opinion, due to both the lack of belief in God and God's hands-off.

This poem was written in 1929, 11 years after the end of WWI. The Great War was hard on everyone involved — from the women, children, and elderly at home to the soldiers on the front line. The economy changed during the war: people didn't have the money to spend on frivolous things as they once did; food was rationed and often unavailable, so people went hungry. On the front line, soldiers were forced to kill. If they didn't kill the enemy first, they risked being killed themselves or having their loved ones killed later on. Many soldiers returned home wounded. As the war dragged on, faith in God began to wane. The whole landscape of life was altered dramatically during the war and again after the war was finally over. There was an economic boom; people began to overindulge, because they had been deprived for so long. Enjoying oneself trumped spirituality, which led to the completely upside down world that Auden speaks about in this poem.

The speaker beseeches God to change his nature of inaction to one of action, so that humanity can be saved; at the same time he is both mocking God and expressing his unbearable sadness as to the current state of things. The first line of the poem begins with a polite, honorific address to God in the form of "sir" (line 1). The word sir is often used in formal correspondence and when addressing someone who is of superior rank or status. He starts this way so that he appears to be humble, hoping that God will listen to the one person who still believes in Him. The speaker then moves on to say that God is "no man's enemy, forgiving all," which in itself is a very sarcastic statement (line 1). If God is supposed to be the enemy of no man, then why does he forgive all indiscretions? We learn by making mistakes and then having to face the consequences for our actions, so if there are no consequences, what is the point of doing the right thing? The speaker is trying to point out that God's hands-off approach is not benefiting us; instead, it is

ensuring that society will descend into total anarchy, and then all will be lost. The speaker wonders if God's "negative inversion"-going from a state of inaction to one of action- will be "prodigal" (giving or yielding profusely) (line 2). Still, the speaker believes that the world needs "a sovereign's touch," so he begs God to send down his power and light-his goodness and love; in order to cure humanity (line 3).

The speaker implores God to cure the "intolerable neural itch"-the overwhelming desire to do evil deeds or commit sins (line 4). In lines five and six, the speaker asks God to save him from the "exhaustion of weaning, the liar's quinsy, and the distortions of ingrown virginity." The speaker is saying that he is extremely tired of being the only one, who is trying to save (or wean) humanity from its dependency on the guarantee that no matter what they do in life they will be forgiven in death. Quinsy is another word for tonsillitis; thus, the act of weaning a liar from his quinsy means to cure someone of telling lies or spreading disbelief. "Ingrown virginity" is another example that the speaker puts forth to show how the world has become completely backwards and unbalanced due to the absence of God. Quinsy and ingrown virginity are both unnatural states of being and it is the speaker's objective to restore the natural or proper state of being of humanity.

In lines seven to fourteen, the speaker takes on a more authoritative tone and demands that God does as he asks. He tells God to prohibit severely the use of "the rehearsed responses," such as, 'I'm sorry, I didn't mean it,' or it's not my fault,' when man comes before God, so that gradually He will be able to correct the "coward's stance" (line 7-8). The goal is to make man accountable for their actions; thus, turning cowards or non-believers into believers once again. And those non-believers who "retreat" or flee from God must bask in God's light, curing them of their disbelief. "Beams" in line nine has a double meaning, it can also be referring to Christ, who was nailed to two beams of wood in the shape of a cross. The speaker wants the names of God's healers-servants of God, ie. Priests, ministers etc.-to be published publicly or in other words he wants God to appoint those select few, who will aide him in restoring order and balance to the world-those like the apostles did after Jesus died on the cross. "Harrow" is defined as

"an agricultural implement with spikelike teeth or upright disks, drawn chiefly over plowed land to level it, break up clods, root up weeds, etc.," but in this poem the speaker is asking God to act like a harrow and make "the house of the dead" a sacred place (or holy ground). The speaker wants God to shine his light on the "new styles of architecture"-meaning the modern world-and have a change of heart about letting man do as they please.

Unit V Section (b)

W.H. Auden

Poem 4. Miranda's Song

Miranda's Song

My dear one is mine as mirrors are lonely,
As the poor and sad are real to the good king,
And the high green hill sits always by the sea.
Up jumped the Black Man behind the elder tree,
Turned a somersault and ran away waving:
My Dear One is mine as mirrors are lonely.
The Witch gave a squawk; her venomous body
Melted into light as water leaves a spring
And the high green hill sits always by the sea.
At his crossroads, too, the Ancient prayed for me;
Down his wasted cheeks tears of joy were running:
My Dear One is mine as mirrors are lonely.
He kissed me awake, and no one was sorry:
The sun shone on sails, eyes, pebbles, anything,
And the high green hill sits always by the sea.
So, to remember our changing garden, we
Are linked as children in a circle dancing:

My Dear One is mine as mirrors are lonely.

And the high green hill sits always by the sea.

This is Miranda's one speaking part in 'The Sea and the Mirror', Auden's long, careful, mostly prose gambit with the Faust-theme, a fantasia on Shakespeare's 'Tempest'. [The 'sea' and the 'mirror' appear through this whole work in various casts; most pointedly, the sea is the vast and dangerous real inner or outer life, the mirror, art's solipsistic construct. Come to think of it, seas and mirrors don't appear outright anywhere in the work except in the above poem, which figures at just about the halfway point... for more on this awesome play, please read it...]

To my mind this first line is enough to carry whatever the poet might want to put in a dozen more; he's gone further, though, and there's a rich little surprise in every verse. I only have some trouble with the final stanza - it seems a bit vacuous. On the other hand, maybe this is intentional: in Miranda's lucky state, anything goes -

Unit V Section (c)

Ted Hughes

Poems

1. Pike
2. Snowdrop
3. October dawn
4. wind

Hughes is an English poet, playwright, editor, and writer of books for children. He is a nature poet in the sense that his poems express, in their descriptions of wildlife and landscape, the brutal savagery of nature. (See also CLC, Vols. 2, 4, Children's Literature Review, Vol. 3, and Contemporary Authors, Vols. 1-4, rev. ed.)

[The] real limitation of Hughes's animal poems is precisely that they conjure emotions without bringing us any nearer to understanding them. They borrow their impact from a complex of emotions that they do nothing to define, and in the end tell us nothing about the urban and civilised human world that we read the poems in. If they reach back, "as in a dream", to a nexus of fear and sensation, this is just the point and the reason why they frequently fail as poetry: one difference between dreams and art is that art deepens our understanding while dreams on their own do not. Larkin's horses are more profound than Hughes's, in fact, because they show us something about the relationship between the horses' world and our own instead of just frightening us with theirs.

Hughes's poetic world is really a prehistoric world of natural violence, where humanity has only the barest fingerhold: when the poems are not about animals they are often about inanimate nature ("October Dawn"), and they give no place to emotions and experience of an essentially human kind. In this sense Hughes is a nature poet, a kind of tough mid-century Blunden (compare their pikes or their Octobers), and makes no serious attempt to face the "full range" of his experience: the experience and emotions that control his poems are frequently those that we share with animals, and these are evoked "as in a dream" more often than they are

explored. It would be one thing to write a single poem or two out of this idea, but to make it the dominant theme of an entire output is quite another. When Hughes makes a direct attempt on human experience the result is often catastrophic: when people feature in the poems they serve as occasions for the poet's own cocksure imagination ("Famous Poet", "Vampire") or comfortable romanticising ("A Woman Unconscious") and never imply a real human engagement or any of the self-doubt that this might sometimes carry with it. It is always hard for a poet to write about people, because there is a deep and perpetual antagonism between human individuals and the poetic images through which we attempt to understand them. But this is what gives poetry its work and its justification. With Hughes the victory goes simply and completely to the images and the result is a cruel absence of compassion and a profound denial of the capacity for growth, love and uniqueness which makes human beings human (and not simply one more species of animal). Hughes's poems are often very fine technically, with sharp detail and imagery and a tense motion perfectly suited to their dramatic content ("Pike", "Esther's Tomcat", especially).... But their most important lesson, it seems to me, concerns what can and cannot be done in an idiom which is decreasingly workable and relevant today and which involves, with Hughes at any rate, a lack of any essential commitment to the human world and its conflicts. (pp. 10-12)

Colin Falck, in *The Modern Poet: Essays from 'the Review'*, edited by Ian Hamilton (© Ian Hamilton), MacDonald, 1968.

Hughes's desire for language free of any gentility is akin in motive to Baraka's stress on the brutal side of white America's consciousness, and he took intellectual clues from a book on shamanism and from certain interests of Vaska Popa's. But anyone can see how much his earlier poetry, whatever it's about, is intimately in search of a language so hard and fierce it will taste of blood. His animal poems in *Lupercal* are concentrations of that search, projections of a sophisticated and even decadent neo-primitivism. When he broke out of their thematic grip, he still kept the same aim of making the intensity of his language, in itself, his symbolic means. "Cadenza" [in *Wodwo*] ... is perhaps Hughes' most purely lyrical poem despite its violent buffoonery at the very end. It consists of a series of images, proliferating in singing couplets after the one-line opening stanzas, evoked by a violin solo. The images are of death-terror, lost love, and mourning. They make

for a dazzling surrealist elegy, and the rhythmic idiom inevitably recalls, because it echoes and summons up their very tone and pitch, the voice and tone of Sylvia Plath's poetry, especially the title-poem of *Ariel*. Her miraculous buoyancy and, simultaneously, her suicidal death-consciousness reverberate in many of the lines and couplets of "Cadenza." (p. 60)

In *Crow*, Hughes tries to suppress that voice which stamped itself into his own spirit even while Sylvia Plath was going through the terrible phase, at once passionate and charged with deadly hatred, defined by the poems in *Ariel*. Husband and wife, as young poets developing together with a definitely reciprocal influence on one another despite their quite individual minds and styles, had shared a desire to be ruthlessly true to their perceptions and to the demands of language. One can actually see, in certain poems of the *Crow* sequence, a continuation of that reciprocity. They present both a fused voice and an ongoing dialogue. Meanwhile, the larger vision of the sequence as a whole pushes toward a kind of negative transcendence, archaic, archetypal, anti-lyrical, and obliterative of personality. The process by which Hughes creates a context for "the plainest and ugliest language" while guiding the interplay of opposites into what he calls "a bit of an epic" makes *Crow* an improvisational structure just as surely as are the superficially more diffuse great American sequences. (pp. 60-1)

Hughes's work ... is of the same order as some of the most interesting American work of the age. It represents a formal ordering of a kind that the best American poetry has been after for a long time but that British critical hostility has made it difficult for English poets to pursue. Such a triumph is always internationally significant, and the explosive violence in Hughes's poetry seems especially expressive to Americans at this moment.

Many of the younger British poets have ... turned to myth as a vehicle of personal expression. One of the most gifted, Ted Hughes, has invented his own myth in the figure *Crow*, a primitive creature depicting the human consciousness exposing its own visions of immortality and love as evasions of the ever-present reality of death and the violence of man's history. *Crow's* world [in *Crow*] is as stark as Beckett's, even closer in its atmosphere of total desolation to that of *Endgame* than *Waiting for Godot*, and he himself, like Beckett's mythical figures, is a

composite of unconscious drives and yearnings reacting without order or comprehension to an equally chaotic nature. Reduced even further than Beckett's characters to the level of pure appetite, lust, aggression and rage, Crow, like them, acknowledges both classical and Christian mythical figures, only to interpret their deeds through the perspective of his own narcissism and despair. He consumes them and, stripped of their exalted roles, they become part of his essence. Toward God, his adversary, he is equally violent.

Hughes's various techniques—mock ballads and songs, ritual questions and incantations, direct accounts of battle and carnage that suddenly take on the mad logic of dreams, imitations of the contents and tone of Genesis that conclude in savagery and violence—all expose the deepest layers of consciousness struggling not only to survive the constant threat of extinction, but even to retain its fantasy of power and control. At the end of "Examination at the Womb-Door," having answered a long series of questions with the repeated word "Death," Crow is asked the last one: "But who is stronger than death?" The ambiguity of his reply typifies the distortion of myth which is its essential means of revealing the consciousness that conceived it: "Me evidently," he says, and he has passed the test.

In many of the poems of this volume, Crow's elemental probing, staring, prophesying, struggling and weeping have the effect of genuine mythical narrative, but there are times when he seems more a manifestation of Hughes's self-conscious efforts to establish his creature's unqualified rage as a mythical force than a conveyor of general psychic conflict. This self-consciousness in the use of myth to depict extreme possibilities of mental experience occurs in much of contemporary poetry.

But what would he do when he ran out of animals, went the joke. The answer was to let Crow stand for everything in the universe that isn't mind or soul, then write increasingly simplified "cartoon"-like poems in which you assume the voice of God and don't stay for question or answer.... [We] look to the poet to provide us with more complex, various, and interesting versions of experience than we ourselves can come up with. Hughes seems to me humanly deficient in his vision of things.... For me ... [Crow is a disaster]: the humanly tentative, relatively

flexible moments of seeing in the earlier books are no more; the poetry is now sensationalistic, bloody but unsustaining. And there looks like more coming—his latest sequence is called "Cave Birds."

Hardly any of criticism's established systems of value, most of which are one way or the other neoplatonic, prove adequate for dealing with Ted Hughes's poetry, either as frames or as starting points. More obsessively than Lawrence, Hughes demands that we forget everything, moral value included (and moral and intellectual temporizing especially), in order to perceive the extent to which our assumptions about the nature of existence are crude illusions of perspective, innocent epistemologies based upon fastidiously selective habits of perception. Even to say that is to imply a conventional humanistic agenda which Hughes appears to have moved beyond. In fact he has divested romanticism of all its notions of sentimental humanistic utility, and it seems to me that this represents a quantum progression even beyond Lawrence.... Hughes is nothing if not committed, and he goes his way, pressing toward apocalypse this century's hardened antihumanistic pessimism.

It is not an accident that his poems are unpeopled, and it seems unlikely that he will one day cast off his shaman's raiment and disclose himself to have been R. D. Laing in disguise. There are reassuringly lyrical moments, most recently in *Season Songs*, but even Hughes's lyricism is gothic and is motivated chiefly by weather and beasts and stones.... The question that he ... [broods] over is whether achieving it is worth the cost, even where existence without it is worth less. Like Beckett, Hughes has the forbearance, and the cynical distrust of mere aesthetic form, to leave the question unresolved.

The mode of being which clearly is not worth living is the effect of the enlightenment extended into our time: vital relationships suppressed at all levels of experience by the rule of intellect.... For Hughes it would seem that the modern predicament is an effect ... of our powers of sympathy having gone awry, become abstract rather than affective, so that in denying "essential human subjectivity" in the interest of protecting others from ourselves, we have ceased to be selves at all and have broken off our continuity with the forces of nature, which are by definition brutal. (pp. xciii-xciv)

It seems inevitable that Hughes will be intelligible mainly to the St. Georges of the world and that his energies, like Blake's, will in the end be harnessed to serve rationalism's vested interests. Perhaps the nearest thing to revelation we can hope for now is that occasionally a modern reader will look up from a volume of Hughes's poems onto a cold geometry of architectural glass and prestressed concrete and feel momentarily insecure—or perhaps, glumly, very much like a clockwork orange. (p. xcvi)

The Anglican Reverend Nicholas Lumb has a surprising way with him. It seems

He is starting Christianity all over again, right from the start.

He has persuaded all the women in the parish.

Only women can belong to it.

They are all in it and he makes love to them all, all the time.

Because a saviour

Is to be born in this village, and Mr. Lumb is to be the earthly father.

He is eventually killed by outraged husbands after a quasi-theorimorphic ritual orgy which goes murderously wrong.

The whole plot of this long narrative poem is not quite so simply hilarious. Lumb is some sort of duplicate of Lumb from "the other world"—the substitution is effected in a nightmarish prologue. The real Reverend Lumb stands up at the end on the west coast of Ireland and leaves a notebook of opaque poems on a rock—and these form the conclusion of *Gaudete*. Yes, the whole as a whole is perplexing. "Poets in our civilization ... must be difficult."

But the central action is splendid, available, and generally fine writing. It would be tempting to recommend starting a first reading here but for the fact that the mysterious and bloody prologue (whatever its ultimate point) productively complicates one's response to the clear people, clear events and potential humour of much of what ensues. It causes the action to be attended by a continuous and disturbing ambiguity.

Form and technique are fascinating. The poem we are told was originally intended as a film scenario. It is comprehensible that Ted Hughes might try one. He has that sure poetic instinct that heads implacably for the particular instances rather than ideas or abstraction; he has an especial talent for evoking the visual particular; he has an avowed belief in the inability of words to match experience....

Thoughts and conscience take the shape of visualized fantasies and dreams. The story-line picks its way from picture to picture. We follow (for example) a woman moving from room to room, we focus on a drop of water on a tap, on mirrors, a conifer through the window, an orange vase ...: "she stares towards her husband's medical reference library, to numb herself on its dull morocco"....

Poetical narrative is borrowing cinema's distinct method of narrative; cinema's method of switching scene and "point of view", cinema's method of suggestive particularizing, cinema's method of getting across action, thought and emotion.

It might not have worked (Antonioni's scripts incidentally make uproariously awful reading). But Ted Hughes has produced a strange bastard form that does work, often brilliantly. It works not simply because he is a fine writer. It is because he has such an acute sense of the suggestive power of specific visual images and the ability to evoke them in words.... *Gaudete* is obviously a very different work from Hughes's other poetry, but it indulges one of his most familiar talents. It ranks I think with *The Hawk in the Wind* or *Lupercal* (high praise)—though I must admit to preferring the earlier work....

Like all good writers Ted Hughes has good qualities vulnerable to caricature; and like all good writers he occasionally caricatures him. ∴ His style characteristically involves wonderfully violent bombardments of basic words. But these can tend towards overkill, to excessive agglomeration and unproductive mixed metaphor....

If a tendency towards an occasional self-defeating extravagance be admitted, his own theoretical pronouncements supply a clue to the cause. Hughes has a strong sense that words cannot match what one actually feels and sees. In *Words and Experience*, for example, he writes as follows: "There are no words to capture the

infinite depth of crowiness in the crow's flight. All we can do is to use a word as an indicator, or a whole bunch of words as a general directive.... And a bookload of such descriptions is immediately rubbish when you look up and see the crow flying." So we get our bunches of sometimes despairing and ineffectual words—he tries too hard. But not often: mostly his work belies his own pessimism. And (more important) Ted Hughes can do more than reproduce experience. The theorizing mentioned above suggests a rather cramping view of the relationship of art to life: but luckily his poetry in general does not. Art can imitate the form, art can be better than life.

In his continuing examination of violence and its role in the world, Hughes does not choose sides for or against the forces that are set in opposition to each other, except in a few particular situations. For the most part, violence is an accepted fact of life that exists as the connecting link between all creatures in the history of the earth from prehistoric times to contemporary England.... Again and again Hughes stresses the subtle connection in the primitive drives of the wind, the jaguar, the soldier, of all creation.... [The] animal world is used by Hughes as a means of gaining greater insights into the human world. (pp. 92-3)

Hughes does begin with the assumption that violence is an inherent element of all being, but this does not involve the glorification or propagation of violence through his poetry. Instead, Hughes sees that because the mainstream of twentieth-century thought, modern liberalism, has been unwilling to admit that man's nature in some way partakes of a primitive violence, man has become unable to cope with this element in his world. Like other elements of life, says Hughes, violence in vacuo is morally neutral and only takes on qualities of good and evil from its social and historical environment. (p. 93)

[Hughes's] speaker is more often a created persona than the voice of the poet. Another technique that effectively removes both reader and poet to a distance from the poem is the choice of the animal world for symbols of primitive violence and force. Ironically, by shielding himself in these ways from charges of insensitivity, Hughes opened himself up to criticism from another source. His detachment has been interpreted as a rejection of compassion and involvement with human affairs.... Such criticism ultimately falls short of coming to terms

with the poetry. The elements that Hughes employs to gain detachment were used by Donne and Milton, by Eliot and Yeats. Detachment implies neither insensitivity nor disengagement. (p. 94)

[His] continual accents upon large and complex patterns of behavior give his poetry a sense of ... depth. Primitive myth and symbol are integral elements of his poetry, as seen in the titles of two of his volumes: *Lupercal* and *Wodwo*. His later volume, *Crow*, shows Hughes moving more consciously in this direction. The crow is a frequent figure representing discord and strife in folk iconography. He is called the Great Crow or Crow Father in both Eskimo legends and in American Indian myths. While the effect is closer to the mythmaking of Yeats or the restructuring of myths by Lawrence, the technique is nearer to Hardy's in *The Dynasts*, where the reader is shown the forces of the world at work, moving both through and beyond the limitations of man. (p. 95)

His primary concern is with violence as a primitive force that is invested in every form of life. It is here that his tone of assertion is present, for the one dominant theme that emerges throughout his poetry is that this mythic violent force is inherent in the very essence of being, from the wind and rocks to humankind. The basic conflict in life revolves on man's attempt to deal with these forces, which on the one hand are subhuman but by that very token are beyond man's capability to subdue. Man must come to terms with this element in his nature, not through suppression or escape (both of which are impossible), but through accommodation. In a sense this demands a Lawrentian "lapsing-out," for man's consciousness and intellect are the basic obstacles to a successful accommodation. Hughes sees the intellect's indulgence in the life of violence as a perversion of the primitive instinct for violence that still persists in the animal world. It is at this point that the poet shows regret for what he sees to be lacking in the modern expression of violence. Violence in nature is actually a positive force, but when man imposes the intellect upon it, he makes it into something destructive. Under these conditions Hughes becomes an apostle against violence. But he emphasizes the distinction and points to the source of the pollution. His emphasis is finally positive, with the assertion that man must commit himself to life in spite of what he might consider the destructive consequences of violence upon life

What we notice in [the] earlier poems that tell of violence in the natural world is a direct, sincere voice, the voice of an observer who knows that his detached descriptions are sufficiently effective for his purpose. But the poems in *Crow*, having as their subject a mythical force rather than an actual animal, take on a cynical tone that is echoed in the bitter laughter heard in many of the poems. The poet's vision has crystallized and unified, and the certainty with which he now approaches his theme demands a unique strength.

His response [to violence] tends to be analytical rather than emotional, and he is more interested in the nature of the violence than in man's reaction to it. The poetry of Hughes is not of the immediate historical moment and as a result is not in ... danger ... of becoming dated.

Man is the creature who has been excluded from the violence of nature, for his violence is no longer instinctual but planned and intellectualized. Recognizing this rift between the two worlds of violence, Hughes in poem after poem sets out mental scouting parties that explore the forms of violence that still link man to the other world: birth, sex, war, and death. He sees these experiences as means for man to reestablish his connections with his primitive origins.

Crag Jack is a symbol of all men who have lost identity with their violent origins and who have partial insights into their unconscious instincts. Hughes is frequently preoccupied with examining these insights, always asking if it is possible, after birth and childhood, to make some kind of accommodation with the violence in his nature. This search provides much of the tension in his poetry, for the release that he expects to come from indulging the instincts (in sex, in war) is usually frustrated by the very fact that his characters are human. He never advocates the abandonment of humanity in pursuit of one's instincts, and his characters often find it impossible to straddle the civilized and the instinctual worlds.

One of the connectors that he examines is the sexual union, and the poet's response is typical of the philosophical dilemma in which he frequently finds himself. The sexual act, we might expect, should be represented in his poetry as a viable connection with the instinctual world. But Hughes is above all honest, and love and sex are seldom positive forces in his work. Rather it is man's inability to

be both man and animal at the same time that dooms the sexual response. For in accommodating oneself to his sexual instincts, he submits to a primitive and thoroughly selfish impulse, or, by avoiding them, he is drawn into ugly repressions. (p. 102)

There is constant tension and confrontation between man's intelligence and the powers represented by Crow. Hughes sees one of man's basic failings to be his continuous effort to objectify "evil," or in Crow's amoral world, the black forces. "Crow's Account of St. George" is one of the most horrifying poems about human relationships in our language. It begins with the premise that man is misdirected in attempting to see a logical order in the universe:

He sees everything in the Universe

Is a track of numbers racing towards an answer.

Because of this orderly universe, he is led to believe he can control and master those elements that he finds hostile.... The mistake soon becomes evident; by projecting the evil outside man, it remains undetected as it grows within and around him. Once he begins to search out evil, he encounters it everywhere—the blackness is omnipresent. (p. 109)

Because man has become isolated from what Hughes sees as his true nature, the poet offers for a solution an accommodation with his violent nature that depends upon his ability to fuse the intellectual and instinctual. All attempts to overcome the outbreaks of violence from below result either in defeat for the human element ("Two Wise Generals") or at best in a standstill that promises continuing struggle in the future "Thistles"). Since there seems to be no danger of man's abandoning intellect and consciousness, Hughes directs his attention to an accommodation that man must make with the instinctual part of his nature. In the effort to achieve this balance, he must abandon himself to or at least consent to the violent forces within him and accept his consciousness not as a help in this matter but as a burden. He seeks a way to relieve the tensions of poems like "Secretary" and "Incompatibilities," tensions that frequently result in unresolved frustrations. He recognizes the validity of submitting to the destructive element, while at the same time realizing the necessity of emerging as a whole human being. Two sides of

this essential problem are explored in the title poems of *The Hawk in the Rain* and *Wodwo*. The former shows the man caught between the two forces and unable to resolve the tension; the latter depicts a symbolic accommodation that releases this tension. (p. 110)

The thrust of violence can be positive or negative; in "The Martyrdom of Bishop Farrar" the poet's metaphysical concern with violence finds a workable metaphor that stresses the revitalizing powers of violent action.... Preaching a lesson of man's basic brutality and the necessity for accommodation with this part of one's nature, [the poet] must necessarily come into conflict with traditional social values. But his success as poet does not rest in his retreat from violence but in exploring this as his theme. The poet finds greater credibility among his readers not in avoiding this issue (like the neohumanists) but in pursuing the study of violence in man's nature. Those who try to frighten people away from violence are leading people astray: "An ignorant means to establish ownership/Of his flock!"

Those who try to escape the implications of living in a violent world are generally shown to be failures. Man may attempt to substitute wisdom, shrewdness, ideals of brotherhood, for the forces of his violent nature, but his attempts prove futile. (pp. 115-16)

Frustration seems to be the tone of a number of poems illustrating the theme of man's destructive nature, the frustration being barely controlled by a poet who feels his audience does not dare to listen to him. "Criminal Ballad" presents the education of what Hughes would consider the romantic humanist, the man who insists on defending his vision of a happy world. But as he vigorously protests the beauty of the world, this very act bloodies his hands, marks his participation in the destructive acts he struggled against. His initial response is to weep for the loss of his imagined world, until he realizes that the real world is absurd and cruel, and nothing he will do can change it; so "he began to laugh." This is a difficult lesson to have set before us, but Hughes insists that we face the situation nakedly. In this sense, his poetry becomes a rending of the veil, the veil of illusion that allows us to remain in happy contact with nature, with our fellow men, with ourselves. Any attempt to alter this reality, or any effort to contend with the dark forces is futile and ridiculous—the traditional concept of the mythic hero who might come to

destroy the black force and make the world safe for mankind is absurd. "The Contender" who devotes his life to this crusade has in the end only "his senseless trial of strength" as his reward. (p. 118)

Although Hughes sees the attempted escape from violence as an escape from life, and the intellectual's circumvention as a sign of weakness and ineffectual temporizing, he never assumes an assertive stance that indiscriminately approves of all violent acts. Hughes seldom creates circumstances that lend themselves to a strong criticism of violence, but there are several striking poems in which this occurs. From these poems we understand what he finds offensive in the modern expression of violence and how he feels an essentially healthy instinct has been perverted in modern history.

His basic complaint is that modern violence has ceased to be a function of those instinctive urgings that he writes about in most of his poetry. "The Ancient Heroes and the Bomber Pilot" contrasts ancient and modern wielders of violence, stressing that what is lacking in the pilot is the sense of personal self-expression in his acts so that they become totally destructive both in reference to himself and to his victims. The ancient heroes on the other hand found healthy expression in their violent acts.... The bomber pilot ... is a highly sophisticated instrument of war, trained to kill by command, not from need or desire. Contrasting his own actions and motives with his ancient counterparts, he is mortified: "The grandeur of their wars humbles my thought."

Nor is man greatly concerned with individual suffering and violence. In "A Woman Unconscious" man's modern consciousness is preoccupied with universal destruction, which is a substitute for his concern with private tragedy. It is no longer a question of one warrior fighting another.... The bomber pilot could make the enemy capital "jump to a fume," but he would be insensible to the suffering of the thousands burned alive. Hughes seriously challenges this loss of values in an atomic age, and cries out with more immediate passion than is usual in his poetry....

While registering the frustration, the despair, and the moral indignation [aroused by contemporary society], Hughes never retreats from what the majority of his poems describe as man's commitment to life, his association with primitive nature.

His final accents are positive, for Hughes asserts that the human spirit, not only in spite of the violence of its nature, but also because of it, must always turn towards life, never away from life.

Hughes quite clearly expresses this part of his philosophy in a short three-stanza poem that is almost lost in the middle of *The Hawk in the Rain* "Invitation to the Dance." This is an extremely important poem in a discussion of Hughes's attitude towards violence, for while acknowledging that the essence of life is touched with violence and brutality, it asserts that these elements should not deter us from committing ourselves to a full and active participation in life

The ultimate value of Hughes might be [that he had] the strength to stand up and endure in the face of violence.... [He] fulfills that famous prescription of Faulkner: "The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail."

His ability to involve himself with violence and to handle it with an exciting poetic technique distinguishes him from those contemporaries who retreat to the security of safe traditional technique and conventional minor themes.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. What is the moral or message of the poem "Hawk Roosting" by Ted Hughes?
2. Could I have a summary of the themes, and an analysis of the poem, 'The Stag', by Ted Hughes?
3. In the poem "Moose" by Ted Hughes, what do the moose represent and what is the overall meaning?
4. What is the summary of the short story "The Rain Horse" by Ted Hughes?
5. What are the important quotations in "The Rain Horse" by Ted Hughes and what is their significance?
6. How is the horse presented in Hughes's "The Rain Horse"?
7. What are some language features used in the poem "Hawk Roosting" by Ted Hughes?
8. How effective do you find the two words "Finally one" found at the end of stanza five of "Pike,"
9. Please provide a summary of "Relic" by Ted Hughes.
10. What happens in "The Rain Horse" (obvious meaning)
11. How does the sudden changing of the horse contribute to dramatic impact of the writing?
12. Summarize the poem Hawk Roosting by Ted Hughes. What is the poem's theme?
13. How does the run of salmon function as poetic inspiration for Ted Hughes in "That Morning?"
14. What are some examples of the "Pathetic Fallacy" in "The Rain Horse?"
15. Discuss the kinds of conflict in the story "The Rain Horse" by Ted Hughes.
16. What are some techniques Ted Hughes uses for atmospheric effect in "The Rain Horse?"

Unit V Section (c)**Ted Hughes****Poems 1-Pike**

As in most of his poetry, in "Pike" Ted Hughes uses the natural world to its fullest advantage as a stage where humans are only one species among many and are clearly not as powerful as they would like to believe. Hughes's poetry dwells on the innate violence in the natural world and on instinctive predatory behavior; yet, because this behavior is presented in such a manner as to seem uncontrived and natural, Hughes seems to view it as appropriate. Nature as depicted in a poem such as "Pike" shares the perspective of other British poets such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who described nature as "red in tooth and claw" (In Memoriam A. H. H., 1850). These writers—Hughes included—attempt to reconcile what at first appears to be a horrible violence in nature. Their concern reflects a conflict that has troubled people since Charles Darwin's theory of evolution offered an explanation for human development that appeared to omit the hand of God. Perhaps humans are no different from a creature such as the pike, driven by impulse and appetite in a universe that follows no moral law but eat or be eaten.

Hughes clearly views the pike as a creature that belongs in its water world, an animal that exemplifies survival of the fittest. The fish is a part of, rather than apart from, the natural world in which it feeds. The pike shares the colors of the water, the weeds, the pond bottom, and the shadows; it is in harmony with and a necessary part of this world, but...

poem introduction

Here iPike

Pike

Pike, three inches long, perfect

Pike in all parts, green tigering the gold.

Killers from the egg: the malevolent aged grin.

They dance on the surface among the flies.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. How do you discuss the violence of nature in "Pike" by Ted Hughes?
2. How does personification affect this poem, and what effect does it give?
3. How is the admiration and fear conveyed in "Pike by Ted Hughes" and "Horses by Edwin Muir"?
4. How does the structure reflect on the voice of the poem "Pike"?
5. Discuss the atmosphere created in "Pike" by Ted Hughes.
6. Please discuss the way nature is portrayed in Edwin Muir's "The Horses" and Ted Hughes' "Pike."
7. Please give a comparison of "Pike" by Ted Hughes and "Hunting Snake" by Judith Wright.
8. Compare and contrast the poem "Horses" by Edwin Muir and "Pike" by Ted Hughes.
9. How does Ted Hughes show admiration for the pike in his poem "Pike"?
10. Analyze the imagery in "Pike."
11. How does the poem "Pike" by Ted Hughes portray nature?

Unit V Section (c)

Ted Hughes

Poem 2-Snowdrop

Snowdrop by Ted Hughes

Now is the globe shrunk tight
Round the mouse's dulled wintering heart.
Weasel and crow, as if moulded in brass,
Move through an outer darkness
Not in their right minds,
With the other deaths. She, too, pursues her ends,
Brutal as the stars of this month,
Her pale head heavy as metal.

The "Snowdrop" is a poem that is concise and precise in its imagery. The Snowdrop refers to a flowering plant with small white flowers flowering at the end of winter. The snow drop literally signifies a drop of snow that is at once emblematic of transience. Therefore, it is about the winter that approaches life and the idea of how fleeting life is.

The opening lines state that "Now is the globe shrunk tight" suggests the compression and condensation that has set in because of winter. One wonders if the writer had foreseen the impact of globalization, as he declares the same. Nevertheless, here it appears to be the effect of winter having negative consequences upon the globe. The agile mouse's heart has become very dull, 'round' as though it has wound around the mouse. The weasel that is busy with its red furry coat preying upon rodent-like animals, and the crow about its duty as scavenger, appear to be moulded in brass. They come across as arrested in brass. Or their sprightly movements have rendered into heavy gaits with the weight of

brass. They have been arrested as if in metal, in a cold fixture. They seem to move in an outer darkness. As they reach the winter of their lives, they are with the other deaths. The lines may also mean that with the advent of winter the animals have lost their sense of alertness and become distracted.

"The often used symbolic use of metals in the Bible are hidden puzzle pieces used by God to fit together a bigger picture of the salvation process. Understanding the use of these metals provides a deeper understanding of the magnificent way God wrote the Bible. Brass, silver and gold are metals used to symbolically portray the spiritual refinement and growth of Christians, from salvation to glorification. Particularly in the pattern of Moses' tabernacle in the wilderness. (<http://www.biblebigpicture.com/biblelessons/brassasymbolofcarnality.htm>)"

Therefore, the reference to the animals may metaphorically apply to human beings who turn to spirituality and refinement as they enter the winter of their lives. How their survival instinct (act of preying) may limit itself just to the need for survival. They move in 'an outer darkness', but with an inner radiance.

She, too, pursues her ends,

Brutal as the stars of this month,

Her pale head heavy as metal.

The "She" at the end of the poem may refer to the Snow drop, the flowering plant. It may also signify Mother Earth. The flowers of the flowering plant are laden with snow and therefore heavy and crystal-like. Therefore they are the brutal stars of the night that help the preying animals in their endeavour. Note that they are not "guiding stars" but brutal stars as they assist the killing of other animals. It exemplifies, how for Hughes, violence not only pervaded the animal world, it also permeated the natural vegetative world.

Or move, stunned by their own grandeur,

Over a bed of emerald, silhouette

Of submarine delicacy and horror.

A hundred feet long in their world.
In ponds, under the heat-struck lily pads -
Gloom of their stillness:
Logged on last year's black leaves, watching upwards.
Or hung in an amber cavern of weeds
The jaws' hooked clamp and fangs
Not to be changed at this date;
A life subdued to its instrument;
The gills kneading quietly, and the pectorals.
Three we kept behind glass,
Jungled in weed: three inches, four,
And four and a half: fed fry to them -
Suddenly there were two. Finally one.
With a sag belly and the grin it was born with.
And indeed they spare nobody.
Two, six pounds each, over two feet long
High and dry and dead in the willow-herb -
One jammed past its gills down the other's gullet:
The outside eye stared: as a vice locks -
The same iron in this eye
Though its film shrank in death.

A pond I fished, fifty yards across,
Whose lilies and muscular tench
Had outlasted every visible stone
Of the monastery that planted them -
Stilled legendary depth:
It was as deep as England. It held
Pike too immense to stir, so immense and old
That past nightfall I dared not cast
But silently cast and fished
With the hair frozen on my head
For what might move, for what eye might move.
The still splashes on the dark pond,
Owls hushing the floating woods
Frail on my ear against the dream
Darkness beneath night's darkness had freed,
That rose slowly towards me, watching.

Unit V Section (c)

Ted Hughes

Poem 3-October dawn

October Dawn

October is marigold, and yet
A glass half full of wine left out
To the dark heaven all night, by dawn
Has dreamed a premonition
Of ice across its eye as if
The ice-age had begun to heave.
The lawn overtrodden and strewn
From the night before, and the whistling green
Shrubbery are doomed. Ice
Has got its spearhead into place.
First a skin, delicately here
Restraining a ripple from the air;
Soon plate and rivet on pond and brook;
Then tons of chain and massive lock
To hold rivers. Then, sound by sight
Will Mammoth and Saber-tooth celebrate
Reunion while a fist of cold

Squeezes the fire at the core of the world,
Squeezes the fire at the core of the heart,
And now it is about to start.

Unit V Section (c)

Ted Hughes

Poem 4-wind

Wind

This house has been far out at sea all night,
The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills,
Winds stampeding the fields under the window
Floundering black astride and blinding wet
Till day rose; then under an orange sky
The hills had new places, and wind wielded
Blade-light, luminous black and emerald,
Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.
At noon I scaled along the house-side as far as
The coal-house door. Once I looked up -
Through the brunt wind that dented the balls of my eyes
The tent of the hills drummed and strained its guyrope,
The fields quivering, the skyline a grimace,

At any second to bang and vanish with a flap;
The wind flung a magpie away and a black-
Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly. The house
Rang like some fine green goblet in the note
That any second would shatter it. Now deep
In chairs, in front of the great fire, we grip
Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought,

Or each other. We watch the fire blazing,
And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on,
Seeing the window tremble to come in,
Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.

Just about everyone I know who reads and writes poetry seriously owes a debt of one kind or another to Ted Hughes, directly or indirectly. Even though I never met him (the nearest I came was receipt of a hand-written note in the summer before he died) I still think of him as the single biggest influence on my poetry-writing (and therefore reading) life. As Peter Sansom said when he died, his death was the first of a public figure that moved me personally.

These are grand claims, but they are true. It was the poetry of Ted Hughes which first alerted me to the concept of poetry which was not a hymn or a nursery rhyme. It was the poetry of Ted Hughes which I first understood as belonging to and coming from 'a poet', a living one at that, and not just a name in an anthology. And finally it was in Ted Hughes's poems which I found for the first time, aged thirteen, a sense of excitement in the act of reading.

Specifically, this was the first time I remember experiencing that vertiginous yet intimate sensation of reading poems which were not about me whilst sensing that they knew absolutely everything about me at the same time. In the English lessons we looked at 'Retired Colonel', 'Thistles', 'Pike' and (of course) 'The Thought-Fox'. Later I remember being given the poem 'Wind' to write about in an exam, and found that I could. I can still remember the weird and not altogether comforting sense of self-awareness that interpreting the poem's images gave me. I particularly enjoyed the 'black-back gull bent like an iron bar slowly'.

In the week that Ted Hughes died I was staying at the house he had owned and lived in, Lumb Bank, now owned by the Arvon Foundation, near Heptonstall in Yorkshire. My colleague and friend Siân Hughes (no relation) and I were acting 'in loco parentis' for a group of young poets who were being tutored by Jo Shapcott and Roger McGough, as part of their prize in the first ever Foyle Young Poets Award (then called the Simon Elvin Young Poets Award).

In the way of the old joke, it only rained twice that week, once for three days, and once for four. In the brief hiatus between these downpours, the sun did shine with what the poem 'Wind' calls 'blade-light'. It filled the dining room where we sat writing, the only time we saw it that week. After setting us our morning exercise, I noticed left the room. Five minutes later she silently beckoned Siân and me to follow her into the kitchen, where she whispered to us the news. At that exact moment telephones began ringing in the house, which Jo wisely told us to ignore.

From then on we had two main concerns: to protect the young poets from the gaze of the outside world (there were sightings of film crews near the grave of Sylvia Plath in Heptonstall); and to honour the memory of this great man whose life had touched all of ours so deeply. The first we achieved quickly. Jo broke the news to the group around the table, and we held an impromptu minute's silence. We got them to agree to a self-imposed curfew, also immaculately observed. As Seamus Heaney says in one of his sonnets of grief for his mother 'we all knew one thing by being there'.

Later that night, around the hearth of the house, Jo read 'Wind' in his honour, and we toasted his memory. The windows did indeed tremble to come in and we all felt the roots of the house move below us. Every one of us saw that the very house Hughes wrote about in the poem had now become as tangible inside our heads as the elements outside.

Jo closed by saying that her lasting memory of Ted Hughes would be one of personal encouragement, particularly in letters and in personal conversations. 'It is the side of him the world will never see,' she said, 'because kindness does not sell papers. Let that be your legacy to each other.'

Like reading one of Hughes's poems, it was not a comfy experience to live at the centre of the storm of interest in his life that week. But I was pleased to have been there because the experience reminded me what made me want to write poems in the first place.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. What does the nature of the wind say about Nature itself?
2. How does the poem depict the relationship between humanity and Nature?
3. Is Nature inherently violent, according to Hughes?
4. How does the poem heighten the sense of the narrator's isolation?
5. Are human beings at home in Nature, according to Hughes? Would he say that we are entirely a part of the world that surrounds us, or that there is something that makes us alien and different? What part(s) of the poem support your answer?
6. Explain the relationship between humanity and nature in *Wind*.