

William Blake

Songs of Innocence and Experience,

- (i) 'Lamb'
- (ii) (ii) 'Tiger'
- (iii) (iii) 'Chimney Sweeper' (*Songs of Innocence*)
- (iv) (iv) 'Chimney Sweeper' (*Songs of Experience*)

1. Comment on Blake's portrayal of children and childhood in his *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.
2. Write about one poem from *Songs of Innocence* and its paired contrary poem in *Songs of Experience*. Your paper should include some explanation of Blake's doctrine of "contraries."
3. What do you consider to be the task or purpose of *Songs of Innocence*? In other words, do the songs teach us anything? If so, what?
4. How is the title phrase "songs of innocence" capable of more than one interpretation?
5. How are the child-speaker, the lamb, and Christ "the Lamb" set in relation to one another? Why is it so easy for the child to identify the lamb's creator, and so easy to invoke God's blessing on the lamb?
6. What emotional progression does the poem imply in the speaker's contemplation of the Tyger?
7. What is the answer to the question in line 20, "Did he who made the lamb make thee?" Why does the speaker need to ask the question? Who is "he," i.e., the lamb's creator?
8. What is the significance of the poem's references to "fire," "burning," and the "furnace"? What does fire often symbolize?
9. Examine the plate on page 55 - describe the Tyger's attributes. What sort of "tiger" is this that Blake has engraved? What effect does the odd spelling "tyger" create?
10. How does Blake thematically link "The Lamb" and "The Tyger"?
11. How do "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" present the motifs of Innocence and Experience?
12. How does the speaker of "The Chimney Sweeper" feel about his job? What is the difference between the speaker's feelings and the poet's feelings?
13. Compare "Chimney Sweeper" from the *Songs of Experience* to its *Innocence* precursor. What enables the child to interpret his situation so differently?
14. Is it significant that the child uses the present tense in the last stanza - "because I am happy, & dance and sing..."? What is the nature of his dancing and singing?
15. What is the logic of the child's statement that his parents, their conception of God, and that God's Priest and King "make up a heaven of our misery"? How can they all "make up" a heaven from the existence of misery?

William Wordsworth

- (i) 'Tintern Abbey'

(ii) 'London'

1. Wordsworth's poem "Tintern Abbey" has been described as offering readers a "religion of nature." What do you think that term means? Where do you see evidence of this in the poem?
2. Why do you think Wordsworth gives "Tintern Abbey" such a precise and detailed subtitle? What is the significance of this poem's full title?
3. In the final portion of "Tintern Abbey," the speaker turns to his "dear friend." Who is this friend and what role does he/she play in the poem?
4. Comment on the role of Dorothy in the poem.
5. What are the three stages in the development of Wordsworth's attitude to nature in "Tintern Abbey"?
6. Discuss the different stages of development of the poetic self in "Tintern Abbey."
7. Discuss how "Tintern Abbey" records Wordsworth's changing attitudes to Nature.
8. Characterize the relationship between Wordsworth (speaker) and the natural environment in "Tintern Abbey." How does Nature act on him? How does he act on it?
9. What does Wordsworth mean at the end of stanza two of "Tintern Abbey" [while with an eye. . .]?
10. What happens at the beginning of stanza 4? How does his attitude change and what aspect of time does he consider?
11. How has his relationship with nature changed over time?
12. What *presence* is he talking about in line 96?
13. What does he mean by "both what they half-create, / And what perceive? (107)
14. Who enters the picture in stanza 5? Why does Wordsworth bring her in? What's her function in the poem?
15. Wordsworth's poem "Lines, Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting The Banks Of The Wye During A Tour. July 13, 1798," is usually just referred to as "Tintern Abbey." But what effect does the very specific placing (both physical and chronological) in the title achieve?
16. Wordsworth was born in 1770, and his sister Dorothy was born the following year. (They had three other siblings as well.) Their mother died in 1778, at which point the siblings were separated and sent to live with other relatives; William and Dorothy did not see each other for nine years. What does the poet accomplish with his address to his sister in the final stanza of the poem? What role does she play in his sense of himself?
17. 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?
18. Wordsworth is especially known for the use of memory, especially the memory of childhood, in his poetry. What is the relationship between memory and identity in this poem?
19. Does Wordsworth really use "the real language of men" in "Tintern Abbey," as he claimed he would do in the "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads?
20. 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?

21. If the speaker returned to the banks of the Wye for a third time, do you think his impressions would change yet again?
22. In "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth uses the word nature to mean more than material objects such as wildlife, trees, and mountains. How does he describe nature? What is Wordsworth saying about the effect nature has on his soul? Is the speaker's relationship to nature something that is possible for anyone? Why or why not?
23. In William Wordsworth's poems, he speaks of nature as a religion. Instead of using religion to find answers, he uses the beauty of nature to find peace within himself. Why does he turn to nature instead of religion for peace? What does this say about his character and the role of nature in his life - both physically and spiritually? Is it necessary for everyone to have such a spiritual outlet such as this? Why or why not?
24. In what sense does "Tintern Abbey" offer readers a "religion of nature"? What are some of the specific ways in which nature works as a substitute for traditional religion?
25. What is the role of "affective memory" in "Tintern Abbey"? How, in other words, does this kind of memory help Wordsworth's lyric speaker first to recognize his problem and then to resolve it?
26. What is the importance of "surmises" to Wordsworth? Why, that is, does he offer conjectures about "hermits" dwelling in the wilds, and so forth?
27. See line 40 - why has the world become "unintelligible" to the speaker? What has happened to him over time?
28. Compare lines 45-49 to Blake's idea of "looking through the eye" rather than with it. What does Wordsworth appear to mean by "an eye made quiet" and by referring to our ability to "see into the life of things"?
29. How is this poem pantheistic?
30. What is the difference between the pleasure the speaker took in nature as a child and the pleasure he draws from it now? What does the poet gain from his reflections on the past?
31. What role does the speaker's "dear friend" (his sister Dorothy) play in the poem? Why is it important that she is present as an addressee? What does her presence imply about the model of the self that Wordsworth offers in "Tintern Abbey"?
32. How does Wordsworth express anger in his poem, "London, 1802"? What moral ideal does he uphold? How has England violated that ideal?
33. How does the appeal to Milton, a famous poet, reflect upon Wordsworth's view of the power of poetry in "London, 1802"?
34. What of Milton's characteristics does the speaker admire in "London, 1802"?
35. Do you think Wordsworth sets himself up as Milton's poetic heir in this poem?
36. Why would Wordsworth look to a poet for reform, rather than a politician or a religious figure?
37. Why does Wordsworth feel that England needs Milton? Refer specifically to the problems mentioned in the poem.
38. Would it be accurate to label this poem a sonnet? Motivate fully.
39. How does the interjection 'Oh!' add to the mood of the sonnet? Describe Wordsworth's tone and

quote to support your answer.

40. Identify and explain the figures of speech the poet uses to describe Milton in "London, 1802."
Discuss how these comparisons characterise Milton.
41. What evidence is there in the poem that Wordsworth's sentiments are uniquely Romantic?
42. Why is 'cheerful godliness' an admirable quality to Wordsworth?
43. Wordsworth mourns certain qualities in society during 1802. Does modern day society have any of these same qualities? Answer thoroughly and justify your views.
44. Describe, with examples, some of the ways in which Wordsworth's poetry conforms to the features of Romanticism.

Samuel Coleridge

- (i) 'Kubla Khan';
- (ii) 'Dejection: An Ode'

1. Why is the poem called a fragment? Comment upon the fragmentary nature of the poem.
2. How far do you agree with Coleridge that "Kubla Khan" is "a fragment"? Justify.
3. What is the role of the imagination in "Kubla Khan"?
4. Comment on "Kubla Khan" as a dream allegory.
5. Discuss how Coleridge achieves a blend of form and content in the poem.
6. How does Coleridge draw visual pictures through his poem, "Kubla Khan"?
7. What are the characteristics of Romantic poetry reflected in "Kubla Khan"?
8. Analyse "Kubla Khan" as a romantic poem.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

- (i) 'Ozymandias'
- (ii) 'Ode to the West Wind'

1. How does Shelley use vivid imagery in "Ozymandias" to make a political comment in this poem?
2. How and to what extent would you apply Shelley's theories about inspiration and expression, about the powers of poetic language, to this poem?
3. Describe the structure of this poem. How does the "terza rima" verse form suit this poem's subject and aims?
4. Characterize the West Wind in this poem - what are its powers, what effects does it have on nature (or the other elements in nature) and the poet? In what way does it embody both danger and hope? How is the operation of Shelley's West Wind different from natural forces in Wordsworth and Coleridge (or Blake)?
5. What is the traditional purpose of an ode? What does it seem to be to romantics such as Shelley?
6. What assistance does the poet seek from the West Wind? Why has he been "striving" with the West Wind, unlike the forest, who is also the West Wind's "lyre"?
7. When towards the poem's end the speaker prays to the West Wind to scatter abroad his words and thoughts like dead leaves and ashes, what is he implying about poetic language? How does such a prayer relate to Shelley's ideas about inspiration and expression?
8. Is the speaker certain that the West Wind will grant the prayer that has been uttered? What is the task of the poem with regard to the reader and perhaps to the human community?
9. In what way or ways does the organic metaphor operate in this poem?

John Keats

- (i) 'Ode to a Nightingale'
- (ii) 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'
- (iii) 'Ode to Autumn'

1. The features of Keats's poetic craftsmanship, particularly his negative capability, are varied allusions, myth making, verbal coinage, and alliteration and assonance. Discuss.
2. What emotions and desires does Keats' speaker describe in connection with the nightingale? How do his feelings and desires differ from those of Shelley's speaker in "To a Sky-Lark"?
3. What value does the speaker attribute to the nighttime setting of his composition--that is, what opportunities does the night open to him? What associations does he make in connection with darkness?

4. How, in Stanza 7, does the bird's song lead the speaker beyond his immediate surroundings? What draws him back to himself in the final stanza? What does the poem suggest about the nature and duration of vision that the speaker has attained as he listens to the nightingale?
5. Keats respectfully opposes Wordsworth's poetry of the "egotistical sublime." How does the present poem offer an alternative focus for poetry?
6. What makes the speaker question the urn in the first stanza? What state of mind does Keats' poem seem designed to bring about?
7. Why are the figures on the urn called a "leaf-fringed *legend*"? [Look up the Latin verb "lego" or the gerundive "legendum" in a lexicon.] What does such a word have to do with the relationship between speaker and urn?
8. What paradox develops beginning with the second stanza and developing through the rest of the poem? What does art give us? What does it withhold?
9. What subjects of address does the speaker draw from the urn? What do they have in common? What don't they have in common--in other words, does the speaker have to address some subjects differently? Does the speaker put them into any working relationship? Explain.
10. People have sometimes said that line 25 is not good poetry: "More happy love! more happy, happy, happy love!" But consider the placement of the line in the poem as a whole--why might Keats have included such a line where he does, rendering it appropriate?
11. Critics argue over the meaning of the poem's last two lines, with or without the parentheses. How do you interpret them? What does it mean to identify truth and beauty--two realms that we generally insist upon keeping separate, just as we separate ethics or morality from aesthetics or beauty?
12. In a sense, the speaker is playing "art critic" when he questions the urn about its meaning. Does the personified urn's response validate this questioning? What does the poem, and especially the final stanza as a whole, suggest about the status of attempts to address the meaning of a work of art?
13. Contemporary critics usually insist on interpreting art in terms of its social and historical context, with the understanding that context is always at least partly constructed by the critic and not simply available as objective data. But how does Keats' speaker suggest we ought to consider a work of art, if indeed you take the poem as offering any insights about "context"?
14. All of the seasons have found poets to sing their praises, or at least their significance. But what is special to Keats' speaker about Autumn? What associations does he draw from the season beyond the natural surroundings and the time of year?
15. How does the stanzaic patterning of this poem, along with other formal features, reinforce the seasonal mood that Keats explores?

Mary Shelley

Frankenstein

1. Discuss the life and works of Mary Shelley with special reference to *Frankenstein*.
2. Describe the original personality of Dr. Victor Frankenstein's creature, and the changes that occurred to the creature's personality over the course of the novel.
3. Do you consider Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a gothic novel? Explain
4. Comment on the character of Victor Frankenstein.
5. Comment on the role of Elizabeth in Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*.
6. What does the Monster symbolise and signify?
7. Do you think *Frankenstein* is a science fiction? Give reasons.
8. Comment on the role of Nature in *Frankenstein*.
9. *Frankenstein* is a story of Romantic Quest. Comment.