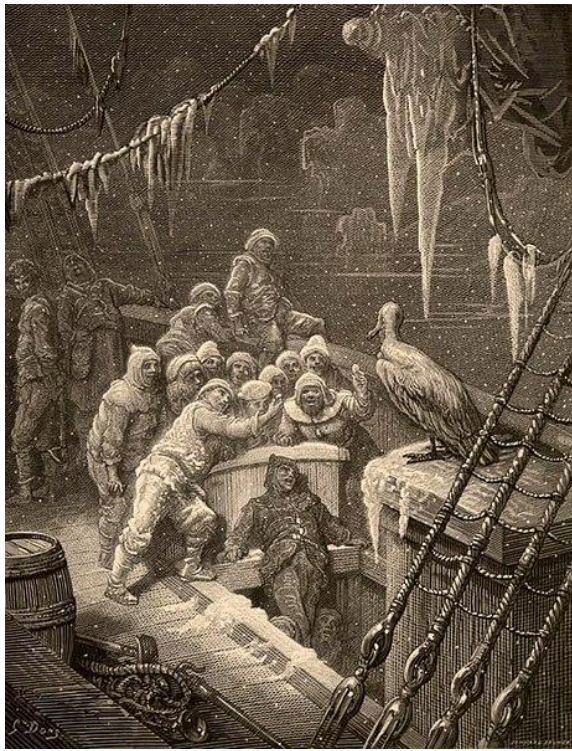


9539 / 02: The English Romantic Period (1785-1832)

The Poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and John Keats



SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834)

JOHN KEATS (1795-1823)

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ROMANTIC TOPICAL CONCERNS:

Whilst the term Romanticism collects a broad range of writers from across the ideological spectrum, there are several topical features that recur in 'Romantic' literary texts. As you cover some of these topics, they may feel familiar to you: you should consider how much the foundations of popular culture (especially Western media) are rooted in Romantic concepts or ideas.

- An emphasis on subjectivity, and strong personal or emotional experiences (sometimes as opposed to the scientific or the rational viewpoint).
- Accompanying the previous point, a search for significance in language that can be mystical or spiritual, to the point of being quasi-religious. This might also pose a threat (whether real or imagined) to established religion and its values.
- Admiration for the state of innocence, childhood, and children, but also fascination with extreme emotions like wonder, alienation or terror.
- Linked to the above, a fascination with transcendent states of perception or emotion that allow individuals to move beyond their immediate limits, sometimes described as the 'sublime'.
- A fascination with altered or unusual states of consciousness, especially those arising from dreams, madness, delirium, fear, etc.
- A veneration of man's relationship with nature, during a time of increasing urbanisation and industrialisation that seemed to place nature under threat.
- Radical political rejections of the contemporary social order, at least in the early years leading up to the French Revolution and before the rise of Napoleon.
- The questioning of more conventional codes of morality, sometimes in favour of more individualistic or personally liberating moral codes.
- Accordingly, some writers sought out, reinterpreted, or reinvented 'anti-heroes': non-traditional heroic figures who were exceptional in their individuality, rather than their morality.
- A desire to evoke a heroic national past, and subsequent fascination with myths and legends, or stories that took on the feel of myth or legend.

Remember, 'Romantic' writers are not a collective hive-mind, and in fact some wouldn't recognize the 'Romantic' label we use today. Many writers were fascinated by the topics above, but this does not mean they came to the same conclusions or attended a weekly meeting where they all agreed to follow particular orthodoxies. Be sensitive to how poets embody, respond to, undermine, or question particular values and ideas: this can often form the bones of a strong critical response.

POET BIOGRAPHIES:

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 – 1834)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, **a leader of the British Romantic movement**, was born on October 21, 1772, in Devonshire, England. His father, a vicar of a parish and master of a grammar school, married twice and had fourteen children. The youngest child in the family, Coleridge was a student at his father's school and an avid reader. After his father died in 1781, Coleridge attended Christ's Hospital School in London, where **he met lifelong friend Charles Lamb**. While in London, he also **befriended a classmate named Tom Evans**, who introduced Coleridge to his family. **Coleridge fell in love with Tom's older sister, Mary.**

Coleridge entered Jesus College, Cambridge in 1791, with the intention of **pursuing a future as a clergyman, in line with his father's wish**. However, **Coleridge's religious views began to change** over the course of his first year at Cambridge. He became a supporter of William Frend, a Fellow at the college whose Unitarian beliefs made him **a controversial figure**. While at Cambridge, **Coleridge also accumulated a large debt**, which his brothers eventually had to pay off. **Financial problems continued to plague him throughout his life, and he constantly depended on the support of others.**

En route to Wales in June 1794, Coleridge met and formed an **instant friendship with a student Robert Southey**, so he postponed his trip for several weeks, and the **men shared their philosophical ideas**. **Influenced by Plato's Republic, they constructed a vision of pantisocracy** - equal government by all, which involved emigrating to the New World with ten other families to set up **a commune** on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. Coleridge and Southey envisioned the men sharing the workload, a great library, philosophical discussions, and freedom of religious and political beliefs.

After finally visiting Wales, Coleridge returned to England to find that Southey had become engaged to a woman named Edith Fricker. As marriage was an integral part of the plan for communal living in the New World, **Coleridge decided to marry Edith's sister Sara**. Coleridge wed in 1795, in spite of the fact that **he still loved Mary Evans**, who was engaged to another man. **Coleridge's marriage was unhappy** and he spent much of it apart from his wife.. During that period, Coleridge and Southey collaborated on a play titled *The Fall of Robespierre* (1795). While the pantisocracy was still in the planning stages, Southey abandoned the project to pursue his legacy in law. Left without an alternative plan, Coleridge spent the next few years beginning his career as a writer. He never returned to Cambridge to finish his degree.

In 1795 **Coleridge befriended William Wordsworth, who greatly influenced Coleridge's verse**. Coleridge, whose early work was celebratory and conventional, began writing in a more natural style. In his 'conversation poems', such as 'The Eolian Harp' and 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison', **Coleridge used his intimate friends and their experiences as subjects**. The following year, Coleridge published **his first volume of poetry, *Poems on Various Subjects***, and began the first of ten issues of **a liberal political publication** entitled *The Watchman*. From 1797 to 1798 **he lived near Wordsworth** and his sister, Dorothy, in Somersetshire. In 1798 **the two men collaborated on a joint volume of poetry** entitled *Lyrical Ballads*. **The collection is considered the first great work of the Romantic school of poetry** and contains Coleridge's famous poem, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.'

That autumn the **two poets travelled to the Continent together**. Coleridge spent most of the trip in Germany, studying the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, Jakob Boehme, and G. E. Lessing. While there, he mastered the German language and began translating. He returned to England in 1800, settling with family and friends at Keswick. Coleridge stayed with Wordsworth and his wife Mary Hutchinson, together

with Wordsworth's sister Dorothy and Mary's sister Sara, whom Coleridge, despite being still married, fell deeply in love with, but who did not reciprocate his affections.

Over the next two decades, **Coleridge lectured on literature and philosophy**. His **ill-health, opium-addiction problems, and somewhat unstable personality** meant that all his lectures were plagued with delays and erratic quality. However, his lecture on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* on 2 January 1812 was considered the best and rescued the play's reputation. He also **wrote about religious and political theory**, spent two years on the island of Malta as a secretary to the governor in an effort to overcome his poor health and **his opium addiction**, and lived off of financial donations and grants. Still addicted to opium, he moved in with the physician James Gillman in 1816. In 1817, he published *Biographia Literaria*, which contained his finest literary criticism. He continued to publish poetry and prose, notably *Sibylline Leaves* (1817), *Aids to Reflection* (1825), and *Church and State* (1830). He died in London on July 25, 1834, as a result of heart failure compounded by an unknown lung disorder, possibly linked to his use of opium.

John Keats (1795 – 1821)

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

Around this time, **Keats met Leigh Hunt**, an influential editor of the *Examiner*, who published his sonnets 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' and 'O Solitude'. Hunt also introduced Keats to a circle of literary men, including the poets Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Wordsworth. The group's influence enabled Keats to see **his first volume, *Poems by John Keats*, published in 1817**. Shelley, who was fond of Keats, had advised him to develop a more substantial body of work before publishing it. Keats, who was not as fond of Shelley, did not follow his advice. *Endymion*, a 4,000-line erotic/allegorical romance based on the Greek myth of the same name, appeared the following year. Two of the most influential critical magazines of the time, the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, attacked the collection, **one of them calling it nonsense and recommended that Keats give up poetry**. Shelley, who privately disliked *Endymion* but recognized Keats' genius, wrote a more favourable review, but it was **never published**. Shelley also exaggerated the effect that the criticism had on Keats, attributing his declining health over the following years to a spirit broken by the negative reviews.

Keats spent the summer of 1818 on a walking tour in Northern England and Scotland, **returning home to care for his brother, Tom, who suffered from tuberculosis**. While nursing his brother, **Keats met and fell in love with a woman named Fanny Brawne**. **Writing some of his finest poetry between 1818 and 1819**, Keats started working on 'Hyperion', a Miltonic blank-verse epic of the Greek creation myth, stopping upon the death of his brother, then returning in late 1819 to rewrite it as 'The Fall of Hyperion' (unpublished until 1856). **Keats and Fanny became secretly engaged** in October 1819, but Keats soon discovered that he was **suffering from tuberculosis**, and by the following February he felt that death was already upon him, referring to the present as his 'posthumous existence'.

In July 1820, he published **his third and best volume of poetry**, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*. The three title poems, dealing with mythical and legendary themes of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance times, are rich in imagery and phrasing. The volume also contains the unfinished 'Hyperion', and three poems considered among the finest in the English language, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Ode on Melancholy', and 'Ode to a Nightingale'. **The book received enthusiastic praise** from Hunt, Shelley, Charles Lamb, and the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*.

The fragment 'Hyperion' was considered by Keats' contemporaries to be his greatest achievement, but by that time he had reached an advanced stage of his disease and was too ill to be encouraged. He continued a correspondence with Fanny Brawne and - when he could no longer bear to write to her directly - her mother, but **his failing health and his literary ambitions prevented their getting married**. Under his doctor's orders to seek a warm climate for the winter, **Keats went to Rome** with his friend, the painter Joseph Severn. He died there on February 23, 1821, **at the age of twenty-five**, and was buried in the Protestant cemetery. The words that he asked his friends to have carved into his gravestone were only these words, not his name: **"Here lies One Whose Name was writ in Water."**

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet has been organised by poet, with their poems organised into rough chronological order. Checking the year of composition against the timeline included might give helpful historical and biographical context for understanding the poem, though any important contextual information will also be provided in the poem notes. You may not want to read this cover to cover, since a poet's earlier poems can sometimes be weaker. Your tutor will suggest some starting poems for your first class.

In composing the annotations for the poems, decisions had to be made between ease of reference and preserving the form of the original poem. As far as possible, this collection has tried to preserve the shape of the poem on the page. Page numbers next to poem titles refer to your exam copies.

Reading this booklet is a three-step process: the process of first *understanding* and *appreciating* these poems as pieces of art, secondly the process of *analysing* these poems and *articulating* their literary features through close analysis, and thirdly, *critically comparing* how these poems fit (or don't fit) within a poet's wider canon of works, and how they compare to other poets. It is in the second and third categories that students struggle, especially when it comes to essay writing and critical analysis.

Your energy will be spent in 1) understanding what the poems are saying, and the poetic choices being made by the poets and 2) formulating broad arguments around questions like the following:

How are these poems portraying Nature, and its relationship with Man?

How do the poems present the experience of awe and wonder?

What are the poems saying about the experience of love?

The fundamental goal of Literature as a subject is to **articulate meaningful broad arguments about the texts as a whole, grounding those arguments in clear references to form, structure, and language.**

For those new to literature, the following steps can be helpful.

Step 1: Understanding these poems

Read through the poems multiple times and give time to let the language settle in. Try and break the poem up into chunks. How would you summarise each section? Are there images or phrases that jump out at you? Highlight keywords. Can you trace an argument or flow of events? Be sensitive to change: the end might not be the same as the beginning. What feelings do you have after reading this poem?

Step 2: Close Analysis (How does this poem work?)

Read through the poem and look for literary devices (see the Appendix). Use the annotations as a starting point. As you identify devices, ask yourself what effect(s) the device is creating. How would you articulate these effects? How do these effects link to or complicate the wider argument of the poem? What makes this poem a *work* of art? Annotate the poem thoroughly. After completing this step, you should be able to explain what makes this poem 'literary', with specific examples.

Step 3: Critical Comparison (Broad Arguments)

Consider what you know of the Romantic period, and key topics that the poet is engaging with. How does the poet treat these themes? How would you compare this with other poems in this collection? What broad topic sentences can you come up with to describe what you are observing?

Sonnet to the River Otter (p. 45)

Dear native brook! wild streamlet of the West!
 How many various-fated years have past,
 What happy and what mournful hours, since last
 I skimmed the smooth thin stone along thy breast,
 Numbering its light leaps! yet so deep imprest
 Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes
 I never shut amid the sunny ray,
 But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,
 Thy crossing plank, thy marge with willows grey,
 And bedded sand, that veined with various dyes
 Gleamed through thy bright transparency! On my way,
 Visions of childhood! oft have ye beguiled
 Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs:
 Ah! that once more I were a careless child!

Genre, context, and title: This sonnet is dedicated to the *River Otter*, not the aquatic mammal, near Coleridge's childhood home. The poem uses the image of the River Otter as a means through which the speaker reflects on his childhood memories, especially in contrast with the miserable realities of adulthood. The veneration of childhood as a pure and special state and indulgence in nostalgia was commonplace amongst writers during that period. It was during this period that writers began to grapple seriously with early childhood education and advocacy for compulsory schooling.

1 'native brook'. Note the word 'native' suggests a lost home that the speaker wishes to return to. Consider the presentation of childhood and nostalgia in this poem.

1 'wild streamlet of the West'. 'of the West' because the River Otter is in the West of England. Consider the adjective 'wild' and the link to 'careless child' in line 14, in contrast with the presentation of adulthood in lines 2 and 13.

4 - 6 Note the use of alliteration ('skimm'd the smooth thin stone') mirroring a skipping stone along the water's surface, and how the image of the sinking stone in line 5 ('deep imprest') transitions into a flashback to the speaker's childhood ('sink the sweet scenes of childhood').

9 - 11 'marge' = margin. Note language that suggests rich gems and luxurious dyes, even though the speaker is simply describing the water's surface. The river is precious because it functions as a medium for 'visions of childhood'.

12-13 "beguil'd ... yet waking". Note the metaphor of sleep here, where the visions 'beguile' the speaker from "Lone manhood's cares", yet "waking" forces one back to reality. Consider the presentation of dreams and escapist fantasy here, and compare this to other poems like 'Something Childish But Very Natural' or 'To Sleep'.

13, 14 "Lone manhood's cares", "careless child". This poem is primarily about childhood and nostalgia, especially in contrast with adulthood. Pay careful attention to adjectives and qualifiers, and consider how childhood is presented and how adulthood is presented.

[Pantisocracy] (p. 57)

No more my Visionary Soul shall dwell
 On Joys that were! No more endure to weigh
 The Shame and Anguish of the evil Day,
 Wisely forgetful! O'er the Ocean swell
 Sublime of Hope I seek the cottag'd Dell,
 Where Virtue calm with careless step may stray,
 And dancing to the moonlight Roundelay
 The Wizard Passions weave an holy Spell.
 Eyes that have ach'd with Sorrow! ye shall weep
 Tears of doubt-mingled Joy, like theirs who start
 From Precipices of distemper'd Sleep,
 On which the fierce-eyed Fiends their Revels keep,
 And see the rising Sun, and feel it dart
 New Rays of Pleasance trembling to the Heart.

1794

Genre, context, and title:

'Pantisocracy', from the Greek *panto* for 'all', was a form of utopian society dreamt up by Coleridge and Robert Southey in the wake of political disillusionment: by this time, the French Revolution had been in the grips of the Terror, and the English government was violently cracking down on radicals. They proposed the creation of a radical, egalitarian society made up of intelligent, sensitive thinkers, which they would establish by buying up land in the United States to create a farming commune. Southey wrote enthusiastically: 'When Coleridge and I are sawing down a tree, we shall discuss metaphysics; criticise poetry when hunting a buffalo; and write sonnets while following the plough. Our society will be of the most polished order'. However, the project was a little naive: the members had barely any experience with farming, and seemed to believe they could live off the land working just a few hours a day (Southey proposed marrying women to do domestic chores). Furthermore, none of the members actually had enough money to buy land, and hoped to find wealthy volunteers to join them. The impracticality of their plan may be excused by their age: Southey was just nineteen, and Coleridge was twenty-two at the time. Ultimately, the lack of funds and experience and conflicts between Southey and Coleridge caused the scheme to collapse by the end of 1795.

This particular Petrarchan sonnet (retroactively titled 'Pantisocracy') was taken from a letter that Coleridge wrote to Southey. It describes the speaker's desire to escape to a foreign land to seek peace amongst pastoral images of peace and tranquillity. This is one of several poems in the collection that engages with the subject of politics and freedom.

1 "my Visionary Soul". Coleridge's speaker often refers to himself in self-aggrandising ways that distinguish him from wider society. Consider what qualities are being described in this phrase, and note the emphasis produced by capitalisation.

1 - 2 "No more ... On joys that were!" Note the political context: the poem is a repudiation of past hopes (i.e. in the French Revolution, in English reform) that Coleridge now feels disillusioned by, emphasised by the anaphora "No more ... No more ..." that emphasises a contrast between past and present.

2 - 3 "to weigh/The Shame and Anguish of the evil Day". Note the use of enjambment in lines 2-3 and how it creates emphasis on the word "weigh".

4 - 5. Besides contrasts between past and present, note also the contrast between locations. Coleridge makes mention of the Ocean (and the motif of travel) in other poems like 'Ode to Tranquillity' but for a very different purpose. The "cottag'd Dell" suggests a pastoral idyllic fantasy, in implicit contrast to the world of the City.

5 "Sublime of Hope". "Sublime" = elevated, but note as well the importance of the concept of the "sublime" in Romantic thought.

6. The speaker imagines personified Virtue wandering calmly and carelessly (i.e. without fear or restriction). Contrast this to the feeling of weightiness implied in line 2.

7 "moonlight Roundelay". A simple dance in a circle. Consider references to the moon in other Romantic poems, like 'Kubla Khan', 'The Nightingale', and the 'Eve of St Agnes', and think about what associations the poets might have with the moon.

8 "the Wizard Passions weave an holy spell". Notice the reference to magic / enchantment in "Wizard Passions" and "spell", but also the suggestion of holiness and divinity in "holy spell". Consider how the Romantic poets present enchantment (especially in relation to strong feelings, like in 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci') as well as how they present spirituality.

11 "distemper'd Sleep". Bad dreams. Note Coleridge's treatment of 'sleep' here as a metaphor for political and personal frustrations in life, and compare this to Keats' 'To Sleep'.

12 "fierce-eyed Fiends their revels keep". Note the contrast between the 'revels' of the Fiends and line 7. Coleridge makes use of devil imagery again in 'The Pains of Sleep'.

13 - 14 "And see the rising Sun and feel it dart ... trembling to the Heart." Notice the focus on immediate, visceral physical sensation and emotionality: to see, to feel, and to tremble. Consider how the Romantic poets present the experience of extreme emotions.

The Eolian Harp (p. 87)*COMPOSED AT CLEVEDON, SOMERSETSHIRE*

My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
 Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
 To sit beside our cot, our cot o'ergrown
 With white-flowered jasmin, and the broad-leaved myrtle,
 (Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!),
 And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
 Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve
 Serenely brilliant (such should wisdom be)
 Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
 Snatched from yon bean-field! and the world so hushed!
 The stilly murmur of the distant sea
 Tells us of silence.

And that simplest lute,
 Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
 How by the desultory breeze caressed,
 Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
 It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
 Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
 Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
 Over delicious surges sink and rise,
 Such a soft floating witchery of sound
 As twilight Elfins make, when they at eve
 Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
 Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
 Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
 Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!
 O! the one life within us and abroad,
 Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
 A light in sound, a sound-like power in light
 Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where -
 Methinks, it should have been impossible
 Not to love all things in a world so filled;
 Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
 Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

Genre, context, and title: Coleridge wrote this poem in anticipation of his (later failed) marriage to Sara Fricker, not to be confused with Sara Hutchinson (or "Asra") whom he would to / about in 'Dejection: An Ode' and 'Constancy to an Ideal Object'. An 'Eolian Harp' (or wind harp) is an actual stringed instrument that is played by the wind (similar to wind-chimes). The poem is in blank verse of unrhymed iambic pentameter, though many lines show deviation from the metre. This poem is difficult for two reasons: 1) Coleridge's philosophy of 'Panentheism' is unintuitive and difficult to follow, and 2) he seems to repudiate his views in the ending, though you can discuss how sincere he is. Take note that this is a poem with a shifting argument that changes over time!

5 **1 - 12** The poem is one of Coleridge's "conversational" poems, framed as an ongoing address to a target audience (in this case "pensive Sara"). Note the various elements that combine to create a sense of intimacy and gentleness (the use of imagery that suggests privacy, the use of sibilants, the transition from "thy" and "mine" to "our" and "us", as examples). Coleridge being who he is, he can't help but turn what starts as a sincere love poem into a treatise on his spiritual philosophy, which is maybe one reason why the marriage didn't work.

10 **13 "that simplest lute"**. The "Eolian harp" of the title: please look up what this instrument is and how it functions. The image of the harp (an instrument played entirely by Nature) is the key conceit of this poem, and Coleridge reframes the metaphor from several perspectives as his argument shifts. This is the essential element to understand about this poem.

15 **14 "hark!"** A feature of "conversational" poems is the illusion that you are physically present with the speaker and experiencing events with them: note the present tense, and here, the reference to a sound that apparently has just been heard.

20 **15-16** The image compares the harp's fitful noises with the (at the time, winsome) image of a reluctant maid halfheartedly rebuffing her lover's attempts to win her. Modern readers need to be aware of the very different impressions/connotations of this imagery (see, for example, 'Love'). This is not sinister.

17 - 18 It produces such beautiful complaints/noises, that must tempt (the lover) to repeat the wrong he had done.

25 **19 - 20** The speaker is describing the moment-to-moment sounds produced by the harp as the wind rises or falls. Note how alternating long and short syllabled words ("long sequacious notes", "surges sink and rise") mimic the changing rhythms of the music.

30 **21 - 26 "Such a soft floating witchery of sound ... hovering on untamed wing!"**. The syntax is convoluted, but can be read as follows: *This soft enchanting music from the harp is similar to the music of elves from Fairy-Land, where Music flies like a beautiful untamed bird ("footless and wild") around the honey-filled flowers*. Note the link to enchantment in "witchery", and the comparison to "Elfins" and "Fairy-land" in the subsequent lines. *Elves* show up in many poems in our collection, like 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and 'Ode to a

And thus, my love! as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-closed eye-lids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,
And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;
Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject lute!

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all?

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O beloved woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallowed dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
Meek daughter in the family of Christ!
Well hast thou said and holily dispraised
These shapings of the unregenerate mind;
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.
For never guiltless may I speak of him,
The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels;
Who with his saving mercies healed me,
A sinful and most miserable man,
Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace, and this cot, and thee, dear honoured Maid!

1795

Nightingale' and require discussion in class to understand their connotations.

27 - 28 **"the one life within us and abroad/which meets all motion and becomes its soul"**. The core of Coleridge's argument: there is a universal "one life" that animates Man and Nature. "All motion" refers to all living things.

29 - 30 Coleridge expresses the profundity of this idea through a series of paradoxes: note the use of synesthesia here that merges *sight, sound, thought* and *feeling*.

31 - 34 Paraphrased: *I think it is impossible not to love everything in this world so filled with wonders: where the breeze itself produces singing, and even the silent still air is (but) sleeping Music (that is yet to be played)*. Coleridge imagines the very air we breathe as simply unplayed music (through the medium of the Harp).

35 - 44 In this section, the speaker extends the image of the Eolian Harp to a simile describing his own idle thoughts. Unusually, it is the *speaker's* "indolent and passive brain" that is the harp, and the thoughts themselves are like the wind, "uncalled and undetained" and playing on him. Note language that emphasises human passivity and receptivity, in contrast to the activity of the thoughts. This might sound odd to us, so take some time to reflect on why. Why is it strange to imagine our brains as instruments being played on? What is Coleridge emphasising about Man's relationship with Nature and the wider world? Think also about Coleridge's presentation of thought itself as uncontrolled ("uncalled and undetained", 'as wild and various as the random gales').

44 **"this subject lute"**. A witty pun. "This lute (or harp) that is the subject of my poem", but also "My brain, a lute, which is the subject being acted upon".

45 - 49 Note how the metaphor of the Harp is being changed for the third time: here the entirety of nature is imagined as the Harp, and a greater divine force ("one intellectual breeze") is playing and acting on all of Nature. Note how Coleridge is very intentionally using the image of the Harp to work up towards this quite abstract idea.

45 **"all of animated nature"**. Note how the image of "animated nature" being swept over by "one intellectual breeze" recalls "all motion" in line 28.

48 **"Plastic"**. Easily shaped, not the modern material! As an aside, Coleridge defined "esemplastic imagination" as the intellectual capacity to unite disparate things in order to create a new unified whole. In this case, it is the greater, divine 'one intellectual breeze' doing the shaping.

49. **"the Soul of each, and God of all"**. Note the striking paradox here: what do we normally think of as the relationship between "Souls" and "God"? Here, the speaker argues that the divine energy *is* the Soul of each *and* the God of all. If you have encountered modern spiritualism that talks about *the divine energy in all of us* or similar phrases, they are cribbing directly from the Romantics.

50-51 **"But thy more serious eye ... O beloved woman!"** Paraphrase: *"But [from] your stern looking eyes, woman, I receive a mild rebuke"*. Note the change in argument signalled through the conjunction. Sara is clearly a more religiously conventional person. The closing stanza is a guilty repudiation of the previous philosophy, though it is likely to be tongue-in-cheek.

56 **"unregenerate mind"**. A "regenerate" or "renewed" mind is supposed to be the marker of a Christian. Coleridge deprecating his own philosophy as a product of an 'unregenerate' mind.

57 - 58 The speaker describes his previous musings disparagingly. Note language that suggests transience and superficiality ("Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break"), while also suggesting the idiom "*all that glitters is not gold*". Philosophy is characterised as "vain", and an "aye-babbling spring": i.e. akin to a bubbling brook that makes a lot of meaningless noises". Whilst the last section feels a bit out of sorts with the main body, elements here can be made use of in an essay on thought, or the presentation of ideas. Coleridge also makes use of very similar bubble-imagery in 'Ode to Tranquillity'.

60 "The Incomprehensible". i.e. God. Note the comparison with lines 57-58 denigrating Philosophy.

60 - 65. The poem ends with a very conventional Christian profession of faith. Note the use of listing in the final line, as Coleridge gives thanks for all he is grateful for, and ends with slightly unconvincingly emphasis on his greatest blessing: "thee, dear honoured Maid!"

Sonnet

COMPOSED ON A JOURNEY HOMEWARD; THE AUTHOR HAVING RECEIVED INTELLIGENCE OF THE BIRTH OF A SON, SEPT. 20TH, 1796 (p. 121)

Oft o'er my brain does that strange fancy roll
Which makes the present (while the flash dost last)
Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past,
Mixed with such feelings, as perplex the soul
Self-questioned in her sleep; and some have said
We lived, ere yet this fleshy robe we wore.
O my sweet baby! when I reach my door,
If heavy looks should tell me thou art dead
(As sometimes, through excess of hope, I fear),
I think, that I should struggle to believe
Thou were a Spirit, to this nether sphere
Sentenced for some more venial crime to grieve;
Didst scream, then spring to meet Heaven's quick reprieve,
While we wept idly o'er thy little bier!

Sept. 20, 1796

Genre, context, and title: The sentiment expressed in this poem would be repeated by William Wordsworth in 'Strange fits of passion have I known' (1798), in which the speaker approaches his beloved's cottage and has a sudden morbid premonition that she might be dead. Like Wordsworth's poem, this poem describes an irrational, anxious feeling as one considers an absent love one. In terms of form, this Petrarchan sonnet uses 14 lines of pentameter (mostly iambic), with a regular rhyme scheme (initially ABBA).

1 - 3 "that strange fancy". See introduction. You can perhaps consider the presentation of "fancy", or imagination here: something irrational, but perhaps something that gives deeper spiritual insight into some "unknown past"? Note the contrast between 'present' reality and the world of the "past".

4 - 5 "perplex the soul / Self-questioned in her sleep". i.e. *this strange fancy is mixed with the kind of feelings that perplex and trouble the soul in sleep*. Coleridge is articulating feelings that belong to the world of the *irrational* and the *subconscious*. Consider the reference to sleep here, and its links to "fancy".

6 "We lived ere yet this fleshy robe we wore". The image of the body as a borrowed "robe" for our immortal souls is an old, well-attested one in English literature. Coleridge's seemingly tangential reflections in lines 4-6 anticipate his musings on his child's immortal soul.

9 Note the *volta* or turn in argument, signalled by the changing rhyme scheme here.

10 "I think, that I should struggle to believe". i.e. I would try to make myself believe.

11 "nether sphere". The earth. "nether" = lower, and suggesting the *netherworld* or *underworld*. Note the framing of earth as a sort of purgatory compared to heaven, and life on earth as being akin to punishment for crime. You can use this poem for variety of discussions: examples include the Soul, mortality, the divine vs the earthly world, or childhood and purity.

12 "venial crime". Minor crime. Note the wider metaphor of legal punishment being used to describe our life on earth.

12 "Didst scream, then spring ...". i.e. you, a Spirit were exiled for a minor crime to earth. You screamed (as a punished Spirit/newborn baby) but then quickly leapt back to Heaven when forgiven of your crime. Note how words like "spring" and "quick" emphasise the lightness of the Spirit and its eagerness to return to its true home.

14 "idly", "little bier". Note how the words "idly" and "little" downplay and minimise the grief the mourners should feel.

This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison (p. 138)*Addressed to Charles Lamb, of the India House, London*

Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
 This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost
 Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
 Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
 Had dimmed mine eyes to blindness! They, meanwhile, 5
 Friends, whom I never more may meet again,
 On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
 Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
 To that still roaring dell, of which I told;
 The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep, 10
 And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
 Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
 Flings arching like a bridge; - that branchless ash,
 Unsunned and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
 Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
 Fanned by the water-fall! and there my friends
 Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
 That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
 Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
 Of the blue clay-stone.

Now, my friends emerge
 Beneath the wide wide Heaven - and view again
 The many-steepled tract magnificent
 Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
 With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light up
 The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles
 Of purple shadow! Yes! they wander on
 In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
 My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
 And hungered after Nature, many a year,
 In the great City pent, winning thy way
 With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
 And strange calamity! Ah! slowly sink
 Behind the western ridge, thou glorious sun!
 Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
 Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds
 Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
 And kindle, thou blue ocean! So my Friend
 Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
 Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
 On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
 Less gross than bodily; and of such hues

Genre, context, and title: The poem was originally published with the following advertisement, explaining its context:

In the June of 1797 some long-expected friends paid a visit to the author's cottage; and on the morning of their arrival, he met with an accident, which disabled him from walking during the whole time of their stay. One evening, when they had left him for a few hours, he composed the following lines in the garden-bower.

Coleridge's conversational poem thus imaginatively follows his friends on their walk through the Quantock hills, while using natural imagery to articulate his own sense of beauty. In terms of form and scansion, the poem uses blank verse (unrhymed lines held together by a meter, supposed to better reflect speech) made up mostly of iambic pentameter, though in places the poet alters the rhythm with trochees. Take note of how the poem presents Nature, especially in relation to the divine or to man.

Title 'Lime-Tree Bower'. Bower = a shady, leafy shelter in a garden or grove, in this case one featuring a large lime tree.

1 "Well, they are gone, and here must I remain". Note how the word "well" introduces a conversational tone, whilst "here" places the reader in the "lime-tree bower" with the speaker, meaning we imaginatively travel with Coleridge's speaker from *here* to the path through nature that his friends follow.

2 "This lime-tree bower my prison!" Note the exclamation here, and the use of the word "prison". Coleridge's argument is developed as the poem goes on, and from line 45 his speaker reconciles himself to the beauties of the narrow bower.

5-9 Note the contrast with lines 3-4 in the bitter, assonance-laden "dimmed mine eyes to blindness!" in line 5, and the joyful alliterative imagery describing his friends' wandering.

10 - 17 Coleridge is on the one hand faithfully describing the route of his friends, but note the language that suggests small and humble nature here ("branchless ash", "few poor yellow leaves") in order to build the contrast with the "wide wide Heaven" in line 21. Coleridge also anticipates his later argument that all Nature, even humble Nature, speaks of beauty.

21 "Now, my friends emerge". Notice the use of present-tense conjunctions that place us with Coleridge's friends as if they are taking their journey, and consider the contrast ("Now ...") between how nature is characterised by this section and the preceding lines.

22 - 27 "wide wide Heaven ... many-steepled tract". Notice the use of repetition emphasising *vastness*, and terms like "Heaven" and "many-steepled". Consider how poets describe Nature and the sublime, and make comparisons to poems like 'To Nature' and 'Frost at Midnight' that link Nature to divinity. (See also lines 40-44).

25 "fair bark". A bark (or barque) is a kind of ship, but notice the pun here for "bark" as in tree-bark, and how the man-made and natural merge into one.

29 - 33 "for thou hast pined ... and strange calamity". Note the use of words like "pine" and "hunger" to describe desire for Nature as akin to an appetite. Note the description of Charles "pent" up in the "great City" and the contrast with the expansive "wide wide" natural

As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
Spirits perceive his presence.

A delight

Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,
This little lime-tree bower, have I not marked
Much that has soothed me. Pale beneath the blaze
Hung the transparent foliage; and I watched
Some broad and sunny leaf, and loved to see
The shadow of the leaf and stem above,
Dappling its sunshine! And that walnut-tree
Was richly tinged, and a deep radiance lay
Full on the ancient ivy which usurps
Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
Through the late twilight: and though now the bat
Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters,
Yet still the solitary humble bee
Sings in the bean-flower! Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart.
Awake to Love and Beauty! and sometimes
'Tis well to be bereft of promised good,
That we may lift the Soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share.
My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook
Beat its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blest it! deeming, its black wing
(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
Had crossed the mighty orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing; or when all was still,
Flew creeking o'er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

landscape in line 22. How is the City characterised in comparison within Nature?

45 **40 - 44 "all doth seem/Less gross than bodily ... perceive his presence"**. "gross" here means substantial, dense, or tangible, and 'less gross than bodily' can be read as "less substantial than a bodily or physical form". In other words, Coleridge's speaker asserts that as Charles gazes, nature seems to reveal itself as *more* than "bodily" matter. Note the metaphor of the "veil" and how it describes Nature as a means of both concealing and revealing a greater "Almighty Spirit". Consider these lines in comparison with discussions of a divine spirit elsewhere in the poems.

50 **47 - 48 "Nor in this bower ... I have not marked"**. Note the difficult double-negative that could indicate uncertainty or wrestling, as Coleridge's speaker reconciles himself with his "prison".

55 **49 - 57** Note how the poem mingles images of darkness and light as it reflects on the paradoxical beauties of the bower, in which the speaker has now found Nature (see lines 63-65 for the speaker's conclusion). Read back to see where else light is used in this poem, and consider the emotions the poem is associating with light.

60 **60 - 61 "the solitary humble-bee / Sings in the bean-flower"**. Notice the pun in "humble-bee" (bumble-bee). Note that the "solitary humble bee" also hints at the speaker himself. Poetry is often associated with song (for example: in 'Ode to a Nightingale'), so the lonely and humble singing bee is perhaps a stand-in for Coleridge the poet, singing in his isolation.

65 **61 "Henceforth"**. Note that this signals the conclusion of the argument.

64 - 67 Consider what this poem is saying about hardship and beauty.

70 **74 "mighty orb's dilated glory"**. "mighty orb" = the sun. Note the words "mighty" and "glory" here as a triumphant coda to the hints of light the speaker sees in the bower in lines 49-57, and how it also recalls the earlier "wide wide Heaven".

76 "Flew creeking". An onomatopoeia meant to mimic the sound of the rook.

75 **78**. Consider how this poem presents the experience of life, and in particular the role of "dissonant" experiences. "No sound is dissonant" further implies a universal sense of beauty and meaning: compare this with, for example, 'The Eolian Harp'.

Genre, context, and title: The date of composition (1798) is especially important for this poem, since this helps us understand the critical political context. Like the vast majority of fellow intellectuals, Coleridge had been an early supporter of the French Revolution in 1789, seeing in it promises of a radical new liberty and form of popular government. The promise of the Revolution would curdle somewhat during the Reign of Terror (1793-1794) as the new establishment began to persecute political opponents both real and imaginary (giving rise to the still-popular association between Revolution and the guillotine). By 1798, Coleridge lost faith in Revolutionary France entirely when it invaded and occupied neighbouring Switzerland, partly due to the urgings of a French general named Napoleon Bonaparte (who would later become the self-styled Emperor of France in 1804 and a terror to the rest of Europe). At the time, France also seemed to be menacing Britain and the other European monarchies with invasion, which Coleridge's poem responds to. The tenor and purpose of this poem can be inferred from its original title: 'The Recantation: An Ode'. Coleridge, in his later years, would adopt a much more conservative political position in contrast to the radicalism of his youth, though as this poem demonstrates, his attitudes to Liberty remained complex.

France: An Ode (p. 233)

I

Ye Clouds! that far above me float and pause,
 Whose pathless march no mortal may control!
 Ye Ocean-Waves! that, wheresoe'er ye roll,
 Yield homage only to eternal laws!
 Ye Woods! that listen to the night-birds singing,
 Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,
 Save when your own imperious branches swinging,
 Have made a solemn music of the wind!
 Where, like a man beloved of God,
 Through glooms, which never woodman trod,
 How oft, pursuing fancies holy,
 My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,
 Inspired, beyond the guess of folly,
 By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound!
 O ye loud Waves! and O ye Forests high!
 And O ye Clouds that far above me soared!
 Thou rising Sun! thou blue rejoicing Sky!
 Yea, every thing that is and will be free!
 Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,
 With what deep worship I have still adored
 The spirit of divinest Liberty.

II

When France in wrath her giant-limbs upreared,
 And with that oath, which smote air, earth, and sea,
 Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free,
 Bear witness for me, how I hoped and feared!
 With what a joy my lofty gratulation
 Unawed I sang, amid a slavish band:
 And when to overwhelm the disenchanted nation,
 Like fiends embattled by a wizard's wand,
 The Monarchs marched in evil day,
 And Britain joined the dire array;

1 - 8 The speaker begins with a three-fold address to "Ye Clouds!", "Ye Ocean-Waves!" and "Ye Woods!" Note how the speaker characterises these natural forces: far above me" (line 1), "no mortal may control" (line 2), "homage only to eternal laws" (line 4), "your own imperious branches swinging" (line 7), and consider the status of Nature in relation to Man. This is important to the wider argument of France, which establishes true freedom of Nature as being superior to the disappointing tyranny of Man.

9 - 11 "man beloved of God ... pursuing fancies holy". Note the use of both language of religion and solitude in this section, and compare with poems like 'Ode to Tranquillity' or 'To Nature'. Coleridge's speakers are often portrayed as iconoclasts possessed of unique or holy vision.

12 - 14 "moonlight way ... flowering weeds I wound". Consider the associations with moonlight and inspiration in other poems in our collection, like 'Frost at Midnight' or both Nightingale poems.

20 - 21 "With what deep worship I have still adored/The spirit of divinest Liberty". See notes to lines 9-11.

22, 24 Note the subtle criticism here: France "in wrath her giant-limbs upreared" suggests a powerful, destructive giant, but "stamped her strong foot" suggests petulance or immaturity. That idea will be developed as the poem goes on.

23 "with that oath, which smote air, earth, and sea". The poem describes the oath taken by the Third Estate (the body representing the common people of France) to establish a new constitution for France, precipitating the downfall of the monarchy.

26 "gratulation". i.e. congratulations.

27 "slavish band". "slavish" = having a slave's mentality. "band" = group. Coleridge (in the past) sang the praises of France, 'unawed' by the criticism of his "slavish" countrymen. Note that poetry is associated with song.

26 - 31 "to overwhelm the disenchanted nation ... joined the dire array". "disenchanted" = set free from "enchantment". "embattled" = called to battle. Paraphrase: *And when [the monarchs of surrounding kingdoms] sought to [over]whelm the disenchanted nation of France; then [foreign] Monarchs joined by Britain were called to war like devils summoned by a wizard's wand.* Contrast the negative reference to magic here with the "magic light" in line 35. Consider the use of imagery of magic and enchantment here, and compare this to the presentation of enchantment elsewhere in the collection.

Though dear her shores and circling ocean,
 Though many friendships, many youthful loves
 Had swol'n the patriot emotion
 And flung a magic light o'er all her hills and groves; 35
 Yet still my voice, unaltered, sang defeat
 To all that braved the tyrant-quelling lance,
 And shame too long delayed and vain retreat!
 For ne'er, O Liberty! with partial aim
 I dimmed thy light or damped thy holy flame; 40
 But blessed the paeans of delivered France,
 And hung my head and wept at Britain's name.

III

"And what," I said, "though Blasphemy's loud scream
 With that sweet music of deliverance strove!
 Though all the fierce and drunken passions wove 45
 A dance more wild than e'er was maniac's dream!
 Ye storms, that round the dawning east assembled,
 The Sun was rising, though ye hid his light!"
 And when, to soothe my soul, that hoped and trembled,
 The dissonance ceased, and all seemed calm and bright; 50
 When France her front deep-scar'd and gory
 Concealed with clustering wreaths of glory;
 When, insupportably advancing,
 Her arm made mockery of the warrior's ramp;
 While timid looks of fury glancing, 55
 Domestic treason, crushed beneath her fatal stamp,
 Writhed like a wounded dragon in his gore;
 Then I reproached my fears that would not flee;
 "And soon," I said, "shall Wisdom teach her lore
 In the low huts of them that toil and groan! 60
 And, conquering by her happiness alone,
 Shall France compel the nations to be free,
 Till Love and Joy look round, and call the Earth their own."

IV

Forgive me, Freedom! O forgive those dreams!
 I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament, 65
 From bleak Helvetia's icy caverns sent -
 I hear thy groans upon her blood-stained streams!
 Heroes, that for your peaceful country perished,
 And ye that, fleeing, spot your mountain-snows
 With bleeding wounds; forgive me, that I cherished 70
 One thought that ever blessed your cruel foes!
 To scatter rage, and traitorous guilt,
 Where Peace her jealous home had built;

31 - 35 *And Britain joined these rival nations, although France was dear to us, and many friends had been inspired by France's example.*

36 - 38 The speaker "sang defeat ... and shame" to "all that braved the tyrant-quelling lance" of *France*, i.e. he praised the defeat of his own country, Britain, and the other nations at the hands of France who defeated tyrants. Note the foregrounding of the speaker's personal sacrifice and ambivalence here: Coleridge lingers on the betrayal of his own country, rather than the glory of France's victory.

40 - 41 "**holy flame**", "**delivered France**". Note again the language of divinity and religiosity, and thus the contrast with France's "Blasphemy" in line 43.

43 - 46 "**Blasphemy's loud scream**" is an oblique reference to the violence unleashed by the French Revolution (especially the subsequent Reign of Terror – line 56). Consider what is implied by calling it "Blasphemy": against the religion of liberty. Note the contrast between the "scream" and the "music", a "dissonance" that the speaker is unsettled by. The images of a "dance more wild" or a "maniac's dream" might be interesting points of comparison to other mentions of dances or dreams in Coleridge's poems (for example in 'Pantisocracy').

51 - 52 Note the ironic rhyme of "gory" and "glory", and the literal implication that the "wreaths of glory" (i.e. the acclaim and fame) conceals the "gore" of France.

53 - 4 The word "ramp" describes the heraldic image of a lion up-reared majestically in a warlike pose. France triumphantly rears up and advances, but is unbalanced (punning on both a physical and moral sense). Rough paraphrase: *her upraised [sword] arm makes a mockery of the heroic [pose] she adopts*. There is some controversy about plagiarism, since Coleridge is accused of adapting these lines from Milton's 17th century poem *Samson Agonistes*.

59 - 60 Note Coleridge's concern for the poor and oppressed in the "low huts".

62 "**Shall France ...**". This line is obviously sarcastic since it is a contradiction in terms.

64 "**those dreams**". i.e. the speaker's mistaken statements in the previous stanza.

65 "**I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament**". Note the use of anaphora here. Note how the poem is torn between competing voices to reflect Coleridge's ambivalence: France's in line 23, the speaker's in line 27, Blasphemy in line 43, and now lamenting Freedom in line 65.

66 "**bleak Helvetia's icy caverns**". i.e. Switzerland, famous for its cold Alpine mountains.

72 - 79 Note the language of national loyalty: "traitorous", "patriot-race", "patriot only in ..." to contrast the betrayal of France with the heroic patriotism of the Swiss defending their home. Compare this to "patriot emotion" in line 34, where patriotism is framed as a defence of liberty even if it means criticising your country.

A patriot-race to disinherit
 Of all that made their stormy wilds so dear;
 And with inexpiable spirit
 To taint the bloodless freedom of the mountaineer--
 O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,
 And patriot only in pernicious toils,
 Are these thy boasts, Champion of human kind?
 To mix with Kings in the low lust of sway,
 Yell in the hunt, and share the murderous prey;
 To insult the shrine of Liberty with spoils
 From freemen torn; to tempt and to betray?

 V
 The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
 Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game
 They burst their manacles and wear the name
 Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain!
 O Liberty! with profitless endeavour
 Have I pursued thee, many a weary hour;
 But thou nor swell'st the victor's strain, nor ever
 Didst breathe thy soul in forms of human power.
 Alike from all, howe'er they praise thee,
 (Nor prayer, nor boastful name delays thee)
 Alike from Priestcraft's harpy minions,
 And factious Blasphemy's obscener slaves,
 Thou speedest on thy subtle pinions,
 The guide of homeless winds, and playmate of the waves!
 And there I felt thee! - on that sea-cliff's verge,
 Whose pines, scarce travelled by the breeze above,
 Had made one murmur with the distant surge!
 Yes, while I stood and gazed, my temples bare,
 And shot my being through earth, sea and air,
 Possessing all things with intensest love,
 O Liberty! my spirit felt thee there.

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76 "inexpiable spirit". Inexpiable = An offence against God that cannot be atoned for by religious sacrifice, i.e. France's sinful spirit.

78 "O France, that mockest Heaven". Note how Coleridge inverts the language of religious praise from earlier in the poem. France is "adulterous" because it is unfaithful to Liberty. See the links to sexual infidelity in lines 81 and 85 also.

85 "The Sensual and the Dark rebel". Note Coleridge's argument about freedom here: France, the "rebel", is slave to a "heavier chain" (line 88) because it is slave to internal "compulsion" (line 86). Compare this with the criticism of the "sensual and the proud" in 'Dejection: An Ode' (line 70), and their inability to access joy.

86 - 87. The speaker contrasts the "manacles" of the political oppression France cast off with the "heavier chain" France now wears, ironically labelled "Freedom".

91 - 92 These lines are interesting ones in understanding Coleridge's philosophy of freedom. Here, Freedom ("thou") is *not* in the military "victor's strain" or in "forms of human power". Coleridge's vision of "freedom" here seems more about individual freedom than in political systems.

93 - 96 Note religious criticism in "Priestcraft's harpy minions" and "Blasphemy's obscene slaves". There is implicit contrast between the human "harpy minions" and the "subtle pinions" of Liberty in line 97 ("subtle" = obscure or difficult to discern, and "pinions" = wings). Note also the comparison between "minions" and "slaves" and free nature.

April 1798

Frost at Midnight (p. 231)

The frost performs its secret ministry,
 Unhelped by any wind. The owl's cry
 Came loud - and hark, again! loud as before.
 The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
 Have left me to that solitude, which suits
 Abstruser musings: save that at my side
 My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
 'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
 And vexes meditation with its strange
 And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
 This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
 With all the numberless goings on of life,
 Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
 Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
 Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
 Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
 Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
 Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
 Making it a companionable form,
 Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
 By its own moods interprets, every where
 Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
 And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,
 How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
 Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
 To watch that fluttering stranger! and as oft
 With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
 Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
 Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
 From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
 So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
 With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
 Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
 So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,
 Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!
 And so I brooded all the following morn,
 Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
 Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:
 Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
 A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
 For still I hoped to see the stranger's face,
 Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
 My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

Genre, context, and title:

'Frost at Midnight' expresses Coleridge's thoughts on poetry, his own childhood, and his hopes for his son's education. Some context on the title: "Frost" was sometimes used as an emblem for poetry in this period, because the word "Rime" (or frost) has a punning similarity to "Rhyme". 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is another Coleridge poem that draws on the "Rime"/"Rhyme" association. 'Frost at Midnight' is thus also about *poetry* at midnight, hinted at in the opening lines. In terms of form, the poem is written in blank verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter. The poem can be broken up into three sections dealing with the present, the speaker's past, and the speaker's imagined future.

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1 - 6 The frost's ministry (a sacred duty) is "secret" and "unhelped". The mood of the poem is further established by describing the speaker as an "inmate" in his cottage, and making reference to "solitude", drawing comparisons to the lonely image of the frost in lines 1-2. The image of the frost here can be read as an oblique reflection by Coleridge the poet of his solitude and loneliness in the act of writing in his cottage (see the introduction).

9 - 10 "vexes ... strange ... extreme silentness". Note the presentation of the disquieting solitude the speaker experiences. Take note of references to silence in the first section of this poem, and note how this contrasts with sound-imagery later on.

10 - 13 "Sea, hill, and wood ... Inaudible as dreams!" These lines are a little obscure. The speaker free-associates between images of nature ("Sea, hill, and wood") and images of human company ("This populous village") but all of these things are conflated as "numberless goings on of life/inaudible as dreams". The speaker is reflecting on his general alienation from the world around him.

15 "that film". A thin film of soot, tangible enough to act like a bit of fabric. Coleridge: "In all parts of the kingdom these films are called *strangers*, and supposed to portend the arrival of some absent friend" [1798 note].

16 - 23 Note the explicit link between the solitary "unquiet" film of soot and the speaker, who sees in it a "companionable form" (note the use of pathetic fallacy here). The use of alliteration in "flaps and freaks" evokes the fluttering motion of the "film". There is perhaps some self-deprecation here since the speaker describes the film as a reflection of his own "idling Spirit" (or imagination). Coleridge articulates the *pathetic fallacy* in lines 21-23, in how the Spirit seeks an "Echo or mirror" of itself and makes a "toy of thought". These lines can be useful in a discussion of imagination, or thought.

24 "But O!" This is a half-line, signalling a shift in argument. The speaker recalls the past here. The next section is broken up with caesuras and enjambment to mimic the speaker's strong emotional recollection.

26 "Presageful". i.e. anticipating or believing in a sign.

27 "fluttering stranger". See notes to line 15: Coleridge is describing the same phenomenon in his childhood.

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

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

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- 45 **30 “bells ... hot Fair-day”.** The *noise* and *heat* of the past is used to contrast with the *silence* and *cold* of the present in lines 1-10.
- 35 - 36 **“I dreamt ... sleep prolonged my dreams!”** Compare the idea of dreams prolonging pleasant reflection to ‘Something Childish but Very Natural’.
- 50 **38 - 44** Whilst Coleridge’s speaker retreats from his present solitude and loneliness by imagining the past, it turns out he was also a lonely child. The present ‘stern preceptor’ is an unwelcome contrast to the companions the speaker would rather have had, articulated through a wistful listing that progresses from distant ‘stranger’ to intimate ‘sister’. The boring lessons of the speaker’s childhood function as a contrast with the next section, and the hope for God to be his own child’s ‘Great universal Teacher’. Conversations about the (relatively new) field of compulsory schooling were a major feature of the Romantics period; this poem is implicitly also an articulation of Coleridge’s philosophies about education.
- 55 **45 “Dear Babe”.** The poem shifts to a direct address of the speaker’s child in the cottage with him, and expresses hope for his future.
- 60 **51 - 52 “far other lore,/And in far other scenes!”** Note the speaker’s use of the word *lore* (or *knowledge*) in contrast to the previous section. See ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ for other mentions of this ‘lore’.
- 65 **53 “pent ‘mid cloisters dim”.** “pent” suggests being pent up or confined and is reinforced by “mid” (or amidst), whilst “cloisters” refers to the school but can suggest a secluded monastery, and the modifier “dim” suggests obscurity and darkness. Compare this to the great city in ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison’.
- 70 **55 “shalt wander like a breeze”.** Coleridge line pre-empted Wordsworth’s famous “I wandered lonely as a cloud” opening to ‘Daffodils’ by around six years.
- 75 **55 “lakes, and sandy shores, beneath the crags”.** There’s some echo of the “Sea, hill, and wood” in line 10, but where that image conjures up strangeness and distance for the speaker, here he imagines a future where his child is wholly one with nature as a “breeze” in these places. The start and end of the section mirror each other, in the same way the clouds “image” (or mirror) the lakes, shores, and crags below.

60 - 61. This image of God is more a Deist image of a universal God in life and nature, rather than an articulation of a clear Christian theology. These lines are important ones for thinking about the relationship between Nature and the Divine: *Nature* forms the “shapes and sounds” of an “eternal language” that God uses to teach man about himself. Compare this to ‘This Lime Tree Bower My Prison’, where Nature functions as a veil through which God is visible. See also the notes for 38-44.

62 “doth teach”. i.e. “does reveal”.

63 “Himself in all, and all things in himself”. Compare this to ‘The Eolian Harp’.

66 - 75 “Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee”. Note the use of “Therefore” and that this is the conclusion to an argument; “all seasons” recalls and responds to the imagery of *frost* and *winter* that this poem opens on. Coleridge’s speaker elaborates on the image of “all seasons” being sweet to the child.

72 - 75 “Heard only in the trances of the blast”. Coleridge’s note to printer: “Trances – i.e. the brief moments of profound silence”. The poem returns to the ‘silence’ of line 10 that punctuates the blowing winter wind. The characterisation of the frost here contrasts very subtly with lines 1-2. In comparison to the ‘unhelped’ and solitary Frost in the earlier lines, here the Frost hangs up “quietly shining” icicles to the “quiet Moon”, with the repeated adjectives suggesting a kinship or secret understanding, as well as an act of veneration rather than a solitary unappreciated gesture. Compare the symbolism of the Moon here to mention of the Moon in other poems, like the ‘Pantisocracy’ or the Nightingale poems.

Genre, context, and title:

To understand this poem, you should know that the nightingale is a common emblem for poets themselves, and poems were often rhetorically associated with the nightingale's song. As a nocturnal bird, the nightingale's song was often heard at night, and led to associations with melancholy or loneliness, suggesting lonely / brilliant poets composing distinctive poetic songs that cut through the gloom of night and obscurity. Both Keats and Coleridge made use of the nightingale as a way to signal that they were writing about poetry itself. Note the subtitle: 'A Conversation Poem'. Coleridge is framing the poem as a continuation of a conversation with his two friends (line 39), a stylistic quirk also adopted in William Cowper's "The Task" (1785), but also describing his use of blank verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter that better mimics normal speech than rhymed verse. The poem begins with a criticism of poets who misuse Nature for their own ends, before segueing into a general comparison of man living out-of-step with nature versus man living in harmony with nature. Coleridge ends the poem with the image of his son as an exemplar of guileless harmony with nature.

The Nightingale (p. 244)

A CONVERSATION POEM, APRIL, 1798

No cloud, no relique of the sunken day
Distinguishes the West, no long thin slip
Of sullen light, no obscure trembling hues.
Come, we will rest on this old mossy bridge!
You see the glimmer of the stream beneath,
But hear no murmuring: it flows silently,
O'er its soft bed of verdure. All is still,
A balmy night! and though the stars be dim,
Yet let us think upon the vernal showers
That gladden the green earth, and we shall find
A pleasure in the dimness of the stars.
And hark! the Nightingale begins its song,
"Most musical, most melancholy" bird!
A melancholy bird? Oh! idle thought!
In Nature there is nothing melancholy.
But some night-wandering man whose heart was pierced
With the remembrance of a grievous wrong,
Or slow distemper, or neglected love,
(And so, poor wretch! filled all things with himself,
And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale
Of his own sorrow) he, and such as he,
First named these notes a melancholy strain.
And many a poet echoes the conceit;
Poet who hath been building up the rhyme
When he had better far have stretched his limbs
Beside a brook in mossy forest-dell,
By sun or moon-light, to the influxes
Of shapes and sounds and shifting elements
Surrendering his whole spirit, of his song
And of his fame forgetful! so his fame
Should share in Nature's immortality,
A venerable thing! and so his song

1 - 12 The poem opens by setting the scene at night (the traditional hour of the nightingale) and establishing a quiet mood that allows the poet to dramatically introduce his main subject in line 12. Like other conversation poems, the reader is placed in the immediate action through the use of the imperative "hark!".

13 'Most musical, most melancholy'. A direct quote from John Milton's 'Il Penseroso', in which the poet praises melancholy poetry (and the Nightingale as one of its symbolic aspects). Coleridge's argument criticises what he sees as the over-mannered approach of poets to the bird, and suggests that their rhetorical use of the bird has obscured the real, beautiful animal and their ability to appreciate Nature itself.

16 - 18 "distemper" = bad temper. Human poets are described deprecatingly with a series of miserable qualities. Note the contrast with the opening lines and particularly line 15: in Nature there is 'nothing melancholy'.

19 - 22 "fill'd all things with himself". A striking criticism of the pathetic fallacy. Consider how poems in the collection reflect on the poet's relationship with Nature. Coleridge himself is not consistent on this score, and you might contrast this poem with, for example, 'Dejection: An Ode'. The phrase 'melancholy strain' in line 22 is a pun that anticipates the argument in lines 35-39.

23 "echoes the conceit". Conceit = poetic metaphor, but there is also the pun on 'pride'.

24 - 25 Note the humorous rejection of inward-looking poetry in favour of natural experiences. These lines are to some extent self-deprecatory, since 1) this is a poem and 2) Coleridge often indulges this exact behaviour of projecting melancholy on nature, for example in 'Frost at Midnight'.

28 - 31 The lines are held together by consonance: external "shapes and sounds" require "surrender" of the poet's "spirit" and "song", and he must be "forgetful" of "fame". The consonance creates a feeling of reverie akin to the mentality Coleridge calls for. The wider argument is a paradox: notice that it is only *Nature* that is immortal, and only by surrendering elements of himself is the poet able to take part in immortality as his "song" will then be "loved like Nature". Throughout this poem, Coleridge alternates images of selfish, wrong human behaviour with behaviour in harmony with Nature.

Should make all Nature lovelier, and itself
 Be loved like Nature! But 'twill not be so;
 And youths and maidens most poetical,
 Who lose the deepening twilights of the spring
 In ball-rooms and hot theatres, they still
 Full of meek sympathy must heave their sighs
 O'er Philomela's pity-pleading strains.

My Friend, and thou, our Sister! we have learnt
 A different lore: we may not thus profane
 Nature's sweet voices, always full of love
 And joyance! 'Tis the merry Nightingale
 That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates
 With fast thick warble his delicious notes,
 As he were fearful that an April night
 Would be too short for him to utter forth
 His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul
 Of all its music!

And I know a grove
 Of large extent, hard by a castle huge,
 Which the great lord inhabits not; and so
 This grove is wild with tangling underwood,
 And the trim walks are broken up, and grass,
 Thin grass and king-cups grow within the paths.
 But never elsewhere in one place I knew
 So many nightingales; and far and near,
 In wood and thicket, over the wide grove,
 They answer and provoke each other's songs,
 With skirmish and capricious passagings,
 And murmurs musical and swift jug jug,
 And one low piping sound more sweet than all -
 Stirring the air with such a harmony,
 That should you close your eyes, you might almost
 Forget it was not day! On moonlit bushes,
 Whose dewy leaflets are but half disclosed,
 You may perchance behold them on the twigs,
 Their bright, bright eyes, their eyes both bright and full,
 Glistening, while many a glow-worm in the shade
 Lights up her love-torch.

A most gentle Maid,
 Who dwelleth in her hospitable home
 Hard by the castle, and at latest eve
 (Even like a Lady vowed and dedicate
 To something more than Nature in the grove)

35 **35 - 37** "deepening twilights of the spring" = fading youth. Coleridge presents a scathing criticism of modern youth, contrasting the 'ball-rooms' and 'hot theatres' they waste their time in with the nature imagery he has used before.

39 "Philomela". A Greek tragic figure who is transformed into a nightingale after being raped, and the reason why nightingales (or more specifically their songs) are associated with melancholy.

40 **36 - 39** The phrase "pity-pleading strains" suggests a forced sentimentality, especially considering the double-meaning of "strains" and the verb "heave". The emotionality of the youths is "meek" and merely "sympathy" rather than genuine.

45 **40 "My Friend, and thou, our Sister!"** In real life, the poets William and Dorothy Wordsworth, to whom this poem is meant for, and both of whom practice this new poetic "lore".

41 "profane". i.e. to blaspheme. Note the religious connotations of the language here.

44 "crowds, and hurries, and precipitates". Note how the verbs build in syllable-length, creating an accumulative and joyful effect, in contrast to the previous poets / youth.

50 **48 "disburthen his full soul"**. Compare this to line 29 and line 38 to see the portrayed contrast between authentic, passionate nature and miserable, melancholy man. Note the multiple references to "love" in this stanza, an emotion that seems missing from the "ball-rooms" and "hot theatres".

55 **50 - 54** What seems at first like an irrelevant aside is the first of two images that contrasts harmony and disharmony with nature. Note how Coleridge introduces human activity ("castle", "great lord"), only to undercut it. Note the irony of "king-cups" (a type of plant) usurping the neglected paths of the 'great lord'. The lord's castle is physically proximate to Nature, but at odds with it and intrusive, emphasised by the alliterative "hard ... huge", and the double-meaning of 'hard': "hard by" = close to, but "hard" also contrasts against the soft, natural grove. This image of human pride has, however, been reclaimed by nature: look for imagery that suggests nature's dominance over man.

65 **56 - 60** The speaker describes the large numbers of nightingales nearby. "passagings" = movements. Is this a sly reference to feuding poets, or just a vivid engagement with nightingales as real (rather than symbolic) creatures?

60 "swift jug jug". "jug jug" is the way the nightingale's call is traditionally represented in poetry. Note the rhythmic alliteration in "murmurs musical" and "jug jug".

67 "bright, bright eyes". Note the three-fold repetition of "bright" in this line, and how the repetition breaks the iambic rhythm. The imagery anticipates the glittering in the eyes of Coleridge's son, and suggests his closeness to true Nature.

70 **70 - 79 "A most gentle Maid ... Hard by the castle"**. In contrast to the "great lord", this is a "Maid" who is "most gentle". This is possibly a real person that Coleridge would have encountered on his walks. Take note of language that suggests how she is in harmony with nature and receptive to it. For example, see how the Maid "glides", suggesting both an

Glides through the pathways; she knows all their notes, That gentle Maid! and oft, a moment's space, What time the moon was lost behind a cloud, Hath heard a pause of silence; till the moon Emerging, hath awakened earth and sky	75	ethereal quality but also evoking the nightingales' flight. "notes" here refers to the routes through the pathways, but also suggests the "notes" of the songbirds in the previous section.
With one sensation, and those wakeful birds Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy, As if some sudden gale had swept at once A hundred airy harps! And she hath watched Many a nightingale perch giddily On blossomy twig still swinging from the breeze, And to that motion tune his wanton song Like tipsy joy that reels with tossing head.	80	74 "something more than Nature" . It is ambiguous what Coleridge is referring to, but the words "vowed" and "dedicate" clues, since these are words associated with religious devotion.
	85	79 - 80 "hath awakened earth and sky/With one sensation" . Consider the presentation of oneness in Nature in other poems in our collection, such as in 'The Eolian Harp'.
	90	86 - 87 "wanton song ... tipsy joy that reels" . wanton = sensual and indulgent. Notice how the iambic rhythm of line 87 mimics the bobbing and swaying of the nightingales.
Farewell, O Warbler! till to-morrow eve, And you, my friends! farewell, a short farewell! We have been loitering long and pleasantly, And now for our dear homes. - That strain again! Full fain it would delay me! My dear babe, Who, capable of no articulate sound, Mars all things with his imitative lisp, How he would place his hand beside his ear, His little hand, the small forefinger up, And bid us listen! And I deem it wise To make him Nature's play-mate. He knows well The evening-star; and once, when he awoke In most distressful mood (some inward pain Had made up that strange thing, an infant's dream -) I hurried with him to our orchard-plot, And he beheld the moon, and, hushed at once, Suspends his sobs, and laughs most silently, While his fair eyes, that swam with undropped tears, Did glitter in the yellow moon-beam! Well! - It is a father's tale: But if that Heaven Should give me life, his childhood shall grow up Familiar with these songs, that with the night He may associate joy. - Once more, farewell, Sweet Nightingale! once more, my friends! farewell.	95	92 "My dear babe" . i.e. his infant son. Note the contrast between the poets who "fill all things with [themselves]" and the child who (as yet) cannot speak, but only attempt "imitative lisp[s]".
	100	95 - 96 "His little hand ..." . Coleridge lingers on these images as a way of emphasising the sentimentality of the scene.
	105	96 "Nature's play-mate" . "play-mate" suggests a relationship of equals, in contrast to the first half of the poem.
	110	101 "that strange thing, an infant's dream" . Note how the infant is presented as distinct, "strange", and separate from the adult's experience.
		105 "undropped tears" . Because the infant was just crying, but is there a suggestion of future (human) suffering? The infant's affinity with Nature is shown in how he is "hushed at once" by beholding the moon, but notice as well how his eyes reflect Nature in the yellow moon-beam' and recall his "imitative lisp". Consider what this poem is saying about man seeking to reflect/represent nature, rather than impose on it. Contrast this with 'Dejection: An Ode'.
		108 "Familiar with these song" . i.e. the joyous nightingale songs that this poem describes, but also <i>this</i> song (i.e. this poem).

Kubla Khan: Or, A Vision in a Dream (p. 249)

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

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

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
 Floated midway on the waves;
 Where was heard the mingled measure
 From the fountain and the caves.

It was a miracle of rare device,
 A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
 In a vision once I saw:

1 "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan". The famous opening line of this poem. Note the detail in the introduction above that Coleridge's source read "*In Xamdu did Cublai Can*". Notice how Coleridge has added a syllable and changed some vowels for the sake of repetition and assonance: "*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan*". Take note of assonance and alliteration generally throughout the poem, and note how it contributes to a sing-song, chanting effect.

5 1 - 11 This first stanza contrasts imagery of human authority ("stately pleasure-dome", "decree", "walls and towers", "girdled round") against natural imagery that seems to immediately undercut it by evoking the sublime, overwhelming, and strange ("Alph, the sacred river", "caverns measureless to man", pre-lapsarian "gardens bright with sinuous rills", "forests ancient as the hills"). What are we to make of this? Powerful human activity and awe-inspiring nature seem to exist in tension that is resolved in the "miracle of rare device" in line 35. Is this a metaphor for human rationality juxtaposed against the raw, atavistic creative element?

15 3 "Alph, the sacred river". Possibly a reference to the river Alpheus, a Greek river and home to a river god who flowed underneath the sea to reunite with a lover (perhaps linking to the underground caverns of the next few lines). Note that Coleridge writes "*Alph*" not Alpheus: another possible link is to the Greek letter "Alpha" that might denote beginnings and origins (as in the Biblical term "Alpha and Omega"), and thus link the imagery to the prelapsarian Garden of Eden, that exists in the distant past when the Earth was made

20 4 - 5 "caverns measureless to man/Down to a sunless sea". Note the immediate contrast between human artifice and ability in the "pleasure-dome" above, now set against the caverns that are "measureless to man" which defeat human ingenuity.

25 7 "walls and towers were girdled round". Note again the contrast between the natural world ("fertile ground") and human agency ("walls and towers were girdled round"). "Girdled" suggests being enclosed or restrained, with the image of walls and towers suggesting a walled garden or military fort.

30 8 - 11 "gardens bright with sinuous rills". "rills" are small streams, so "sinuous rills" = snake-like or winding streams. Is there a hint of an Edenic garden and Satanic snake here? The imagery of "gardens" here, the snake-like "sinuous rills", and the "incense-bearing trees" suggest (but do not directly equal!) imagery of Eden, especially that used elsewhere in other poems, like John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. This is *not* Eden, but Coleridge evokes an 'ancient', paradisaical and strange landscape.

35 12 - 30 The poem seems to unexpectedly change subject with the exclamation "But oh!". This section begins with a description of a strange, sinister chasm. Coleridge evokes an uncertain, haunting sensation of power and danger that culminates in the image of a geyser ("mighty fountain") in line 19. The explosive geyser (a symbol for raw, subconscious creativity?) tosses up rocks like grain, then sinks to a subterranean ocean, and amidst this great noise, Kubla Khan hears an atavistic vision prophesying war and death. This section resists allegorical interpretation, but can be read as reflective of the mindset Coleridge associates with poetry and creativity in particular.

40 12 - 16 "deep romantic chasm". "deep" is an unsurprising adjective, but "romantic" is odd: consider 1) how Coleridge imbues a natural location with emotional meaning (another example of *pathetic*

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

45

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fallacy) and 2) what other adjectives are used to describe this 'chasm' in lines 12-16 that might help us understand what Coleridge implies by "romantic". "savage", "holy", and "enchanted" suggest a rich and complex web of associations that Coleridge is attempting to evoke. Take note that this is not a case of *good* or *bad*: Coleridge mingles imagery of holiness with savagery, and the unexpected image of the "woman wailing for her demon lover". This is an atavistic, pagan image rather than a tame Christian one.

15 - 16 "As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted / By woman wailing for her demon-lover!" Coleridge is possibly making a reference to the goddess Cybele here, but the identity of this figure is unimportant compared to the comparison Coleridge is making. In terms of rhyme, "haunted" is a half-rhyme that just offsets "enchanted" and destabilises the rhyme scheme, perhaps emphasising a sense of the sinister. Note the simile here, and the collection of images and connotative language ("waning moon", "haunted", "wailing", "demon-lover"). Notice how the poem combines sentimental, romantic images (a woman wailing for her lover) with the supernatural and sinister ("demon-lover").

1798.

17-18 "with ceaseless turmoil seething, / As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing". Note the use of *both* assonance ('ee' and 'a' sounds) and consonance ('s' sibilants). Note the presence of trochees (ceaseless turmoil seething) and stressed syllables (fast thick pants) that mimic the same heaving / panting of the shaking earth, as well as how the earth is personified as a tormented (or pregnant?) individual.

29-30 "Kubla heard ... Ancestral voices prophesying war!" Kubla Khan (or Kublai Khan) is, to Coleridge, a warlord. Note the links to the atavistic and supernatural in words like "ancestral" and "prophesying", and how this reinforces the pagan, sinister imagery of lines 12-16.

31-34 *'The pleasure-dome that Kubla Khan built cast a shadow on the flowing waters [as they fall into the caves], and the sound of the geyser, the waterfall, and the cave all mingled together.*

33 "mingled measure", "rare device". 'Measure' = music. The alliterative "mingled measure" here describes the roaring sound of falling water as it descends to the caves below, but more importantly the link to music ties to the aesthetic delight Coleridge is conveying in this stanza. Recall that music is associated with poetry, reinforced by the use of the word 'device' to praise the miracle.

36 "sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!" Note the contrasting (and paradoxical) images. We have "sunny" vs "ice", and human "pleasure-dome" vs natural "caves". Coleridge's earlier images come together here: the contrasting worlds of man and nature have come together and are suspended in aesthetic harmony, which Coleridge explicitly links to poetry in the next stanza.

37-54 The poem seems to rapidly change subject here: bearing in mind the context that this is (for Coleridge) an unfinished poem, a common interpretation is that this section describes frustrated creativity (particularly Coleridge's), and the inability to recapture an inspired creative vision. The nature of this creative vision is external, irrational, and irreducible to logic: it is, as the poem title puts it, a 'vision in a dream'. Strikingly the outcome of this poetic vision is a kind of apotheosis, with the poet as a supernatural, terrifying, figure. The poem builds to a powerful and striking conclusion that resists easy interpretation. Consider what the poem is saying about the nature of creativity, and the nature of poetry.

37-41 'damsel with a dulcimer... an Abyssinian maid ... Mount Abora'. Notice that, for the first time, the poem switches to a first person perspective in line 38, but now the speaker describes this as a 'vision', rather than direct experience: we are now at a further remove from the imagery, in the same way Coleridge finds himself at a remove from his creative experience. A 'dulcimer' is a stringed instrument: consider the genteel, delicate associations of words like 'damsel' and 'dulcimer'. 'Abyssinian' refers to Abyssinia, now Ethiopia: nowhere near Mongolia, but for Coleridge's (European) purposes it signals 'the distant, exotic, possibly savage, East' like Kubla Khan does. Likewise, 'Mount Abora' is possibly a mountain in Ethiopia once called Mount Amara, which Coleridge changed to 'Abora' for better assonance with line 43. Overall, the impression is of a vision that is beautiful, but also exotic, foreign, and strange.

45 'music loud and long'. i.e. the speaker's own song / poem.

46 'I would build that dome in air'. In what way does the poetic imagination construct images 'in air'?

50-54 Consider the use of religious language here, and pay attention to language that portrays the speaker as a supernatural figure that inspires awe and worship. 'honey-dew' suggests ambrosia, the traditional drink of the Greek gods, and a metaphor for poetic inspiration. 'milk of Paradise' might recall the Biblical imagery of a land 'flowing with milk and honey'. The common connector here is that these are substances which are divinely gifted, and (in the context) convey deeper mystical enlightenment.

Genre, context, and title: “Love” as a poem draws heavily on chivalric stories of love and romance, though Coleridge has made the interesting choice to treat chivalric love through a frame-story. This poem is *not* about a knight directly, but instead the unnamed speaker’s *use* of a story about a knight to win over his love, Genevieve. Unlike older chivalric stories, this poem foregrounds the psychological experience of love and rejection rather than engaging with the duties and obligations of chivalry: the Knight is more of an idealised, abstract figure whose purpose is to illustrate the experience of love.

Coleridge intended this poem to be part of an introduction to a longer (unfinished) poem called “The Ballad of the Dark Ladie”. This poem can be fruitfully contrasted with Keats’ “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”, since this poem was in fact the inspiration for Keats’ version. Both poems deal with the similar subject matter of a knight pining for a lady, but consider how both respective poems portray the experience of love, rejection, attitudes to women, and heroism. In this poem, a speaker tells a sentimental, moving story of a knight dying for love, but does it as a way to (successfully) manipulate the emotions of his Beloved through art. Interestingly, there are subtle hints that his Beloved might also be involved in a performance of her own. It is important to consider this poem as a whole: whilst, like “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”, it features a story of a knight, here the story-within-a-story format means that the message is very different and much less pessimistic. The poem asks us to reflect on the power (and artifice) of poetry itself.

In terms of form, the poem makes use of iambic tetrameter and a rhyme scheme where only the second and fourth line of each stanza rhyme. Note how the last line of each stanza is an abbreviated trimeter, and how it creates an air of finality to each section.

Love (p. 275)

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

Oft in my waking dreams do I
Live o'er again that happy hour,
When midway on the mount I lay,
Beside the ruined tower.

The moonshine, stealing o'er the scene
Had blended with the lights of eve;
And she was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Genevieve!

She lean'd against the armèd man,
The statue of the armèd knight;
She stood and listened to my lay,
Amid the lingering light.

Few sorrows hath she of her own,
My hope! my joy! my Genevieve!
She loves me best, whene'er I sing
The songs that make her grieve.

I played a soft and doleful air,
I sang an old and moving story -
An old rude song, that suited well
That ruin wild and hoary.

3 - 4 “ministers of Love ... his sacred flame”. Note the capitalisation of Love, and the religious connotations of “ministers” (i.e. priests) and “sacred flame”.

7 - 8 “mount” = mountain. Note the gothic image of the “ruined tower”, which then inspires the speaker to play a “soft and doleful air” in order to evoke strong emotion.

10 “lights of eve”. The light from the setting sun towards evening, though there is perhaps a secondary pun on Eve, the first woman.

12 “Genevieve”. A name appropriate for this genre of poetry, possibly suggesting Saint Genevieve: a figure of chaste womanhood (i.e. one whom the speaker must therefore win over). See for example lines 25-26 for Genevieve’s characterisation.

14 “statue of the armed knight”. Possibly a reference to a real statue in Sockburn that inspired Coleridge. Some critics have pointed out how the tower and the statue of the knight seem to have then directly inspired the speaker’s song, foregrounding the artificiality of art and performance.

15 “my lay”. My song / poem.

17-20 Consider the relationship between poetry and sorrow, or the portrayal of sorrow and grief more generally. For another example of sorrow being portrayed as sweet or desirable, look at ‘Isabella, or the Pot of Basil’.

23 - 24 “old rude song”, “ruin wild and hoary”. “Rude” in this context = rural, uncivilised. The speaker is evoking a simpler, rough past.

25 - 28 Consider how Genevieve is characterised in lines 25-26, but take note of lines 27-28.

29 - 64 The speaker sings a ballad very typical for its genre: both “Knight” and “Lady of the Land” require no names, because they are stereotypical figures.

She listened with a flitting blush, With downcast eyes and modest grace; For well she knew, I could not choose But gaze upon her face.	25	30 "burning brand". A burning torch. Note the use of fire as an emblem for love, as well as the traditional link between burning torches and love (a reference to Greek marriage traditions: see the idiomatic phrase "to carry a torch for ...").
I told her of the Knight that wore Upon his shield a burning brand; And that for ten long years he wooed The Lady of the Land.	30	34 - 36 "Interpreted my own": i.e. the speaker, in singing movingly of the Knight's love, is interpreting his <i>own</i> love. Reflect on what this poem is saying about art's role in reflecting the emotions of the artist (and contrast this with, for example, 'Ode to a Nightingale').
I told her how he pined: and ah! The deep, the low, the pleading tone With which I sang another's love, Interpreted my own.	35	37 - 40 Note how the first two lines are repeated from lines 25-26 as a refrain (in connection with the ballad-format that this poem evokes). Genevieve's characterisation suggests a willing participation in this process!
She listened with a flitting blush, With downcast eyes, and modest grace; And she forgave me, that I gazed Too fondly on her face!	40	41 - 42 "But ...". Note how "But" seems to suggest a change or alteration as a result of "cruel scorn", and how the speaker is implicitly engaged in an act of imaginative persuasion here with the adjective "cruel" in contrast to the 'bold and lovely' Knight.
But when I told the cruel scorn That crazed that bold and lovely Knight, And that he crossed the mountain-woods, Nor rested day nor night;		42 "crazed that bold and lovely Knight". Consider the impact that scorned love has on the Knight, and compare this to Keats' interpretation in 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'.
That sometimes from the savage den, And sometimes from the darksome shade, And sometimes starting up at once In green and sunny glade, -	45	
There came and looked him in the face An angel beautiful and bright; And that he knew it was a Fiend, This miserable Knight!	50	49 - 52 This is a continuation of the lines in 45-48: the Knight is often visited by "An angel beautiful and bright" but the Knight "knew it was a Fiend". The song implies this is a recurring dream/nightmare the Knight has, since he awakes ("starting up") from it. The Lady of the Land appears to him as an "angel beautiful and bright", but also simultaneously as a "Fiend" since she has rejected him. The trope of the suffering, scorned Lover was a common one in Petrarchan love poetry and tragic ballads like this one.
And that unknowing what he did, He leaped amid a murderous band, And saved from outrage worse than death The Lady of the Land! -	55	55 "from outrage worse than death". An outrage of her chastity, i.e. rape.
And how she wept, and clasped his knees; And how she tended him in vain - And ever strove to expiate The scorn that crazed his brain; -		57 - 59 "And how ... And how". Note how the triple repetition here seems to recall the Knight's triply-repeated torment in lines 45-47 ("That sometimes ... And sometimes"). The Lady's penitent, futile actions mirror the earlier sufferings of the Knight that she caused by rejecting him.
And that she nursed him in a cave; And how his madness went away,	60	57 - 59 'wept, and clasped his knees ... tended him in vain ... ever strove to expiate'. Note the language emphasising gentleness, care, and nurturing. Contrast this with language of action, recklessness, and violence, used to describe the Knight in 41-56.
		59 - 60 Note how the Lady repentantly strives "in vain" to restore the Knight's sanity after her "scorn" for his love crazes him, and the implicit moral the speaker is hinting at for Genevieve.

When on the yellow forest-leaves
A dying man he lay; -

His dying words - but when I reached
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,
My faltering voice and pausing harp
Disturbed her soul with pity!

All impulses of soul and sense
Had thrilled my guileless Genevieve;
The music and the doleful tale,
The rich and balmy eve;

And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng,
And gentle wishes long subdued,
Subdued and cherished long!

She wept with pity and delight,
She blushed with love, and virgin shame;
And like the murmur of a dream,
I heard her breathe my name.

Her bosom heaved - she stepped aside,
As conscious of my look she stepped -
Then suddenly, with timorous eye
She fled to me and wept.

She half enclosed me with her arms,
She pressed me with a meek embrace;
And bending back her head, looked up,
And gazed upon my face.

'Twas partly love, and partly fear,
And partly 'twas a bashful art,
That I might rather feel, than see,
The swelling of her heart.

I calmed her fears, and she was calm,
And told her love with virgin pride;
And so I won my Genevieve,
My bright and beauteous Bride.

63 "yellow forest-leaves". Suggesting autumn, itself emblematic of death (because it precedes the onset of winter).

64 - 68 The em-dashes here signal a break in the narrative, as the poem reminds us that this story is being constructed by the speaker. Note the link between the speaker's moving, mawkish performance ("faltering voice and pausing harp") and Genevieve's emotional response. Consider how this poem presents art and its power to disturb or move a viewer/listener, and compare this to other poems like 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer'.

70 "thrilled my guileless Genevieve". "guileless" = naïve, unsuspecting. Note the implication that the speaker is involved in a project of *manipulation* (but also consider Genevieve's involvement in the earlier lines).

73 "hopes, and fears that kindle hope". A seemingly paradoxical statement, since "fear" might be an antonym for "hope". Consider how the poem presents the relationship between hope and fear when it comes to love or affection. Compare with 'Sonnet Composed on a Journey Homeward' or 'Constancy to an Ideal Object'.

75 - 76 "gentle wishes long subdued, subdued and cherished long!" Note the implication that this is a *mutually desired* relationship from the point of view of both the speaker and Genevieve! Is Genevieve really "guileless"?

77 - 80, 85 - 88 Note how, like the Knight and the Lady, Genevieve's actions are described in sets of three as a mirror of the love story we have just heard.

79 - 80 "like the murmur of a dream, / I heard her breathe my name". Consider the relationship between love and dreams/fantasy, and look at poems like 'Something Childish but Very Natural', or 'The Eve of St Agnes'. This reflection might seem cliché to us, because the description of *love* as a *dream* or *fantasy* really starts with the Romantics!

83 "timorous" = fearful.

90 "bashful art" is a striking phrase, in that it suggests Genevieve's actions can also be read as an "artful" performance!

93 "told her love with virgin pride". Note the connection/contrast with the phrase "virgin-shame" in line 78.

93 - 96 "I calmed ... I won ...". The active verbs frame the speaker as playing the active role in this relationship.

96 "bright and beauteous Bride". The use of alliteration here brings emphasis to the close of the poem.

Something Childish, but Very Natural (p. 260)

WRITTEN IN GERMANY

If I had but two little wings
And were a little feathery bird,
To you I'd fly, my dear!
But thoughts like these are idle things,
And I stay here.

But in my sleep to you I fly:
I'm always with you in my sleep!
The world is all one's own.
But then one wakes, and where am I?
All, all alone.

Sleep stays not, though a monarch bids:
So I love to wake ere break of day:
For though my sleep be gone,
Yet while 'tis dark, one shuts one's lids,
And still dreams on.

April 23, 1799

5

10

15

Genre, context, and title: A short poem on love and infatuation, in which the speaker acknowledges that while he is separate from his Beloved in reality, he nonetheless willfully rejects reality by striving to be with her in his dreams. Notice how love is framed as "childish" (seemingly negative - connoting naivete and irrationality) but "natural" (positive - connoting normalcy). This poem is useful in examining Romantic attitudes to childishness and dreams when it comes to emotion: childhood is also a state of innocence and purity, and the emotional sentimentality of dreams is part of how we realise our "natural" humanity (as opposed to wisdom only being associated with scientific rationality).

In terms of form, each stanza is composed of two sections: two lines of tetrameter, punctuated by a trimeter line, then a line of tetrameter before concluding in a dimeter line. The sections are linked together through a rhyme scheme in which the first and third lines rhyme with the fourth and fifth. Appropriately, this gives the poem the feel of a childhood rhyme. Pay attention to words like "But" and "Yet", and consider (like the title) how this is a poem that see-saws between two opposing perspectives - perhaps reflecting the petulance of a child who is refusing to give up on his dream.

1 - 2 "little wings ... little feathery bird". Notice the repetition of "little", and the mention of "idle things" in line 4. In conjunction with "childish", the effect is to emphasise the whimsical, fanciful nature of the speaker's desires, which he knows are not realistic.

5, 10, 15 Each stanza is punctuated by a deflatory half-line of 4 syllables that interrupts the rhythm of the previous lines and functions as a counterpoint. Compare these lines to 3, 8, and 13, and take note of how each stanza is built around contrasting elements.

6 "But in my sleep". Note the use of contradiction in "But", and the role of sleep (and the dreams that one has while asleep) in fulfilling the speaker's desires. Compare this to similar presentations of sleep elsewhere, like in 'To Sleep', or 'The Eve of St Agnes', where sleep offers respite or escape from life's toils.

8. "The world is all one's own." Paraphrase: *[When I am with you in my dreams] it feels like the whole world belongs to me.* Note how this image of triumph and control is inverted into one of loneliness in line 10; fulfilled love is suggested to be an empowering emotion, in contrast to (by implication) enervating isolation.

11 "though a monarch bids". Human temporal power is unable to prolong sleep, and avoid reality.

14 - 15 "Yet while 'tis dark, one shuts one's lids ...". The last lines indicate an active willful choice to "dream on" in defiance of reality and waking. Even as he acknowledges that humans are unable to prolong sleep, the speaker's declaration that he will nonetheless "shut one's lids" and "drea[m] on" reveals the title's "childish act" of cleaving to the fantastical dream world. Compare this with 'Constancy to an Ideal Object' (in terms of the power of illusions), or 'The Eve of St Agnes' (in terms of a willful refusal to be awakened from fantasy).

The Keepsake (p. 317)

The tedded hay, the first fruits of the soil,
 The tedded hay and corn-sheaves in one field,
 Show summer gone, ere come. The foxglove tall
 Sheds its loose purple bells, or in the gust,
 Or when it bends beneath the up-springing lark,
 Or mountain-finch alighting. And the rose
 (In vain the darling of successful love)
 Stands, like some boasted beauty of past years,
 The thorns remaining, and the flowers all gone.
 Nor can I find, amid my lonely walk
 By rivulet, or spring, or wet road-side,
 That blue and bright-eyed floweret of the brook,
 Hope's gentle gem, the sweet Forget-me-not!
 So will not fade the flowers which Emmeline
 With delicate fingers on the snow-white silk
 Has worked, (the flowers which most she knew I loved,)
 And, more beloved than they, her auburn hair.

In the cool morning twilight, early waked
 By her full bosom's joyous restlessness,
 Softly she rose, and lightly stole along,
 Down the slope coppice to the woodbine bower,
 Whose rich flowers, swinging in the morning breeze
 Over their dim fast-moving shadows hung,
 Making a quiet image of disquiet
 In the smooth, scarcely moving river-pool.
 There, in that bower where first she owned her love,
 And let me kiss my own warm tear of joy
 From off her glowing cheek, she sate and stretched
 The silk upon the frame, and worked her name
 Between the Moss-Rose and Forget-me-not -
 Her own dear name, with her own auburn hair!
 That forced to wander till sweet spring return,
 I yet might ne'er forget her smile, her look,
 Her voice, (that even in her mirthful mood
 Has made me wish to steal away and weep),
 Nor yet the entrancement of that maiden kiss
 With which she promised, that when spring returned
 She would resign one half of that dear name,
 And own thenceforth no other name but mine!

1800?

30 "Moss-Rose and Forget-me-not". The Moss-Rose can represent a declaration of love. Coleridge in his younger years wrote a love poem titled "On Presenting a Moss-Rose to Miss F. Nesbitt".

Genre, context, and title: The title 'The Keepsake' refers to the myth of the Forget-me-not, or *Myosotis* flower, which symbolises romantic constancy and separation. The poem is in two halves, the first dealing with the present (and associated with Autumn) and the second dealing with the past (and associated with Summer). The speaker reflects on the pain of separation from his Beloved, but is comforted by the Keepsake: an image of flowers she wove as a token for him. The speaker recalls his past with his Beloved, and looks forward to their eventual reunion. The poem is in blank verse, or unrhymed iambic pentameter, and is divided into two sections: the present and the past.

1 -3 "Tedded" hay is hay that has been dried and raked, but not yet bundled into bales. The imagery suggests the arrival of autumn and the end of summer (when harvesting happens).

3 - 9 These lines describe two flowers, the foxglove and the rose, slowly dying as autumn comes. Both can be associated with love and beauty, but also be suggestive of romantic disappointment or pain: the foxglove is a poisonous plant, and the rose is proverbially covered in thorns (see line 9). The imagery of the dying flowers symbolically reflects the speaker's pain in being separated from his Beloved (NOT that she has abandoned or rejected him), but also acts as the basis of comparison with the flowers that 'will not fade' in line 14.

3 "foxglove tall". A plant known for its "purple bell" shaped flowers. The word "or" in lines 4-6 can be read as "when": *The tall foxglove sheds its petals in the gust, or when the lark takes off from it, or when the mountain-finch lands on it.*

7 i.e. the rose was once the symbol of successful love, but now stands in vain.

14 "So will not fade". The speaker, in lines 3-13, describes the disappearance of all the natural flowers as autumn arrives. Emmeline's flowers "will not fade" because they are embroidered on the keepsake the speaker carries. Consider how this poem presents the constancy and power of art, and compare this with 'Ode to a Grecian Urn', or contrast it with 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles'.

18 Note how this line uses a mostly trochaic rhythm (**morning twilight early**), in place of an iambic one, to emphasise the sharp break with the preceding stanza.

18 - 25 Take note of imagery which emphasises a private, quiet meeting ('softly', "lightly stole", the isolation of the "woodbine bower") contrasted with the strength of Emmeline and the speaker's mutual passion ("joyous restlessness"). Note how the landscape reflects these contradictory moods: the "fast-moving" shadows of the rich flowers that contrast with the "scarcely moving" river pool. The poem editorialises this as a "quiet image of disquiet". Compare this with other poems where Natural landscapes reflect the emotions of the characters in the poem.

21 "coppice" = cleared woodland, and "bower" = shelter made from tree branches.

32, 37 "till sweet spring return". Note the repetition of this idea, that Emmeline will marry the speaker in the coming Spring. Since the first stanza is set in Autumn, by implication this stanza is most likely set in Spring or Summer. The promise of Emmeline marrying the speaker when Spring returns, and the fact that the speaker derives comfort from the Keepsake in stanza 1, and the hopeful optimism of the concluding lines, all indicate that this is a poem about temporary separation and the anticipation of union, rather than a tragic poem about the loss of love.

Ode to Tranquillity (p. 297)

Tranquillity! thou better name
Than all the family of Fame!
Thou ne'er wilt leave my riper age
To low intrigue, or factious rage;
For oh! dear child of thoughtful Truth,
To thee I gave my early youth,
And left the bark, and blest the steadfast shore,
Ere yet the tempest rose and scared me with its roar.

Who late and lingering seeks thy shrine,
On him but seldom, Power divine,
Thy spirit rests! Satiety
And Sloth, poor counterfeits of thee,
Mock the tired worldling. Idle Hope
And dire Remembrance interlope,
To vex the feverish slumbers of the mind:
The bubble floats before, the spectre stalks behind.

But me thy gentle hand will lead
At morning through the accustomed mead;
And in the sultry summer's heat
Will build me up a mossy seat;
And when the gust of Autumn crowds,
And breaks the busy moonlight clouds,
Thou best the thought canst raise, the heart attune,
Light as the busy clouds, calm as the gliding moon.

The feeling heart, the searching soul,
To thee I dedicate the whole!
And while within myself I trace
The greatness of some future race,
Aloof with hermit-eye I scan
The present works of present man -
A wild and dream-like trade of blood and guile,
Too foolish for a tear, too wicked for a smile!

1801. 30

Genre, context, and title: Coleridge, in this poem, focuses on individual *tranquillity*, a state of inner peace and harmony. Take note of the likely allusions to external political counterpoints in line 4 and lines 30-32. This poem could be fruitfully compared to poems like "France: An Ode", in which Coleridge articulates his disillusionment with the violence of radical political change in favour of a personal, individual search for liberty.

Form: regular iambic couplets of four feet per line. Do note that the final couplet of each stanza is in pentameter, not tetrameter.

1 "better name". There is a pun here: "Tranquillity" is personified as a person (or deity) being addressed, but the word can also be interpreted as a bestowed title in the imperial style (e.g. nobility/royalty were often addressed as such). The speaker is thus suggesting that the title of "Tranquillity" is a better title than any bestowed title of worldly power; i.e. to be tranquil within is better than to be deemed a ruler in the eyes of the world.

4 "low intrigue, or factious rage". Note the words "intrigue" and "factious" - possible references to the infighting and dissension of petty politics.

5 "dear child of thoughtful Truth". Note the metaphor of a *child*, and compare this to the alliterative 'family of Fame' in line 2. Tranquillity is explicitly associated with truth, which may suggest that the 'family of Fame' is in turn associated with falsehood/inauthenticity. Consider how this might add to Coleridge's subtle political critique.

6 "my early youth". The speaker states his lifelong devotion to Tranquillity/Truth, having begun it in his "early youth". His idealistic willingness to thus commit himself is similar to that of the speaker in 'France: An Ode', who metaphorically professes himself to be an ardent devotee of 'the spirit of divinest Liberty'.

7 "bark ... steadfast shore". "bark" = a sailing ship or barque. The speaker abandoning the 'bark' before the arrival of 'the tempest' suggests the safety offered by the "steadfast shore" of Tranquillity, in contrast to the instability of being in a boat out at sea during a storm.

9 - 11. i.e. "Thy spirit, divine Tranquillity, seldom rests on those who seek you late and reluctantly in life". The use of religious references (e.g. "shrine", "divine", "spirit") metaphorically compares Tranquillity to a deity who bestows blessings on its faithful - i.e. tranquillity is a potent desired state of being that brings positivity to those who seek it.

11 - 12 "Satiety/And Sloth". i.e. imitations of true Tranquillity.

13 "tired worldling". "worldling" = someone engrossed in the concerns of the world. The speaker here eschews being overly involved in worldly affairs; rather, one should seek Tranquillity in detachment. (Consider how this might reflect Coleridge's disillusionment with political life.)

13-14 "Idle Hope ... dire Remembrance interlope". "interlope" = to impose themselves. Note that while Satiety and Sloth are external conditions (being fed / having nothing to do), Idle Hope and Remembrance spring from within. Threats to Tranquillity, it seems, can arise from one's external environment but also from within / one's own mind.

16 “The bubble floats before, the spectre stalks behind”. The line metaphorically compares “Idle Hope” to a “bubble ... before” (in the way the bubbles from a swimmer might be seen on the surface) and “dire Remembrance” to a “spectre” emerging from “behind”. Both images carry negative connotations: bubbles are ephemeral - to follow one connotes futility; being stalked by a spectre would induce fear/anxiety.

17 - 24 Here the speaker addresses personified Tranquillity. Note the use of nature imagery: “mead” = meadow, “mossy seat” = grassy place of rest. The poem draws a strong association between Tranquillity and Nature, connoting the eternal, restorative properties of the former as a place of refuge from the rest of the world. (Compare this to ‘France: An Ode’ and how the speaker lauds Nature as the embodiment of Liberty.)

19, 21 Note the comparison between “sultry summer” and the “gust of Autumn”: Tranquillity offers one succor in both the seasons of symbolic plenty and physical decline; i.e. it is always a desirable state to be in.

22 and 24 Coleridge employs images of moonlight to varying effects throughout his poems, where the moon could be associated with mystery, beauty, reason, the imagination, etc. In this poem, the simile in line 24 clearly associates the moon with an abiding sense of inner peace. i.e. even when strong winds scatter the moonlight clouds, Tranquillity would allow one to keep ‘light’ thoughts and a “calm” heart despite the chaotic situation.

25 - 26 i.e. “To thee, Tranquillity, I dedicate the whole of my feeling heart and searching soul”. Note the use of assonance and alliteration linking these qualities into a “whole”. The fact that the speaker dedicates his “feeling heart” and “searching soul” seems to suggest that tranquillity is not only an internal experience, but is something that needs to be deliberately sought in order to be discovered.

28 “greatness of some future race”. This phrase is meant to contrast with “the present works of present man” in line 30, where it is implied that “present man” is not living out this “greatness” (because his “present works” have fallen short, being full of “blood and guile”). The speaker’s tone here seems to be world-weary and cynical.

29 “Aloof with hermit-eye”. The metaphorical comparison of the speaker to a “hermit” is meant to suggest objectivity (since the hermit lives apart from society), but also conveys the speaker’s sense of isolation (since as a hermit, he has chosen to set himself apart from the rest of society and does not identify with them). The speaker’s aloofness here corresponds with his disdain for the “tired worldling” in line 13: it is not wise to be overly immersed in worldly affairs.

31 - 32 Coleridge claimed that this final couplet was composed in his sleep: the poem ends on a condemnation of the “present works of present man” that are too foolish (i.e. absurd/pointless) to cry over, but also too wicked to laugh over. Compare the “wild and dream-like” actions of man with the ‘feverish slumbers of the mind’ in line 15. In this poem, dreams can have negative connotations - suggesting a restless/troubled mind (line 15), or detachment from reality/rationality (line 31).

Dejection: An Ode (p. 307)

*Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
 With the old Moon in her arms;
 And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
 We shall have a deadly storm.
 (Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence.)*

I.

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made
 The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
 This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
 Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
 Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes, 5
 Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
 Upon the strings of this Eolian lute,
 Which better far were mute.
 For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
 And overspread with phantom light, 10
 (With swimming phantom light o'erspread
 But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
 I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
 The coming-on of rain and squally blast.
 And oh! that even now the gust were swelling, 15
 And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
 Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
 And sent my soul abroad,
 Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
 Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live! 20

II.

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
 A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
 Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,

Genre, context, and title: Coleridge originally wrote this poem in a much longer form as a direct appeal to Sara Hutchinson, describing his love for her as well as his sense of personal and professional failure. The poem was also inspired by the opening stanzas of William Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', which also dealt with the loss of joy from nature. Coleridge later edited this down to the poem we have here, removing some of the more personal references and making the poem a wider reflection on dejection and man's relationship to nature. Holistically, the poem also expresses a crisis of confidence as Coleridge laments the decline of his creative imagination.

In terms of form, the poem is composed of eight stanzas of variable length and irregular rhyme scheme. Whilst Stanzas 1-4 mostly use an ABBA or AABB rhyme scheme, Stanzas 5-8 show quite a lot more variation. Pay special attention to changes in line length or the use of more complex rhyme schemes, and think about how the changes in form might mirror changes in content. Pay attention also to the address: who is being addressed at different points in the poem, and what does this do to the mood or tone of the poem?

Preface The lines here describe the phases of the moon, and are an extract from an old folk song, which Coleridge read in a compilation by Sir Thomas Percy.

1 The first line of the poem builds on the Preface with its reference to the "Bard", i.e. the original poet of the Ballad who anticipated the coming of a "deadly storm" based on what he saw – "the new Moon/With the old Moon in her arms". Consider the use of personification in the opening stanza – (the winds "ply a busier trade", "the dull sobbing draft that moans and rakes / Upon the strings of this Eolian lute") – which draws links between natural phenomenon and human emotions.

9 - 11 The speaker draws attention to the new moon, "**overspread with phantom light**". Note the repeated reference to the phantom light and what this may convey. Literally, the speaker sees the crescent moon surrounded by a thin ring of light which allows him to envision the new moon with the old moon in her lap. But the ghostly associations of "phantom" also suggest a foreboding sign or a weak, insubstantial light emphasizing his despair and his lack of true inner light.

13 - 18 Note the sensory references here as the speaker anticipates the coming of the storm in terms of what he "see[s]" as well as what may be heard – the "swelling" gusts and "loud and fast" sounds that "oft have raised" him "And sent [his] soul abroad". The break in the line length (line 18 is in trimeter) not only draws our focus to the shorter line but also signals the poet's hope that the storm will break through his numbness and dejection.

19 - 20 Note the anaphoric repetition of "Might" which signals the speaker's hope as well as uncertainty that the storm will free him from his numbness and state of dejection.

In word, or sigh, or tear -
 O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood, 25
 To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,
 All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
 Have I been gazing on the western sky,
 And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
 And still I gaze - and with how blank an eye! 30
 And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
 That give away their motion to the stars;
 Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
 Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen
 Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew 35
 In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
 I see them all so excellently fair,
 I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

III.

My genial spirits fail;
 And what can these avail 40
 To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
 It were a vain endeavour,
 Though I should gaze for ever
 On that green light that lingers in the west:
 I may not hope from outward forms to win 45
 The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

IV.

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
 And in our life alone does nature live:
 Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
 And would we aught behold, of higher worth, 50
 Than that inanimate cold world allowed
 To the poor loveless, ever-anxious crowd,
 Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
 A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud -
 Enveloping the Earth - 55
 And from the soul itself must there be sent
 A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
 Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

21 - 24 Pick up on how the speaker's grief and despair is expressed in the initial lines of Stanza 2. Note the diction (void, dark, drear, stifled), the repeated use of negation (unimpassioned, no natural outlet, no relief), as well as the listing ("**no relief / In word, or sigh, or tear**") which amplifies the loss of hope. Consider also the shift from the more atmospheric description of the external natural environment to the exploration of his internal void which offers no natural outlet.

25 "wan and heartless" weak and spiritless.

26 "throstle". Older term for a song thrush, a type of bird.

27 The speaker's description of the quiet and calm "balmy and serene" evening offers an ironic echo on his own inner state which he earlier describes as a dull and empty void rather than a sharp and intense pain.

28 - 38 The speaker gazes at the western sky and comments on the beauty laid out before him. But these beautiful images are undercut by the contrast between seeing and feeling which culminates in his frustrated expression, "**I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!**"

39 "My genial spirits fail". i.e. My positive and pleasant emotions falter.

43 - 44 Note the disconnection the speaker feels from nature – though he may gaze forever on the green light that lingers in the west, symbolizing the setting sun, there is no hope or recourse to revive the passion within.

45 - 48 The couplets here highlight Coleridge's philosophy of the self, evident in the contrast between "outward forms" (nature, poetry and the surrounding world) and the fountains "within" (the inner spirit).

49 "Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!" "Shroud" = funeral shroud for a corpse. Picking up on the earlier reference to "in our life alone does nature live", the speaker states that nature lives through us – it is we who give meaning and significance to what we perceive, whether it is a wedding-garment or a shroud.

50 - 54 i.e. "And [if] we ever behold anything of higher worth, greater than what the inanimate cold world [usually] offers to poor and loveless humankind, then, this must come from within the soul itself which may issue forth "**a light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud**" that envelops the earth with its bright shining light as opposed to the thin, insubstantial ring of phantom light referenced in Stanza 1 and the "bedimmed" light of the stars mentioned in Stanza 2.

56 - 58 i. e. "The soul will send forth a sweet and powerful voice, birthed from the soul - the basic life-giving element to all sweet sounds". Note the centrality of the soul in this image. "**of its own birth**" is syntactically ambiguous: it could mean "born from the soul", or "the voice of the soul's birth/emergence". How might this sound contrast to other sounds in Stanza 1? Where does Coleridge locate the source of life/vitality?

V.

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
 What this strong music in the soul may be! 60
 What, and wherein it doth exist,
 This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
 This beautiful and beauty-making power.
 Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
 Save to the pure, and in their purest hour, 65
 Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
 Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
 Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower,
 A new Earth and new Heaven,
 Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud - 70
 Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud -
 We in ourselves rejoice!
 And thence flows all that charms our ear or sight,
 All melodies the echoes of that voice,
 All colours a suffusion from that light. 75

VI.

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
 This joy within me dallied with distress,
 And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
 Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
 For hope grew round me, like the twining vine, 80
 And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
 But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
 Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth,
 But oh! each visitation
 Suspends what nature gave me at my birth, 85
 My shaping spirit of Imagination.
 For not to think of what I needs must feel,
 But to be still and patient, all I can;
 And haply by abstruse research to steal
 From my own nature all the natural man - 90
 This was my sole resource, my only plan:
 Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
 And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

VII.

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
 Reality's dark dream! 95
 I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
 Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream
 Of agony by torture lengthened out
 That lute sent forth! Thou wind, that ravest without,
 Bare craig, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree, 100

59 - 63 "**O pure of heart! .. This beautiful and beauty-making power**". According to Coleridge, the source of beauty itself and what makes everything else beautiful is joy which comes from within us. Note the shift in the rhyme scheme which accompanies this realization.

65 "**Save to the pure and in their purest hour**". Contrast this with line 70 for the speaker's characterisation of the *impure*.

66 "**effluence**" = outflow. Joy is both Life and the product of Life, thus both "cloud at once and [rain] shower".

68 "**dower**". i.e. a wedding dowry / gift. Notice the repetition of "wedding" imagery from line 49, here used to highlight the connection between man and nature and the rich dowry this relationship offers us.

69 "**A new Earth and new Heaven**". A Biblical description of Paradise, and the end of earthly suffering.

71 "**Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud**". What contrast is being made with voices or clouds in Stanza 1 e.g. the "dull sobbing draft that moans and rakes"?

72 - 75 "**We in ourselves rejoice!**" How might this sentiment be contrasted with attitudes to Nature elsewhere in Romantic poetry? How is repetition used here? What kinds of senses (visual, auditory?) are being described, and to what effect?

76 - 81 "**For hope grew round me, like the twining vine**". Note the use of nature similes to describe hope and joy (the twining vine, the fruits and foliage etc). Contrast the presentation of the 'twining vine' in line 80 which offers support and grows 'round' him, as opposed to the "viper thoughts that coil around [his] mind" in line 94.

82 - 86 Note the shift from past ("**There was a time ...**") to present ("**But now**") and the corresponding shift from joy to afflictions which "**bow [him] down to earth**", the syntax emphasizing the power and agency that affliction seems to have over him, weighing him down, robbing him of mirth and suspending "**what nature gave [him] at [his] birth**", his "**shaping spirit of Imagination**".

87 - 93 Pay careful attention to language describing emotion vs language describing rational thought, as well as the distinction between what is natural vs what is unnatural as the speaker tries to hold on to his authentic self; his one resource before the "**part infects the whole / And now is almost grown the habit of [his] soul**".

95 Compare "**Reality's dark dream!**" to line 79's "**Fancy made me dreams of happiness**", and the change that comes with this contrast, as well as the contrast between the "twining vine" that grows "round him" and the "viper thoughts, that coil around his mind". Dreams of happiness have not only replaced dark dreams but this darkness has also encroached upon reality. Likewise, images of growth represented by the twining vine are replaced by serpentine, viper thoughts that coil round his mind, suggesting a bind that he cannot escape.

96 - 97 Note how the speaker returns us to his present in Stanza 1 as he turns his attention back to the wind. Consider the symbolism of the personified wind, and the emotions it displays. The "scream of agony" and "torture lengthened out" mirror his own intense pain and anguish which is no

Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
 Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
 Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
 Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
 Of dark brown gardens, and of peeping flowers, 105
 Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,
 The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.
 Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
 Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
 What tell'st thou now about? 110
 'Tis of the rushing of a host in rout,
 With groans of trampled men, with smarting wounds -
 At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
 But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
 And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd, 115
 With groans, and tremulous shudderings - all is over -
 It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
 A tale of less affright,
 And tempered with delight,
 As Otway's self had framed the tender lay, 120
 'Tis of a little child
 Upon a lonesome wild,
 Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:
 And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
 And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother
 hear. 125

VIII.
 'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
 Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
 Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
 And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,
 May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling, 130
 Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
 With light heart may she rise,
 Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
 Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
 To her may all things live, from pole to pole, 135
 Their life the eddying of her living soul!
 O simple spirit, guided from above,
 Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
 Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

1802

longer dull or drowsy. From line 100 onwards, the poem shifts from inward despair to an outward dramatic expression of pain which is portrayed as a "tragic actor" and "a mighty poet" (lines 108-109) caught up in a frenzy of performance and creative expression.

99 "ravest without". i.e. rages outside.

100 - 103 "Bare craig, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree". "craig" = crag. "Tairn" = small mountain lake, typically isolated. The speaker lists locations that are 'fitter instruments' for the 'Mad Lutanist' [the wind] to play the lute (line 99).

104 - 107 "month of showers", "blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves". The speaker is describing the onset of Spring - typically associated with growth and rejuvenation - which is here eclipsed by the Devil's yule, an unholy force that surpasses the death and decay associated with winter.

111 - 119 The sound of the wind now tells the tale of a defeated army "with groans of trampled men, with smarting wounds" which culminates in "a pause of deepest silence" - the end of the battle and the sudden hush of the wind indicated by the caesura in line 116 (- all is over -).

117 - 120 The hushed sounds initially seem to offer some respite, the reference to "Otway's self ... tender lay" ("Lay" = song i.e. poem), alluding to the 17th century dramatist Thomas Otway, famous for his sentimental tragedies and his own tragic life.

121 - 125 But the quieter "tale of less affright" offers little consolation since Otway's tale is of a lost "little child" who "moans low in bitter grief and fear", and then "screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear." Note the repeated motif of isolation and loneliness despite the various changes in context and consider how this reflects Coleridge's state of mind even as we move towards the end of the poem. Also note the use of anaphora in the last two lines of Stanza 7 ("And now ...") which adds a sense of urgency to the moans and screams of the lost child, desperate to be found.

126 The concluding stanza begins with a continued note of disquiet as the speaker lies awake, alone and troubled. His thoughts shift, however, to the "Lady" he has addressed in the course of the poem, hoping that she, at least, will have everlasting peace and joy.

127 "Full seldom may my friend ...". i.e. May my friend seldom have cause to keep the vigil I am keeping tonight.

128 - 131 "Visit her, gentle Sleep!" Note the speaker now addresses himself to personified Sleep. Consider the nature imagery used here, and how it is characterised. What adjectives are used? What contrast(s) can be made with the preceding sections? Consider references to "mountain-birth" vs "mountain-tairn" and the "stars" hanging bright and watching over the "sleeping Earth" in an almost protective gesture.

135 - 136 "from pole to pole" = from the North to the South pole, i.e. the whole earth. The syntax of these lines is striking in how it draws a relationship between the life of "all things" and the "living soul" of the speaker's friend, suggesting a connection between her and nature (in contrast to his disconnection).

137 - 139 Consider the ending of the poem and how, or whether, it is resolved.

Answer to a Child's Question (p. 313)

Do you ask what the birds say? The Sparrow, the Dove,
 The Linnet and Thrush say, "I love and I love!"
 In the winter they're silent - the wind is so strong;
 What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud song.
 But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,
 And singing, and loving - all come back together.
 But the lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
 The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
 That he sings, and he sings; and for ever sings he -
 "I love my Love, and my Love loves me!"

1802

5

10

Genre, context, and title:

It is important to take note of the *title* that indicates this is a response to a child (with the question in line 1). This suggests a didactic quality to the speaker's response, where he is teaching a young listener about the universality of love in the natural world. Here, the poem's idealisation of childhood innocence and a rural pastoral landscape as a repository of emotional truth reflects common Romantic themes.

Like 'The Nightingale', this is a poem concerned with the symbolism of *birds*. As with 'To Nature', it engages in a form of pathetic fallacy in attributing our human emotion to nature (i.e. the speaker's feelings of love are reflected in the natural world around him).

In terms of form and scansion, the poem makes use of a regular form: an anapestic rhythm (two unstressed and one stressed syllable – In-the-WIN-ter-they're-SI-lent), and a fixed AABB rhyme scheme. The combined effect resembles a child's nursery rhyme (suitable for the implied child who asked the question), and the regular fixed form ties into the wider themes of unity – between man and nature, lover and beloved, and animals with the seasons.

1 "the birds ...". Note how the listing of birds suggests a sense of universality describing the birds (i.e. Sparrow, Dove, Linnet, and Thrush), whose coming together to voice the declaration in line 2, likewise suggests the universality of 'love'. (i.e. if so many birds say it, then it must be true.)

2 "I love and I love!". Note the use of repetition for emphasis. Opening the poem using a perfect rhyme (i.e. 'Dove' and 'love') helps to acoustically emphasize the primacy of 'love', as well as the implied factual simplicity of the speaker's response to the child.

3 - 4 "In the winter ... silent ... sings a loud song". Note the symbolic contrast between winter here and "sunny warm weather in line 5: while the birds sing during the warm weather of summer (connoting life, action, and vitality), they are silent in winter (connoting stillness, passivity, and dormancy/death). Note that the "loud song" in line 4 is describing the *winter wind* in line 3 while the birds are silent, suggesting a paired parallel song to the joyful singing of the birds - i.e. Nature is always associated with "song" (suggesting harmony), there are evidently different songs for different seasons. If birdsong is associated with love, this might then imply that there are likewise seasons for love, where it flourishes (during summer) and where it wanes (during winter), but will always return (just as seasons move in a cycle).

4 "What it says, I don't know". An elliptical statement where the interpretation is somewhat ambiguous. While we learn that the speaker does not know what the song of the winter wind says, we don't learn why he does not know or get direct insight into what the wind might be singing about. It could be that the speaker simply dismisses the winter wind's song as unimportant (due to how focused he is on the idea of love). We can also consider this line in the light of imagery of winter and cold in other Coleridge poems (eg, 'Frost at Midnight'), where winter is often linked to tranquillity and isolation - in contrast to the birds who sing of love in "warm weather", and love is an emotion that comes to fruition between two people (rather than in isolation).

5, 7 "But". Note the repetition of "But" that turns away from the imagery of winter.

5 "green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather". Note the listing of imagery of summer here, and the focus on images of vitality ("green", "blossoms"), and warmth/temperance ("sunny warm weather"), to emphasize the associations of love as an emotion that likewise brings those who experience it to life and growth.

6 "singing, and loving - all coming together". Note that this is a continuation of the previous line, and "all coming together" merges the imagery of nature with action. Recall discussions of Coleridge's thoughts about a state of Oneness (e.g. 'The Eolian Harp'); for him, nature is a crucial space in which man can realise his truest self, often via (sublime) emotional experiences.

8 "green fields below him ... blue sky above". Note the paired images: we have colour ("green", "blue"), earth and sky ("fields", "sky"), and space ("below", "above"). These images highlight both the beauty of nature but also the lark's place within that beauty; this positively associates the lark being "brimful of gladness and love" with a sense of belonging (within a wide world).

9 - 10 Note the use of both chiasmus ("he sings ... sings he", "I love my Love ... my Love loves me") and repetition (sings, 'love') to suggest the everlasting and consistent quality of love as a celebrated emotion. Note how the emotions of the lover and the beloved ("my Love") are purposely intertwined through the use of repetition: Coleridge ends this poem with an idealisation of the mutuality of love: love is a universal emotion; loving and being loved in return as a part of nature/a natural state of being.

The Pains of Sleep (p. 328)

Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,
 It hath not been my use to pray
 With moving lips or bended knees;
 But silently, by slow degrees,
 My spirit I to Love compose,
 In humble trust mine eye-lids close,
 With reverential resignation,
 No wish conceived, no thought exprest,
 Only a sense of supplication;
 A sense o'er all my soul imprest
 That I am weak, yet not unblest,
 Since in me, round me, everywhere
 Eternal Strength and Wisdom are.

But yester-night I prayed aloud
 In anguish and in agony,
 Up-starting from the fiendish crowd
 Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me:
 A lurid light, a trampling throng,
 Sense of intolerable wrong,
 And whom I scorned, those only strong!
 Thirst of revenge, the powerless will
 Still baffled, and yet burning still!
 Desire with loathing strangely mixed
 On wild or hateful objects fixed.
 Fantastic passions! maddening brawl!
 And shame and terror over all!
 Deeds to be hid which were not hid,
 Which all confused I could not know
 Whether I suffered, or I did:
 For all seemed guilt, remorse or woe,
 My own or others still the same
 Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame.

So two nights passed: the night's dismay
 Saddened and stunned the coming day.
 Sleep, the wide blessing, seemed to me
 Distemper's worst calamity.
 The third night, when my own loud scream
 Had waked me from the fiendish dream,
 O'ercome with sufferings strange and wild,
 I wept as I had been a child;
 And having thus by tears subdued
 My anguish to a milder mood,
 Such punishments, I said, were due
 To natures deepliest stained with sin, -

Genre, context, and title: Written in 1803, 'The Pains of Sleep' is a meditation on guilt and shame, viewed through a poem on insomnia. By this point in his life, Coleridge was struggling in his marriage and with addiction, and (unbeknownst to him) the night terrors he describes were likely a symptom of opium withdrawal. The poem is written in rhymed iambic tetrameter. Take note of changes to the rhyme scheme as the poem progresses, and consider the effect this might have. As you read, highlight examples of alliteration throughout the poem, and consider the overall effect created on the speed and rhythm of the poem.

1 - 13 Take note of the use of sibilants, or 's' sounds in this stanza. A possible effect of these is to create a soothing euphony that matches the speaker's efforts to "compose" his "spirit". Also observe how the first 6 lines are in AABBC couplets, with the rhyme scheme subsequently shifting to DEDEE - this seems to slow down our reading pace; perhaps the initial attempt to compose himself was successful. However, given that the stanza closes with eye rhyme/a break in the perfect rhymes, this prepares us for the parallel break/failure in the speaker's efforts to stay calm.

1 "my limbs I lay". Instead of simply saying that he lays down on his bed, the speaker specifies that he is laying down his "limbs". The alliteration further draws our attention to "limbs" - is the speaker implying that while he may physically put his body into bed, his mind remains at unrest?

5 "My spirit I to Love compose". It is not entirely clear what higher power the speaker is praying to here: Love as a figurative/literal deity, the Christian God (who is often associated with love), etc.

12 "in me, round me, everywhere". Compare this to 'To Nature' and "The Eolian Harp", where Coleridge likewise draws moral precepts from and sees divinity in the natural world around him.

14 "But yester-night I pray'd aloud". Opening the stanza with the conjunction "But" clearly indicates that the speaker's efforts in the preceding stanza were all in vain. The "anguish" and "agony" of his prayers indicate that he was not even a little successful, implying the intensity of his emotional suffering.

14 - 25 The speaker's continual switching between various rhyme patterns seems to reflect his sense of being overwhelmed by his turbulent thoughts and emotions. Likewise, there are several clauses that end in exclamation marks, which interrupt the poem's meter to suggest an outburst. Contrast the structure here to the earlier stanza's relative harmony.

16 - 17 "the fiendish crowd/Of shapes and thoughts". The speaker's nightmares consist of an indeterminate "crowd/Of shapes and thoughts" - their ambiguous nature and form could add to their menacing quality. The listing of sensations and experiences in lines 17-19 also creates a sense of uncertainty and confusion, as if the speaker is being mentally overwhelmed.

20 - 21 The speaker notably confesses that part of his dilemma is unfulfilled *hatred*: i.e. those whom he "scorned" remain "strong"; while he has "Thirst of revenge" but is unable to carry it out (i.e. 'powerless will'). Compare the speaker's dilemma here to "Work Without Hope": the speakers in both poems are keenly aware of their respective inability to take action, and are in despair at their own impotency

22 "Still baffled, and yet burning still!" Note the use of plosives (the b sounds) here - a possible effect of this alliteration is to suggest the aggression of the speaker's "burning" yet "powerless" will.

25 "Fantastic passions! maddening brawl!" "Fantastic" is being used here to mean "wild imagination", rather than "amazing". The "maddening brawl"

For aye entempesting anew
 The unfathomable hell within
 The horror of their deeds to view,
 To know and loathe, yet wish and do!
 Such griefs with such men well agree,
 But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?
 To be beloved is all I need,
 And whom I love, I love indeed.

45 describes the tumult of strange, mixed emotions and thoughts the speaker is experiencing.

26 "Deeds to be hid which were not hid". The speaker seems to be also suffering from a deep sense of shame / regret. His focus on not having "hid" certain deeds suggests his concern with being judged by others.

50 **30 - 31 "all seemed guilt ... My own or others still the same"**. i.e. he cannot tell whether these feelings are his or others, whether he was even the recipient or perpetrator (line 29). Compare this to line 12: rather than finding proof of divine blessing all around him, the speaker is so taken by mental suffering that he can no longer distinguish his own emotions clearly.

1803

31 "Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame". Coleridge is quite intentional in his choice of language. The word "stifling" conveys the idea of being violently restrained or suffocated: his "fear" and "shame" are so potent that they are described as being hyperbolically suppressing his very life and soul. Compare this to how Coleridge describes the soul in other poems like 'Dejection: An Ode', where the soul is the source of one's ability to find hope and joy and in his dejection, the speaker's soul is unable to go "abroad".

35 "Sleep, the wide blessing". "Wide" here means expansive or vast. This line is ironic, given that the speaker is only able to perceive this blessing as its opposite: a superlative "calamity".

36 "Distemper's worst calamity". "Distemper" = to be in bad temper, or out of balance.

39 "the fiendish dream". Coleridge describes the dreams as "fiendish", metaphorically comparing them to demons or evil spirits to convey the hellish torment they put him through. His sufferings are moreover "strange and wild", implying that they are so powerful that they are beyond his understanding and control. In Romantic poems, dreams can be a source of revelation, an expression of longing, or even used to express detachment from reality. In this poem, however, the fiendish quality of the dream suggests none of these, merely his inability to escape his pain even in a state of sleep.

40-42 "I wept as I had been a child". The speaker's suffering is so intense that he is reduced to unbecoming, vulnerable child-like helplessness.

43 "punishments ... were due". "Due" = deserved. e.g., *his due punishment*.

44 "natures deepliest stain'd with sin". Perhaps contrasting here with the image of a "child" in line 40, though conventional Christian theology teaches that sin is inherent in everyone, even children.

45 "For aye entempesting anew". "For aye" = forever; "entempesting" = to disturb or stir up (like a tempest). i.e. *Forever stirring up and making me freshly experience the unfathomable hell within*.

46 "The unfathomable hell within". This is part of the speaker's complaint, now that he is calmer and capable of reflection: to him, it would make sense if sinful folk deserving of "punishments" are tortured by the "hell" within them; with "such griefs", "men [can] well agree" that they are deserved. However, he sees himself to be undeserving of such torment (i.e. while he has regrets, he doesn't think they're sinful). It thus makes no sense to him that he should experience "hell" in the form of the "fiendish crowd" (line 16) and "fiendish dream" (line 38) mentioned earlier.

48 "To know and loathe, yet wish and do!" Romans 7:18-19: *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."*

50 "But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?" "Wherefore" = why. (Tutor's aside/pet peeve: This is why the famous line from *Romeo and Juliet* is often misquoted. When Juliet says 'wherefore art thou Romeo' she is not asking *where is Romeo* because in the play he is *right there*. She is asking *why* he has to be Romeo, the son of her father's mortal enemy.) Note the repetition here: the speaker is feeling aggrieved and wronged at being subject to suffering that he does not think he deserves.

51 - 52 "To be beloved is all I need,/And whom I love, I love indeed". These are very personal lines from Coleridge, who claims that all he wants to be loved by others and professes that he only has sincere feelings towards those he loves. It seems that the speaker's pain has to do with his feelings going unreciprocated by others, and that the purity of his intentions have been misunderstood. Compare this declaration of this poem to the closing couplet of 'Answer to a Child's Question': in both works, Coleridge valorises mutual love as an emotion of paramount importance. The ostensible absence of such a reassuring love in 'The Pains of Sleep' could exacerbate the speaker's plight, where his emotional suffering is both undeserved and aggravated by a lack of reciprocatory love.

Genre, context, and title:

First published in 1817, but possibly worked on even earlier, this poem is one of Coleridge's later poems. By this point in his career, Coleridge is grappling with addiction and depression, the failure of his marriage (he separated from Sara Coleridge in 1808), and a persistent sense of not having reached his full potential despite some literary fame. This poem is thus a gloomy meditation on human life and its significance, and Coleridge constructs a complex philosophical argument here. Note the title: the poem develops an argument for why 'immortality' is not just undesirable, but philosophically impossible, since man's 'being's being is contradiction' (line 29).

In terms of form, the poem is written in rough iambic pentameter which starts with an ABAB rhyme scheme, but pay attention to breaks in metre and changes to the rhyme scheme as the speaker emphasises different ideas or brings in contrasting ones.

Human Life, (p. 362)**ON THE DENIAL OF IMMORTALITY**

If dead, we cease to be; if total gloom
 Swallow up life's brief flash for aye, we fare
 As summer-gusts, of sudden birth and doom,
 Whose sound and motion not alone declare,
 But are their whole of being! If the breath
 Be life itself, and not its task and tent,
 If even a soul like Milton's can know death;
 O Man! thou vessel purposeless, unmeant,
 Yet drone-hive strange of phantom purposes!
 Surplus of Nature's dread activity,
 Which, as she gazed on some nigh-finished vase,
 Retreating slow, with meditative pause,
 She formed with restless hands unconsciously!
 Blank accident! nothing's anomaly!
 If rootless thus, thus substanceless thy state,
 Go, weigh thy dreams, and be thy hopes, thy fears,
 The counter-weights! - Thy laughter and thy tears
 Mean but themselves, each fittest to create,
 And to repay each other! Why rejoices
 Thy heart with hollow joy for hollow good?
 Why cowl thy face beneath the mourner's hood,
 Why waste thy sighs, and thy lamenting voices,
 Image of Image, ghost of ghostly elf,
 That such a thing as thou feel'st warm or cold?
 Yet what and whence thy gain, if thou withhold
 These costless shadows of thy shadowy self?
 Be sad! be glad! be neither! seek, or shun!
 Thou hast no reason why! Thou canst have none;
 Thy being's being is contradiction.

1815?

1 "If dead, we cease to be". The poem begins with a stark philosophical statement: Coleridge rejects the possibility of heaven or an afterlife here. The monosyllabic iambic structure and the matter-of-fact tone underscore the forcefulness of the statement.

2 "for aye". Eternally. Note, in conjunction with "total" gloom, the juxtaposition with "life's brief flash": the modifiers suggest a metaphor of a sudden flash of light swallowed up by absolute darkness, emphasising human transience.

5 3 "summer-gusts". "Summer" is the season symbolically associated with youth and vitality. However, "gusts" are powerful winds that do not last, suggesting transience.

10 3 "sudden birth and doom". Note the linking between "birth" and "doom", suggesting that doom/birth are one and the same - i.e. they hold the same ontological weight. Note also the unexpectedness implied by 'sudden', suggesting imposition and a lack of human control. Coleridge is very depressed.

15 4 - 5 "Whose sound ... being!" i.e. the "sound" and "motion" of the "summer-gusts" are all there is to them - i.e. noise and motion, without higher purpose or meaning. We are speaking and moving for the sake of speaking and moving.

5 - 6 "breath ... not its task and tent". If the "breath [we breathe]" is "[all there is to] Life itself", and is not part of a greater "task", nor a "tent" (or home) for some divine spirit ...

20 7 "If even a soul like Milton's can know death". The renowned English poet John Milton. Coleridge, perhaps considering his own literary failures, reflects on how even literary success does not stave off death.

25 8 "O Man! thou vessel purposeless". The speaker addresses mankind in general. The phrasing here is ironic: it draws on Biblical language that teaches the opposite of what Coleridge is saying (i.e. man was purposefully created by a benevolent God). "O Man" is a common Biblical turn of phrase, and 2 Timothy 2:21 (for example) describes faithful believers as "vessels of honour". Here, such language is subverted since man is a "vessel" but with no divine purpose or content.

9 "drone-hive strange of phantom purposes". A very striking metaphor: man is compared to a hive of bees, suggesting busy-ness and activity. However, words like "drone", "strange", and "phantom" suggest the unnaturalness of this behaviour. Like drone bees, man does not have individual will but serves the hive. Yet, any purpose the hive has is phantom-like - not rooted in reality, insubstantial, etc.

9-14 Note how line 9 breaks the ABAB rhyme scheme, which only resumes at lines 15-26. This break draws sharp acoustic focus to lines 8-9, where the argument of how there is no higher purpose to human life is contained. Lines 10-14, which elaborate on this argument, have a CDDCC rhyme scheme which creates a similar effect of catching our attention.

10 "Surplus of Nature's dread activity". "dread" here means to evoke reverence, not fear. As a corollary to the speaker's disdain for man's "drone-hive" activity in line 9, Nature's activity is implied to be worthy of awe. However, man is described here to be but Nature's 'surplus' - i.e. man was not created with care and meaning, but was created as a mere afterthought. The speaker's sense of estrangement here could be contrasted with other Romantic poems that instead depict the relationship between man and Nature to be positive, close, and intimate (e.g. inspiring awe and stirring the imagination).

11 "nigh-finished vase". Nature is metaphorically compared to a potter sculpting a vase: her deliberate care in observing the "nigh-finished vase", gazing and pausing meditatively, is contrasted with her "unconsciou[s]" fiddling that creates man (i.e. the "Surplus") - i.e. man was not created with such higher purpose. Note how the half-rhyme with "pause" in line 12 disrupts the rhyme scheme, in the same way the vase is "nigh-finished".

14 "Blank accident! nothing's anomaly!" The exclamations and interruption to the meter here emphasize the emotion behind the speaker's self-deprecating descriptions of man here. The repetitions of similar concepts in "blank" and "nothing"/"accident" and "anomaly" highlight the emptiness and arbitrariness of human existence.

16 - 19 "Go ...". The instruction to "weigh thy dreams" and let "hopes and fears" be the counter-weight means to weigh (or judge) your dreams against the emotions ("hopes and fears ... thy laughter and thy tears") they inspire, since the emotions 'mean but themselves' (i.e. have no higher spiritual significance). Note how "weigh thy dreams" feels like an admonition coming after line 15, when "rootless" and "substanceless" seem to imply those dreams are *weightless*, and yet the anaphoristic "thy hopes, thy fears" seems to nonetheless depict these emotions as palpable and tangible (otherwise they would not be able to be counter-weights). Here, as with line 3, there is an implied equivalence of "hopes" and "fears", where neither is more significant than the other.

20 - 21 "hollow joy for hollow good ...". This is a dark, nihilistic philosophy: Coleridge here rejects both happiness and goodness (i.e. which are conventionally things people find hope in clinging to) as "hollow" and meaningless. Conversely it is pointless to wear a "mourner's hood" and mourn for others, because there is no deeper meaning to be had. Coleridge is *very depressed*.

23 "Image of Image, ghost of ghostly elf". Consider the connotations of an "Image": an unreal reflection of a real thing, without physical substance. Man (or man's existence) is not just an Image but an "Image of [an] Image" or a "ghost of [a] ghost". An "elf" in this context is a mythical faery or transient creature (replace it with the word "sprite" or "shade" for a similar effect), not the later long-lived immortal elves of 20th-century popular fantasy.

24 "That such a thing as thou feel'st warm or cold?" Notice how the logic of the poem is escalating: where, before, our deeper principles and goals are "hollow", now even our physical sensations are subject to doubt. We have moved beyond man being "purposeless" (line 8) to man not even being real (lines 23-24), but an image or ghost.

25 - 26 "Yet ...". Note the contradiction the speaker introduces. Essentially, lines 23-24 doubt the significance of even the physical sensations experienced by man, but here the speaker rhetorically shrugs and asks what the point is of "withholding" our expressions of physical experience or emotions since they are "costless (i.e. no cost to us) shadows of our shadowy self".

27 - 28 "Be sad! be glad! be neither! seek, or shun!" Note the repeated exclamations that interrupt the rhythm of the poem, and how whilst instead of a concluding couplet, the poem ends on an emphatic repeated rhyme across three lines. The speaker figuratively throws up his hands: this is *not* a call to live for our emotions, like in line 16-17, but an assertion that these emotions don't matter. Hence, it is irrelevant if the reader chooses to be "sad" or "glad", to "seek" or to "shun". The reader not only has "no reason" for these emotions, but "canst have none" (see line 29).

29 "Thy being's being is contradiction". There's a complex philosophical argument here. The nature ("being") of our existence ("being's") is contradiction, because as humans we *exist*, but our existence implies both a *lack of existence* and a *lack of meaning* since we are an "anomaly" and "accident". Thus, man's nature is a contradiction: our existence as thinking, acting, feeling beings only serves to emphasise the purposelessness of that thinking, acting, or feeling.

To Nature (p. 370)

It may indeed be phantasy, when I
 Essay to draw from all created things
 Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings;
 And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie
 Lessons of love and earnest piety.
 So let it be; and if the wide world rings
 In mock of this belief, it brings
 Nor fear, nor grief, nor vain perplexity.
 So will I build my altar in the fields,
 And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,
 And the sweet fragrance that the wild flower yields
 Shall be the incense I will yield to Thee,
 Thee only God! and thou shalt not despise
 Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice.

1820?

Genre, context, and title: This sonnet offers a good example of the “Romantic” vision of Nature. In terms of form, the poem is made up of 14 lines using (mostly) regular iambic pentameter, with an ABBACDDCEDEFF rhyme scheme. As you read, pay special attention to alliteration and repetition, and consider the effects of their use.

5 **1 “It may indeed be phantasy”.** “Phantasy” = fantasy. The poem begins with the speaker admitting that his belief of an innate and inherent “joy” to be found in “all created things” (i.e. nature) might only be all in his head. The sonnet thus begins with an argument (lines 1-5), which the speaker counters by refusing to accept it even if he is mocked for doing so (lines 6-8).

10 **2 - 3** These lines describe the process of *pathetic fallacy*, or the imposition of a speaker’s private feelings on an external object. The word choice of “draw” suggests deliberate effort, which seems to posit that such joy is merely projected by the speaker. However, the fact that this joy is “Deep, heartfelt, [and] inward” also suggests that there is something intrinsic about it - i.e. the intensity of the joy is proof of its authenticity. The description here thus blurs the line between the speaker’s inner experiences and “all created things”.

4 “in leaves and flowers that round me lie”. The speaker situates himself within nature, directly experiencing it in a tangible way (vs merely thinking about it in his head) that again underscores the authenticity of the emotions he is experiencing.

5 “Lessons of love and earnest piety”. Nature is identified here as a metaphorical teacher who imparts moral “Lessons”. Pay attention to the use of religious language / references throughout this poem. Coleridge often looks to Nature as a means of experiencing the divine/spirituality. (He is not worshipping Nature itself!)

6 - 8 The alliteration of “wide world” draws attention to the vastness of the given image. In line 8, the speaker lists the emotions he will not feel if he is mocked. The acoustic shift from monosyllabic clauses (“Nor fear, nor grief”) to a polysyllabic clause (“nor vain perplexity”) here emphasizes the latter - i.e. confusion, if felt, will not be in “vain”; he is confident in his professing of joy being inherent within Nature.

7 This line is in tetrameter (four feet) rather than pentameter. The missing foot creates a dramatic pause before the speaker lists the emotions he will not feel if mocked. (Read the poem aloud if you cannot hear it.) When examining poems, looking for such deviations from an otherwise regular structure can give us clues about what the poet wants us to pay attention to.

9 - 12 Note the use of religious imagery: building an “altar” (line 9), the metaphor of sky as a “fretted dome” (i.e. cathedral roof) (line 10), and the metaphorical “incense” of the wild flower (line 12). Nature is hailed as a fit setting for worship of the divine, with these images suggesting the superiority of what is found in nature over what is man-made. Take note that the “God” mentioned in lines 12-13 is not necessarily referring to the Christian deity, but possibly to Coleridge’s own unorthodox conception of a divine spirit existing in nature. (See ‘The Eolian Harp’).

13 - 14 This line echoes Biblical language. Psalm 51:17, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”. The concluding couplet thus emphasises the smallness and the humility of the speaker, in comparison to God, to whom he has made a “poor sacrifice”. Some interpretations of this poem assume the “poor sacrifice” to refer to the aforementioned “incense” of the wild flower (lines 11-12), while others surmise that the poem itself could be the “sacrifice” (i.e. the sonnet itself is a humble attempt to express the poet’s awe of nature).

Work Without Hope (p. 383)*LINES COMPOSED 21ST FEBRUARY, 1827*

All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair -
 The bees are stirring - birds are on the wing -
 And Winter slumbering in the open air,
 Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!
 And I the while, the sole unbusy thing,

5

Nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.

 Yet well I ken the banks where amaranths blow,
 Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow.
 Bloom, O ye amaranths! bloom for whom ye may,
 For me ye bloom not! Glide, rich streams, away!
 With lips unbrightened, wreathless brow, I stroll:
 And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul?
 Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve,
 And Hope without an object cannot live.

10

1827

Genre, context, and title: By 1827, Coleridge was entering the final phase of his life. By this point in his career, Coleridge is grappling with addiction, romantic failure, and a sense of having disappointed his true potential. This poem is a sonnet written in iambic pentameter; however, it departs from the traditional sonnet form. Here, the shift from perfect rhymes to imperfect/half rhymes both draws a listener's attention to the closing lines, while also mirroring the poem's thematic shift in focus from Nature in harmony to the speaker's internal dissonance. This closing half-rhyme couplet, as well as the reversed order of the sestet and octet may also suggest the speaker's lack of closure in finding "Hope".

1 "All Nature seems at work". Consider how the absolute "All" and the capitalisation of "Nature" help to reinforce the argument of the opening line.

1 - 2 Note that the images of "work" here consist of animals in motion: "stirring" or moving about as part of the transition from winter to spring. Their action is purposeful, in contrast to the speaker's inertia.

3 - 4 "And Winter ... a dream of Spring". Consider the connotations of personified *Winter* dreaming of *Spring*. The image of personified Winter "slumbering" while "smiling" could suggest a sense of pleasant anticipation, which mirrors the purposeful action of the animals in lines 1-2. (Spring also often symbolises hope / new beginnings.)

5 "I the while, the sole unbusy thing". The speaker draws a contrast between himself and the rest of Nature in being "unbusy". His emphasis on "sole" implies an aberrant quality; his inertia is both isolating and unnatural.

6 "Nor honey make ...". The syntax focuses on actions that never take place ("nor [verb]") - i.e. all the things the speaker is pointedly not doing, unlike the rest of Nature. Does this imply that the speaker is somehow falling short of what even animals are capable of? Observe how the short monosyllabic clause structure of "nor pair, nor build, nor sing" introduces a cadence not present in the rest of the sestet, which closes the stanza with an acoustic focus on just how "unbusy" the speaker is.

7 "ken the banks where amaranths blow". "ken" = to know of. "amaranths" are a flower associated with immortality. Coleridge wrote in his notebook: "Literally rendered is Flower Fadeless, or never-fading - from the Greek a [meaning] 'not' and maraino, 'to wither'."

8 - 10 "traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow ...". "traced the fount" i.e. observed the fountain / source. "Nectar" is a possible reference to *ambrosia*, the drink of the Greek Gods, associated with immortality and a common symbol for poetic fame or inspiration. The speaker's tragic position seems to be that while he is quite aware of where to discover immortality / achieve poetic fame, he nonetheless believes that this is something he is not meant to obtain. He uses the imperative voice to address both flowers and fount: the amaranths may 'bloom' (for others) but not for him; the "rich streams" will "Glide [...] away". Both images here suggest the speaker's sense of bereftment, with the exclamation marks implying his intense emotions - flowers blooming can symbolise beauty and flourishing, neither of which he has been blessed with; he is figuratively left behind as the streams flow "away" from him, leaving him behind.

11 "lips unbrightened, wreathless brow". The speaker describes his own poor state. Lips are 'unbrightened' as the speaker has not drunk of the symbolic nectar from the 'rich streams'. The 'wreath' here is a reference to laurel wreaths that symbolise fame and achievement: the brow is the speaker's own.

12 "and would you learn the spells that drowse my soul" The speaker here addresses the reader: this question leads up to the final couplet. Another way of reading it is: 'would you, reader, like to know what belief has enthralled me, and put my soul to sleep?' Sleep is used here as a metaphor to describe the speaker's inertia; while Nature in the first stanza is awakening from hibernation into action, he remains figuratively asleep.

13 - 14 The concluding couplet summarises Coleridge's main point, though there are actually *two* statements here. One is what it is like to 'work without hope', and the other is that 'hope' with no 'object' (or purpose) will die. The speaker in effect says 1) I am working, but with no hope; and this is because 2) what hope I have cannot live without a purpose to aim towards.

Constancy to an Ideal Object (p. 332)

Since all that beat about in Nature's range,
 Or veer or vanish; why shouldst thou remain
 The only constant in a world of change,
 O yearning thought! that liv'st but in the brain?
 Call to the hours, that in the distance play,
 The faery people of the future day -
 Fond Thought! not one of all that shining swarm
 Will breathe on thee with life-enkindling breath,
 Till when, like strangers shelt'ring from a storm,
 Hope and Despair meet in the porch of Death!
 Yet still thou haunt'st me; and though well I see,
 She is not thou, and only thou art she,
 Still, still as though some dear embodied good,
 Some living Love before my eyes there stood
 With answering look a ready ear to lend,
 I mourn to thee and say - "Ah! loveliest friend!
 That this the meed of all my toils might be,
 To have a home, an English home, and thee!"
 Vain repetition! Home and Thou are one.
 The peacefull'st cot, the moon shall shine upon,
 Lulled by the thrush and wakened by the lark,
 Without thee were but a becalmèd bark,
 Whose helmsman on an ocean waste and wide
 Sits mute and pale his mouldering helm beside.
 And art thou nothing? Such thou art, as when
 The woodman winding westward up the glen
 At wintry dawn, where o'er the sheep-track's maze
 The viewless snow-mist weaves a glist'ning haze,
 Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
 An image with a glory round its head;
 The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
 Nor knows he makes the shadow, he pursues!

1828

Genre, context, and title: Some biographical and scientific detail is helpful for this poem. For much of his life, Coleridge experienced an intense unrequited love for Sara Hutchinson (not to be confused with his wife, Sarah Fricker), whom he sometimes referred to in his letters as "Asra", an anagram. Coleridge himself was painfully aware that his affection was unrequited and that the romance was impossible. 'Constancy to an Ideal Object' is thus a direct address to the speaker's "yearning thought" that torments him constantly despite being a mere fantasy, yet the speaker's actual attitude to this thought is complex and ambivalent. The poem closes on a striking comparison to the Brocken Spectre that emphasises both the delight of the fantasy and its foolishness. This is curiously a love poem that seems to hardly engage with the actual subject of the speaker's affections!

Title: "Constancy" = loyalty/ permanence. "Ideal" here means perfect, but also imaginary or hypothetical. There is an ambiguity in "Ideal Object", since "object" implies something external and *real*, but an 'ideal' suggests something abstract or imaginative. A large part of the tension of this poem is the degree to which the speaker's pursuit of an "ideal" is of something genuine and substantial, versus a projection from within themselves (see the notes to the last stanza).

1 "Since all that beat about in Nature's range ...". "beat about" = to scour or move around.

2 "Or veer or vanish". "Or" here means "either". The syntax here is difficult. Paraphrase: "Since everything that moves in Nature eventually goes away or disappear ...".

4 "O yearning thought!" Notice how Coleridge is *not* addressing Sara, but his "yearning thought". Pay attention to how the thought is characterised (e.g. lines 7 vs line 16) and note that "thee" in line 16 is still addressing the thought!

5 "Call to the hours, that in the distance play". i.e. appeal to the (future) moments.

6 - 10 "faery" metaphorically likens the people of the "future day" to supernatural "faeries" because they are a product of fantasy. i.e. "Not one of these hypothetical future-people will entertain you or give you life, Thought, because you cannot be made real. This will last until my death, when Hope and Despair finally meet".

7 "Fond thought". "Fond" means "foolish" or "silly", but also can be a term of affection (much like we use the adjective 'fond' today).

10 "Hope and Despair meet in the porch of Death!" There is a paradox here, since Hope and Despair are mutually incompatible qualities. Consider how "Hope" and "Despair" might equally describe the speaker's romantic feelings, and consider how this paradox is also reflected in the wider poem.

12. "She is not thou, and only thou art she". Note the use of chiasmus, in order to heighten the contradictory statement. Importantly, this line establishes that "thou" (the imagined Beloved) is distinct from "she" (the actual Beloved).

13-14. "as though some living good; 'embodied Love'. Notice the adjectives "living" and "embodied", and the implicit contrast with abstract fantasy. Is this imagined fantasy the closest the speaker can come to "embodied" reality?

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16 - 18 “Ah! Loveliest friend! ... an English home, and thee!” Recall from line 12 that we are still addressing the Thought! Consider what this poem is saying about fantasy / imagination in that the *impossible fantasy* is now being addressed as the “Loveliest friend” and a substitute for the real Beloved. Compare this to other poems that discuss fantasy and imagination in love, like ‘The Eve of St Agnes’.

19 “Vain repetition! Home and Thou are one.” A slightly cheesy pun. “*It is pointless repetition to say the words ‘home’ and ‘you’ because you are my home.*” Please do not attempt this as a pick-up line.

20 - 21 “The peacefullest cot ... wakened by the lark”. Note the Pastoral mingling of domestic and natural imagery in the speaker’s portrayal of an idyllic home. Compare this with imagery in ‘Pantisocracy’, for example.

22 - 24 Note the contrast the speaker is creating here with the domestic imagery in the previous lines. Interestingly, when reaching for imagery of desolation and loneliness Coleridge also settles on the same sort of sea-imagery that appears in ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’.

25 “And art thou nothing?” Does the speaker’s “yearning Thought” have any actual substance or value? Lines 26-32 are an answer to this rhetorical question.

25 - 32 The speaker gives an extended analogy in which the “yearning thought” is compared to the visual phenomenon of the Brocken Spectre, in which at high altitudes and in foggy conditions, a person’s shadow can become magnified and with a halo around its head. As you read this section, consider the different images used to characterise both the Thought and the speaker, and think about how this section reflects the conflicting perspectives we have already seen in the poem.

27 - 28 “sheep-track’s maze”, “viewless snow-mist”, “glist’ning haze”. The mazy, obscured imagery here both reflects the foggy conditions under which the Brocken Spectre appears, but also reflects the sense of disorientation that pervades this poem.

30 “image with a glory round its head”. Both the words “image” and “glory” suggest a saint or holy figure with a halo around its head, similar to that seen in traditional Christian art.

31 “enamoured rustic”. A “rustic” is an unsophisticated, unintelligent rural person, whilst “enamoured” means to be infatuated. The speaker compares himself to a superstitious peasant in love with an illusion. Note the tone of self-deprecation that runs throughout this poem! Coleridge is very self-aware of how he comes across.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (p. 167)

IN SEVEN PARTS

Genre, context, and title:

'The Rime of the Ancient Marine', or 'The Ancient Mariner' is a lyrical ballad, and is probably the poem that Coleridge is most famous for, and certainly his longest complete poem. He completed the first version in 1798, working together with his friend and fellow poet William Wordsworth, and claimed that the poem originated from a dream of his friend's, John Cruikshank, who "fancied he saw a skeleton ship with figures on it" (*Reminiscences of Alexander Dyce*, ed. Eichard J. Schrader [1972], 185). The poem itself is difficult to summarise: it uses a frame narrative of an old Mariner stopping a stranger at a wedding in order to narrate the supernatural story of what happened to the Mariner at sea. The poem's difficulty comes (like 'Kubla Khan') from the fact that the narrative is queer and obscure, and sometimes seems to function on dream-logic. That point was both a matter for praise and criticism: Wordsworth noted approvingly to a friend that Coleridge had "meditated a poem on delirium, confounding its own dream-scenery with external things, and connected with the imagery of higher latitudes." (*Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets*, in *De Q Works*, 2:145) More critically, contemporary reviewers sometimes described the poem as unintelligible nonsense, or complained that the punishment of the Mariner seemed out of proportion to his sins, or that the events of the poem seemed to have no connection to each other. Stung by the criticism, Coleridge reworked the poem, removing intentionally archaic spelling from his initial version, changing the argument to foreground the moral punishment, including an epigraph from Burnet in Latin, and adding a marginal gloss that explains the events for readers who had felt bewildered by what was happening.

The title of the poem is a multi-layered pun. The word 'Rime' means frost, and part of the Mariner's experiences involves traversing the freezing South Pole. Alternatively, at various points, both the Mariner and the Wedding Guest are described as being frozen or trapped in particular situations. In another sense, the poem is literally the '*Rhyme*' of the Ancient Mariner: the poem was originally published as 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere, In Seven Parts', and the archaic spelling was an intentional choice by Coleridge to emphasise the strangeness of the tale. Coleridge also made other intentional stylistic choices. As you read, pay special attention to language and sound, like the curious rocking rhythm that comes from the alternating tetrameter and trimeter lines, or how the poem makes use of alliteration and internal rhyme. Consider how *sound* contributes to the hypnotic effect of this poem.

Finally, like 'Kubla Khan', it is important to view this poem not as a logical sequence of cause-and-effect (though Coleridge did stress that there was a logical progression to the poem), but to consider the emotional content and mood that the poem is trying to create. Despite (or in some cases, *because*) of the gloss, the poem features imagery that invites symbolic reading but seems to frustrate it at the same time. In the words of one modern critic, Robert Penn Warren, '*The fable, in broadest and simplest terms, is a story of crime and punishment and repentance and reconciliation ...*' ("A Poem of Pure Imagination", in *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Halmi, Magnuson, and Modiano [2004], 671). For our purposes, the easiest reading of this poem is to take the Mariner's moral from the end of the story: "he prayeth well who loveth well, both man and bird and beast". Consequently, the most useful parts for us would be to look at the Mariner's initial sin against Nature, his torment, and his subsequent repentance and restoration. This is to some degree a flattening of the poem, and more ambitious readers might also reflect on themes related to isolation, alienation, the irrational, and the macabre.

ARGUMENT

How a Ship, having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner cruelly and in contempt of the laws of hospitality killed a Sea-bird and how he was followed by many and strange judgements: and in what manner he came back to this own Country. [1800 edition]

Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit? et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quæ loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, nunquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tanquam in tabulâ, majoris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari: ne mens assuefacta hodiernæ vitæ minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis,

diem a nocte, distinguamus.¹
 --T. BURNET, *Archæol.Phil.* p. 68.

PART I

An ancient Mariner meeteth three Gallants bidden to a wedding-feast, and detaineth one.	It is an ancient Mariner, And he stoppeth one of three. "By thy long grey beard and glittering eye, Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?" ²	
	"The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide, And I am next of kin; The guests are met, the feast is set: May'st hear the merry din."	5
The Wedding Guest is spellbound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.	He holds him with his skinny hand, "There was a ship," quoth he. "Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!" Eftsoons his hand dropt he.	10
	He holds him with his glittering eye - The Wedding-Guest stood still, And listens like a three years' child: The Mariner hath his will. ³	15
	The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone: He cannot choose but hear; And thus spake on that ancient man, The bright-eyed Mariner.	20
	The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared, Merrily did we drop Below the kirk, below the hill, Below the light-house top.	

¹ Translation: I readily believe that there are more invisible than visible Natures in the Universe. But who will explain for us the family of all these beings, and the ranks and relations and distinguishing features and functions of each? What do they do? What places do they inhabit? The human mind has always desired the knowledge of these things, but never attained it. Meanwhile I do not deny that it is helpful sometimes to contemplate in the mind, as on a tablet, the image of the greater and better world; lest the intellect, habituated to the petty things of daily life, narrow itself and sink wholly into trivial thoughts. But at the same time we must be watchful for the truth and keep a sense of proportion, so that we may distinguish the certain from the uncertain, day from night.

² Note how the poem begins with a frame device: the Mariner stopping "one of three" wedding-guests. The wedding feast is already rich with symbolism from a Biblical standpoint as a symbol for heaven, and we can also consider the contrast between the isolated, tormented Mariner on the edge of polite society, and the wedding guest who is joined with other humans in common celebration.

³ Notice how line 13 mirrors line 9: the guest is first physically restrained by the Mariner, then restrained purely by his force of personality (or perhaps something more mystical and sinister). We, like the guest, are also carried along by the strange, compelling quality of the poem.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the line.	The sun came up upon the left, ⁴ Out of the sea came he! And he shone bright, and on the right Went down into the sea.	25
	Higher and higher every day, Till over the mast at noon - The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast, For he heard the loud bassoon. ⁵	30
The wedding-Guest heareth the bridal music; but the Mariner continueth his tale.	The bride hath paced into the hall, Red as a rose is she; Nodding their heads before her goes The merry minstrelsy.	35
	The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast, Yet he cannot choose but hear; And thus spake on that ancient man, The bright-eyed Mariner.	40
The ship driven by a storm towards the south pole.	"And now the storm-blast came, and he Was tyrannous and strong: He struck with his o'ertaking wings And chased us south along.	
	With sloping masts and dipping prow, As who pursued with yell and blow Still treads the shadow of his foe, And forward bends his head, The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast, ⁶ And southward aye we fled. ⁷	45 50
	And now there came both mist and snow, And it grew wondrous cold: And ice, mast-high, came floating by, ⁸ As green as emerald.	
	And through the drifts the snowy clifts Did send a dismal sheen:	55

⁴ Both the sun and moon recur as symbolic images in this poem. Contrast the characterisation of the personified sun here with its appearance elsewhere in the poem.

⁵ The "loud bassoon" reminds us that the wedding guest is currently missing the wedding and reminds us of the contrast between Mariner's poem and the real world. Why does the guest not leave? Part of the strange, mystic power of the poem is because of the irrational, dream-like logic it suggests.

⁶ Notice the use of assonance / internal rhyme in "drove fast" and "loud roared the blast", and how the lines are accelerated to match the storm.

⁷ Take note of the changed rhyme scheme and stanza-length here: what is different from previous sections? What aspect of the ship's journey is the form being used to stress?

⁸ Note how the repetition of "And" creates an accumulative effect through these images. Consider how Nature is presented as alien, vast, and foreboding here. Compare Man's relationship with Nature here with other poems in our collection, and reflect on presentations of the sublime.

The land of ice, and of fearful sounds where no living thing was to be seen.	Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken - The ice was all between.	
Till a great seabird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog, and was received with great joy and hospitality.	The ice was here, the ice was there, The ice was all around: It cracked and growled, and roared and howled, ⁹ Like noises in a swound*! <i>a fainting spell</i>	60
And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen, and followeth the ship as it returned north-ward through fog and floating ice.	At length did cross an Albatross, Thorough ¹⁰ the fog it came; As if it had been a Christian soul, We hailed it in God's name. ¹¹	65
	It ate the food it ne'er had eat, And round and round it flew. The ice did split with a thunder-fit; The helmsman steered us through!	70
	And a good south wind sprung up behind; The Albatross did follow, And every day, for food or play, Came to the mariners' hollo!	
	In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud*, <i>ship's rigging</i> It perched for vespers ¹² nine; Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white, Glimmered the white moon-shine."	75
The ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen.	"God save thee, ancient Mariner! From the fiends, that plague thee thus! - Why look'st thou so?" - With my cross-bow I shot the albatross. ¹³	80

⁹ The poem often makes use of internal rhyme and repetition to emphasise particular images: this line is a particularly striking example. This image of being surrounded by hostile Nature is also echoed in lines 119-124.

¹⁰ i.e. Through. Coleridge takes some license in changing it to "Thorough" for the sake of the poetic meter.

¹¹ It was Wordsworth who suggested the killing of the albatross to Coleridge, linking it to a 'tutelary spirit' (or guiding spirit) of the region. Common superstition held that albatrosses were the souls of sailors lost at sea and brought good fortune: Coleridge further makes the link by comparing it to a "Christian soul". The Mariner's unprovoked killing of the bird is thus framed as a crime both spiritually and morally.

¹² Evening prayer service. "vespers" are a traditional hour for prayer, and a vesper is an individual song or prayer. Note the link again between the albatross and the divine.

¹³ The Mariner's action in killing the albatross is the moral catalyst for everything that follows, which Coleridge takes pains to make clear in his gloss. Coleridge never provides any reason for why the Mariner might have done this. Note how "cross"-bow also suggests the Christian cross.

PART II

	The Sun now rose upon the right: Out of the sea came he, Still hid in mist, and on the left Went down into the sea.	85
	And the good south wind still blew behind, But no sweet bird did follow, Nor any day for food or play Came to the mariners' hollo!	90
His shipmates cry out against the ancient Mariner, for killing the bird of good luck.	And I had done a hellish thing, And it would work 'em woe: For all averred, I had killed the bird That made the breeze to blow. Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay, That made the breeze to blow!	95
But when the fog cleared off, they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime.	Nor dim nor red, like God's own head, The glorious Sun uprist:¹⁴ Then all averred, I had killed the bird That brought the fog and mist. 'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay, That bring the fog and mist.¹⁵	100
The fair breeze continues; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line.	The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, The furrow followed free;¹⁶ We were the first that ever burst Into that silent sea.¹⁷	105
The ship hath been suddenly decalmed.	Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down, 'Twas sad as sad could be; And we did speak only to break The silence of the sea!	110
	All in a hot and copper sky, The bloody Sun, at noon, Right up above the mast did stand, No bigger than the Moon.	

¹⁴ The sun is *not* dim and *not* red: the Sun is instead "glorious" and "like God's own head". The link between the sun and God becomes sinister in line 112, as the "bloody Sun" suggests divine judgement for crime.

¹⁵ The sailors quickly change their mind about the albatross based on the weather, despite it having been a friendly and hospitable bird.

Coleridge, in his gloss, takes pains to stress that the sailors are morally in the wrong here for their hypocrisy: some critics complained that the fate of the sailors seemed undeserved and especially grisly.

¹⁶ The striking alliterations here emphasise the sense of movement arising from the "fair breeze" that moves the ship, and thereby creates more striking contrast with the immobility of the ship in the next stanza.

¹⁷ Echoes of 'Kubla Khan' in the phrase "silent sea". Note the emphasis on human isolation amidst nature.

	Day after day, day after day, We stuck, nor breath nor motion; As idle as a painted ship Upon a painted ocean.	115
And the Albatross begins to be avenged.	Water, water, every where, And all the boards did shrink; Water, water, every where Nor any drop to drink. ¹⁸	120
*A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinople, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.	The very deep did rot: O Christ! That ever this should be! Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs Upon the slimy sea. ¹⁹	125
	About, about, in reel and rout The death-fires ²⁰ danced at night; The water, like a witch's oils, Burnt green, and blue and white. ²¹	130
	*And some in dreams assurèd were , Of the spirit that plagued us so; Nine fathom deep he had followed us From the land of mist and snow ²² .	
	And every tongue, through utter drought, Was withered at the root; We could not speak, no more than if We had been choked with soot.	135
The shipmates in their sore distress would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner: in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.	Ah! well a-day! what evil looks Had I from old and young! Instead of the cross, the Albatross About my neck was hung. ²³	140

¹⁸ Lines 115 to 122 speak of being trapped in a changeless environment. Note how repetition is used to create a sense of stasis and entrapment (and compare this to, for example, the use of repetition in 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci').

¹⁹ Notice how the "silent sea" has now become the "slimy sea", and the speaker's revulsion towards nature, full of "slimy things with legs". Compare this with lines 236-239 and the notes for those lines.

²⁰ St Elmo's fire, a real phenomenon where masts at sea produce an electrostatic glow.

²¹ Echoes of the witches' song in *Macbeth* 1.3.30-32: "The weird sisters hand in hand, / Posters of the sea and land, / Thus do go about, about." Note how the colours of nature here are associated with sinister, evil magic, ('water like a witch's oils') and compare this with lines 272-281.

²² I.e. a demon from the Polar region, where the ship has just been. Notice how it is through dreams that the sailors learn the real nature of the world they are in. Compare this with 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' or 'Isabella, or the Pot of Basil'.

²³ A Christian cross symbolises the death of Christ, and forgiveness for the individual believer. Here, however, the albatross' corpse functions as a reminder of sin and punishment *instead* of the forgiveness and grace represented by the cross.

PART III

The ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off.	There passed a weary time. Each throat Was parched, and glazed each eye. A weary time! a weary time! How glazed each weary eye, When looking westward, I beheld A something in the sky.	145
	At first it seemed a little speck, And then it seemed a mist; It moved and moved, and took at last A certain shape, I wist.	150
	A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist! And still it neared and neared: As if it dodged a water-sprite, It plunged and tacked and veered. ²⁴	155
At its nearer approach, it seemeth him to be a ship; and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.	With throats unslaked, with black lips baked, We could nor laugh nor wail; Through utter drought all dumb we stood! I bit my arm, I sucked the blood, And cried, A sail! a sail!	160
A flash of joy;	With throats unslaked, with black lips baked, Agape they heard me call: Gramercy ²⁵ ! they for joy did grin, And all at once their breath drew in, As they were drinking all.	165
And horror follows. For can it be a ship that comes onward without wind or tide?	See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more! Hither to work us weal*; <i>benefit</i> Without a breeze, without a tide ²⁶ , She steadies with upright keel!	170
	The western wave was all a-flame. ²⁷ The day was well nigh done! Almost upon the western wave Rested the broad bright Sun; When that strange shape drove suddenly Betwixt us and the Sun.	175

²⁴ Take time to highlight the descriptive 1) nouns and 2) verbs in lines 149-156. Notice how the poem builds uncertainty about the nature of the coming ship, and hints at its supernatural, otherworldly nature.

²⁵ Archaic: great thanks. Note the ironic invocation of "mercy": if we consider this poem a story of guilt and punishment, to what extent can we consider the Mariner's survival a "mercy" instead of a curse?

²⁶ Sailing ships cannot move without a breeze or tide. The poem builds growing suspense about the nature of this ship.

²⁷ The wave is "aflame" because of the light from the setting sun (173-176).

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.	And straight the Sun was flecked with bars, (Heaven's Mother send us grace!) As if through a dungeon-grate he peered With broad and burning face. ²⁸	180
	Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud) How fast she nears and nears! Are those her sails that glance in the Sun, Like restless gossameres*? <i>thin translucent fabric</i>	
And it ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun. The Spectre-Woman and her Death-mate, and no other on board the skeleton ship.	Are those her ribs ²⁹ through which the Sun Did peer, as through a grate? And is that Woman all her crew? Is that a Death? and are there two? Is Death that Woman's mate ³⁰ ?	185
Like vessel, like crew!	Her lips were red, her looks were free ³¹ , Her locks were yellow as gold: Her skin was as white as leprosy, The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she, Who thicks man's blood with cold.	190
Death and Life-in-Death have diced for the ship's crew, and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner.	The naked hulk* alongside came, <i>ruined ship</i> And the twain were casting dice; "The game is done! I've, I've won!" Quoth she, and whistles thrice.	195
No twilight within the courts of the Sun.	The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out: At one stride comes the dark; With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea, Off shot the spectre-bark.	200
At the rising of the Moon,	We listened and looked sideways up! Fear at my heart, as at a cup, My life-blood seemed to sip! The stars were dim, and thick the night, The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white; From the sails the dew did drip-- Till clomb* above the eastern bar <i>climbed</i> The hornèd Moon, with one bright star Within the nether tip. ³²	205 210

²⁸ Notice how the strange ship interposes itself "betwixt us and the Sun", and the language of prisons ("bars", "dungeon-grate"). Consider the possible symbolic undertones since the Sun was previously associated with God or the divine. See lines 244-247.

²⁹ I.e. the wooden ribs of the ship, but also suggesting the ribs of a skeleton. The overall image created is of a ghostly, decayed ship. Interestingly, the Mariner's own ship is described in a similar way when he is eventually rescued.

³⁰ Coleridge is drawing on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which Sin and Death are similarly represented as a woman and a skeleton.

³¹ Note how "red" lips and "free" looks denote sensuality and wantonness, in macabre contrast to her surroundings and her skin like "leprosy".

³² Note how the obscuration of the Sun and the appearance of the Moon herald the supernatural deaths of the crew. The Moon was commonly associated with magic, imagination, feminine energy, and the sinister.

One after another,	One after one, by the star-dogged Moon, Too quick for groan or sigh, Each turned his face with a ghastly pang, And cursed me with his eye.	215
His shipmates drop down dead.	Four times fifty living men, (And I heard nor sigh nor groan) With heavy thump, a lifeless lump, They dropped down one by one. The souls did from their bodies fly, -	220
But Life-in-Death begins her work on the ancient Mariner.	They fled to bliss or woe ³³ ! And every soul, it passed me by, Like the whizz of my cross-bow!	

PART IV

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a Spirit is talking to him;	"I fear thee, ancient Mariner! I fear thy skinny hand! And thou art long, and lank, and brown, As is the ribbed sea-sand.	225
But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.	I fear thee and thy glittering eye, And thy skinny hand, so brown." - Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest! This body dropt not down.	230
	Alone, alone, all, all alone, ³⁴ Alone on a wide wide sea! And never a saint took pity on My soul in agony.	235
He despiseth the creatures of the calm,	The many men, so beautiful! And they all dead did lie: And a thousand thousand slimy things Lived on; and so did I. ³⁵	
And envieth that <i>they</i> should live, and so many lie dead.	I looked upon the rotting sea, And drew my eyes away; I looked upon the rotting deck,	240

³³ Traditionally, souls would either go to heaven or hell, though this poem seems quite uninterested in where the souls go and the existence of an afterlife. This is very much not a traditional Christian poem, despite the use of some Christian imagery.

³⁴ Note the striking use of alliteration and repetition in this line. To some degree, this whole poem is about how the Mariner is "alone" and alienated from the rest of humanity.

³⁵ This line recalls lines 125-126, but notice how the speaker now includes *himself* in the same category of 'slimy things' and apart from the common humanity of the "many men, so beautiful".

	And there the dead men lay.	
	I looked to heaven, and tried to pray; But or ever a prayer had gusht, A wicked whisper came, and made My heart as dry as dust. ³⁶	245
	I closed my lids, and kept them close, And the balls like pulses beat; For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky, Lay like a load on my weary eye, And the dead were at my feet.	250
But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the dead men.	The cold sweat melted from their limbs, Nor rot nor reek did they: The look with which they looked on me Had never passed away.	255
*In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and every where the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter un-announced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.	An orphan's curse would drag to hell A spirit from on high; But oh! more horrible than that Is a curse in a dead man's eye! Seven days, seven nights ³⁷ , I saw that curse, And yet I could not die.	260
	*The moving Moon went up the sky, And no where did abide: Softly she was going up, And a star or two beside -	265
	Her beams* bemoaned the sultry main*, <i>moonbeams / humid ocean</i> Like April hoar-frost spread; But where the ship's huge shadow lay, The charmed water burnt always A still and awful red.	270
By the light of the moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm.	Beyond the shadow of the ship, I watched the water-snakes: They moved in tracks of shining white, And when they reared, the elfish light Fell off in hoary flakes.	275
	Within the shadow of the ship	

³⁶ Note the significance of the Mariner being unable to pray, and compare this to lines 282-291 later, when he finally recognises beauty in Nature. Consider how this poem presents man's relationship with the Divine, and how it is connected to his experience of Nature.

³⁷ In the Biblical book of Job, the eponymous Job is cursed by the devil and suffers a string of calamities to the point where he is a Biblical byword for suffering. See Job 2:13: "Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was."

Their beauty and their happiness.	I watched their rich attire: Blue, glossy green, and velvet black, They coiled and swam; and every track Was a flash of golden fire. ³⁸	280
He blesseth them in his heart.	O happy living things! no tongue Their beauty might declare: A spring of love gushed from my heart, And I blessed them unaware: Sure my kind saint took pity on me, And I blessed them unaware.	285
And the spell begins to break.	The selfsame moment I could pray; And from my neck so free The Albatross fell off, and sank Like lead into the sea. ³⁹	290

PART V

By the grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain.	Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing, Beloved from pole to pole! To Mary Queen* the praise be given! <i>Virgin Mary</i> She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven, That slid into my soul. 295
	The silly* buckets on the deck, <i>Archaic: 'useless' rather than 'foolish'</i> That had so long remained, I dreamt that they were filled with dew; And when I awoke, it rained. 300
	My lips were wet, my throat was cold, My garments all were dank; Sure I had drunken in my dreams, ⁴⁰ And still my body drank.
	I moved, and could not feel my limbs: 305 I was so light - almost I thought that I had died in sleep, And was a blessed ghost.

³⁸ These are important lines. Compare this to lines 127-130: notice how almost the same colours in Nature are being observed, but here the Mariner sees them as luxurious "rich attire", "glossy", and beautiful "golden fire". Meanwhile the "slimy things" of the ocean are now water-snakes that emit holy "shining white" and "elfish light". Consider how the same images of Nature now seem ethereal and magical to the Mariner, rather than horrid and diabolical, and that this 1) enables him to pray and "bless them unaware" which results in 2) the albatross falling off his neck.

³⁹ Note the symbolism here: the moment the Mariner is able to see beauty in living creatures, he is able to pray, and the albatross falls from his neck and into the sea. Note the key use of the word "free" in this verse.

⁴⁰ I.e. Though I had drunk water in my sleep, still my body was thirsty.

He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the element.	And soon I heard a roaring wind: It did not come anear; But with its sound it shook the sails, That were so thin and sere.	310
	The upper air burst into life! And a hundred fire-flags sheen, ⁴¹ To and fro they were hurried about! And to and fro, and in and out, The wan stars danced between.	315
	And the coming wind did roar more loud, And the sails did sigh like sedge*; <i>river plants</i> And the rain poured down from one black cloud; The Moon was at its edge.	320
	The thick black cloud was cleft, and still The Moon was at its side: Like waters shot from some high crag, The lightning fell with never a jag, A river steep and wide.	325
The bodies of the ship's crew are inspired, and the ship moves on;	The loud wind never reached the ship, Yet now the ship moved on! Beneath the lightning and the moon The dead men gave a groan.	330
	They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose, Nor spake, nor moved their eyes; It had been strange, even in a dream, To have seen those dead men rise.	
	The helmsman steered, the ship moved on; Yet never a breeze up blew; ⁴² The mariners all 'gan work the ropes, Where they were wont to do; They raised their limbs like lifeless tools - We were a ghastly crew. ⁴³	335 340
	The body of my brother's son ⁴⁴ Stood by me, knee to knee: The body and I pulled at one rope But he said nought to me.	

⁴¹ Coleridge is imagining the aurora borealis of the Northern Hemisphere. Compare this section to the "dance" of the "death-fires" in lines 127-130, and note the Mariner's different attitude to Nature.

⁴² Compare this to the movement of the ruined ship crewed by Death and Life-in-Death.

⁴³ Notice the macabre switch from "They" to "We" in this line.

⁴⁴ The familiarity and companionship of 'my brother's son' is subverted by the macabre reference to his (dead) "body".

But not by the souls of the men, nor by daemons of earth or middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint.	"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!" Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest! 'Twas not those souls that fled in pain, Which to their corpses* came again, <i>corpses</i> But a troop of spirits blest: ⁴⁵	345
	For when it dawned - they dropped their arms, And clustered round the mast; Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths, And from their bodies passed.	350
	Around, around, flew each sweet sound, Then darted to the Sun; ⁴⁶ Slowly the sounds came back again, Now mixed, now one by one.	355
	Sometimes a-dropping from the sky I heard the sky-lark sing ⁴⁷ ; Sometimes all little birds that are, How they seemed to fill the sea and air With their sweet jargoning!	360
	And now 'twas like all instruments, Now like a lonely flute; And now it is an angel's song, That makes the heavens be mute.	365
	It ceased; yet still the sails made on A pleasant noise till noon, A noise like of a hidden brook In the leafy month of June, That to the sleeping woods all night Singeth a quiet tune. ⁴⁸	370
	Till noon we quietly sailed on, Yet never a breeze did breathe: Slowly and smoothly went the ship, Moved onward from beneath.	375
The lonesome Spirit from the south-pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to	Under the keel nine fathom deep, From the land of mist and snow, The spirit slid: and it was he	

⁴⁵ Coleridge takes pains to note in this line (a later addition) and the gloss that these are not demons but 'spirits blest', or angelic spirits, though in fairness to his critics this seems at odds with the macabre and terrifying image he has created.

⁴⁶ Is this another hint that the Sun is associated with God or heaven?

⁴⁷ Notice how the spirits that "flew" as "sweet sound" (line 354) are linked to the singing "sky-lark", a symbol of joy and freedom.

⁴⁸ Notice the use of assonance linking the natural imagery together: "noon", "June", "brook", "woods". Contrast this image of peaceful, gentle Nature with how Nature was presented in the previous parts of this poem.

the angelic troop, but still
requireth vengeance.

That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

380

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion -
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

385

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond*.

390

fainting spell

The Polar Spirit's
fellow-daemons, the invisible
inhabitants of the element, take
part in his wrong; and two of
them relate, one to the other,
that penance long and heavy for
the ancient. Mariner hath been
accorded to the Polar Spirit, who
returneth southward.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not* to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

am unable

395

"Is it he?" quoth one, "Is this the man?
By him who died on cross⁴⁹,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

400

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow."
The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do."⁵⁰

405

PART VI

FIRST VOICE

"But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing -
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?"

410

⁴⁹ I.e. Jesus Christ. Note that lines 400-401 remind us of the association between "cross" and "crossbow".

⁵⁰ In religious terms, "penance" was a set of activities one would undertake as a form of contrition / punishment for one's sinful actions. How can we understand the content of this poem as a story of "penance", and what is the Mariner's sin?

SECOND VOICE

"Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast - 415

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him." 420

The Mariner hath been cast into
a trance; for the angelic power
causeth the vessel to drive
northward faster than human
life could endure.

FIRST VOICE

"But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?"

SECOND VOICE

"The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind. 425

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated."

The supernatural motion is
retarded; the Mariner awakes,
and his penance begins anew.

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high,
The dead men stood together. 420

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter⁵¹: 425
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs, 430
Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse is finally expiated.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen - 435

Like one, that on a lonesome road

⁵¹ i.e. Fitter for a charnel-dungeon [than the deck of a ship].

Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend 440
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea⁵²,
In ripple or in shade. 445

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring--⁵³
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship, 450
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze -
On me alone it blew.

And the ancient Mariner
beholdeth his native country.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed 455
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk⁵⁴?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray -
O let me be awake, my God! 460
Or let me sleep alway⁵⁵.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon. 465

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

⁵² The wind the Mariner felt left no visible traces on the sea.

⁵³ Compare the language of a "meadow-gale" to the description of the noise of the sails in lines 367-372. Note the associations with Pastoral imagery.

⁵⁴ Regional Scottish / North English. "kirk" = Church. Note the significance of the church as a landmark for a story of sin, repentance, and penance.

⁵⁵ 'Alway' = forever. I.e. let this vision be real, God, or if it is a dream, let me sleep forever and not wake up.

The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies,	And the bay was white with silent light Till rising from the same, Full many shapes, that shadows were, In crimson colours came.	470
And appear in their own forms of light.	A little distance from the prow Those crimson shadows were: I turned my eyes upon the deck - Oh, Christ! what saw I there!	475
	Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat, And, by the holy rood*! <i>holy cross</i> A man all light, a seraph-man, On every corse there stood.	480
	This seraph-band, each waved his hand: It was a heavenly sight! They stood as signals to the land, Each one a lovely light;	485
	This seraph-band, each waved his hand, No voice did they impart - No voice; but oh! the silence sank Like music on my heart. ⁵⁶	
	But soon I heard the dash of oars, I heard the Pilot's ⁵⁷ cheer; My head was turned perforce away, And I saw a boat appear.	490
	The Pilot and the Pilot's boy, I heard them coming fast: Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy The dead men could not blast.	495
	I saw a third - I heard his voice: It is the Hermit good! He singeth loud his godly hymns That he makes in the wood. He'll shrive ⁵⁸ my soul, he'll wash away The Albatross's blood.	500

⁵⁶ Contrast this heavenly silence to the 'silence of the sea' in Part II.

⁵⁷ A pilot guides ships through difficult waters close to land.

⁵⁸ Another spelling for "shrive". Religious: to hear someone's confession and absolve them of guilt. One of the ambiguities of this poem is whether the Mariner ever truly is forgiven.

PART VII

The Hermit of the Wood,	This Hermit good lives in that wood Which slopes down to the sea. How loudly his sweet voice he rears! He loves to talk with marineres That come from a far countree.	505
	He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve - He hath a cushion plump: It is the moss that wholly hides The rotted old oak-stump.	510
	The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk, "Why, this is strange, I trow! Where are those lights so many and fair, That signal made but now?"	515
Approacheth the ship with wonder.	"Strange, by my faith!" the Hermit said - "And they answered not our cheer! The planks looked warped! and see those sails, How thin they are and sere! ⁵⁹ I never saw aught like to them, Unless perchance it were	520
	Brown skeletons of leaves that lag My forest-brook along; When the ivy-tod* is heavy with snow, <i>ivy-bush</i> And the owlet whoops to the wolf below, That eats the she-wolf's young. ⁶⁰	525
	"Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look- ⁶¹ (The Pilot made reply) I am a-feared" - "Push on, push on!" Said the Hermit cheerily.	530
	The boat came closer to the ship, But I nor spake nor stirred; The boat came close beneath the ship, And straight a sound was heard.	535
	Under the water it rumbled on,	

⁵⁹ The Mariner's ship is now described in the same terms as the ghost ship in Part III. The Mariner now seems to find himself alienated and estranged from ordinary human beings (as the framing narrative shows).

⁶⁰ The owlet cries out to the wolf, that has eaten his mate's young (its own children). Both the Mariner and the Pilot have now compared the ship to nature (see 367-372), but note how the Pilot's language uses imagery that is macabre and sinister ("Brown skeletons", "ivy-tod", "eats the she-wolf's young") in comparison to the Mariner's gentle imagery.

⁶¹ Note the word "fiendish", and how the Mariner himself seems like a devil to other human beings.

The ship suddenly sinketh.	Still louder and more dread: It reached the ship, it split the bay; The ship went down like lead. ⁶²	
The ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat.	Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound, Which sky and ocean smote, Like one that hath been seven days drowned My body lay afloat; But swift as dreams, myself I found Within the Pilot's boat.	540 545
	Upon the whirl, where sank the ship, The boat spun round and round; And all was still, save that the hill Was telling of the sound.	
	I moved my lips - the Pilot shrieked And fell down in a fit; The holy Hermit raised his eyes, And prayed where he did sit.	550
	I took the oars: the Pilot's boy, Who now doth crazy go, Laughed loud and long, and all the while His eyes went to and fro. "Ha! ha!" quoth he, "full plain I see, The Devil knows how to row."	555
	And now, all in my own countree, I stood on the firm land! The Hermit stepped forth from the boat, And scarcely he could stand.	560
The ancient Mariner earnestly entreath the Hermit to shrieve him; and the penance of life falls on him.	"O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!" The Hermit crossed his brow. "Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say What manner of man art thou?" ⁶³	565
	Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched With a woful agony, Which forced me to begin my tale; And then it left me free.	570
	Since then, at an uncertain hour, That agony returns:	

⁶² Compare this to the albatross sinking "like lead into the sea" (line 291).

⁶³ Interestingly, the Mariner's story ends on this question. Is it ever answered? What sort of man is the Mariner? The poem is perhaps asking the same question of the reader.

And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land;	And till my ghastly tale is told, This heart within me burns.	575
	I pass, like night, from land to land; I have strange power of speech; That moment that his face I see, I know the man that must hear me: To him my tale I teach. ⁶⁴	580
	What loud uproar bursts from that door! The wedding-guests are there:	
	But in the garden-bower the bride And bride-maids singing are: And hark the little vesper bell, Which biddeth me to prayer!	585
	O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been Alone on a wide wide sea: So lonely 'twas, that God himself Scarce seemed there to be.	590
	O sweeter than the marriage-feast, Tis sweeter far to me, To walk together to the kirk With a goodly company! -	
	To walk together to the kirk, And all together pray, While each to his great Father bends, Old men, and babes, and loving friends, And youths and maidens gay! ⁶⁵	595
And to teach, by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth,	Farewell, farewell! but this I tell To thee, thou Wedding-Guest! He prayeth well, who loveth well Both man and bird and beast. ⁶⁶	600
	He prayeth best, who loveth best All things both great and small; For the dear God who loveth us,	605

⁶⁴ The Mariner is compelled to tell his story, and his "strange power of speech" compels people to listen. Could this perhaps be an indirect metaphor for poets and poetry?

⁶⁵ It is striking that, despite the Mariner's recommendation, this whole poem has been about the Mariner *stopping* the Wedding Guest from joining the "goodly company" of 'Old men, and babes, and loving friends', and that the Mariner doesn't actually join the company for prayer but ends as an isolated figure. Moments like these contribute to the ambiguities of the wider message of the poem.

⁶⁶ Note the addition of "and bird and beast": consider what this poem is saying about the relationship between Man and Nature.

He made and loveth all.⁶⁷

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest 610
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. 615

1797-1798.

⁶⁷ This is, ostensibly, the moral of the poem. Coleridge in later years made a revealing comment: "Mrs Barbauld told me that the only faults she found with the Ancient Mariner were – that it was improbable, and had no moral ... I told her that in my judgement the chief fault of the poem was that it had too much moral, and that too openly obtruded on the reader. It ought to have had no more moral than the story [in *The Arabian Nights*] of the merchant sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well and throwing the shells aside, and the Genii starting up and saying he must kill the merchant, because a date shell had put out the eye of the Genii's son." (*Table Talk*, ed. Carl Woodring, 1990, 1:149, 2:100).

On Peace (p. 4)

O Peace! and dost thou with thy presence bless	
The dwellings of this war-surrounded Isle*;	<i>the United Kingdom</i>
Soothing with placid brow our late distress,	
Making the triple kingdom* brightly smile?	<i>England, Ireland, Scotland: the British Isles</i>
Joyful I hail thy presence; and I hail	5
The sweet companions* that await on thee;	<i>he hopes liberalisation and reform will ensue</i>
Complete my joy - let not my first wish* fail,	<i>his wish that the newly obtained peace will not fail</i>
Let the sweet mountain nymph thy favourite be,	
With England's happiness proclaim Europa's* Liberty.	<i>Europe</i>
O Europe! let not sceptred tyrants* see	10 <i>Napoleon crowned himself Emperor of France</i>
That thou must shelter in thy former state;	
Keep thy chains burst, and boldly say thou art free;	
Give thy kings law* - leave not uncurbed the great;	<i>The poet calls for order and justice</i>
So with the horrors past thou'lt* win thy happier fate!	<i>thou wilt/will</i>

Genre, context and title: In this early poem written by Keats in August 1814, the poet addresses the personified figure of Peace (in the style of an ode, a poem of praise), expressing a longing for the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and a hope that happiness will ensue. Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France, was finally defeated at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, which effectively ended 23 years of France's attempts to dominate Europe.

One of Keats' few political poems; see also 'Sonnet. In Praise of Vulgar Superstition', where he attacks the church for trapping the minds of the people. While Coleridge lived in the time of the French Revolution (he was 16 when it began in 1789), the event which eventually led to the rise of the dictator Napoleon, and was aware of its descent into terror and violence, the French Revolution was largely over by the time Keats was born, though England was at war with France throughout his short life.

8 It is significant that peace and liberty are associated with the pastoral, with nature ('sweet mountain nymph'), which sets up a contrast between the serenity of the natural world and the violence and chaos of the human world, which purports to fight for freedom. See the same idea presented in poems like Coleridge's 'France: an Ode'.

12 'Keep thy chains burst, and boldly say thou art free'. A possible reference to philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's view that 'Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains'.

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On Seeing the Elgin Marbles (p. 34)

My spirit is too weak - mortality
 Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
 And each imagined pinnacle and steep
 Of godlike hardship, tells me I must die
 Like a sick eagle looking at the sky. 5
 Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep
 That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
 Fresh* for the opening of the morning's eye**. *vital and young; the Sun / imagination*
 Such dim-conceivèd glories of the brain
 Bring round the heart an undescribable feud; 10
 So do these wonders a most dizzy pain
 That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
 Wasting of old Time - with a billowy main* - *storm-tossed seas*
 A sun - a shadow of a magnitude.

Genre, context and title: Written in 1817, this sonnet offers a contemplation of art, life and mortality through the Elgin Marbles. The Elgin Marbles are a collection of Ancient Greek marble sculptures from the Parthenon and other structures from the Acropolis of Athens, consisting of fragments of Phidias' frieze depicting warriors and some metopes. Lord Elgin, a British nobleman, diplomat and art collector, had them removed from Ottoman Greece and shipped to Britain, where they were displayed in the British Museum in London in early 1817. Keats regularly visited these reliefs of gods and humans, and they were an abiding visual and thematic influence on his work.

1 Unlike 'Ode to a Grecian Urn', this poem does not begin with a contemplation of the work of art itself. Instead, the first 8 lines of the sonnet (the octet or octave) highlight the burden the speaker feels as he admires the Elgin Marbles. Note how this burden is presented in the opening lines of the poem which is interrupted by the caesura and followed by the word "mortality", which almost literally "weighs heavily" on the enjambed first line.

9 The struggles the speaker experiences in the octave remain unresolved in the sestet which offers a series of contradictory images that reinforce the contrasting effects of art. On the one hand, the Elgin Marbles serve as a reminder of the pinnacle of human achievement, their "Grecian grandeur" evoking a sense of awe and wonder. At the same time, "these wonders" are "mingle[d]" with the "rude / Wasting of old Time", since the statues themselves are no longer as perfect or as beautiful as they once were, and are equally subject to time and decay. Human achievement is thus inseparable from human limitations, and like man, works of art are also not quite permanent or eternal as their glory may fade with time.

Consider the variations between Keats' poems on art and how they reflect his world view. Chapman's translation of Homer evokes awe and an unmistakable joy and wonder while the Grecian urn evokes a more questioning and contemplative attitude on larger philosophical "Truth[s]" that coexist with "Beauty". The response to the Elgin Marbles is perhaps the most bleak - the reference to the "shadow of a magnitude" at the end of the poem, highlighting the insubstantiality of even the most glorious things.

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer (p. 12)

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
 Round many western islands have I been
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold. *the Greek sun-god, patron deity of poetry and music*
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told 5
 That deep-browed Homer* ruled as his demesne*; *the blind Greek poet; domain, territory*
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
 Then felt I like some watcher of the skies* *astronomer*
 When a new planet swims into his ken; 10
 Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
 He stared at the Pacific - and all his men
 Looked at each other with a wild surmise -
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien*. *on the east side of the Isthmus of Panama*

Genre, context and title: In October 1816, under his mentor Clarke's guidance, Keats had been reading an edition of George Chapman's translation of Homer's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' (describing the siege of Troy by the Greeks and the subsequent wanderings of the legendary Greek King Odysseus). This edition had been published early in the 17th century. Keats and Clarke stayed up all night reading and, when Clarke eventually went home, Keats sat down and wrote this sonnet straight out, sending it round to Clarke, so that it would be on his breakfast table.

The dominant idea presented in the poem is that of reading as a journey of discovery, one inspired by Homer's epic poem 'The Odyssey', which is in fact about the ten-year journey home by Greek hero Odysseus, king of Ithaca, after the Trojan War. ('Odyssey' = 'journey'). The poem combines this ancient, classical story with more recent reference to journeys of the 16th century Spanish explorers and conquistadors for God, Glory and Gold.

1 The phrase **"the realms of gold"** has many implications, referring to:

- i) The Classical Age, also called the Golden Age – underlining Keats' fondness for classical mythology and literature; a reference to the realms of the imagination (or more specifically, according to Leigh Hunt, of poetry);
- ii) El Dorado, the golden city – which likens the idea of reading (discovery of truths and insights) to an exploration, a quest for rare precious minerals (and presents the reader as an explorer seeking new lands);
- iii) The gold binding of books – underlining the idea of books as treasures.

4 "Round many western islands have I been/Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold" the obligation of fidelity due to a vassal to his master in feudal times. This also conveys Keats' allegiance to and love of classical poetry and mythology.

5 "Oft of one wide expanse had I been told" Comment on the effects achieved by the long open vowels here.

11 "stout Cortez" It was in fact Vasco Nunez de Balboa (1475 -1519) who in 1513 was the first European to see the Pacific, from a Darien mountain. Cortez (1485-1547) conquered Mexico for Spain several years later, entering Mexico City in 1519.

11 - 13 "Cortez with eagle eyes/He stared at the Pacific – and all his men/Looked at each other" The focus on seeing and sight in here as well as in the title ('On First Looking ...') underlines the idea of reading, which is about abstract, second-hand understanding, as a direct, profound and transformative visual revelation. The poem ends climactically, with a sense of discovery, epiphany and revelation, communicating Keats' wonder at discovering the full beauty and power of Homer's works through George Chapman's translation ('Chapman spoke out loud and clear').

Keats revised some of the lines. Consider what is achieved by the changes:

Line 7	Yet could I never tell what men could mean Yet could I never judge what men could mean Yet did I never breathe its pure serene.	FINAL VERSION
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Line 11	Or like stout Cortez, when with wondering eyes Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes	FINAL VERSION
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9539 / 02: The English Romantic Period (1785-1832) Section

13 – 14 To surmise is to suppose that something is true without having evidence to confirm it. **“wild surmise .../Silent”** can be said to sum up the Romantic response to the grandeur and beauty of nature – a sense of being struck speechless, completely overcome by awe and wonder, a powerful, instinctive response that transcends understanding and logic.

Consider the lone status of the poet, the discoverer; In ‘Chapman’, the poet is the sole wanderer and discoverer (he likens himself to the astronomer, conquistador, the Greek hero Ulysses), he is set apart from ordinary men because of his superior ability to grasp truth and insight.

A poem which can be considered to be about Keats searching for a defining role in life: The moment of epiphanic revelation, which marks the poet as someone who has found his literary goal in life (he too longs to be a great poet like Homer), as the individual who stands out from the crowd, with his singular ability to see (the beauty of Homer’s poetry), and desire to be similarly talented. The mountain peak symbolises the extent of his literary ambition and aspiration.

Consider other poems which convey the poet’s self-definition of his role and destiny as Romantic poets e.g. In Coleridge’s ‘To Nature’, he declares himself to be a priest, humbly offering his poem in worship of Nature. In ‘Ode to Psyche’, Keats offers his poem as a tribute to the goddess Psyche, thereby presenting himself as an advocate championing the pursuit of love.

The poem illustrates Keats’ fondness for classical themes, forms, and mythology which sets him somewhat apart from Coleridge.

Sonnet. Written in Disgust of Vulgar Superstition. (p. 32)

The church bells toll a melancholy round,
Calling the people to some other prayers,
Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,
More hearkening to the sermon's horrid sound.
Surely the mind of man is closely bound 5
In some black spell; seeing that each one tears
Himself from fireside joys, and Lydian airs,
And converse high of those with glory crowned.
Still, still they toll, and I should feel a damp -
A chill as from a tomb - did I not know 10
That they are dying like an outburnt lamp;
That 'tis their sighing, wailing ere they go
Into oblivion - that fresh flowers will grow,
And many glories of immortal stamp*.

'stamp' = bearing the quality of

Genre, context and title: Written in December 1816, the early sonnet bitterly attacks the church, deeming it to be backward. The poem was written under strong anti-religious influence by Keat’s friends (Leigh Hunt, Percy Shelley, etc.) in The Hunt Circle (also the Cockney School) whom he joined in 1816. In general, Keats was not a devout Christian: ‘he already viewed Christianity as just another myth - a happy piety of the past on the same level, and doomed to the same fate of gradual extinction. ... Keats was concerned very early with the issue of old, outworn faiths being replaced by newer, more humanistic ones.’ (Ronald Sharp, ‘“A Recourse Somewhat Human”: Keats’ Religion of Beauty’)

1’ ‘The church bells’ The poem employs the use of metonymy throughout the poem, equating the dull, monotonous tolling of funeral bells with the deadening, sterile nature of the Church. Emphasis is placed on mournful, unpleasant sounds: ‘melancholy round’, ‘horrid sound’.

5 - 6 ‘Surely the mind of man is closely bound/In some black spell’ The Church is implied to be, ironically, a medieval institution which practises black magic in order to trap the minds of the people, in keeping with the poet’s assertion in the title that the Church doctrine is ‘vulgar superstition’ – a backward, unfounded belief associated with magic, sorcery, witchcraft, fallacy, delusion, illusion.

7 ‘soft Lydian airs’ A Classical Greek musical mode associated with sensuality and joy. Keats was alluding to poet John Milton (whose grand style of poetry was a source of inspiration for Keats), who wished for his poem ‘L’Allegro’ to be lapped in ‘soft Lydian airs’. It is significant that Keats here uses imagery that is pagan, harking to a period which predated and, he implied, superseded the later Christian era.

9 ‘Still, still they toll,’ Consider the slow, dragging effect achieved by the ‘l’ sounds and the pauses (caesurae) in the form of commas which Keats employs in order to signify the tedious monotony of the bells, and by implication Church doctrine.

10 'A chill as from a tomb' The bells, which are in fact death knells or funeral bells, are associated with death throughout the poem to convey the poet's assertion that the Church is defunct.

11 - 12 'that fresh flowers will grow,/And many glories of immortal stamp' In the volta, the concluding couplet of this Shakespearean sonnet, Keats expresses hope that an alternative form of faith will replace the old doctrine of the Church, one which is significantly conveyed by vibrant, nature imagery ('fresh flowers'). Typically, Keats places value on enduring, beautiful things (like natural wonders and art and poetry) that have an everlasting quality, a divine or eternal mark ("immortal stamp") that makes them timeless sources of joy, unlike fleeting human life. Consider Keats' tribute to beauty, love and poetry in poems like 'Ode to Psyche'. As a point of comparison, consider Coleridge's response to the divine in poems like 'An Eolian Harp' and 'To Nature'.

To My Brothers (p. 12)

Small, busy flames play through the fresh-laid coals,
 And their faint cracklings o'er our silence creep
 Like whispers of the household gods that keep
 A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls.
 And while for rhymes, I search around the poles*, 5 *the earth*
 Your eyes are fixed, as in poetic sleep,
 Upon the lore so voluble and deep,
 That aye* at fall of night our care condoles**. *always; consoles*
 This is your birth-day Tom, and I rejoice
 That thus it passes smoothly, quietly. 10
 Many such eves of gently whispering noise
 May we together pass, and calmly try
 What are this world's true joys - ere the great voice
 From its fair face, shall bid our spirits fly.

Genre, context and title: Keats had two brothers, George and Thomas; like the rest of Keats' life, his relationship with them was tinged with tragedy. After the death of their father in a riding accident, the siblings faced constant financial difficulties. The same Tom Keats fell ill tuberculosis in 1817, and it was probably in the process of nursing him that John Keats was also fatally infected with the disease that killed him. The poem, written in November 18, 1816 for his brother Tom's 17th birthday, presents a cosy fireside scene of Keats writing and reading his poem aloud while his brothers listened.

3 - 4 Like whispers of the household gods that keep/A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls' A pagan tradition: minor household spirits that watch over a house.

11 'gently whispering noise' Sound imagery is used throughout the poem: sibilants - soft, gentle sounds ('whispers', 'whispering') - convey the quiet intimacy, tranquillity and harmony of familial companionship, which serves as a contrast to the 'great voice' (l. 13) of mortality and the busyness of the outside world.

This poem with its depiction of family relationships, here featuring brotherly love, can be discussed in tandem with poems like Coleridge's poems which address his son, such as 'Frost at Midnight', 'The Nightingale', and his wife in 'The Eolian Harp'.

'O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell' (p. 5)

O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell,
 Let it not be among the jumbled heap
 Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep -
 Nature's observatory - whence the dell,
 Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell, 5
 May seem a span; let me thy vigils* keep *ritual remembrance*
 'Mongst boughs pavilioned, where the deer's swift leap
 Startles the wild bee from the foxglove bell.
 But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,
 Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind, 10
 Whose words are images of thoughts refined,
 Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be
 Almost the highest bliss of human-kind,
 When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

Genre, context and title: Written around 1815-1816 and first published on May, 1816, in *The Examiner*, making it Keats' first published poem and a significant early work that showcased his Romantic talent, the sonnet is addressed to personified "Solitude": a form of poetic address known as an apostrophe. Take note of the conditional "If", which suggests some degree of reluctant or conditional acceptance of being alone. The poem adopts a typical Romantic attitude (inherited from the classical pastoral tradition) of rejecting the chaotic and corrupt city ("the jumbled heap/Of murky buildings") for the beauty and serenity of Nature. Here, the poet rejects loneliness that he experiences in the city and prefers to be alone in Nature; and in the volta (line 9) he adds that above all, he would rather be residing in nature, sharing its tranquil nature with another "kindred spirit[]".

Some clarifications regarding interpretation of the poem:

The poet does NOT reject Nature; he would rather be lonely in nature than in the city; but most of all he would rather be with a close friend in nature.

The company of the 'kindred spirit' need not necessarily be an amorous partner; rather, the poet longs to be with a like-minded friend to share meaningful, high-minded conversations with.

3 "climb with me the steep - /Nature's observatory". Compare Keats' depiction of the city with Nature; while the former is depicted in vague, unpleasant terms ("jumbled heap/Of murky buildings"), Nature is elevated, assuming a high vantage point, as from a mountainside, ("climb with me the steep", allowing the speaker a clear view (as from an "observatory"), of nature's beauty and liveliness ("the deer's swift leap/Startles the wild bee from the foxglove bell"). Consider the effects achieved by sibilants in the depiction of nature here.

6 "a span" an expansive vista.

14 "to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee" The word "flee" conveys the poet's desire to escape the crowded, tumultuous, polluted city and seek refuge in nature. Poems which reject the city and embrace nature are also conveyed in various works such as 'On the Sea', Coleridge's 'Ode to Tranquillity', 'Frost at Midnight', his reflection on his friend Charles's cramped living conditions in the city in 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison', the concluding message of 'France: an Ode'.

Isolation, and longing for connection, companionship and love are key themes which run strongly throughout Keats' as well as Coleridge's poetry, in various poems such as 'To Fanny', 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', 'When I have fears that I may cease to be', 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'Constancy to an Ideal Object', 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison'.

On The Sea (p. 35)

It keeps eternal whisperings around
 Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
 Gluts twice ten thousand caverns, till the spell
 Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
 Often 'tis in such gentle temper found, 5
 That scarcely will the very smallest shell
 Be moved for days from where it sometime fell,
 When last the winds of Heaven were unbound.
 Oh, ye! who have your eyeballs vexed and tired,
 Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea - 10
 Oh ye! whose ears are dinned with uproar rude,
 Or fed too much with cloying melody -
 Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth and brood,
 Until ye start, as if the sea nymphs quired*! *archaic: to sing in a choir*

Genre, context and title: Written in April 1817, the sonnet celebrates the grand scale and mysterious power of the sea, underlining its ancient, immortal quality by associating it with magic and mythology, using sibilants throughout the poem (an example of Keats' sensitivity to sound in his poetry) to mimic the constant sounds of sea waves in order to convey its pervasive presence and effect. Nature is typically set up as a soothing counterpoint to the loud and noisy city.

4 "Hecate" Sinister Greek goddess associated with witchcraft and night; such an allusion gives the sea a sense of inexplicable mystery and power.

9 "Oh ye! ..." In the volta, the poet turns to the reader, urging him, using a series of exclamations, to turn to Nature for solace and comfort from the noise ("uproar rude" and "cloying melody") of the city. Here and elsewhere in Keats' poetry, the city and society is associated with unpleasant loud noise. See also the "silver snarling trumpets" and "boisterous, midnight festive clarion" in 'The Eve of St Agnes', and the loud "thrill/Of trumpets" which intrudes into the private space of the sleeping lovers in 'Lamia'.

10 Feast them The idea of feasting one's eyes (also used today) on the beauty of nature is an example of Keats' use of synaesthesia, giving the act of seeing an added quality of physical enjoyment.

11 - 12 "Oh ye! whose ears are dinned with uproar rude,/Or fed too much with cloying melody" In contrast to the soothing experience offered by being in nature, Keats uses gustatory as well as auditory imagery to express the unpleasant, noisy experience of life in the city.

13 "Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth and brood". A quintessential Romantic position: the poet places himself in nature (here sitting by a cave listening to the sea-waves), contemplating ("brood[ing]" on) the state of his life or life in general. See similar moments enacted in poems – like 'When I have Fears', 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison', 'France: An Ode', just to name a few.

13 - 14 "Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth and brood,/Until ye start, as if the sea nymphs quired!". The unpleasant sounds of the city have been driven out by the beautiful music of the sea, its allure likened to a song sung by mythological creatures. Typically, Keats associates nature with mysterious, mythological power, suggesting that nature offers the reader magical access to an alternative, otherworldly experience, one that jolts him out of his previous dull state and gives him fresh perspectives.

To Leigh Hunt, Esq. (p. 34)

Glory and loveliness have passed away;
 For if we wander out in early morn,
 No wreathèd incense do we see upborne
 Into the east, to meet the smiling day:
 No crowd of nymphs* soft voiced and young, and gay, 5 *Pagan female wood spirits, or young women*
 In woven baskets bringing ears of corn,
 Roses, and pinks, and violets, to adorn
 The shrine of Flora in her early May.
 But there are left delights as high as these,
 And I shall ever bless my destiny, 10
 That in a time, when under pleasant trees
 Pan* is no longer sought, I feel a free *Pagan god of Nature*
 A leafy luxury, seeing I could please
 With these poor offerings*, a man like thee. *these poems*

Genre, context and title: James Henry Hunt (1784 - 1859), publisher, literary critic, essayist and poet, was a good friend and supporter of Keats. He formed what was called the Hunt Circle, a literary group which included poets and writers like William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, Percy Shelley and introduced John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Victorian poets Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson to the public. He had radical political views and was imprisoned for libel, for attacking the government in 1812. The sonnet was written in February 1817 as a dedication poem to this friend, mentor and supporter. When asked if he wanted a dedication as preface to his first published book called *Poems* published in March 1817, Keats wrote this sonnet in one sitting without changing a word of it, dedicating it to his friend and patron.

In the octave the poet laments the disappearance, declining popularity of myths and poetry in the world today to convey how alienated man has become from nature, mythology; in the sestet, he declares that nevertheless, he considers himself fortunate to be able to enjoy reading and writing poems and humbly offers his set of poems to Hunt for his approval.

Key themes: the importance of mythology and poetry in life; the poet's role in preserving the past traditions in poetry; the appreciation of poetry, art and beauty. Here, typically, Keats expresses his fondness for and allegiance to the Classical Age of poetry and literature, which he deems to be superior to the contemporary state of affairs.

3 "wreathèd incense" fragrant smoke from aromatic resins that were burned as offerings in pagan ritual, especially associated with the worship of the Roman goddess of spring. The poet is mourning the fact that no one now practises such a ritual, i.e. shows appreciation for the grandeur of classical art poetry, or even engages in producing works of such a nature.

8 "The shrine of Flora in her early May" Flora being the goddess of Spring, it is significant that Keats refers to this season of beginnings, as he hopes that his own humble contributions ("these poor offerings"), referring to the book of poems that were about to be published ("that there are left delights as high as these") will be a sign of hope for the arts in a modern world.

12 "Pan" In ancient Greek religion and mythology, Pan is the god of the wild, shepherds and flocks, rustic music, and companion of the nymphs. He is connected with fertility and the season of spring. Keats mourns such the loss of Pan, which symbolise the shift from mythic belief to modern life. Is Keats' allusion to Pan a possible reference to Hunt?

13 "leafy luxury" It is significant that Keats uses pastoral imagery here. Pastoral poetry written in the Classical era praises the innocence, simplicity and virtue of the countryside, depicting an idealized representation of nature, one which facilitates the creation of art and poetry – and rejects the impure, decadent state of the city. The image presented here is of the poet, in typical pastoral style, sitting beneath shady trees ("when under pleasant trees") with friends and indulging in reading and writing poetry and easy conversation. By describing poetry as "leafy luxury", which suggests rich abundance, Keats is expressing immense enjoyment of nature and the creation of poetry. The phrase conveys a typical Keatsian attitude of embracing life's rich experiences and sensations, engaging with full-hearted pleasure. Laurel leaves (or bay leaves) are conferred on fine poets for their artistic achievement– this signals Keats' poetic ambitions. (See also 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer').

To – * (p. 101)

(Or: *To a Lady Seen for a Few Moments at Vauxhall*)

Time's sea hath been five years at its slow ebb,
Long hours have to and fro let creep the sand,
Since I was tangled in thy beauty's web,
And snared by the ungloving of thy hand.
And yet I never look on midnight sky, 5
But I behold thine eyes' well-remembered light;
I cannot look upon the rose's dye,
But to thy cheek my soul doth take its flight;
I cannot look on any budding flower,
But my fond ear, in fancy at thy lips, 10
And hearkening for a love-sound, doth devour
Its sweets in the wrong sense: - Thou dost eclipse
Every delight with sweet remembering,
And grief unto my darling joys dost bring.

Genre, context and title: In this early poem, written in August 1814, based on Keats' passing glimpse of a beautiful unknown woman at Vauxhall Gardens (or Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens), London's most famous outdoor entertainment venue from the 1660s to 1859. While the poem is a Shakespearean sonnet, comprising three quatrains and a concluding couplet, it adopts many Petrarchan features and conventions in its praise of the beloved lady.

1 - 2 "Time's sand ... creep the sand" The poem conveys the bittersweet way in which time and memory preserves (and perhaps even intensifies) the poet's longing and desire for love.

3 - 4 "tangled in thy beauty's web/And snared' by the ungloving of your hand" The poem adopts some features and conventions that are typical of love sonnets such as the poet paying courtly tribute to the beauty of the lady, professing to be enthralled and trapped by her, a of declaring his love for her (a typical convention in love poetry).

6 - 10 "eyes ...cheek ... lips ..." References to the lady's facial features are an example of a blazon, a poetic technique in which the parts of the beloved are listed to be praised, and often compared to elements of nature here (or to stars, or precious materials like diamonds, pearls).

11 - 12 "And hearkening for a love-sound, doth devour/Its sweets in the wrong sense" These lines convey the intensity of the poet's longing; being so powerfully affected by the beauty of the woman that his senses of seeing and hearing are confused.

Typically, Keats employs synaesthesia here, equating one physical sense: that of feeling (or experiencing) with another sense: that of eating or consuming to convey the overwhelming state of his emotions.

12 - 14 "Thou dost eclipse/Every delight with sweet remembering,/And grief unto my darling joys dost bring" By presenting the paradoxical situation in which "grief" and "joy" are equated, the poet conveys the bittersweet nature of his memory of the lady. Again, this is a typical Petrarchan convention: that the beloved is a source of both joy and sorrow to the poet, who desires but cannot attain her.

The sense of regret and longing (unfulfilled desire), conveyed by the transience (brief moments) of the encounter, is similarly expressed in 'When I have Fears that I may Cease to be', in which the poet refers longingly to a beautiful woman (probably the same one featured in this poem), but is painfully aware of how he is destined never to have a lasting connection with love, beauty and life ('fair creature of an hour').

Consider the connection between memory and love (and desire) in poems like 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' and Coleridge's 'The Keepsake', as well as the connection between memory and childhood in poems like Coleridge's 'Sonnet to the River Otter' and 'Frost at Midnight'.

To Ailsa Rock (p. 133)

Hearken*, thou craggy ocean pyramid! *Pay attention, listen*
 Give answer from thy voice, the sea-fowl's screams!
 When were thy shoulders mantled in huge streams?
 When from the sun was thy broad forehead hid?
 How long is't since the mighty Power bid 5
 Thee heave to airy sleep from fathom* dreams? *nautical measurement of depth*
 Sleep in the lap of thunder or sunbeams,
 Or when gray clouds are thy cold coverlid?
 Thou answer'st not, for thou art dead asleep.
 Thy life is but two dead eternities - 10
 The last in air, the former in the deep,
 First with the whales, last with the eagle skies.
 Drowned wast thou till an earthquake made thee steep,
 Another cannot wake thy giant size!

Genre, context and title: Written in July 1818, the poem addresses Ailsa Rock, an island off the Western coast of Scotland that Keats saw from afar on a walk in Scotland. Its gloomy and rocky appearance corresponds with what the Romantics thought of as the 'sublime'. By dwelling on the immense scale of the rock and its ancient quality, the poem focuses on the concept of time, which is profound and eternal in the natural world, pitted against the shortness and insignificance of human life, also showing up the limits of human understanding

1 "thou craggy ocean pyramid" By describing the mountain as an Egyptian pyramid (one of the wonders of the ancient world), the poet is not just emphasizing the steep shape of the mountain (it is technically a volcanic plug) but also evoking the grand, ancient and timeless quality of Nature.

1 - 8 The mountain, initially likened to an Egyptian pyramid, is then personified, given human features (a "voice", "shoulders", "broad forehead"), depicted as a giant, therefore continuing with the idea of nature being magnificent and powerful, whereas man is small and insignificant.

3 - 8 "When were thy shoulders mantled in huge streams?" This line is the first in a series of earnest rhetorical questions posed by the poet who seeks to understand the origins and existence of the rock, which fail to yield any response ("Thou answer'st not"), therefore showing nature to be unknowable and mysterious, too vast for human comprehension.

9 "dead asleep" an oxymoron; the huge rock (something inanimate) is in a state of profound and perpetual slumber.

10 "two dead eternities" Keats is referring to the two geological eras (two periods of the rock's "sleep" or dormant existence) that the rock had gone through: the first when the rock was submerged in the water among sea creatures ("the whales"), then when it was lifted up and exposed to the air with the "eagle[s]", both of which predate human existence – to show how the concept of time in the natural world is far beyond the scale of human time, and beyond human comprehension, thus showing man to be small and insignificant.

This idea of the frailty of human life, the mortal nature of man, as opposed to the eternal state of nature and the world of art is a key idea in Keats' poems: 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'When I Have Fears that I May Cease to Be', 'To Autumn'.

Consider the connection between sleep and death in other Keats' poems like 'To Sleep'.

To Mrs Reynolds's Cat (p. 99)

Cat! who hast passed thy grand climacteric*, *critical period*
 How many mice and rats hast in thy days
 Destroyed? How many tit-bits stolen? Gaze
 With those bright languid segments green*, and prick *the cat's eyes*
 Those velvet ears - but prithee do not stick 5
 Thy latent talons in me, and up-raise
 Thy gentle mew, and tell me all thy frays
 Of fish and mice, and rats and tender chick.
 Nay, look not down, nor lick thy dainty wrists -
 For all thy wheezy asthma, and for all 10
 Thy tail's tip is nicked off, and though the fists
 Of many a maid have given thee many a maul,
 Still is that fur as soft as when the lists* *knightly battle*
 In youth thou enteredst on glass-bottled wall.

Genre, context and title: Written in January 1818, while Keats was staying with his friend John Hamilton Reynolds, this is a parody of a Miltonic sonnet, typically centered around weighty themes. In a Miltonic sonnet, the initial octet poses a question, which the sestet then answers. Poems about cats had been popularised by Thomas Gray's 'Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes' (1748). While this is a humorous poem, conferring heroic status on an ordinary cat, the ideas of youth and mortality are typical of Keats' concerns.

2 - 3, 8 "How many mice and rats hast in thy days/Destroyed? How many tit-bits stolen? ... Of fish and mice, and rats and tender chick." These lines focus on the cat's appetite, which in Keats' poetry is often equated with a capacity for enjoying life, for indulging in physical sensations, pleasures, and love. In 'Ode on Melancholy', he asks the reader to "glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,/Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave", using eating as a metaphor for fully experiencing sorrow.

5 - 11 While this is not exactly a love poem, the poem humorously employs a blazon (see also 'To A Lady Seen for a Few Moments at Vauxhall') which typically presents a list of the beloved lady's facial and bodily features to be praised ("those bright languid segments green" (the cat's eyes), "Those velvet ears ... /Thy latent talons .../thy dainty wrists ..."), conveying the poet's affection for and admiration of the cat.

10 - 11 "thy wheezy asthma, /Thy tail's tip is nicked off ... lists" The poem presents a heroic image of a battle-scarred cat who has had its fill of ordeals, having sustained physical ailments, as well as wounds in scuffle with other cats (which are likened to medieval jousting tournaments), and attacks by scullery maids.

13 - 14 "Still is that fur as soft as when the lists/In youth thou enteredst on glass-bottled wall" The final lines of the poem dwelling on the sustained beauty and youthfulness of the cat, despite having undergone many ordeals in life. Juxtaposing the heroic (lists are medieval tournaments) with the ordinary ("glass-bottled wall") continues the mock-heroic presentation of the cat.

'When I have fears that I may cease to be' (p. 100)

When I have fears that I may cease to be

Before my pen has gleaned* my teeming** brain, *fully gathered; full (of thoughts)*
Before high-piled books, in charactery*, *writing*

Hold like rich garnerers* the full-ripened grain;

When I behold, upon the night's starred face, 5

Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,

And think that I may never live to trace

Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;

And when I feel, fair creature of an hour!

That I shall never look upon thee more, 10

Never have relish in the faery power

Of unreflecting love! - then on the shore

Of the wide world I stand alone, and think

Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

Genre, context and title: This poem, Keats' first Shakespearean sonnet, was written between January 22 and 31, 1818, when he was 22. The first quatrain expresses the poet's fears that he may die ("cease to be") before he has written all the poems he wants to. The second quatrain is more specific in spelling out his fears: that he may not be able to attain love ("high romance"), the uncertainty of being able to achieve love - and poetic ambition - conveyed by the words "cloudy" (unclear) and "high" suggesting that his goals are out of reach and thwarted by fate ("the magic hand of chance"). In the third quatrain he addresses a woman whom he met in a brief encounter to consider that he may also be prevented from ever experiencing love. Finally, the poem ends with the image of the poet, standing alone on the shore of the wide world with all thoughts of personal ambitions and concerns erased from his mind by the immensity of what he contemplates.

2 - 5 "Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain, ... /Hold like rich garnerers the full-ripened grain" The poet uses agricultural or harvesting imagery to refer to his rich imagination, to the copious ideas in his head (like a barn fully stocked in grains), which he fears will never be developed into volumes ("high-piled books") of poetry (i.e., will never reach full growth or be harvested) as he fears he will die before fulfilling his potential.

5 - 6 "When I behold, upon the night's starred face,/Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance/And think that I may never live to trace/Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance" The poet, while hopeful for love (looking "upon the night's starred face", to search for such a possibility) fears that he is destined ("with the magic hand of chance") never to achieve love. The sense of hopelessness and futility is conveyed by the vain action of tracing shadows, which are insubstantial things which cannot be grasped, and reinforced by the use of "never" (in lines 7, 10 and 11) throughout the poem.

9 "fair creature of an hour" i.e. a beloved person whose beauty and life are, like all human existence, transient and temporary. There is also the implication that the poet's connection with the object of his affection is tenuous at best. The phrase is also a reference to the same woman in 'To a Lady Seen for a few Moments in Vauxhall', written a few months later in August 1818.

11 "the faery power/Of unreflecting love!" 'Faeries', or elves, were known to place mortal humans under enchantment. See also the mysterious woman ("a faery's child") who bewitches the mortal knight in 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'.

12 - 14 "then on the shore/Of the wide world I stand alone, and think/ Till love and fame to nothingness do sink." A typical Romantic pose: the poet standing in front of vast nature, contemplating on his life or the state of life in general, with all thoughts about his personal, earthly concerns being driven out and rendered insignificant by the immensity and timeless grandeur of nature.

The poem is significant for its heartfelt expression of longing and anguish and for its prescience, as the anxieties it expresses about an early death, unfulfilled potential, and lost love tragically and accurately foreshadow the poet's own life and untimely death. Consider how the themes of poetic ambition and the fear of failing to achieve poetic success figure in poems like 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Kubla Khan', 'Dejection; an Ode', 'Work Without Hope'.

'Hush, hush! tread softly! hush, hush my dear!' (p. 164)

I.

Hush, hush! tread softly! hush, hush my dear!
All the house is asleep, but we know very well
That the jealous, the jealous old bald-pate may hear,
Though you've padded his night-cap - O sweet Isabel!
Though your feet are more light than a faery's feet, 5
Who dances on bubbles where brooklets meet -
Hush, hush! tread softly! hush, hush my dear!
For less than a nothing the jealous can hear.

II.

No leaf doth tremble, no ripple is there
On the river - all's still, and the night's sleepy eye 10
Closes up, and forgets all its Lethean care,
Charmed to death by the drone of the humming mayfly;
And the moon, whether prudish or complaisant,
Hath fled to her bower, well knowing I want
No light in the darkness, no torch in the gloom, 15
But my Isabel's eyes, and her lips pulped with bloom*. *i.e. red*

III.

Lift the latch! Ah gently! Ah tenderly - sweet!
We are dead if that latchet gives one little clink!
Well done - now those lips, and a flowery seat -
The old man may dream, and the planets may wink; 20
The shut rose may dream of our loves, and awake
Full-blown, and such warmth for the morning take,
That stock-dove shall hatch her soft brace and shall coo,
While I kiss to the melody, aching all through!

Genre, context and title: Written in 1818, this poem has a highly dramatic quality, immediately placing readers in the midst of a clandestine scene of two lovers in the act of fleeing from the woman's home, so eager to leave and pursue their happiness together and so fearful of discovery. Particularly evocative are lines 17 – 18 "Lift the latch! Ah gently! Ah tenderly - sweet!/ We are dead if that latchet gives one little clink!"

1 "Hush, hush! tread softly! hush, hush my dear!" The imperatives convey caution and secrecy.

2 "the house is asleep" Personification (and metonymy) used here suggests a collective state: everyone is sleeping except for the two lovers.

3 "the jealous, the jealous old bald-pate" The epithet "old bald-pate" serves as synecdoche for the old man, the woman's father (or husband), who has kept her contained in his house, with his possessiveness underlined by the repetition of "jealous" here and in line 11.

4 "you've padded his night-cap". This implies that the woman has either thickened her father's (or husband's) sleeping cap or spiked her father's nightly drink with a sedative to prevent him from hearing their furtive footsteps, which suggests the daughter's willful desire to escape and circumvent his authority without detection.

4 - 6 "O sweet Isabel!/Though your feet are more light than a faery's feet,/ Who dances on bubbles where brooklets meet -" The speaker pays compliments to his beloved lady in a series of pleasant fricatives, plosives and sibilants.

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8 “For less than a nothing the jealous can hear” This implies that the old man is paranoid, reacting to things that are not there (hence, less than a nothing).

11 “Lethean” Lethe is one of five rivers in the Greek underworld. Drinking its waters would lead to forgetfulness and oblivion.

13 - 15 “And the moon, whether prudish or complaisant,/Hath fled to her bower, well knowing I want/No light in the darkness, no torch in the gloom” Nature is personified here, presented as being sympathetic to the fleeing lovers, and colluding in their escape, also conveyed in line 20: “the planets may wink”.

16 “my Isabel’s eyes, and her lips pulped with bloom” A form of blazon here, with the lover listing his beloved’s beautiful facial features in adoration, with “her lips pulped with bloom”. Together with lines 21 – 22: The shut rose may dream of our loves, and awake/Full-blown, it conveys her awakening passionate nature, showing promise of the consummation of their love.

17 “Lift the latch” Possibly a reference to Song of Songs 5:4: “My beloved put his hand by the latch of the door, and my heart yearned for him”

21 “The shut rose may dream of our loves, and awake/Full-blown, and such warmth for the morning take,/That stock-dove shall hatch her soft brace and shall coo, /While I kiss to the melody, aching all through!” The last four lines of the poem celebrate the consummation of the lovers’ secret union, again suggesting that nature also participates in the celebration. Consider the use of rich, fertile natural imagery used here to depict the lovers’ union, contrasted with the sterile depiction of the old “bald” man.

Consider connections between this poem and ‘The Eve of St Agnes’: both share themes of forbidden love, young lovers pitted against an aging social order, love as an expression of rebellion and liberty. In a way, this poem serves as a coda or companion piece to the longer, more ambitious work.

Consider Keats’ more blatant (than Coleridge’s) exploration of sexuality and carnal love (with poems like ‘The Eve of St Agnes’, ‘Lamia’, ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci’ which feature sexual liaisons and their consequences.

Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil (p. 109)*A Story from Boccaccio*⁶⁸

I.

Fair Isabel, poor simple Isabel!⁶⁹

Lorenzo, a young palmer* in Love's eye!

pilgrim

They could not in the self-same mansion dwell

Without some stir of heart, some malady*;

love-sickness

They could not sit at meals but feel how well

5

It soothed each to be the other by;

They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep

But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

II.

With every morn their love grew tenderer,

With every eve deeper and tenderer still;

10

He might not in house, field, or garden stir,

But her full shape would all his seeing fill;

And his continual voice was pleasanter⁷⁰

To her than noise of trees or hidden rill*;

stream

Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,

15

She spoilt her half-done broidery* with the same.

embroidery

III.

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch,

Before the door had given her to his eyes;

And from her chamber-window he would catch

Her beauty farther than the falcon spies;

20

And constant as her vespers* would he watch,

evening prayers

Because her face was turned to the same skies;

And with sick longing all the night outwear,

To hear her morning-step upon the stair.

IV.

A whole long month of May in this sad plight⁷¹

25

Made their cheeks paler by the break of June:

'To-morrow will I bow to my delight,

⁶⁸ This poem was completed on April 27th 1818. Keats got his idea from a story by 14th century Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio. Keats wrote the poem while he was nursing Tom. Keats was ambivalent about this macabre tale, which reflected the contemporary vogue for grotesquery evident in the Gothic novel and the supernatural ballads of Coleridge, calling it "mawkish" and "too smokeable" (i.e. liable to be easily mocked)

⁶⁹ Notice the direct introduction to the characters of the poem: there is no preliminary description; they are identified purely in terms of their tragic love (i.e. Isabella is "poor [and] simple" - hinting at her fate at the poem's close; Lorenzo's devotion as a metaphorical "palmer" to the deity of Love). This focuses our attention on the sentimentality of their tale by keeping them as stock characters (rather than fleshed out individuals).

⁷⁰ Lines 13-14 suggest that the sound of Lorenzo's voice was more beautiful to Isabella than her previous ideas of perfect beauty, such as the noise made by the swaying branches, or the sweet sound of running water in a stream. As lines 15-16 exemplify, they are so enamoured that they cannot help but see reminders of each other in their everyday activities.

⁷¹ The time of year (i.e. May / June) when the poem takes place is made very definite here. Notably, the love between Isabella and Lorenzo is set against a background of Nature, usually to dramatise the trajectory of their relationship (as is the case here: the lively flourishing of summer provides a contrast to the wasting they endure due to their unconfessed love) or to enhance the emotional gravitas of a situation (e.g. lines 249-250: Isabella's physical decline from wasting away for want of Lorenzo is paralleled in the shift from autumn to winter).

To-morrow will I ask my lady's boon*.'	<i>gift, favour</i>	
'O may I never see another night,		
Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune.'		30
So spake they to their pillows; but, alas,		
Honeyless days and days did he let pass -		
V.		
Until sweet Isabella's untouched cheek*	<i>formerly rosy cheek pale</i>	
Fell sick within the rose's just domain*,	<i>area controlled by the rose</i>	
Fell thin as a young mother's, who doth seek		35
By every lull to cool her infant's pain:		
'How ill she is,' said he, 'I may not speak,		
And yet I will, and tell my love all plain:		
If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears,		
And at the least 'twill startle off her cares.'		40
VI.		
So said he one fair morning, and all day		
His heart beat awfully against his side;		
And to his heart he inwardly did pray		
For power to speak; but still the ruddy tide		
Stifled his voice, and pulsed ⁷² resolve away -		45
Fevered his high conceit* of such a bride,	<i>fanciful idea, metaphor</i>	
Yet brought him to the meekness of a child:		
Alas! when passion is both meek and wild! ⁷³		
VII.		
So once more he had waked and anguishèd		
A dreary night of love and misery,		50
If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed		
To every symbol on his forehead high. ⁷⁴		
She saw it waxing very pale and dead,		
And straight all flushed; so, lispèd tenderly,		
'Lorenzo!' - here she ceased her timid quest,		55
But in her tone and look he read the rest.		
VIII.		
'O Isabella, I can half-perceive		
That I may speak my grief into thine ear		
If thou didst ever any thing believe,		
Believe how I love thee, believe how near		60
My soul is to its doom: I would not grieve		
Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear		

⁷² 'drove'. The pulsing of Lorenzo's heart renders him incapable of verbal expression.

⁷³ This is one of the few poems where Keats' voice can be clearly heard as he addresses readers directly. In the last line here he adds an aphoristic moral which sums up what he thinks of Lorenzo's inability to express his love to Isabella: i.e. the pitiful irony of how passionate love takes away his ability to act (i.e. making Lorenzo too "meek" to confess), even as it makes him 'wild' with its intensity.

⁷⁴ Isabella reads Lorenzo's emotion on his face. The ability of the lovers to intuit each other's emotions in their "look" may suggest the sincerity of their love (i.e. it is attentive and centred on the other).

Thine eyes by gazing; but I cannot live
 Another night, and not my passion shrive*. *confess*

IX.

'Love! thou art leading me from wintry cold, 65
 Lady! thou leadest me to summer clime,
 And I must taste the blossoms that unfold
 In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time.'
 So said, his erewhile* timid lips grew bold, *formerly*
 And poesied* with hers in dewy rhyme: *they kissed* 70
 Great bliss was with them, and great happiness
 Grew, like a lusty flower, in June's caress.

X.

Parting they seemed to tread upon the air,
 Twin roses by the zephyr* blown apart *gentle breeze*
 Only to meet again more close, and share 75
 The inward fragrance of each other's heart.
 She, to her chamber gone, a ditty fair
 Sang, of delicious love and honeyed dart;
 He with light steps went up a western hill,
 And bade the sun farewell, and joyed his fill. 80

XI.

All close they met again, before the dusk
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
 All close they met, all eyes, before the dusk
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
 Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk, 85
 Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.
 Ah! better had it been for ever so,
 Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe.

XII.⁷⁵

Were they unhappy then? - It cannot be -
 Too many tears for lovers have been shed, 90
 Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
 Too much of pity after they are dead,
 Too many doleful stories do we see,
 Whose matter in bright gold were best be read;
 Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse⁷⁶ 95
 Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

⁷⁵ Here and later on in lines 103-104, we see Keats' typical concern with the moment of beauty, i.e. the moment when the two lovers speak of their love to each other, will soon be past and will soon die. Compare this to 'Ode on Melancholy', where he likewise emphasizes the fleeting nature of Beauty / Joy.

⁷⁶ Theseus had carried Ariadne off after she helped him kill the Minotaur, but he coldly abandoned her on one of the Greek islands and sailed away. While Keats advocates here for "doleful stories" to be immortalised and celebrated in "bright gold" (symbolising preciousness and glory), he makes an exception for love stories that end in deliberate abandonment / cruelty.

XIII.

But, for the general award of love,
 The little sweet doth kill much bitterness;
 Though Dido⁷⁷ silent is in under-grove*, *underground* 100
 And Isabella's was a great distress,
 Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove
 Was not embalmed, this truth is not the less -
 Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers,
 Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

XIV.⁷⁸

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt, 105
 Enriched from ancestral merchandise,
 And for them many a weary hand did swelt* *swelter*
 In torched mines and noisy factories,
 And many once proud-quivered loins did melt
 In blood from stinging whip; - with hollow eyes 110
 Many all day in dazzling river stood,
 To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood*. *pan for gold*

XV.

For them the Ceylon* diver held his breath**, *the modern Sri Lanka; to dive for pearls*
 And went all naked to the hungry shark;⁷⁹
 For them his ears gushed blood; for them in death 115
 The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark
 Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe
 A thousand men in troubles wide and dark:
 Half-ignorant, they turned an easy wheel,
 That set sharp racks* at work to pinch and peel. *medieval torture instruments* 120

XVI.

Why were they proud? Because their marble founts* *fountains*
 Gushed with more pride than do a wretch's tears? -
 Why were they proud? Because fair orange-mounts⁸⁰
 Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs⁸¹?
 Why were they proud? Because red-lined accounts⁸² 125
 Were richer than the songs of Grecian years? -

⁷⁷ Another reminder of the shortness of love. In classical legend Dido killed herself when the hero she loved, Aeneas, left her. The focus here on love stories that end in tragedy underscores the fleeting quality of love.

⁷⁸ Notice how the imagery of Nature is replaced by the imagery of trade, industry and money once Isabella's brothers appear. Keats draws a distinction between the beauty of Nature and the ugliness of the (industrialised) human world, where the villainy of the brothers is illustrated through their exploitative greed of their commercial endeavours.

⁷⁹ Keats depicts the shocking scale of human suffering that takes place at the behest of the brothers, in both exotic foreign lands (i.e. Ceylon, an icy realm with "seal[s]") and within Europe (i.e. "torched mines and noisy factories"). The listing of graphic descriptions of both animals and men who bleed and toil for the brothers emphasizes both their economic clout (i.e. they are very rich and powerful), but also suggests that their cruelty knows no bounds (so of course, they would be the kind of men who would kill off their sister's lover in order to marry her off to someone else for their own gain).

⁸⁰ the sides of mountains planted with orange trees

⁸¹ the stairs in "lazar houses" for the poor and sick

⁸² balance accounts circled or marked in red ink

Why were they proud?⁸³ again we ask aloud,
Why in the name of Glory were they proud?

XVII.

Yet were these Florentines as self-retired
In hungry pride and gainful cowardice, 130
As two close Hebrews in that land inspired,
Paled* in and vineyarded from beggar-spies⁸⁴; *fenced*
The hawks of ship-mast forests - the untired
And panniered mules for ducats* and old lies - *gold coins*
Quick cat's-paws* on the generous stray-away**, - *unscrupulous person/dock* 135
Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.⁸⁵

XVIII.

How was it these same ledger-men could spy
Fair Isabella in her downy nest?
How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye
A straying from his toil? Hot Egypt's pest⁸⁶ 140
Into their vision covetous and sly!
How could these money-bags see east and west? -
Yet so they did - and every dealer fair
Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

XIX.

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio!⁸⁷ 145
Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon;
And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow,
And of thy roses amorous of the moon,
And of thy lilies, that do paler grow
Now they can no more hear thy ghittren's* tune, *guitar-like instrument* 150
For venturing syllables that ill beseem
The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

XX.

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale
Shall move on soberly, as it is meet*; *fit or proper*
There is no other crime, no mad assail 155
To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet:
But it is done - succeed the verse or fail -

⁸³ The repeated question of why the brothers were proud serves to underscore that there is, in fact, no reason for them to be proud. We already know that their riches are all inherited (line 106: "ancestral merchandise") or derived from exploitative practice, and here, the comparisons in stanza XVI imply that the brothers are more concerned with luxury and wealth than charity (i.e. going up "lazar stairs" to visit the sick) and art (i.e. "songs of Grecian years"). That is, they have zero redeeming qualities.

⁸⁴ The image draws on the (anti-semitic) association between Jews (Hebrews) and covetous wealth. The brothers are compared to two Hebrew misers, shut up in a rich mansion and sun-deprived, to avoid "beggar-spies".

⁸⁵ The brothers' skill in foreign languages is meant to demonstrate their mercantile greed, since these languages are associated with places of foreign trade: Spain, Italy, and the Malay archipelago. Keats is writing during a period of overseas colonial expansion. Consider the poem's portrayal of wealth and mercantilism, and Keats' own poverty in a time of great economic growth and disruption.

⁸⁶ An allusion to the Biblical plagues of Egypt (in this case, stinging flies).

⁸⁷ The poet delivers an aside here to apologise to Boccaccio for the quality of his translation. (See the first annotation for this poem.)

To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet;
To stead* thee as a verse in English tongue, *establish*
An echo of thee in the north-wind sung. 160

XXI.

These brethren having found by many signs
 What love Lorenzo for their sister had,
 And how she loved him too, each unconfines
 His bitter thoughts to other, well nigh mad
 That he, the servant of their trade designs, 165
 Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,
 When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees
 To some high noble and his olive-trees.⁸⁸

XXII.

And many a jealous conference had they,
And many times they bit their lips alone, 170
Before they fixed upon a surest way
To make the youngster for his crime atone;
And at the last, these men of cruel clay
Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone;
For they resolvèd in some forest dim 175
To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

XXIII.

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant
 Into the sunrise, o'er the balustrade
 Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent
 Their footing through the dews; and to him said, 180
 "You seem there in the quiet of content,
 Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade
 Calm speculation; but if you are wise,
 Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

XXIV.

'To-day we purpose, ay, this hour we mount 185
 To spur three leagues towards the Apennine⁸⁹;
 Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count
 His dewy rosary on the eglantine.'
 Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,
 Bowed a fair greeting to these serpents' whine; 190
 And went in haste, to get in readiness,
 With belt, and spur, and bracing huntsman's dress.

⁸⁸ i.e. to marry her off to a rich olive-tree owning man, for their own benefit.

⁸⁹ Italian mountain range.

XXV.

And as he to the court-yard passed along,
 Each third step did he pause, and listened oft
 If he could hear his lady's matin-song, 195
 Or the light whisper of her footstep soft;
 And as he thus over his passion hung,
 He heard a laugh full musical aloft;
 When, looking up, he saw her features bright
 Smile through an in-door lattice, all delight. 200

XXVI.

'Love, Isabel!' said he, 'I was in pain
 Lest I should miss to bid thee a good morrow
 Ah! what if I should lose thee, when so fain
 I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow
 Of a poor three hours' absence? but we'll gain 205
 Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow.
 Goodbye! I'll soon be back.' 'Goodbye!' said she -
 And as he went she chanted merrily.⁹⁰

XXVII.

So the two brothers and their murdered man
 Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's stream 210
 Gurgles through straitened banks, and still doth fan
 Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream
 Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan
 The brothers' faces in the ford did seem,
 Lorenzo's flush with love. - They passed the water 215
 Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

XXVIII.

There was Lorenzo slain⁹¹ and buried in,
 There in that forest did his great love cease;
 Ah! when a soul doth thus its freedom⁹² win,
 It aches in loneliness - is ill at peace 220
 As the break-covert blood-hounds⁹³ of such sin:
 They dipped their swords in the water, and did tease
 Their horses homeward, with convulsèd spur,
 Each richer by his being a murderer.

⁹⁰ The pathos of Isabella and Lorenzo's situation is heightened by the dramatic irony: the lovers are unaware of the plot on Lorenzo's life (although we are quite aware), and they thus part in the belief that he will "soon be back" after a mere "three hours" absence'.

⁹¹ Notably, the poem skims over the actual moment of the murder - perhaps because the focus is on the tragedy of their love rather than the horror of bloodshed.

⁹² An ironic phrase. The soul is "free" because it is let loose from the body and can ascend to heaven, but Lorenzo cannot leave for heaven because his soul remains "ill at peace" (i.e. obviously, he's not resting in peace as he's been murdered and a promise to return to his lover unfulfilled).

⁹³ Keats draws a comparison between the unease of Lorenzo's soul and sin of the brothers (i.e. the "break-covert blood-hounds"); neither party is able to be rid of their unease / sin.

XXIX.

They told their sister how, with sudden speed, 225
 Lorenzo had ta'en ship for foreign lands,
 Because of some great urgency and need
 In their affairs, requiring trusty hands.
 Poor girl! put on thy stifling widow's weed,
 And 'scape at once from Hope's accursèd bands; 230
 To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,
 And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

XXX.

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be;
 Sorely she wept until the night came on,
 And then, instead of love, O misery! 235
 She brooded o'er the luxury alone:
 His image in the dusk she seemed to see,
 And to the silence made a gentle moan,
 Spreading her perfect arms upon the air,
 And on her couch low murmuring 'Where? O where?' 240

XXXI.

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long
 Its fiery vigil in her single breast;
 She fretted for the golden hour, and hung
 Upon the time with feverish unrest -
 Not long - for soon into her heart a throng 245
 Of higher occupants, a richer zest,
 Came tragic passion⁹⁴ not to be subdued,
 And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

XXXII.

In the mid days of autumn, on their eves
 The breath of Winter comes from far away, 250
 And the sick west continually bereaves
 Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay* *a short and simple song*
 Of death among the bushes and the leaves,
 To make all bare before he dares to stray
 From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel 255
 By gradual decay from beauty fell,

XXXIII.

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes
 She asked her brothers, with an eye all pale,
 Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes
 Could keep him off so long? They spake a tale 260

⁹⁴ Believing her brothers' lie that Lorenzo has gone abroad, Isabella is in an emotional tumult. While she initially "brood[s]" sulkily (i.e. out of "Selfishness") in stanza XXX, in stanza XXXI, "higher" or more virtuous emotions also come into her heart - "tragic passion" or longing for Lorenzo, and also empathetic "sorrow" for him (as she imagines him to be experiencing hardship in "travels rude" or rural travels).

Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes
 Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's vale⁹⁵;
 And every night in dreams they groaned aloud,
 To see their sister in her snowy shroud.⁹⁶

XXXIV.

And she had died in drowsy ignorance, 265
 But for a thing more deadly dark than all;
 It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance,
 Which saves a sick man from the feathered pall
 For some few gasping moments; like a lance,
 Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall⁹⁷ 270
 With cruel pierce, and bringing him again
 Sense of the gnawing fire at heart and brain.

XXXV.

It was a vision. - In the drowsy gloom,
 The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot
 Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb 275
 Had marred his glossy hair which once could shoot
 Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom
 Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
 From his lorn voice, and past his loamed* ears *full of soil*
 Had made a miry channel for his tears. 280

XXXVI.

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake;
 For there was striving, in its piteous tongue,
 To speak as when on earth it was awake,
 And Isabella on its music hung:
 Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake, 285
 As in a palsied Druid's* harp unstrung; *forest shaman*
 And through it moaned a ghostly under-song,
 Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral* briars among. *of the grave*

XXXVII.

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright
 With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof 290
 From the poor girl by magic of their light,

⁹⁵ A valley in Israel, now called Gehenna, equated with Hell because, amongst other horrors, child-sacrifice was practised there. The brothers are being haunted by the thought of their crime; the simile comparing the thought to smoke from Hinnom connotes the hellish and tormenting nature of their guilt, despite how (like smoke) it is something insubstantial.

⁹⁶ The conflict between the beauty of love and its inevitable death is quickly and directly shown by the striking contrast between the two words "snowy shroud". A "shroud" can be a funeral shroud, but it also hints at a bridal veil. The brothers' dreams foreshadow Isabella's fate as Lorenzo's eternal bride in death.

⁹⁷ Keats is comparing Isabella's sick longing to a cloudy opium hall - detaching her from the real world, leaving her passive and indolent. Ironically, the reason why India is associated with opium (besides Orientalism) is because at this time, the British-run Indian Raj is busy exporting vast quantities of opium to China.

The while it did unthread the horrid woof⁹⁸
 Of the late darkened time - the murderous spite
 Of pride and avarice, the dark pine roof
 In the forest, - and the sodden turfèd dell, 295
 Where, without any word, from stabs he fell.

XXXVIII.

Saying moreover, 'Isabel, my sweet!
 Red whortle-berries droop above my head,
 And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet;
 Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed 300
 Their leaves and prickly nuts; a sheep-fold bleat
 Comes from beyond the river to my bed:
 Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,
 And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

XXXIX.

'I am a shadow now, alas! alas! 305
 Upon the skirts of human-nature dwelling
 Alone. I chant alone the holy mass⁹⁹,
 While little sounds of life are round me knelling*, *sounding like a bell*
 And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,
 And many a chapel bell the hour is telling, 310
 Paining me through: those sounds grow strange to me,
 And thou art distant in humanity.

XL.

'I know what was, I feel full well what is,
 And I should rage, if spirits could go mad;
 Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss, 315
 That paleness¹⁰⁰ warms my grave, as though I had
 A seraph* chosen from the bright abyss *angel*
 To be my spouse: thy paleness makes me glad;
 Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel
 A greater love through all my essence steal.' 320

XLI.

The Spirit mourn'd 'Adieu!' - dissolved, and left
 The atom darkness in a slow turmoil;
 As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,

⁹⁸ Literally: the weft of cross-threads in a piece of material. Here it means the real truth - the figurative unraveling of the brothers' lies. (Possibly a reference to how deceit is often described as weaving a web of lies.)

⁹⁹ Referring to the liturgical service of the Catholic church. (Italy is predominantly Catholic.) By stating that he is chanting the mass alone (when it is meant to be a communal service), Lorenzo's spirit further emphasizes his isolation and abandonment as 'a shadow now [...] Alone', but also the abject condition of his corpse - the proper funeral rituals have not been conducted for him.

¹⁰⁰ The images of Isabella's *paleness* indicates both her physical decline and longing for her absent lover (which is why Lorenzo is "glad" to see her pale in line 318: it is proof of her devotion to him). The clear association being drawn between paleness and the grave / death, however, also suggestive of the Gothic: her closeness to death (from wasting and from longing for a dead lover) has paradoxically made her more beautiful.

Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,
 We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft, 325
 And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil:
 It made sad Isabella's eyelids ache,
 And in the dawn she started up awake -

XLII.

'Ha! ha!' said she, 'I knew not this hard life,
 I thought the worst was simple misery; 330
 I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife
 Portioned us - happy days, or else to die;
 But there is crime - a brother's bloody knife!
 Sweet Spirit, thou hast schooled my infancy:
 I'll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes, 335
 And greet thee morn and even in the skies.'

XLIII.

When the full morning came, she had devised
 How she might secret to the forest hie;
 How she might find the clay, so dearly prized,
 And sing to it one latest lullaby; 340
 How her short absence might be unsurmised,
 While she the inmost of the dream would try.
 Resolved, she took with her an agèd nurse,
 And went into that dismal forest-hearse.¹⁰¹

XLIV.

See, as they creep along the river side, 345
 How she doth whisper to that agèd dame,
 And, after looking round the champaign wide,
 Shows her a knife. - 'What feverous hectic flame
 Burns in thee, child? - What good can thee betide,
 That thou should'st smile again?' The evening came, 350
 And they had found Lorenzo's earthy bed -
 The flint was there, the berries at his head.

XLV.¹⁰²

Who hath not loitered in a green church-yard,
 And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,
 Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard, 355
 To see skull, coffined bones, and funeral stole;

¹⁰¹ Neologism: nature itself is Lorenzo's "hearse" or resting place, perhaps suggesting how Isabella's powerful intent to find Lorenzo's corpse has reduced an entire forest to a mere hearse in her eyes - it is but the receptacle for his body.

¹⁰² The stanza begins with a rhetorical question: it presumes upon the reader's empathy, which pities the dead bodies buried in a church-yard - using his imagination ("spirit") to visualise what the bodies within the earth must look like (thus, figuratively digging them up "like a demon-mole") and longing to fill each body once more "with human soul". The focus on the sensorial action of digging up in the imagination is meant to parallel Isabella's literal excavation of Lorenzo's body, as well as her wish to revive him. We are being cued to empathise in being asked to imaginatively immerse ourselves into the experience of digging up a corpse, only to be told that our imagination is mere "holiday to what was felt" by Isabella; i.e. her anguish is so great that it cannot be expressed, and even the hyperbolic act of excavating in a church-yard falls short.

Pitying each form that hungry Death hath marred,
 And filling it once more with human soul?
 Ah! this is holiday to what was felt
 When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt. 360

XLVI.

She gazed into the fresh-thrown mould, as though
 One glance did fully all its secrets tell;
 Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know
 Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well;
 Upon the murderous spot she seemed to grow, 365
 Like to a native lily of the dell -
 Then with her knife, all sudden, she began
 To dig more fervently than misers can.

XLVII.

Soon she turned up a soiled glove, whereon
 Her silk had played in purple phantasies, 370
 She kissed it with a lip more chill than stone,
 And put it in her bosom, where it dries
 And freezes utterly unto the bone
 Those dainties* made to still an infant's cries: *her breasts*
 Then 'gan she work again, nor stayed her care, 375
 But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

XLVIII.

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,
 Until her heart felt pity to the core
 At sight of such a dismal labouring,
 And so she kneelèd, with her locks all hoar*, *grey* 380
 And put her lean hands to the horrid thing:
 Three hours they laboured at this travail* sore - *task, ordeal*
 At last they felt the kernel of the grave,
 And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

XLIX.

Ah! wherefore all this wormy circumstance? 385
 Why linger at the yawning tomb so long?
 O for the gentleness of old Romance,¹⁰³
 The simple plaining* of a minstrel's song! *lamentation*
 Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,
 For here, in truth, it doth not well belong 390
 To speak - O turn thee to the very tale,
 And taste the music of that vision pale.

¹⁰³ Note the explicit contrast Keats is making between this sort of love story (the poem being read) and "old Romance". While we might typically envision a romance story to be sentimental and sweet (i.e. full of "gentleness"), Keats bluntly states that such an "old tale" does not "belong" in the narrative of Gothic horror that we are now reading.

L.

With duller steel than the Persèan sword¹⁰⁴

They cut away no formless monster's head,
But one, whose gentleness did well accord 395

With death, as life. The ancient harps have said,
Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord:¹⁰⁵

If Love impersonate was ever dead,
Pale Isabella kissed it, and low moaned.
'Twas Love¹⁰⁶; cold, - dead indeed, but not dethroned. 400

LI.

In anxious secrecy they took it home,
And then the prize was all for Isabel.
She calmed its wild hair with a golden comb,
And all around each eye's sepulchral cell
Pointed each fringed lash; the smeared loam* *dirt, soil* 405
With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,
She drenched away - and still she combed, and kept
Sighing all day - and still she kissed, and wept.

LII.

Then in a silken scarf - sweet with the dew
Of precious flowers plucked in Araby*, *Arabia is the exotic East* 410
And divine liquids come with odorous ooze
Through the cold serpent-pipe¹⁰⁷ refreshfully -
She wrapped it up; and for its tomb did choose
A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by,
And covered it with mould, and o'er it set 415
Sweet basil¹⁰⁸, which her tears kept ever wet.

LIII.¹⁰⁹

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,
And she forgot the blue above the trees,
And she forgot the dells where waters run,
And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze; 420
She had no knowledge when the day was done,
And the new morn she saw not, but in peace

¹⁰⁴ the sword used by Perseus to cut off the head of the Gorgon Medusa

¹⁰⁵ Can this line be seen as a statement of the theme of the poem? i.e. Love is a metaphorical "immortal Lord" that governs our lives; it does not die because it is such a powerful emotion that is cherished even after its object has passed on.

¹⁰⁶ Rather than identify the head as Lorenzo's, the head is identified as "Love": in Isabella's eyes, Lorenzo is an embodiment of Love. While he may be "dead indeed", the fact that Lorenzo has not been "dethroned" in her heart allows him / her love for him to continue thriving.

¹⁰⁷ A possible sexually charged poeticism for the winding tube of perfume from which "oozes" the divine liquids. This sensuous description (if so) could imply her devoted love and care for Lorenzo.

¹⁰⁸ Basil is a culinary and sometimes medicinal herb, but is also associated with burial rituals and graves in various countries. In Italy, a pot of basil on a windowsill is meant to signal a lover; it is also conversely associated with chastity, and therefore with both love and death. Ancient Romans and Greeks believed that it represented hate and misfortune, and in modern-day Crete it symbolizes 'love washed with tears'. Significantly, it has a wonderful smell and taste, and dies every autumn.

¹⁰⁹ Note the use of repetition in this stanza to emphasize the sheer scale of Isabella's hyperbolic devotion to the pot of basil (and thus the depth of her love for Lorenzo).

Hung over her sweet basil evermore,
And moistened it with tears unto the core.

LIV.¹¹⁰

And so she ever fed it with thin tears, 425
Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,
So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
Of basil-tufts in Florence; for it drew
Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
From the fast mouldering head there shut from view: 430
So that the jewel, safely casketed,
Came forth, and in perfumèd leafits* spread. *young leaves*

LV.

O Melancholy, linger here awhile!
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!
O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle, 435
Unknown, Lethean¹¹¹, sigh to us - O sigh!
Spirits in grief, lift up your heads, and smile;
Lift up your heads, sweet Spirits, heavily,
And make a pale light in your cypress glooms,
Tinting with silver wan your marble tombs. 440

LVI.

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,
From the deep throat of sad Melpomene¹¹²!
Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go,
And touch the strings into a mystery;
Sound mournfully upon the winds and low; 445
For simple Isabel is soon to be
Among the dead. She withers, like a palm
Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm.¹¹³

LVII.

O leave the palm to wither by itself;
Let not quick Winter chill its dying hour! - 450
It may not be - those Baälites of pelf¹¹⁴,
Her brethren, noted the continual shower
From her dead eyes; and many a curious elf,

¹¹⁰ The tone here initially seems more optimistic. New life and growth have come from death. However, as the subsequent stanzas make clear, Isabella is doomed to die.

¹¹¹ The River Lethe was a river of the legendary underworld. When the waters were drunk, they made the souls of the dead forget their life on earth. Keats makes such a passionate plea to Melancholy, Music and Echo to observe Isabella's faithfulness and love: she has nurtured life (i.e. the basil) out of (Lorenzo's) death, but as stanza LVI reveals, she will not escape death herself.

¹¹² The Muse or goddess who inspired Tragedy.

¹¹³ Again, another Orientalism. This poem is full of references to the foreign, and the exotic (to Keats), which may add to its high sentimentality. It could also be read as an ironic critique of the brothers: the brothers had exploited foreigners to enrich themselves and had likewise hoped to exploit their sister; that sister is now dying as a result of their own actions - she is a figurative "palm" being harvested, though the harvest of her death will not enrich her brothers one bit.

¹¹⁴ In the Old Testament, Baal is a false god. Thus Isabella's brothers are worshippers of money ("pelf" = money).

Among her kindred, wondered that such dower
Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside 455
By one marked out to be a noble's bride.

LVIII.

And, furthermore, her brethren wondered much
Why she sat drooping by the basil green,
And why it flourished, as by magic touch.
Greatly they wondered what the thing might mean: 460
They could not surely give belief, that such
A very nothing would have power to wean
Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay,
And even remembrance of her love's delay.

LIX.

Therefore they watched a time when they might sift 465
This hidden whim; and long they watched in vain;
For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift*, *confession*
And seldom felt she any hunger-pain;
And when she left, she hurried back, as swift
As bird on wing to breast its eggs again; 470
And, patient, as a hen-bird, sat her there
Beside her basil, weeping through her hair.

LX.

Yet they contrived to steal the basil-pot,
And to examine it in secret place:
The thing was vile with green and livid spot, 475
And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face:
The guerdon* of their murder they had got, *reward, just deserts*
And so left Florence in a moment's space,
Never to turn again. Away they went,
With blood upon their heads, to banishment. 480

LXI.

O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away!
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!
O Echo, Echo, on some other day,
From isles Lethean, sigh to us - O sigh!
Spirits of grief, sing not your 'Well-a-way!' 485
For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die -
Will die a death too lone and incomplete,
Now they have ta'en away her basil sweet.

LXII.

Piteous she looked on dead and senseless things,
Asking for her lost basil amorously; 490
And with melodious chuckle in the strings

Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry
 After the pilgrim in his wanderings,
 To ask him where her basil was, and why
 'Twas hid from her: "For cruel 'tis," said she, 495
 "To steal my basil-pot away from me."

LXIII.
 And so she pined, and so she died forlorn,
 Imploring for her basil to the last.
 No heart was there in Florence but did mourn
 In pity of her love, so overcast. 500
 And a sad ditty of this story born
 From mouth to mouth through all the country passed:
 Still is the burthen sung - 'O cruelty,
 To steal my basil-pot away from me!'

Completed April 27th 1818.

The Eve of St. Agnes¹¹⁵ (p. 165)

I.¹¹⁶
 St. Agnes' Eve - Ah, bitter chill it was!
 The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
 The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
 And silent was the flock in woolly fold*: *sheep*
 Numb were the Beadsman's¹¹⁷ fingers, while he told* *counted* 5
 His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
 Like pious incense from a censer* old, *vessel for burning incense*
 Seemed taking flight for heaven, without a death,¹¹⁸
 Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁵ **Genre, context and title:** This poem was written early in 1819 at the suggestion of Isabella Jones. Keats had just started to meet Fanny Brawne, a natural prompt for a poem about young love confronting familial disapproval. The popular belief was that a girl who went supperless and remained silent and immobile in bed on the Eve of St. Agnes (i.e. 20 January, about the time that Keats was writing this poem) would dream of her lover. Keats almost lost his publisher, John Taylor, over this. Taylor thought the descriptions of love here and in 'Isabella' too explicit; such matters were not regarded as the poet's decent concern. The poem's bare plot might prompt modern objections: Porphyro, finding out about Madeline's plan to carry out the Eve of St Agnes ritual, plots to deceive her, appears to her, and sleeps with her. Both lovers flee into the storm rather than confront the end of their relationship. What makes this poem so striking is its dream-like, unreal atmosphere and repeated references to sleep and fantasy: the poem complicates the question of agency, as *both* Porphyro and Madeline are described as deceivers/conjurors/enchanters at various points, and the poem raises the question of the degree to which romance is really a form of self-deception. The ambiguous ending of the poem means it can be read as a triumph of imagination, or a fatal warning against fantasy.

¹¹⁶ The poem begins with a description of a secondary character, the Beadsman, who carries out his duties in a cold and dark mausoleum, before switching perspective to show us Madeline at a party. Pay attention to moments of contrast in this poem: cold vs warmth, age vs youth, reality vs fantasy. The presentation of the Beadsman in Stanzas 1-3 serve as a contrast with the scenes that come after.

¹¹⁷ A Beadsman is an elderly servant in medieval times, employed to say prayers for a family.

¹¹⁸ The beadsman's chilled breath rises to heaven like the souls of the dead.

¹¹⁹ Old word for 'says'. The word is not merely used for the rhyme but to support the historical setting of the poem. Keats purposely constructed this poem such that it would seem strange and distant to the contemporary reader (much like 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner').

II.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man; 10
 Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
 And back returneth, meagre*, barefoot, wan, *thin*
 Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
 The sculptured dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
 Emprisoned in black, purgatorial rails; 15
 Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries*, *silent chapels*
 He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
 To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.¹²⁰

III.

Northward he turneth through a little door,
 And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue 20
 Flattered to tears¹²¹ this agèd man and poor;
 But no - already had his deathbell rung:
 The joys of all his life were said and sung:
 His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve.
 Another way he went, and soon among 25
 Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve*, *redemption; reprieve from Hell*
 And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

IV.

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude* soft; *introductory music*
 And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
 From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft, 30
 The silver, snarling¹²² trumpets 'gan to chide:
 The level chambers, ready with their pride,
 Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
 The carvèd angels, ever eager-eyed,
 Stared, where upon their heads the cornice¹²³ rests, 35
 With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts.

V.

At length burst in the argent* revelry, *silver*
 With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
 Numerous as shadows haunting fierily* *enchantedly*
 The brain, new-stuffed, in youth, with triumphs gay 40
 Of old romance.¹²⁴ These let us wish away,
 And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
 Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
 On love, and winged St. Agnes' saintly care,
 As she had heard old dames full many times declare. 45

¹²⁰ Consider the references to ice, death, and weakness in these early stanzas, and contrast this with Madeline and Porphyro's characterisation.

¹²¹ Paraphrase: 'The poor old man was moved, by the sweet music, to think that so sweet a thing was intended for his comfort, as well as others.'

¹²² This word suggests both the noise of the trumpets and the rude, uncouth nature of Madeline's kinsmen.

¹²³ A plaster moulding around the ceiling where the walls and ceiling meet. The top of the frieze on which the angels are depicted.

¹²⁴ This is not the first time Keats talks about "old romance" (See 'Isabella, Or the Pot of Basil'). Compare the description of youth here to Coleridge's in 'The Nightingale'.

VI.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
 Young virgins might have visions of delight,
 And soft adorings from their loves receive
 Upon the honeyed middle of the night,
 If ceremonies due they did aright; 50
 As, supperless to bed they must retire,
 And couch supine* their beauties, lily white; *lying flat on one's back*
 Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
 Of Heaven with upward eyes¹²⁵ for all that they desire.

VII.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline: 55
 The music, yearning like a God in pain,¹²⁶
 She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
 Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train* *many skirts*
 Pass by - she heeded not at all: in vain
 Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier, 60
 And back retired - not cooled by high disdain,
 But she saw not: her heart was elsewhere.
 She sighed for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

VIII.

She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,
 Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short: 65
 The hallowed hour was near at hand: she sighs
 Amid the timbrels*, and the thronged resort *tambourines*
 Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
 'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,¹²⁷
 Hoodwinked with faery fancy¹²⁸ - all amort*, *spiritless, uninterested* 70
 Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn¹²⁹,
 And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

IX.¹³⁰

So, purposing each moment to retire,
 She lingered still. Meantime, across the moors,
 Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire 75
 For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
 Buttressed from moonlight*, stands he, and implores *shaded by a buttress*

¹²⁵ Madeline must lie on her back, looking directly above her.

¹²⁶ Madeline is set apart from the other revellers: she is repeatedly described in this stanza with the language of divinity.

¹²⁷ Note how Madeline is set apart from the shallowness and emotionality of the party around her.

¹²⁸ A very important line. Madeline is "hoodwinked" (or deceived) by "faery fancy". "Hoodwinked" is a term taken from how a falcon is blinded to control it. 'Faeries', as an emblem for deception and enchantment, appear in other poems like 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'. 'Fancy', however, refers to one's *imagination*. To what extent is Madeline responsible for deceiving herself? As you read this poem, take note of all mentions of enchantments and charms. Who is being charmed or bewitched? Who or what is the source of the enchantment?

¹²⁹ The lamb was closely associated with St. Agnes, but could also suggest the sacrifice of the innocent, possibly foreshadowing Madeline's fate.

¹³⁰ The poem is made more dramatic by the direct and unexpected introduction of Porphyro. The link between love and "fire" contrasts with the imagery of ice and old age that the poem opens with.

All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
 But for one moment in the tedious hours,
 That he might gaze and worship all unseen; 80
 Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss¹³¹ - in sooth such things have been.

X.¹³²

He ventures in - let no buzzed whisper tell,
 All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
 Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:
 For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes, 85
 Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
 Whose very dogs would execrations howl
 Against his lineage: not one breast affords
 Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
 Save one old beldame*, weak in body and in soul.¹³³ *old woman* 90

XI.

Ah, happy chance! the agèd creature came,
 Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand*, *walking stick*
 To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
 Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
 The sound of merriment and chorus bland*: *gentle, soothing* 95
 He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
 And grasped his fingers in her palsied hand,
 Saying, 'Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place:
 They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!'

XII.

'Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand -¹³⁴ 100
 He had a fever late, and in the fit
 He cursèd thee and thine, both house and land:
 Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
 More tame for his gray hairs - Alas me! flit!
 Flit like a ghost away.' 'Ah, gossip* dear.' *old term for female friend* 105
 We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,
 And tell me how' - 'Good Saints! not here, not here;
 Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier.

XIII.

He followed through a lowly archèd way,
 Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume, 110
 And as she muttered, 'Well-a - well-a-day!'* *generic exclamation: eg, 'My, my!'*

¹³¹ Note the repetition of verbs here and the emphasis on physical sensation. Pay attention to how sensuality is presented in this poem.

¹³² This stanza presents the perils which young love must endure, and recalls similar stories like Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Take note of the characterisation of Madeline's family as "**barbarian hordes**", "**hyena foemen**", and "**hot-blooded lords**", and consider links to the Gothic and macabre in presenting opposition to the lovers as savage, animalistic, and otherworldly.

¹³³ Romeo and Juliet's narrative also features a sympathetic old nurse, who enables the meeting of the lovers.

¹³⁴ A relation of Madeline's: note how his grotesque "**dwarfish**" shape and "**fever**" seem to echo Porphyro's imagination in the previous stanza.

He found him in a little moonlight room,
 Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
 'Now tell me where is Madeline,' said he,
 'O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom 115
 Which none but secret sisterhood¹³⁵ may see,
 When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously.'

XIV.¹³⁶

'St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve -
 Yet men will murder upon holy days:
 Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve*, *a strainer* 120
 And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays*, *fairies*
 To venture so¹³⁷: it fills me with amaze
 To see thee, Porphyro! - St. Agnes' Eve!
 God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays¹³⁸
 This very night. Good angels her deceive!¹³⁹ 125
 But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle* time to grieve." (*archaic*) plenty of

XV.

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon¹⁴⁰,
 While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
 Like puzzled urchin on an agèd crone* *old woman*
 Who keepeth closed a wondrous riddle-book, 130
 As spectacted she sits in chimney nook.¹⁴¹
 But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
 His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook* *restrain*
 Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold¹⁴²
 And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old. 135

XVI.

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown* rose, *in full bloom*
 Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
 Made purple riot*: then doth he propose *made his heart beat furiously*
 A stratagem¹⁴³, that makes the beldame start:
 'A cruel man and impious* thou art: *irreverent* 140
 Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
 Alone with her good angels, far apart
 From wicked men like thee. Go, go! - I deem
 Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.'

¹³⁵ Presumably the nuns who weave the wool of the sheep used in the feast of St Agnes. Essentially, a women's-only quarter.

¹³⁶ Note how in this stanza both Porphyro and Madeline are associated with elves and conjurors. In this poem, who is being enchanted?

¹³⁷ Paraphrase: 'Though it is a holy day, evil men may still commit murder. You, Porphyro, must think yourself able to perform miracles and be in command of magic elves and faeries if you dare to come here and risk your life.'

¹³⁸ Madeline is attempting to "conjure" up images of her future love.

¹³⁹ 'Send her pleasing delusions in her dreams'

¹⁴⁰ The moon was seen as a symbol of innocence, beauty, femininity, or imagination. See poems like 'The Nightingale' or 'Ode to a Nightingale' and take note of how they make reference to the moon.

¹⁴¹ An elaborate simile: Porphyro is as baffled by old Angela's words about Madeline as a young child being told riddles by an old crone.

¹⁴² Madeline could only see "cold" visions rather than a warm human being.

¹⁴³ Are we meant to read Porphyro as an innocent (if over-eager) youth, or a manipulative cheat?

XVII.

'I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,' 145
 Quoth Porphyro: 'O may I ne'er find grace
 When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
 If one of her soft ringlets* I displace, *curls of her hair*
 Or look with ruffian* passion in her face: *uncouth*
 Good Angela, believe me by these tears; 150
 Or I will, even in a moment's space,
 Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
 And beard* them, though they be more fanged than wolves and bears.'¹⁴⁴ *defy*

XVIII.

'Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
 A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing¹⁴⁵, 155
 Whose passing-bell* may ere the midnight toll; *death-bell*
 Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
 Were never missed.' - Thus plaining*, doth she bring *lamenting*
 A gentler speech from burning Porphyro,
 So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing, 160
 That Angela gives promise she will do
 Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal* or woe. *happiness*

XIX.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
 Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
 Him in a closet, of such privacy 165
 That he might see her beauty unespied,
 And win perhaps that night a peerless* bride, *without equal*
 While legioned fairies paced the coverlet*, *counterpane of her bed*
 And pale enchantment¹⁴⁶ held her sleepy-eyed.
 Never on such a night have lovers met, 170
 Since Merlin¹⁴⁷ paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

XX.

'It shall be as thou wishest,' said the Dame:
 'All cates* and dainties** shall be stored there *delicacies; desserts*
 Quickly on this feast-night¹⁴⁸, by the tambour frame* *embroidery frame*
 Her own lute thou wilt see. No time to spare, 175
 For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
 On such a catering trust my dizzy head.

¹⁴⁴ I.e., 'If you don't believe me, I will shout and taunt my foes as one taunts a wolf or bear (and thus commit suicide).'

¹⁴⁵ Angela's age and feebleness make her similar to the Beadsman. Note the contrast being made between age and youth here.

¹⁴⁶ The visions are pale when compared to physical love.

¹⁴⁷ A reference to the wizard Merlin, and how he was tricked by a woman into revealing his magic and then being enchanted and imprisoned within a tree (the "monstrous debt"). This is an ambiguous reference: this is a warning against enchantment and trickery, but who exactly is Merlin and who is the Demon between Porphyro and Madeline? The reference also seems to foreshadow a fatal conclusion to the romance.

¹⁴⁸ In the original St Agnes legend, the sleeping girl will see her husband and have a feast with him. Angela is showing Porphyro where the food will be stored, so he can use it as a hiding-place if he wishes to meet with Madeline.

Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
 The while. Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
 Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.¹⁴⁹ 180

XXI.

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
 The lover's endless minutes slowly passed;
 The dame returned, and whispered in his ear
 To follow her; with agèd eyes aghast
 From fright of dim espial*¹⁵⁰. Safe at last, *being seen* 185
 Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
 The maiden's chamber, silken, hushed, and chaste¹⁵¹;
 Where Porphyro took covert*, pleased amain**. *hid; greatly*
 His poor guide hurried back with agues* in her brain. *fevers (or fears)*

XXII.

Her faltering hand upon the balustrade*, *banister* 190
 Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
 When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmèd maid*, *virgin*
 Rose, like a missioned* spirit, unaware: *sent on a mission*
 With silver taper's light, and pious care,
 She turned, and down the agèd gossip led 195
 To a safe level matting. Now prepare,¹⁵²
 Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed -
 She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove* frayed** and fled. *wood pigeon; frightened*

XXIII.

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
 Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died: 200
 She closed the door, she panted, all akin
 To spirits of the air, and visions wide -
 No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!* *i.e. or the charm will not work*
 But to her heart, her heart was voluble*, *beating quickly*
 Paining with eloquence her balmy* side; *fragrant* 205
 As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
 Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stiflèd, in her dell.

XXIV.¹⁵³

A casement* high and triple-arched there was, *window*
 All garlanded with carven imag'ries* *pictures*

¹⁴⁹ I.e. this love plot must result in you marrying Madeline. Angela implies that otherwise her participation in this trick will dishonour her.

¹⁵⁰ from fear of being discovered in the gloomy light

¹⁵¹ "Chaste" here describes Madeline's room, but also figuratively describes Madeline.

¹⁵² Notice the caesura, and the switch from past to present tense that suggests the tension and uncertainty that Porphyro feels in the moment.

¹⁵³ The whole stanza is an excellent example of Keats' ability to present rich and evocative descriptions. Take note of how Keats often makes use of rich, luxurious imagery as a stand-in for overwhelming emotions. See, for example, 'Lamia' and 'Isabella, or the Pot of Basil'.

Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass, 210
 And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
 Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
 As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked* wings; *intricately patterned*
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings, 215
 A shielded scutcheon* blushed with blood of queens and kings. *coat of arms*

XXV.¹⁵⁴

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
 And threw warm gules* on Madeline's fair breast,¹⁵⁵ *red lines*
 As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon*; *blessing*
 Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together pressed, 220
 And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
 And on her hair a glory*, like a saint: *halo*
 She seemed a splendid angel, newly dressed,
 Save wings, for heaven - Porphyro grew faint:
 She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint. 225

XXVI.

Anon his heart revives; her vespers* done, *prayers*
 Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees;
 Unclass her warmèd jewels one by one;
 Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees
 Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees: 230
 Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,¹⁵⁶
 Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
 In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
 But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

XXVII.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest, 235
 In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,
 Until the popped warmth of sleep oppressed
 Her soothèd limbs, and soul fatigued away -
 Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
 Blissfully havened both from joy and pain; 240
 Clapsed like a missal where swart Paynims pray¹⁵⁷;
 Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,

¹⁵⁴ Stanzas 25 and 26 are important ones: notice how Madeline's appearance to Porphyro is described in supernatural, mythological terms. She seems "like a saint", "a splendid angel", "like a mermaid in sea-weed". Compare Porphyro's awe-struck, fantastical impression of Madeline with how she weeps in Stanzas 34 and 35 after being awoken from her dream, and consider how this poem presents the relationship between fantasy and love.

¹⁵⁵ Light through the stained-glass window from the previous stanza illuminates Madeline in red. There is perhaps some menacing symbolism here as the virginal, "fair" Madeline is covered in blood-red light.

¹⁵⁶ Note how the physical description of Madeline as a "half-hidden" mermaid as she undresses segues into the next line describing her as "dream[ing] awake". Note how Madeline's physical state (in the middle of changing) mirrors her conscious state (between dreams and reality).

¹⁵⁷ Clapsed like a Christian prayer book in a land of dark-skinned pagans. Note how Madeline is compared to the holy and sacred prayer book, but how the text suggests she is under threat.

As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.¹⁵⁸

XXVIII.

Stolen to this paradise¹⁵⁹, and so entranced¹⁶⁰,
 Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress, 245
 And listened to her breathing, if it chanced
 To wake into a slumbrous tenderness¹⁶¹;
 Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
 And breathed himself: then from the closet crept,
 Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness, 250
 And over the hushed carpet, silent, stepped,
 And 'tween the curtains peeped¹⁶², where, lo! - how fast she slept.

XXIX.

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
 Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
 A table, and, half anguished, threw thereon 255
 A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet -
 O for some drowsy Morphean amulet¹⁶³!
 The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion*, *trumpet*
 The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarinet,
 Affray his ears, though but in dying tone; 260
 The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

XXX.¹⁶⁴

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
 In blanchèd linen, smooth, and lavendered,
 While he from forth the closet brought a heap
 Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd* *melon* 265
 With jellies soother* than the creamy curd, *smoother, softer*
 And lucent syrups, tinct* with cinnamon; *flavoured*
 Manna¹⁶⁵ and dates, in argosy* transferred *a great merchant ship*
 From Fez*; and spicèd dainties, every one, *a place in Morocco, North Africa*
 From silken Samarkand¹⁶⁶ to cedared Lebanon¹⁶⁷. 270

XXXI.

These delicacies he heaped with glowing hand

¹⁵⁸ A striking phrase: describing an impossible dream-image in which time is reversed. The blooming rose has sexual connotations, which you can see by comparing this to 'Hush, Hush! Tread softly!'

¹⁵⁹ The word "**paradise**" suggests the Biblical Garden of Eden, into which the devil secretly crept as a snake in order to deceive Adam and Eve. Porphyro's role as interloper is also emphasised by the word "**Stolen**".

¹⁶⁰ The term here refers to Porphyro. Who, exactly, is a victim of magic and enchantment in this moment?

¹⁶¹ Porphyro is listening to see if Madeline wakes up.

¹⁶² Keats is describing a four-poster bed, surrounded by curtains on each side for privacy.

¹⁶³ A charm from the Greek god of dreams; sleeping pill

¹⁶⁴ Note again the detailed description appealing to our sense of taste, touch and sight, and enriched by the long 'c' ('k') and 's' sounds. The use of foreign trade and foreign locations also emphasises a sense of the exotic and the unreal: compare this with how Coleridge uses images of the foreign in 'Kubla Khan'.

¹⁶⁵ A sweet secretion from a plant, as in Persian manna.

¹⁶⁶ A Persian city famous for its silk.

¹⁶⁷ Biblical allusion to Lebanon, famous for its cedar wood.

On golden dishes and in baskets bright
 Of wreathèd silver; sumptuous they stand
 In the retirèd quiet of the night,
 Filling the chilly room with perfume light. 275
 'And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
 Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite*¹⁶⁸: *religious hermit*
 Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
 Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.'

XXXII.

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved* arm *tentative, nervous* 280
 Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
 By the dusk curtains - 'twas a midnight charm
 Impossible to melt as icèd stream:
 The lustrous salvers* in the moonlight gleam; *trays*
 Broad golden fringe* upon the carpet lies. *of the cloth* 285
 It seemed he never, never could redeem
 From such a steadfast spell¹⁶⁹ his lady's eyes;
 So mused awhile, entailed* in woofed** fantasies. *trapped; woven*

XXXIII.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute¹⁷⁰,
 Tumultuous, and, in chords that tenderest be, 290
 He played an ancient ditty, long since mute,
 In Provence called, 'La belle dame sans mercy'¹⁷¹,
 Close to her ear touching the melody -
 Wherewith disturbed, she uttered a soft moan:
 He ceased - she panted quick - and suddenly 295
 Her blue affrayèd* eyes wide open shone. *startled*
 Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

XXXIV.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
 Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep -¹⁷²
 There was a painful change, that nigh expelled 300
 The blisses of her dream so pure and deep.
 At which fair Madeline began to weep,
 And moan forth witless words with many a sigh,
 While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
 Who knelt, with joinèd hands and piteous eye, 305

¹⁶⁸ Keats also uses the "eremite" metaphor in 'Bright Star!', though for a very different purpose here.

¹⁶⁹ i.e. the spell of her sleep. Note how it is *Madeline* who is now described as ensorcelled / entranced.

¹⁷⁰ This might remind us of how the speaker in 'Love' also uses a song, or poetry, to woo his Beloved.

¹⁷¹ The title of an English translation of a 1424 poem by the 15th century poet Alain Chartier and of course Keats' own 1819 poem, which he wrote a few months after this. Note how Keats' own version dwells on the fatal power of enchantment.

¹⁷² i.e., Madeline is awake but at first seems to still see her dream vision. Take note of how Madeline *weeps* on waking, and see lines 311-312: it is apparent that she was dreaming of *Porphyro*, but the real Porphyro seems to provoke her to tears in comparison to her dream vision. How does the poem present the relationship between dreams and reality?

Fearing to move or speak, she looked so dreamingly.

XXXV.

'Ah, Porphyro!' said she, 'but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow,
And those sad eyes were spiritual* and clear: *ethereal, otherworldly* 310
How changed thou art! How pallid, chill, and drear!¹⁷³
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings* dear! *love lamentations*
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go.'

315

XXXVI.

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
At these voluptuous accents*, he arose, *passionate words*
Ethereal*, flushed, and like a throbbing star¹⁷⁴ *like a spirit*
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
Into her dream he melted¹⁷⁵, as the rose 320
Blendeth its odour with the violet -
Solution sweet. Meantime the frost-wind blows¹⁷⁶
Like Love's alarum* pattering the sharp sleet *warning, alarm bell*
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

XXXVII.

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw*-blown sleet: *sudden* 325
'This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!
'Tis dark: the icèd gusts still rave and beat.
'No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine. -
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring? 330
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing¹⁷⁷ -
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned* wing.' *unpreened*

XXXVIII.

'My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal* blessed? *servant or slave* 335
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil* dyed? *bright red*
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,

¹⁷³ The words "pallid, chill, and drear" might remind us of the grim Beadsman at his labours in the start of the poem.

¹⁷⁴ These lines are indeed a sexual innuendo, and this stanza scandalised Keats' readers and nearly caused his publisher to drop him.

¹⁷⁵ Note how their moment of intimacy is described as Porphyro melting into her *dream*. Consider the role of dreams in this poem.

¹⁷⁶ Note how the earlier silence is now interrupted, and the harsh weather is framed as an "alarum" (which also would wake a sleeper). Notice how confrontation with reality is framed as *waking* from sleep.

¹⁷⁷ Madeline accuses Porphyro of deceiving her as she seems to have thought she was asleep when they slept together.

A famished pilgrim¹⁷⁸ - saved by miracle.
 Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest 340
 Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
 To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel*.' *an unbeliever; a non-Christian*

XXXIX.

'Hark! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land¹⁷⁹,
 Of haggard seeming*, but a boon¹⁸⁰ indeed: *wild appearance*
 Arise - arise! the morning is at hand. 345
 The bloated wassaillers* will never heed - *revellers*
 Let us away, my love, with happy speed -
 There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,
 Drowned all in Rhenish* and the sleepy mead**;
a type of wine; liquor
 Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be, 350
 For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.'

XL.

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
 For there were sleeping dragons*¹⁸¹ all around, *dragoons, soldiers*
 At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears -
 Down the wide stairs a darkling* way they found. *obscure* 355
 In all the house was heard no human sound.
 A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
 The arras*, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound, *rich hanging tapestry*
 Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar;
 And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor. 360

XLI.¹⁸²

They glide, like phantoms¹⁸³, into the wide hall;
 Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide;
 Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
 With a huge empty flaggon by his side:
 The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide, 365
 But his sagacious eye an inmate owns.
 By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide -
 The chains lie silent on the footworn stones -
 The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

¹⁷⁸ Again notice the use made of religious references (here, the comparison is to a pilgrim on pilgrimage to a holy shrine) and the framing of love as holy.

¹⁷⁹ The storm is symbolically associated with elves and faeries: note how the lovers escape *into* the storm at the end of this poem, rather than confront reality.

¹⁸⁰ The storm seems threatening but is a boon in that it will provide cover for the lovers' escape.

¹⁸¹ Consider how danger is presented in fantastical, magical terms in this Stanza and compare this to the introduction to Madeline's family earlier.

¹⁸² Madeline and Porphyro seem to be escaping from a prison. The image comes from the collection of the following words: "iron", "Porter", "wakeful", "bloodhound", "inmate", "bolts", "chains" and "keys".

¹⁸³ Notice the word "phantoms" here, and the word "glide". Madeline and Porphyro seem more associated with the world of fantasy and dreams by this point: some critics have pointed out that by the end of this stanza, the use of passive voice means that they have even disappeared from the poem itself.

XLII.¹⁸⁴

And they are gone - ay, ages long ago¹⁸⁵ 370
 These lovers fled away into the storm.
 That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
 And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
 Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
 Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old 375
 Died palsy-twitched, with meagre face deform;
 The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
 For aye unsought for¹⁸⁶ slept among his ashes cold.

La Belle Dame Sans Merci (p. 184)

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

Oh what can ail thee, knight-at-arms 5
 So haggard and so woe-begone?
 The squirrel's granary is full,
 And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
 With anguish moist and fever-dew, 10
 And on thy cheeks a fading rose
 Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads* *meadows*
 Full beautiful - a faery's child,
 Her hair was long, her foot was light, 15
 And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
 And bracelets too, and fragrant zone*; *girdle*
 She looked at me as she did love,
 And made sweet moan. 20 *romantic murmurings*

I set her on my pacing steed,
 And nothing else saw all day long,

¹⁸⁴ This is an ambiguous stanza: note how it ends on a series of nightmare images, and the deaths of Angela and the beadsman. Do their deaths parallel Madeline and Porphyro's tragic fate in the storm, or have Madeline and Porphyro escaped from the world of tragedy into the world of fantasy? For the latter, compare how Keats discusses the world of man vs the world of imagination in 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

¹⁸⁵ Note how the phrase "ay, ages long ago" distance us from this poem, and heighten its fantastical nature.

¹⁸⁶ I.e. his "thousand aves" (or Ave Maria: a Christian prayer) were unasked for, and not valued.

For sidelong would she bend and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet, 25
And honey wild and manna-dew,
And sure in language strange she said -
'I love thee true'.

She took me to her elfin grot*, *grotto, cave*
And there she wept and sighed full sore, 30
And there I shut her wild, wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dreamed - Ah! woe betide! -
The latest* dream I ever dreamt 35 *final*
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried - 'La Belle Dame sans Merci,
Thee hath in thrall!' 40

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

And this is why I sojourn here 45
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake
And no birds sing.

Genre, context and title: Written between 14 February to 3 May 1819, the poem presents a sickly knight, wandering aimlessly after falling in love and then being abandoned by a mysterious woman. The poem is a ballad, composed in the style of a medieval love song, comprising short stanzas. Keats drew inspiration from a similarly titled 15th century French poem by Alain Chartier, also featuring a merciless lady who leaves a knight heartbroken. Apart from the love story that forms the narrative expressing Keats' longing for love and fulfillment, the poem can also be read symbolically, signifying the poet's fervent pursuit of the imagination (represented by the wild "**faery's child**" who promises unimagined delights), which ultimately eludes him, and leaves him in disappointment and despair. Such a trajectory – of longing and desire for escape followed by crushing disappointment, betrayal, even doom – is similarly enacted in poems like 'Ode to a Nightingale' and 'Lamia'.

1 "Oh what can ail thee" This poem contains a narrative within a narrative – the speaker who begins the poem is a passerby who encounters the wandering knight, who subsequently (i.e. in flashback) tells his tale of lost love.

2 "Alone and palely loitering" The sad and abandoned state of the knight, whose sickly appearance (palely) signals imminent death, suggested by the bleak and barren wintry landscape: "**The sedge has withered from the lake, /And no birds sing.**"

5 "And no birds sing." The song-like nature of the poem (a ballad), with its refrain, repetition of key lines – "**On the cold hillside**", "**And no birds sing**" which emphasise the bleakness of the physical landscape and correspondingly the emotional and psychological decline of the knight. The final line of each stanza is shorter in meter than the first three lines, which produces a sense of incompleteness, thus expressing the unsatisfactory conclusion of the love affair and of the poem, and the lack of fulfillment experienced by the knight.

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7 - 8 "The squirrel's granary is full,/And the harvest's done." It is the end of autumn, with the onset of winter, with all its bleak associations.

9 - 12 "I see a lily on thy brow,/With anguish moist and fever-dew,/And on thy cheeks a fading rose/Fast withereth too." Such a sickly description of the knight suggests imminent death, the result of lovesickness.

13 - 16 "I met a lady in the meads/Full beautiful - a faery's child,/Her hair was long, her foot was light, /And her eyes were wild" The lady is depicted as belonging to the faery realm, which conveys connotations of mystery, otherworldliness, magic. Faeries, or elves, were associated with bewitchment and enchantment. The woman has cast a spell on the knight, who becomes blind to any danger that she may pose to him.

19 - 20 "She looked at me as she did love,/ And made sweet moan" The sexual nature of the knight's encounter with the lady is clearly suggested here; at the same time, there is a sense of the woman's deliberateness, suggesting her seduction of the knight, as indicated by her actions which lead the knight and direct him to her secret abode ("**She took me to her elfin grot**").

27 - 28 "And sure in language strange she said - /'I love thee true'." The lady's use of foreign, ambiguous ("**strange**") language, the emphasis on "**sure**" and the short line of her avowal (line 28), which has a tentative, cut-off, hollow effect, cast some doubt as to the legitimacy of her claim of true love, in keeping with a reading of the lady as seductive and manipulative. It could also suggest that the knight's understanding of her love might be a projection or a misunderstanding; that he has convinced himself that her affection for him is genuine.

37 - 42 "I saw pale kings, and princes too,/Pale warriors, death-pale were they all; ... I saw their starved lips in the gloam,/ With horrid warning gapèd wide, - " It is in sleep, and dreams, that the knight comes to a realization of the dangerous nature of the woman. (See further comments below on dreams and dream-visions.)

39 - 40 "They cried - 'La Belle Dame sans Merci, /Thee hath in thrall!'" The dream (more accurately, nightmare) reveals that the knight is the latest in a long list of men who have fallen prey to the lady's attraction; like them, the knight will die. The repetition of "**pale**" in the description of the ghoulish figures in lines 37 - 8 connects these once high-born men with the "palely loitering" knight, anticipating his demise.

See also Coleridge's ballad 'Love' with its use of double narratives, and exploration of similar themes of love and desire.

The importance of dreams and dream-visions: The term 'dream-vision' is often used to depict the Romantic exploration of insights, suggesting that it is in the unconscious state of sleep and dreams that the poet arrives at a heightened understanding of truths. Such a process is an instinctive one, driven by emotion and instinct rather than by logic or scientific reasoning. Consider the role and significance of dreams here and elsewhere in other poems.

Lamia (P. 199)

Genre, context and title: Drawing from classical sources and figures (Hermes, the nymph) and using an epic style similar to John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (depicting themes of temptation and fall of the hero), using heroic (rhyming) couplets throughout, Keats' narrative poem, written in 1819, draws heavily from Robert Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy' (1612), which retells a story from Greek writer Philostratus's *Vita Apollonii*: Twenty-five year-old Menippus Lycius falls in love with the serpent-woman Lamia, and their affair is exposed by the philosopher Apollonius at their wedding-feast.

In his depiction of Lamia, Keats has created an ambiguous, complex character, full of conflicting qualities, open to multiple readings. Apart from it being a story about longing for love and fulfilment, another way of reading the poem is to see it as an allegory, a story in which the three major characters embody abstract or moral qualities, in keeping with Romantic ideas: Lamia symbolizes all the allure and beauty of art and the poetic imagination (with its capacity for rich and various meanings and possibilities), Lycius the poet who is attracted to (and seduced by) art and poetry, and Apollonius represents cold logic and reason, which runs counter to and is destructive of the imagination.

The ambiguous and unresolved nature of the character of Lamia may have been a result of Keats' own complicated feelings for Fanny Brawne, which may have influenced his presentation of Lamia. In a letter (1 July 1819) he wrote to Fanny: 'Ask yourself my love whether you are not very cruel to have so entrammelled me, so destroy my freedom'. Letters to her during this period show the same emotional tone as the poem; he is unable to wean himself from her and resentful of her power over him: 'You have absorbed me' (13 October 1819).

Keats' Lamia is nevertheless a more sympathetically portrayed, tragic character: whereas the original Lamia was a purely malicious, child-eating monster, Lamia is driven by love of Lycius.

In terms of the symbolic representation of Lamia and Lycius, and the exploration of love and of the poetic imagination, the poem shares many connections with 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' and 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

PART I.

Upon a time, before the faery broods
 Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods,
 Before King Oberon's bright diadem,
 Sceptre, and mantle, clasped with dewy gem,
 Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns 5
 From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslipped lawns,
 The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
 His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft:
 From high Olympus had he stolen light,
 On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight 10
 Of his great summoner, and made retreat
 Into a forest on the shores of Crete.
 For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
 A nymph, to whom all hoofèd Satyrs knelt;
 At whose white feet the languid Tritons poured 15
 Pearls, while on land they withered and adored.
 Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,
 And in those meads where sometime she might haunt,
 Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,
 Though Fancy's casket were unlocked to choose. 20
 Ah, what a world of love was at her feet!
 So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
 Burnt from his wingèd heels to either ear,
 That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,
 Blushed into roses 'mid his golden hair, 25
 Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare.

Set in the classical age before the later medieval legends of the fairy world, the story begins with the god Hermes who leaves his home in the divine realm of Mount Olympus for the island of Crete in amorous pursuit of a beautiful nymph, thus establishing the theme of love and desire.

1-5. Keats declares that his poem uses Classical myth rather than the later folklore of the faerie. The story is set in a time before classical myth was displaced by medieval legends of the fairy world.

2. "Satyr" a mythological rural creature, half-man and half-horse.

2. "prosperous" denser, more extensive

3. "King Oberon ... diadem" King of the fairies; his crown

5. Dryads are wood-nymphs; fauns are mythological rural creatures, half-man and half-goat.

6. "brakes" bracken, ferns

7. Hermes is the Greek messenger god, son of Zeus and Maia. The **"ever-smitten"** Hermes was renowned for his amorous nature.

11. "his great summoner" Zeus

13. The island is sacred because of its status as the birthplace of Zeus.

14 - 16. "A nymph ... adored" A nymph is a minor female nature spirit in Greek mythology, appearing as a beautiful young woman tied to a specific place like a tree or stream; here, she is a wood-nymph. Lines 15 - 26 express how she arouses strong sexual desire in men.

15. "Tritons" mermen.

19 - 20. "rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,/Though Fancy's casket were unlocked to choose." The gifts showered on the nymph by male admirers were so unique and extraordinary that they were beyond the poetic imagination.

Compare Hermes' pursuit of the unnamed nymph, an object of men's desire, with Lamia's pursuit of Lycius.

From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,
And wound with many a river to its head,
To find where this sweet nymph prepared her secret
bed:

30

In vain; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found,
And so he rested, on the lonely ground,
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.

35

There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,
Such as, once heard, in gentle heart destroys
All pain but pity: thus the lone voice spake:
'When from this wreathèd tomb shall I awake!

When move in a sweet body fit for life,
And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
Of hearts and lips! Ah, miserable me!'

40

The God, dove-footed, glided silently
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
Until he found a palpitating snake,
Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.

45

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barred;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries -
So rainbow-sided, touched with miseries,
She seemed, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar;
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls
complete:

50

55

60

Reaching the forest in Crete, Hermes cannot find the nymph. Instead, he meets Lamia, a snake with a woman's voice, who expresses sorrow that, trapped in her snake body, she is unable to experience human love and pleasure.

38. "this wreathèd tomb ... awake" Lamia likens her serpentine state to a state of death, and of being asleep, implying that it robs her of the ability to enjoy life's sensations and pleasures fully.

40. "ruddy" rosy, or flushed. **"Strife"** means struggle, and in the context of **"hearts and lips"** in the next line suggests strenuous physical intimacy. This sums up Lamia's longing for sexual fulfillment, which she can only enjoy if she were human.

46. "cirque-couchant" Keats invented this word: lying coiled up in circles.

In depicting Lamia's physical appearance, Keats uses a very rich and unusual blend of many varied and contradictory elements and qualities, suggesting her multi-faceted, ambiguous nature. Her very identity is a blend: she is a serpent-woman.

The multiplicity of her nature is conveyed by references to many beasts (zebra, leopard, peacock) with different corresponding patterns (stripes, freckles or dots, bars), various colours (vermilion, crimson or red, gold, green, blue); and she is described as a rainbow. She is a creature of the earth but associated with celestial shining moons and stars.

47. "gordian" Lamia's snake body is coiled up. In Greek mythology, Gordius tied the knot no-one could disentangle.

50. "Eyed like a peacock" The circles of a peacock's plumage are known as eyes.

55 - 56. "She seemed, at once, some penanced lady elf, / Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self." More ambiguity, in three conflicting depictions (is she evil or a victim?), all of which associate Lamia with magic, enchantment and the supernatural.

63. Proserpine, abducted from Sicily by Pluto, cries for her home, just like Lamia longs for her former state as human.

57. "wannish fire" An oxymoron, since "wannish" means pale but **"fire"** suggests intensity.

And for her eyes - what could such eyes do there
 But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair,
 As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air?
 Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
 Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake, 65
 And thus - while Hermes on his pinions lay,
 Like a stooped falcon ere he takes his prey -

'Fair Hermes, crowned with feathers, fluttering light,
 I had a splendid dream of thee last night:
 I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold, 70
 Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
 The only sad one; for thou didst not hear
 The soft, lute-fingered Muses chanting clear,
 Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
 Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious
 moan. 75
 I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,
 Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
 And, swiftly as a bright Phoebean dart,
 Strike for the Cretan isle; and here thou art!
 Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid?' 80
 Whereat the star of Lethe not delayed
 His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired:
 "Thou smooth-lipped serpent, surely high inspired!
 Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
 Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise, 85
 Telling me only where my nymph is fled -
 Where she doth breathe!' 'Bright planet, thou hast said,'
 Returned the snake, 'but seal with oaths, fair God!
 'I swear,' said Hermes, 'by my serpent rod,
 And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown!' 90
 Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown.
 Then thus again the brilliance feminine:
 'Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of thine,
 Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
 About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days 95
 She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
 Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet;
 From weary tendrils, and bowed branches green,
 She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen;
 And by my power is her beauty veiled 100

60. "pearls" teeth

66. "pinions" wings

Lamia and Hermes greet each other in flattering terms, with Hermes asking Lamia for the whereabouts of the nymph, promising (by swearing on his rod) to reward Lamia for her answer. Lamia, who has used her magical power to make the shy nymph invisible, now offers to reveal her, in order to obtain Hermes's aid in turning herself back into a woman. The central idea of desire for love and fulfillment is made clear here: Hermes hopes to gain access to the nymph, while Lamia aims to pursue Lycius who she has fallen in love with. The poet then muses on how the gods have the power to speedily make their desires a reality, implying that human beings lack such an ability, which foreshadows the tragic conclusion of the story. Lamia, breathing on Hermes's eyes, allows him to see the nymph, who, initially shy and reluctant, finally surrenders herself to Hermes. Hermes in turn touches Lamia with his rod, which will lead to Lamia's transformation, before leaving with the nymph into the forest.

76. "purple flakes" fleecy clouds, tinted by the sun.

78. "a bright Phoebean dart" A sunbeam (after Phoebus the god of light, another guise of Apollo).

81. The "star of Lethe" is Hermes himself, as he led the souls of the dead over the river Lethe.

84. "wreath" Lamia's serpentine body is curled.

91. "Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown." The focus on Hermes and Lamia's eloquence in this section conveys how skillful they are in the use of language, and how easily and glibly they negotiate deals, actions which have serious consequences.

92. "brilliance feminine" describes Lamia's glittering, female form.

To keep it unaffronted, unassailed
 By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,
 Of Satyrs, Fauns, and bleared Silenus' sighs.
 Pale grew her immortality, for woe
 Of all these lovers, and she grievèd so 105
 I took compassion on her, bade her steep
 Her hair in weird syrops, that would keep
 Her loveliness invisible, yet free
 To wander as she loves, in liberty.
 Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone, 110

If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon!
 Then, once again, the charmèd God began
 An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
 Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.
 Ravished, she lifted her Circean head, 115
 Blushed a live damask, and swift-lipping said,
 'I was a woman, let me have once more
 A woman's shape, and charming as before.
 I love a youth of Corinth - O the bliss!
 Give me my woman's form, and place me where he
 is. 120

Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
 And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now.'
 The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
 She breathed upon his eyes, and swift was seen
 Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the
 green. 125

It was no dream; or say a dream it was,
 Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
 Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.
 One warm, flushed moment, hovering, it might seem
 Dashed by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burned; 130
 Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turned
 To the swooned serpent, and with languid arm,
 Delicate, put to proof the lithe Caducean charm.
 So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
 Full of adoring tears and blandishment, 135
 And towards her stepped: she, like a moon in wane,
 Faded before him, cowered, nor could restrain
 Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
 That faints into itself at evening hour:
 But the God fostering her chillèd hand, 140
 She felt the warmth, her eyelids opened bland,
 And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,

100 - 103. "And by my power is her beauty veiled/To keep it unaffronted, unassailed/By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,/Of Satyrs, Fauns, and bleared Silenus' sighs". Silenus is a satyr, tutor of Bacchus, god of wine. Lamia claims to have kept the nymph invisible for the sake of protecting her from lecherous suitors.

107. "weird syrops" strange, magical liquid

111. "boon" blessing, favour or gift

112. "the charmèd God" Lamia has been using her beauty and voice to persuade Hermes.

113 - 114. "psalterian" like a psalm; Hermes's oath is depicted as having great passion and power.

115. "her Circean head" A reference to Circe, the enchantress from Homer's *Odyssey*, highlighting Lamia's dangerous, seductive, and magical nature.

116. "live damask" refers to a vivid, blushing pink or red complexion, like that of a damask rose, signifying her sudden transition into a living, mortal-like human.

116. "sweet-lipping" Does this suggest a certain element of contrivance to Lamia's speech, a reminder of her serpentine origin?

117 - 119. Lamia reveals the reason for her desire to be turned back into a woman: to pursue the scholar Lycius whom she has fallen in love with

126 - 128. "It was no dream; ... long immortal dream" This asserts that the desires and whims of the gods have a substantial reality and permanence that human, mortal experiences lack. Human dreams are generally fleeting and insubstantial, whereas a god's dream (or object of desire) is actual and enduring.

133. "put to proof the lithe Caducean charm" He touches her with his serpent-entwined staff, the caduceus.

135. "blandishment" sweet words

144 - 145. "Into the green-recessèd woods they flew" Consider the disappearance of the lovers from the narrative also in 'The Eve of Saint Agnes', entering instead the realm of mythology, of legends.

145. "Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do." As in lines 126 - 128, the idea presented is that gods will forever be immortal and enjoy fulfilling their desires,

Bloomed, and gave up her honey to the lees.
 Into the green-recessèd woods they flew;
 Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do. 145

Left to herself, the serpent now began
 To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
 Her mouth foamed, and the grass, therewith besprent,
 Withered at dew so sweet and virulent;
 Her eyes in torture fixed, and anguish drear, 150
 Hot, glazed, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
 Flashed phosphor and sharp sparks, without one
 cooling tear.

The colours all inflamed throughout her train,
 She writhed about, convulsed with scarlet pain:
 A deep volcanian yellow took the place 155
 Of all her milder-moonèd body's grace;
 And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
 Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede;
 Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
 Eclipsed her crescents, and licked up her stars: 160
 So that, in moments few, she was undressed
 Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
 And rubious-argent: of all these bereft,
 Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
 Still shone her crown; that vanished, also she 165
 Melted and disappeared as suddenly;
 And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
 Cried, 'Lycius! gentle Lycius!' - Borne aloft
 With the bright mists about the mountains hoar
 These words dissolved: Crete's forests heard no
 more. 170

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,
 A full-born beauty new and exquisite?
 She fled into that valley they pass o'er
 Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore;
 And rested at the foot of those wild hills, 175
 The rugged founts of the Peræan rills,
 And of that other ridge whose barren back
 Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
 South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
 About a young bird's flutter from a wood, 180
 Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
 By a clear pool, wherein she passionèd
 To see herself escaped from so sore ills,
 While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

unlike humans, who will die ("**grow pale**"). A key theme in Keats' poetry e.g. 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

Now, Lamia undergoes a metamorphosis, a feature typical of classical mythology, which is here described as a violent, tortured process, a vanishing or annihilation rather than a natural, easy transformation from one state into another. It is likened to a rebirth through destruction (of her former self), a kind of death; a kind of labour pain in reverse, with suffering and pain; as a blend of pain and pleasure ('Her mouth foamed ...'), with references to obstruction of light ('Made gloom of ... /Eclipsed her crescents'); it is also likened to volcanic burning, scalding, melting of matter (rather than natural shedding of snake skin). It also employs sexual imagery, imagery of despoilment, ruination ('ravishes', 'Spoilt', 'licked up', 'undrest'), and synaesthesia, using a blend of colour and sensation ('scarlet pain'). Once transformed, she immediately sets about her quest for Lycius, leaving Crete behind.

Compare such an experience with the depiction of creative, poetic power in 'Kubla Khan'.

148. "besprent" sprinkled

151. "sear" scorched

158. "golden brede" The intricate, shining pattern on the skin of the Lamia while she is in her serpent form.

163. "rubious-argent" ruby-embedded silver

Now a beautiful woman, Lamia makes her way to the city of Corinth, stopping by a clear pond to look at her reflection in the water.

182 -183. "By a clear pool, wherein she passionèd/To see herself" Does this depiction of Lamia, together with her earlier transformation, associate her with Narcissus, the youth who fell in love with the beauty of his own reflected image, and was changed into a daffodil (possibly alluded to in line 184)? Both Lamia and Narcissus are doomed figures; however, while Narcissus falls in love with himself, Lamia uses her self-admiration as a starting point to secure her love for Lycius, making her a more active, though still doomed, agent of her own fate.

182. "passionèd" wept passionately. Another of Keats' own lexical inventions, making a verb of 'passion'.

Ah, happy Lycius! - for she was a maid	185	<i>A paradoxical contrast is established here: Lamia is a "purest" virgin, 185 – "she was a maid ... /A virgin purest lipped", yet deeply experienced in the "lore of love". Such dualities are consistent with the ambiguous and conflicting depictions of Lamia in the poem, showing Keats to be manipulating female archetypes.</i>
More beautiful than ever twisted braid, Or sighed, or blushed, or on spring-flowered lea Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy: A virgin purest lipped, yet in the lore Of love deep learnèd to the red heart's core;	190	
Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain, Define their pettish limits, and estrange Their points of contact, and swift counterchange; Intrigue with the specious chaos, and disport Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art;	195	191 - 194. "Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain/To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain,/Define their pettish limits, ... and swift counterchange". Though a newly created woman, she has ancient knowledge ("yet of sciential brain") and knows how to separate pain and pleasure, and understands the fickle nature of human feelings.
As though in Cupid's college she had spent Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent, And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment. Why this fair creature chose so faerily By the wayside to linger, we shall see; But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse And dream, when in the serpent prison-house, Of all she list, strange or magnificent:	200	
How, ever, where she willed, her spirit went; Whether to faint Elysium, or where Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids fair Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair; Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine, Stretched out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine;	205	197 - 199. "As though in Cupid's college she had spent/ Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,/And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment." Though she has knowledge of love, she is chaste and unspoilt ("unshent"), and spends her time dwelling on thoughts of longing and love.
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line. And sometimes into cities she would send Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend; And once, while among mortals dreaming thus, She saw the young Corinthian Lycius Charioting foremost in the envious race, Like a young Jove with calm uneager face, And fell into a swooning love of him.	210	
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim He would return that way, as well she knew, To Corinth from the shore; for freshly blew The eastern soft wind, and his galley now Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle	215	<i>Keats now provides background details explaining Lamia's quest for love. He reveals that Lamia has magical powers: she can travel in her mind and see visions; she can send her spirit to many places. During these mental journeys, she travels to places of fantasy, beauty, and mythology, including the streets of Corinth where she sees Lycius, who has just won a chariot race, and falls in love with him. It is now evening; in her new woman form, she goes to meet Lycius: he is walking alone from the shore (after a temple visit in Aegina), his mind full of deep thoughts. Boldly, Lamia approaches him in a teasing and familiar way, accusing him of abandoning her. Startled out of his thoughts, the scholar immediately falls in love with her and implores her to stay with him. They kiss and Lamia agrees to stay.</i>
	220	
	225	206. "Elysium" paradise
		207. "Nereids" sea-nymphs
		212. "Mulciber" Another name for Vulcan, god of fire and metal-working.
		218. "Jove" Zeus

Fresh anchored; whither he had been awhile
 To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
 Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare.
 Jove heard his vows, and bettered his desire;
 For by some freakful chance he made retire 230
 From his companions, and set forth to walk,
 Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk:
 Over the solitary hills he fared,
 Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
 His phantasy was lost, where reason fades, 235
 In the calmed twilight of Platonic shades.
 Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near -
 Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
 His silent sandals swept the mossy green;
 So neighboured to him, and yet so unseen 240
 She stood: he passed, shut up in mysteries,
 His mind wrapped like his mantle, while her eyes
 Followed his steps, and her neck regal white
 Turned - syllabing thus, 'Ah, Lycius bright,
 And will you leave me on the hills alone? 245
 Lycius, look back! and be some pity shown.'
 He did; not with cold wonder fearingly,
 But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice -
 For so delicious were the words she sung,
 It seemed he had loved them a whole summer long. 250
 And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
 Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
 And still the cup was full - while he, afraid
 Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid
 Due adoration, thus began to adore 255
 (Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so sure):
 'Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Goddess, see
 Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee!
 For pity do not this sad heart belie -
 Even as thou vanishest so I shall die. 260
 Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!
 To thy far wishes will thy streams obey.
 Stay! though the greenest woods be thy domain,
 Alone they can drink up the morning rain:
 Though a descended Pleiad, will not one 265
 Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
 Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine?
 So sweetly to these ravished ears of mine
 Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade

229. "Jove heard his vows, and bettered his desire"
 The implication is that Lycius, too, is seeking love.

232. "their Corinth talk" sophisticated conversation.

234. "eve's star" Evening star (or night). A possible allusion to Eve, the first woman, who was tempted by the serpent (the disguised devil) in the Garden of Eden.

In Christian tradition, another name for the devil is 'Lucifer', or 'morning star'.

241. "shut up in mysteries" Lycius is portrayed as a young, intellectual, standing alone at a temple porch in a state of pensive thought. In seeing Lamia, he is startled out of his thoughts. See also Line 322 "**Lycius from death awoke into amaze,/To see her still**". And 296 "**as he from one trance was wakening/Into another**" when Lycius first kisses Lamia.

Consider other figures in Keats' poetry in a similar state; individuals wrapped up in private dreams or reverie, who are then awoken or transformed into another state: Madeline ('The Eve of St Agnes'), the knight in 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'?

248. Orpheus was allowed to lead his wife Eurydice back from Hades on the condition that he did not look back at her. He did, and lost her. This tale of lost, doomed love foreshadows the tragic outcome of the poem.

249 - 253. "For so delicious were the words she sung,/It seemed he had loved them a whole summer long./And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,/Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,/And still the cup was full" Keats is typically using gustatory imagery (the act of drinking) to convey human capacity for emotions; here, to depict Lamia's enchanting ability to arouse love powerfully in Lycius.

260. "Even as thou vanishest so I shall die." This serves as foreshadowing, as well as in "**if thou shouldst fade/Thy memory will waste me to a shade - For pity do not melt**". (270)

265. "Pleiad" One of the seven Pleiades, daughters of Atlas, who were transformed into stars.

Thy memory will waste me to a shade - 270
 For pity do not melt! - 'If I should stay,'
 Said Lamia, 'here, upon this floor of clay,
 And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,
 What canst thou say or do of charm enough
 To dull the nice remembrance of my home? 275
 Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
 Over these hills and vales, where no joy is -
 Empty of immortality and bliss!
 Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
 That finer spirits cannot breathe below 280
 In human climes, and live. Alas! poor youth,
 What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
 My essence? What serener palaces,
 Where I may all my many senses please,
 And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts
 appease? 285
 It cannot be - Adieu!' So said, she rose
 Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
 The amorous promise of her lone complain,
 Swooned, murmuring of love, and pale with pain.
 The cruel lady, without any show 290
 Of sorrow for her tender favourite's woe,
 But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
 With brighter eyes and slow amenity,
 Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
 The life she had so tangled in her mesh 295
 And as he from one trance was wakening
 Into another, she began to sing,
 Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing,
 A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,
 While, like held breath, the stars drew in their panting fires. 300
 And then she whispered in such trembling tone,
 As those who, safe together met alone
 For the first time through many anguished days,
 Use other speech than looks; bidding him raise
 His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt, 305
 For that she was a woman, and without
 Any more subtle fluid in her veins
 Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
 Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.
 And next she wondered how his eyes could miss 310
 Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
 She dwelt but half retired, and there had led

280 - 281. "That finer spirits cannot breathe below/In human climes, and live" An unintentionally ironic line, in two senses: i) Lamia indeed does *not* manage to live in "**human climes**" and ii) is she perhaps not a "**finer spirit**", but something more demonic or sinister?

286 - 287. "He, sick to lose/The amorous promise of her lone complain,/Swooned, murmuring of love, and pale with pain." The idea of falling in love and being rejected by the beloved as a sickness is a key theme in Keats' poetry. Consider the state of the "**palely loitering**" knight in 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'.

290. "The cruel lady" Compare the portrayal of Lamia with other women in Keats' poetry e.g. in 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'.

294. "With brighter eyes and slow amenity,/Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh/The life she had so tangled in her mesh/And as he from one trance was wakening/ Into another" Lamia's kiss and offer of love is presented as an awakening, bringing Lycius back to life.

Also 322 - 325 "**Lycius from death awoke into amaze,/To see her still, and singing so sweet lays;/Then from amaze into delight he fell/To hear her whisper woman's lore so well**".

Days happy as the gold coin could invent
 Without the aid of love; yet in content |
 Till she saw him, as once she passed him by, 315
 Where 'gainst a column he leant thoughtfully
 At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heaped
 Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reaped
 Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before
 The Adonian feast; whereof she saw no more, 320
 But wept alone those days, for why should she adore?
 Lycius from death awoke into amaze,
 To see her still, and singing so sweet lays;
 Then from amaze into delight he fell
 To hear her whisper woman's lore so well; 325
 And every word she spake enticed him on
 To unperplexed delight and pleasure known.
 Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
 Of the sweets of Fairies, Peris, Goddesses,
 There is not such a treat among them all, 330
 Hunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
 As a real woman, lineal indeed
 From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed.
 Thus gentle Lamia judged, and judged aright, 335
 That Lycius could not love in half a fright,
 So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
 More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
 With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
 That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save. 340
 Lycius to all made eloquent reply,
 Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh;
 And last, pointing to Corinth, asked her sweet,
 If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.
 The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness 345
 Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
 To a few paces; not at all surmised
 By blinded Lycius, so in her comprised.
 They passed the city gates, he knew not how,
 So noiseless, and he never thought to know. 350

315 – 318. “Where 'gainst a column he leant thoughtfully/At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heaped/Of amorous herbs and flowers”. In Lamia's first sight of Lycius, he is presented emblematically as the archetypal lover, standing against the temple of Venus, surrounded by plants and flowers signifying love.

321. “Adonian feast” Feast of Adonis, who was beloved by Venus.

329. “Peris” Angelic beings in Persian mythology

332. “lineal” real

334. “Pyrrha's pebbles” After an angry Zeus sent a great flood, Pyrrha and Deucalion repopulated the world by throwing stones which were transformed into men and women.

338. There is an irony here in that Lamia, the supernatural creature, captivates Lycius by pretending to be an ordinary human. Is Lamia a sinister, demonic being, or simply a lonely creature aching to be human?

339 - 340. “With no more awe than what her beauty gave, /That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.” A pun here on two idiomatic usages: Lycius is both struck and healed by Lamia's beauty.

348. “comprised” absorbed, preoccupied. Consider the knight's state of mind in ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci’ after falling in love: **“I set her on my pacing steed,/And nothing else saw all day long”** (21)

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,
Muttered, like tempest in the distance brewed,
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers. 355
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,
Companioned or alone; while many a light
Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls, 360
Or found them clustered in the corniced shade
Of some arched temple door, or dusky colonnade.

The city of Corinth is presented as a crowded, noisy place, with garish lights.

References to the city's sounds ("**Muttered ... Shuffled their sandals**") and lights ("**Many a light/Flared, here and there**").

352. "temples lewd" Corinthian temples were supposed to have held sexual ceremonials. 'Lewd' can also mean 'uncouth' in the context.

361. "colonnade" column

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
Her fingers he pressed hard, as one came near
With curled gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald
crown, 365
Slow-stepped, and robed in philosophic gown:
Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,
Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
While hurried Lamia trembled: 'Ah,' said he,
'Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully? 370
Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew?' -
'I'm wearied,' said fair Lamia: 'tell me who
Is that old man? I cannot bring to mind
His features - Lycius! wherefore did you blind
Yourself from his quick eyes?' Lycius replied, 375
' 'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
And good instructor; but tonight he seems
The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams.'

Clutching Lamia's hand, Lycius sees his mentor, old Apollonius, approaching and instinctively tries to avoid him, fearing his intrusion.

376. "Apollonius" named after the first-century Corinthian philosopher, and symbol of reason.

378. "My sweet dreams" Lycius' state of being in love is likened to a state of dreaming, which he fears will be disrupted by Apollonius.

While yet he spake they had arrived before
A pillared porch, with lofty portal door, 380
Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor
Reflected in the slabbèd steps below,
Mild as a star in water; for so new,
And so unsullied was the marble hue,
So through the crystal polish, liquid fine, 385
Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
Could e'er have touched there. Sounds Aeolian
Breathed from the hinges, as the ample span
Of the wide doors disclosed a place unknown
Some time to any, but those two alone, 390
And a few Persian mutes, who that same year
Were seen about the markets: none knew where
They could inhabit; the most curious
Were foiled, who watched to trace them to their house:
And but the flutter-wingèd verse must tell, 395
For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befell,

Contrast between the noisy, crowded city of Corinth and the lover's private world, presented as a pure, untrodden space.

381. "phosphor" phosphorous glow

385. "Sounds Aeolian" (Eolian) sounds produced by the wind

394. "the flutter-wingèd verse": this poem.

394. "Shut from the busy world, of more incredulous." Compare this image of the two lovers escaping to privacy with 'The Eve of St Agnes'.

'Twould humour many a heart to leave them thus,
Shut from the busy world, of more incredulous.

PART II.

Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
Is - Love, forgive us! - cinders, ashes, dust;
Love in a palace is perhaps at last
More grievous torment than a hermit's fast.
That is a doubtful tale from faery land, 5
Hard for the non-elect to understand.
Had Lycius lived to hand his story down,
He might have given the moral a fresh frown,
Or clenched it quite: but too short was their bliss
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss. 10
Besides, there, nightly, with terrific glare
Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
Hovered and buzzed his wings, with fearful roar,
Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor. 15

For all this came a ruin: side by side
They were enthronèd, in the eventide,
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
Floated into the room, and let appear 20
Unveiled the summer heaven, blue and clear,
Betwixt two marble shafts. There they reposed,
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,
Saving a tithe which love still open kept,
That they might see each other while they almost
slept; 25

When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill
Of trumpets - Lycius started - the sounds fled,
But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.
For the first time, since first he harboured in 30
That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
His spirit passed beyond its golden bourne
Into the noisy world almost forsworn.
The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want 35
Of something more, more than her empery
Of joys; and she began to moan and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.
'Why do you sigh, fair creature?' whispered he: 40

After the enchanting mood of Part 1, Keats here asks if love can survive in the real world, whether in poverty or in luxury, introducing a cynical note to the narrative which anticipates the tragic outcome of the poem.

1. **"hut"** – humble cottage

4. **"Love in a palace is perhaps at last/More grievous torment ..."** Keats introduces an abrupt pair of aphorisms that seem to interrupt the love story: love is miserable in poverty, but love in a palace is perhaps also doomed to become torment.

6. **"Non-elect"** A Calvinist (Christian) term: the elect are destined to be saved by God and the non-elect are destined to be damned by God. Keats here means that only a select few will understand his meaning.

9. **"clenched it quite"** proved it conclusively. Lycius does not live long enough to reflect upon love in a palace.

11. **"Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair"** A line with two possible readings: Cupid (God of love) is **"jealous"** i.e. protective, though it might be argued that he ultimately aims to bring down the lovers on account of his envy of the **"complete"** initial perfection of their love.

In a secret palace created by Lamia, the lovers are in a blissful, almost sleeping state, when they are rudely awakened by loud trumpet sounds from the outside world. Lamia, seeing Lycius startled, is filled with disquiet and foreboding. Lycius reassures her of his love, then tells her that he wants to hold a public celebration of their love. Despite Lamia's tearful pleas, Lycius is adamant about his plan. Reluctantly, Lamia acquiesces, asking only that Lycius not invite Apollonius, a request Lycius does not understand.

16. **"For all this"** In spite of this

23 - 24. **"eyelids closed,/saving a tithe which love still open"** their eyes are only half-closed, as a tribute (tithe) to love.

32. **"bourne"** real

34. **"penetrant"** penetrating

36. **"emperry"** empire, domain

40. **"a moment's thought is passion's passing bell"** An epigrammatical sentence which sums up a key idea in the poem: the destructive effect of reason (thought) on love (passion). A passing bell is a funeral bell which announces the death of someone.

'Why do you think?' returned she tenderly,
 'You have deserted me - where am I now?
 Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow:
 No, no, you have dismissed me; and I go
 From your breast houseless - ay, it must be so.' 45
 He answered, bending to her open eyes,
 Where he was mirrored small in paradise,
 'My silver planet, both of eve and morn!
 Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
 While I am striving how to fill my heart 50
 With deeper crimson, and a double smart?
 How to entangle, trammel up and snare
 Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
 Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?
 Ay, a sweet kiss - you see your mighty woes. 55
 My thoughts! shall I unveil them? Listen then!
 What mortal hath a prize, that other men
 May be confounded and abashed withal,
 But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestic,
 And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice 60
 Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.
 Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
 While through the throngèd streets your bridal car
 Wheels round its dazzling spokes.' - The lady's cheek
 Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek, 65
 Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
 Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain
 Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
 To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,
 Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim 70
 Her wild and timid nature to his aim:
 Besides, for all his love, in self-despite,
 Against his better self, he took delight
 Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.
 His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue 75
 Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
 In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.
 Fine was the mitigated fury, like
 Apollo's presence when in act to strike
 The serpent - Ha, the serpent! Certes, she 80
 Was none. She burnt, she loved the tyranny,
 And, all subdued, consented to the hour
 When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.
 Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
 'Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth, 85
 I have not asked it, ever thinking thee
 Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
 As still I do. Hast any mortal name,
 Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?
 Or friends or kinsfolk on the citied earth, 90
 To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?'

52. **"trammel"** enmesh. While Lycius is using conventional amorous imagery to convey his adoration of Lamia, there are the consistent references to her magical powers and role as enchantress. Is there an element of contrivance to his elaborate declaration of love (48 - 54)?

56. **"My thoughts! shall I unveil them?"** Lycius's and Lamia's doom begins here: Lycius is fixed on making their private, interior love a public, visible one.

61. **"hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice"** Again the city's noisy and shiny nature is emphasized: **"thronged streets", "dazzling spokes"** (wheels of the wedding carriage). Also **"the noisy world"** (33).

76. **"Fierce and sanguineous"** red, inflamed with anger

78. **"mitigated"** moderated, controlled

79. Apollo destroyed the huge Python which guarded the oracular shrine at Delphi.

81. **"she loved the tyranny"** There is, perhaps, erotic wish-fulfilment on Keats' part here.

83. **"paramour"** lover, mistress (Lamia)

89. **"appellation"** label, name

92. **"'I have no friends ... no, not one'"** Consider the lonely, outsider status of Lamia, also emphasized in: **"this fair unknown/ Had not a friend. So being left alone"** (110).

'I have no friends,' said Lamia, 'no, not one;
 My presence in wide Corinth hardly known:
 My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
 Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns, 95
 Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
 And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
 Even as you list invite your many guests;
 But if, as now it seems, your vision rests
 With any pleasure on me, do not bid 100
 Old Apollonius - from him keep me hid.'
 Lycius, perplexed at words so blind and blank,
 Made close inquiry; from whose touch she shrank,
 Feigning a sleep; and he to the dull shade
 Of deep sleep in a moment was betrayed. 105

101. "Lycius, perplexed at words so blind and blank"
 He cannot understand her words and concern

104 - 105. "he to the dull shade/Of deep sleep in a moment was betrayed" Lycius's sleep is induced by Lamia's magic.

It was the custom then to bring away
 The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
 Veiled, in a chariot, heralded along
 By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,
 With other pageants: but this fair unknown 110
 Had not a friend. So being left alone,
 (Lycius was gone to summon all his kin)
 And knowing surely she could never win
 His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,
 She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress 115
 The misery in fit magnificence.
 She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence
 Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
 About the halls, and to and from the doors,
 There was a noise of wings, till in short space 120
 The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-archèd grace.
 A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
 Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan
 Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.
 Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade 125
 Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
 High in the midst, in honour of the bride:
 Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
 From either side their stems branched one to one
 All down the aisled place; and beneath all 130
 There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to wall.
 So canopied, lay an untasted feast
 Teeming with odours. Lamia, regal dressed,
 Silently paced about, and as she went,
 In pale contented sort of discontent, 135
 Missioned her viewless servants to enrich
 The fretted splendour of each nook and niche.
 Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
 Came jasper panels; then anon, there burst
 Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees, 140

Having failed to persuade Lycius, Lamia sets herself to make the best of a bad situation and create a grand ceremony (115 – 116), using her magical powers. The palace which Lamia creates, with its exotic objects, is a prime example of the use of imagination in conjuring a vision, a parallel to the poet's ambition of creating visions in poetry, a key theme in poems like Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan'. Consider also parallels to the exotic setting of 'The Eve of St Agnes'.

118. "her subtle servitors" mysterious servants which Lamia summons into existence with her magic.

124. "as fearful the whole charm might fade" A recurrent element in faery-stories is enchanted grand dwelling places and feasts that vanish like dew in the light of day.

And with the larger wove in small intricacies.
 Approving all, she faded at self-will,
 And shut the chamber up, close, hushed and still,
 Complete and ready for the revels rude,
 When dreadful guests would come to spoil her
 solitude. 145

The day appeared, and all the gossip rout.
 O senseless Lycius! Madman! wherefore flout
 The silent-blessing fate, warm cloistered hours,
 And show to common eyes these secret bowers?
 The herd approached; each guest, with busy brain, 150
 Arriving at the portal, gazed amain,
 And entered marvelling - for they knew the street,
 Remembered it from childhood all complete
 Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen 155
 That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne.
 So in they hurried all, mazed, curious and keen -
 Save one, who looked thereon with eye severe,
 And with calm-planted steps walked in austere.
 'Twas Apollonius: something too he laughed,
 As though some knotty problem, that had daffed 160
 His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
 And solve and melt - 'twas just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
 His young disciple. ' 'Tis no common rule,
 Lycius,' said he, 'for uninvited guest 165
 To force himself upon you, and infest
 With an unbidden presence the bright throng
 Of younger friends; yet must I do this wrong,
 And you forgive me.' Lycius blushed, and led
 The old man through the inner doors broad-spread; 170
 With reconciling words and courteous mien
 Turning into sweet milk the sophist's spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,
 Filled with pervading brilliance and perfume:
 Before each lucid panel fuming stood 175
 A censer fed with myrrh and spicèd wood,
 Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
 Whose slender feet wide-swerved upon the soft
 Wool-woofèd carpets: fifty wreaths of smoke
 From fifty censers their light voyage took 180
 To the high roof, still mimicked as they rose
 Along the mirrored walls by twin-clouds odorous.
 Twelve spherèd tables, by silk seats ensphered,
 High as the level of a man's breast reared
 On libbard's paws, upheld the heavy gold 185

143 - 145. "And shut the chamber up, close, hushed and still,/Complete and ready for the revels rude,/When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude." Consider the clear contrast established between Lamia's solitary, private, quiet nature and the boisterous nature of the approaching Corinthian guests, described as **"herd"** (150).

Here, Keats explicitly chides Lycius, accusing him of exposing the secret place that he shares with Lamia. The guests enter, full of intrusive curiosity. His opinion of the Corinthian guests is also critical. Apollonius joins the party uninvited, eager to expose Lamia.

150. "mazed" amazed

155. "demesne" domain, space

160. "some knotty problem" a reference to Lamia, introduced in the poem as having a **"gordian shape"** (Pt 1, 47), who defies Apollonius's logic (**"daffed/His patient thought"**)

160. "daffed" baffled

161 - 162. "His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,/And solve and melt - 'twas just as he foresaw." Being certain of Lamia's serpent identity, Apollonius filled with anticipation at exposing Lamia.

Apollonius apologizes to Lycius for coming uninvited.

163. "The murmurous vestibule" Transferred epithet: The guests in the hall (vestibule) are murmuring.

171. "mien" face, facial expression

172. A sophist is a philosopher, though the word has negative overtones of cold-hearted pedantry, which are reinforced in lines 227-30.

172. "spleen" displeasure

The luxuriously and ornately decorated banquet hall is an opulent, sumptuous affair, full of heavy incense and exotic food. Compare such descriptions with the feast in 'The Eve of St Agnes'.

176. "censer" i.e. for fragrant incense

185. "libbard's" leopard's

187. "Ceres' horn" horn of plenty, cornucopia

Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
 Of Ceres' horn, and, in huge vessels, wine
 Come from the gloomy tun with merry shine.
 Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
 Each shrining in the midst the image of a God. 190

190. "a God" not (the Christian) God. A reminder of Lamia's pagan nature and the pagan (pre-Christian) setting.

When in an antechamber every guest
 Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure pressed,
 By ministering slaves, upon his hands and feet,
 And fragrant oils with ceremony meet
 Poured on his hair, they all moved to the feast 195
 In white robes, and themselves in order placed
 Around the silken couches, wondering
 Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could
 spring.

Soft went the music the soft air along,
 While fluent Greek a vowel'd undersong 200
 Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
 At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow;
 But when the happy vintage touched their brains,
 Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
 Of powerful instruments. The gorgeous dyes, 205
 The space, the splendour of the draperies,
 The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
 Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear,
 Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
 And every soul from human trammels freed, 210
 No more so strange; for merry wine, sweet wine,
 Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.

The guests become noisier and as they drink more wine. Lamia has catered to every whim and indulgence of the guests.

200. "fluent Greek a vowel'd/undersong" the guests kept up a low murmur of conversation in Greek.

202. "happy vintage" transferred epithet: the guests drink wine happily. And they become more and more rowdy.

209 - 212. "Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,/ And every soul from human trammels freed,/No more so strange; for merry wine, sweet wine,/Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine." Keats' sardonic comment that intoxication ('merry wine') loosens up the people ('from human trammels freed') and makes Heaven ('Elysian shades') feel more earthly and less intimidating.

Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height;
 Flushed were their cheeks, and bright eyes double
 bright:
 Garlands of every green, and every scent 205
 From vales deflowered, or forest-trees branch-rent,
 In baskets of bright osiered gold were brought
 High as the handles heaped, to suit the thought
 Of every guest - that each, as he did please,
 Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillowed at his ease. 220

213. "God Bacchus at meridian height" the god of drunkenness and revelry; the guests are at their most inebriated state.

206. "deflowered ... branch-rent" The suggestion is that nature has been destroyed to create the banquet.

207. "In baskets of bright osiered gold" the woven ('osiered') baskets have painted with gold, again showing how nature has been replaced by something artificial and extravagant.

219 - 220. "That each, as he did please,/Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillowed at his ease" The guests have been provided with comfortable silk pillows and can amuse themselves with flowers from baskets.

What wreath for Lamia? What for Lycius?
 What for the sage, old Apollonius?
 Upon her aching forehead be there hung
 The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue;
 And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
 The thyrsus, that his watching eyes may swim
 Into forgetfulness; and, for the sage,
 Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
 War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
 At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
 There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
 We know her woof, her texture; she is given
 In the dull catalogue of common things.
 Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
 Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
 Empty the haunted air, and gnomèd mine -
 Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
 The tender-personed Lamia melt into a shade.

225

230

235

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,
 Scarce saw in all the room another face,
 Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
 Full brimmed, and opposite sent forth a look
 'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
 From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,
 And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher
 Had fixed his eye, without a twinkle or stir
 Full on the alarmèd beauty of the bride,
 Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet pride.
 Lycius then pressed her hand, with devout touch,
 As pale it lay upon the rosy couch:
 'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins;
 Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains
 Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.
 'Lamia, what means this? Wherefore dost thou start?
 Know'st thou that man?' Poor Lamia answered not.
 He gazed into her eyes, and not a jot
 Owned they the lovelorn piteous appeal;
 More, more he gazed: his human senses reel;
 Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs;
 There was no recognition in those orbs.
 'Lamia!' he cried - and no soft-toned reply.

240

245

250

260

Keats uses wreaths (with different plants) to ascribe different qualities to the three characters, commenting on how cold logic and scientific thinking destroy beauty.

224. "The leaves of willow and of adders' tongue"

Willow symbolizes the imagination (also sorrow), and adder's tongue is a nod to Lamia's true identity as a transformed serpent.

226. "thyrsus" A staff covered in ivy, to induce a drunken, dreamlike forgetfulness in Lycius.

228. "spear-grass and the spiteful thistle" represent the sharp, destructive power of Apollonius's cold philosophy

229 - 230. "Do not all charms fly/At the mere touch of cold philosophy?" Again, the destruction of magic and enchantment (and love) with logic and reason.

231. "awful rainbow" 'Awful' means awe-inspiring; Lamia is associated with the rainbow (she is "rainbow-sided" in Pt 1, 52), whose beauty and infinite possibilities are threatened by cold logic.

Keats endorsed his friend Charles Lamb's remark that Isaac Newton had 'destroyed all the Poetry of the rainbow, by reducing it to a prism.' (1817)

Keats focuses on Apollonius's piercing, fixed eye to depict the destructive power of his logical vision, which can only see reality and denies the value of the imagination, of dreams. Upon Apollonius's accusatory naming of her as 'Serpent', Lamia screams and disappears; and Lycius dies.

255. "Poor Lamia answered not" It is significant that Lamia, who has been articulating her desires and feelings eloquently, is now rendered mute and is paralysed in the presence of Apollonius, suggesting that her artificial, illusory existence cannot withstand rational scrutiny. This foreshadows her disappearance from the scene and the story.

260. "There was no recognition in those orbs." Lamia has become blank, unconscious, her essence erased by Apollonius. The use of negation carries on in the description of her face, likened to a corpse: "no azure vein ... no soft bloom ... no passion to illumine ... All was blight;/Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white." (272 - 276)

The many heard, and the loud revelry
 Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;
 The myrtle sickened in a thousand wreaths.
 By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased; 265
 A deadly silence step by step increased,
 Until it seemed a horrid presence there,
 And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.
 'Lamia!' he shrieked; and nothing but the shriek
 With its sad echo did the silence break. 270
 'Begone, foul dream!' he cried, gazing again
 In the bride's face, where now no azure vein
 Wandered on fair-spaced temples; no soft bloom
 Misted the cheek; no passion to illumine
 The deep-recessed vision. All was blight; 275
 Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
 'Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man!
 Turn them aside, wretch! or the righteous ban
 Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
 Here represent their shadowy presences, 280
 May pierce them on
 the sudden with the thorn
 Of painful blindness; leaving thee forlorn,
 In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
 Of conscience, for their long offended might,
 For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries, 285
 Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
 Corinthians! look upon that gray-beard wretch!
 Mark how, possessed, his lashless eyelids stretch
 Around his demon eyes! Corinthians, see!
 My sweet bride withers at their potency.' 290
 'Fool!' said the sophist, in an undertone
 Gruff with contempt; which a death-nighing moan
 From Lycius answered, as heart-struck and lost,
 He sank supine beside the aching ghost.
 'Fool! Fool!' repeated he, while his eyes still 295
 Relented not, nor moved; "from every ill
 Of life have I preserved thee to this day,
 And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?"
 Then Lamia breathed death-breath; the sophist's eye,
 Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly, 300
 Keen, cruel, perçant, stinging: she, as well
 As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
 Motioned him to be silent; vainly so,
 He looked and looked again a level - *No!*
 'A Serpent!' echoed he; no sooner said, 305
 Than with a frightful scream she vanishèd:
 And Lycius' arms were empty of delight,
 As were his limbs of life, from that same night.
 On the high couch he lay! - his friends came round -
 Supported him - no pulse, or breath they found, 310
 And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.

264. "Myrtle" a plant sacred to Venus, goddess of love

271. "Begone, foul dream!" Spoken by Lycius, this can have several interpretations: Does Lycius say this because he thinks that Lamia has been possessed by an evil spirit?

272. "azure" blue

275. "ban" edict

292. "death nighing" nearing death

301. "perçant" piercing

The ending of the poem: Keats amends the ending of the original myth here: whereas in the original version, Lycius is entirely deceived by the illusion and is saved from being consumed by the malicious Lamia, here Lycius is found dead and wound in his "**marriage robe**".

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art (p. 219)

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art -
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
 And watching, with eternal lids apart,
 Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
 The moving waters at their priestlike task 5
 Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
 Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
 Of snow upon the mountains and the moors -
 No - yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
 Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast, 10
 To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
 Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
 Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
 And so live ever - or else swoon to death.

Genre, context and title: 'Bright Star!' is a Shakespearean sonnet believed to be written for Fanny Brawne in 1818 or 1819. While the sonnet is punctuated as one single sentence, note the development of the argument as he moves through the 3 quatrains and comes to the final rhyming couplet.

1 - 4 The first quatrain opens with an apostrophe, directly addressing the star as the speaker shares his wish to be as **"steadfast"** as the fixed star. Line 2, however, immediately changes the direction of the poem, the word **"Not"**, making clear that what he desires is not the isolation and distance associated with the star, but its enduring and permanent quality which he wishes to experience with his **"fair love"**.

Note the use of the words and images in the first two quatrains which pick up on isolation (**"lone"**; **"Eremite"** meaning hermit) and distance (**"hung aloft"**). The star can only **"watch"** (line 3) the **"moving waters"** or **"gaze"** (line 7) at the fallen snow; passive and still, unlike the more dynamic life that moves **"round earth's human shores"**.

9 As with line 2, the speaker again begins with an emphatic rejection marked by a caesura, reiterating the kind of steadfastness he longs for. Note the repetition of the words **"still"** and **"ever"**, drawing attention to his desire for a constant, enduring and eternal love.

10 - 13 Consider the more sensual images and sensory references (auditory and tactile reference to feeling and hearing) used in these lines as he wishes for all his senses to be **"awake"**; **"to feel forever"**, the rise and fall of his **"fair love's ripening breast"** and to **"still, still"** **"hear her tender-taken breath"**.

14 Note the caesura in the final line which draws attention to the juxtaposition between wanting to **"live forever"**, locked in a passionate embrace with his lover, **"or else swoon to death"** - highlighting a contrast between the unattainable ideal of eternal, unchanging love, and the reality of all human life which is ultimately subject to time and death and decay.

Ode on a Grecian Urn (p. 191)

1.

Thou still unravished* bride of quietness, *virginal*
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
 Sylvan* historian, who canst thus express *of the forest, the woods*
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
 What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape 5
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
 What pipes and timbrels*? What wild ecstasy? *tambourines* 10

2.

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
 Not to the sensual* ear, but, more endeared, *physical*
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave 15
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
 Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal - yet, do not grieve:
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair! 20

3.

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
 And, happy melodist, unwearied,
 For ever piping songs for ever new;
 More happy love! more happy, happy love! 25
 For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
 For ever panting, and for ever young -
 All breathing human passion far above,
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed*, *full of sentiment*
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue. 30

4.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?
 What little town by river or sea shore, 35
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
 Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return. 40

5.
O Attic* shape! Fair attitude! with brede** *Grecian; embroidery*
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral! 45
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.' 50

Genre, context and title: Written in April 1819, this poem is one of the best-known examples of 'ekphrasis' — a verbal representation of a visual representation ie a description of a work of art that is so expressive that the reader can imagine it in detail. The urn is believed to be Keats' own invention and as you read the poem, keep in mind that there are two works of art that we are interested in here – the craftsmanship of the Grecian urn itself, and beyond that, the craft of the poet, who has refined words, metre and rhyme to create this poem.

1 Unlike 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles' which begins with a reference to the speaker's/poet's mood, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' begins with an aesthetic appreciation of the beauty of the urn itself. Note the three metaphors in the opening stanza which refer to the urn as a **"still unravished bride"**, **"a foster child of silence and slow time"**, and **"a Sylvan historian"**. The urn may be static – "still" and "silent" – but it is nevertheless enduring and immutable, not subject to the harsh effects of time.

5 The second half of the first stanza offers a juxtaposition between the urn and its static images which portray a dynamic pastoral scene. This shift is reinforced in the contrast between the calm, quiet observations evident in the first four lines to the more interrogative and frenzied pace of the later lines.

Stanzas 2 to 5 focus on the images carved onto the urn as the speaker emphasizes the elevated perfection and potential of art and imagination through synaesthesia – the "unheard melodies" of the piper, the fair youth beneath the trees etc. As much as the urn represents the permanence and immortality of art, however, Stanza 2 also introduces a contradiction since this beauty and perfection is forever frozen and static and will thus never enjoy fulfillment – the fair youth will always sit still and the **"bold lover"** will **"never, never"** be able to kiss his fair maiden. The emphatic repetition of **"never, never"**, highlights the tension between vitality and mortality. Life may be transient and fleeting but it is, perhaps, ultimately more fulfilling than the unattainable ideal and perfection of art. Consider how this idea is developed in the rest of the poem.

31 In Stanza 4, Keats turns his attention to the other side of the urn which depicts a ceremonial ritual with the priest leading a cow to sacrifice. Note the speaker's repeated questions which prolong the sense of anxiety evident in the earlier stanzas as he contemplates the empty stillness of the town.

41 As the poem draws to a close, the speaker returns to a holistic contemplation of the urn as he did in Stanza 1, commenting on its shape and the various scenes involving marble men, maidens and depictions of nature - all of which have **"teased him out of thought"** – yet another line that offers, like the urn, a plurality of meanings. On the one hand, the urn is frustrating in its failure to provide any answers; on the other, it has stirred his imagination on an intuitive level i.e. beyond mere reason and intellect.

45 Again, however, this elevation leads to a letdown encapsulated in yet another paradoxical exclamation, **"Cold Pastoral!"** – the cold and impenetrable urn, likely made of marble, represents art and immortality (continuity and yet stasis), while the pastoral images depicted upon the urn symbolise nature, warmth and life.

46 The immortality of the urn is also contrasted against the mortality of the speaker who states that when everyone in his generation has died, the urn will still endure and remain an object of contemplation for a new generation of people with different **"woes"** than the speaker's generation. To them, the urn will say that beauty and truth are one and the same; this fact is all that it is possible to know, and all that anybody actually needs to know. The ambiguities in the enigmatic final lines have inspired much critical debate in relation to both punctuation and meaning – consider the various possible interpretations of the line **"Beauty is truth, truth beauty ..."**.

Holistically, also consider how the poem raises central conflicts on art and life; art and nature; and the ideal vs the real. This notion of escape into the ideal is evident in several poems including 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

Ode On Melancholy (p. 195)

1.¹⁸⁷

No, no, go not to Lethe¹⁸⁸, neither twist
 Wolf's-bane¹⁸⁹, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
 Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kissed
 By nightshade¹⁹⁰, ruby grape of Proserpine*; *the Queen of the Underworld*
 Make not your rosary of yew-berries¹⁹¹, 5
 Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth¹⁹² be
 Your mournful Psyche¹⁹³, nor the downy owl
 A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
 For shade to shade will come too drowsily,¹⁹⁴
 And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul. 10

2.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
 Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
 That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
 And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
 Then glut thy sorrow* on a morning rose**, * *indulge your sorrow to the full* 15
 Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave, ** *it flowers and withers in the same day*
 Or on the wealth of globèd peonies*; *red flowers*
 Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
 Emprison* her soft hand, and let her rave, *trap her hand in yours*
 And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes. 20

3.

She¹⁹⁵ dwells with Beauty - Beauty that must die;
 And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
 Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,

¹⁸⁷ **Genre, context and title:** 'Ode on Melancholy' is one of five Odes composed in 1819 and explores how one may perceive and / or respond to despair. The poem begins with a series of negations that are also a warning. The speaker urges against allowing feelings of melancholy to overwhelm us: the references to poison and animals which symbolise death imply that to do so would lead to a nihilistic end.

¹⁸⁸ The Hadean waters of oblivion, forgetfulness.

¹⁸⁹ A yellow-leaved plant which had sinister overtones in the popular imagination, as it was associated with witches' potions.

¹⁹⁰ A poisonous plant with red berries.

¹⁹¹ Yew trees were seen as symbolic of sadness.

¹⁹² The death's head moth has skull-like markings on its wings

¹⁹³ The personification of the soul. In Greek 'psyche' also means 'butterfly'. Keats punningly warns against one's butterfly soul becoming a death's head moth.

¹⁹⁴ The word "**drowsily**" (in contrast to "**wakeful anguish**" in line 10) is an important clue to the poem's argument. While the images of melancholy in the first stanza have to do with the consumption of poison, the images in the second stanza show a different kind of consumption: we are instead encouraged to "**glut**" our "**sorrow**" with beautiful nature / a beautiful lover. Notably, the poem is not offering a solution to resolve melancholic feelings. Rather, we are told how to respond to melancholy: i.e. instead of indulging in sorrow (first stanza), we are to instead focus on what is beautiful whenever we feel sad (second stanza). This will thus allow us to understand the higher truth that joy and sorrow go together (third stanza). Keats thus celebrates both joy and sorrow as part of the human condition. Compare this to 'To Autumn', where Keats' speaker responds to the fading of summer's flourishing "**songs**" by appreciating autumn's "music" (lines 23-24), focusing on the beauty in autumn's change and decay.

¹⁹⁵ "**She**" here refers to 'melancholy'. The speaker unexpectedly associates personified Melancholy with Beauty, Joy, Pleasure, and Delight - pointing out how these positive emotions are all ephemeral (i.e. experiencing sorrow is a necessary part of experiencing any of these other emotions).

Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips¹⁹⁶:

Ay, in the very temple of Delight	25
Veiled Melancholy has her sovran* shrine,	<i>sovereign</i>
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue	
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;	
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,	
And be among her cloudy trophies ¹⁹⁷ hung.	30

Ode to a Nightingale¹⁹⁸ (p. 193)

1.¹⁹⁹

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains	
My sense, as though of hemlock* I had drunk,	<i>a poisonous plant</i>
Or emptied some dull opiate* to the drains**	<i>a sleeping drug; dregs</i>
One minute past*, and Lethe ²⁰⁰ -wards had sunk:	<i>ago</i>
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,	5
But being too happy in thine happiness -	
That thou, light-wingèd Dryad* of the trees,	<i>wood-nymph</i>
In some melodious plot	
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,	
Singest of summer in full-throated ease. ²⁰¹	10

2.

O, for a draught of vintage*! that hath been	<i>vintage wine</i>
Cooled a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,	
Tasting of Flora* and the country green ²⁰² ,	<i>Roman goddess of flowers</i>
Dance, and Provençal song ²⁰³ , and sunburnt mirth!	<i>Mediterranean wine</i>

¹⁹⁶ The image here is of a bee drinking sweet nectar. Note that *both* nectar and poison come from plants.

¹⁹⁷ As per the trophies of martial victory displayed in classical temples. Keats' image here suggests that to recognise the truth of how experiencing joy entails experiencing sorrow is something glorious; while we may have been conquered by personified Melancholy, our recognition of such a truth nonetheless elevates us as worthy.

¹⁹⁸ **Genre, context and title:** The poem was written in May 1819 when Keats was staying with his friend Charles Armitage Brown at Hampstead. A nightingale had built her nest in Brown's garden; Keats would sit under a plum-tree for a few hours, and write stanzas on scraps of paper. Keats uses the nightingale - a symbol of Nature and of Poetry - as a starting point to reflect on his own disillusionment with the wider world and his desire to escape into the world of poetry and imagination. Keats' argument shifts as the poem progresses: take note of how Keats continually alternates between moments of transcendent inspiration and moments of despair as a reflection of his own gloomy outlook.

¹⁹⁹ In stanzas 1 and 2, Keats' speaker first introduces his current feelings of dejection, then contrasts that with the sense of joy embodied by the Nightingale, here associated with Nature.

²⁰⁰ Lethe was the river in the Underworld which brought oblivion to all who drank of its waters. Note the repeated imagery of sleep, drowsiness, and forgetfulness ("**hemlock**", "**dull opiate**", "**Lethe**") and also note how all of these are substances that can be consumed. Keats establishes the contrast with an alternate "**draught of vintage**" in Stanza 2. Consider how this poem presents the experience of depression, and compare this with the opening stanza in 'Ode on Melancholy'.

²⁰¹ Note how the "**light-wingèd**" Nightingale "**full of ease**" contrasts with the experience of the speaker.

²⁰² If Flora suggests the mythological realms, the "**country green**" invokes Pastoral simplicity. Both images present a natural idyll, which Keats will contrast with the world of man in Stanza 3.

²⁰³ Love songs composed for the French court in the 13th century. Provence was particularly associated with the medieval troubadours.

O for a beaker full of the warm South, 15
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene²⁰⁴,
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
 And purple-stained mouth;
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen²⁰⁵,
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim - 20

3.²⁰⁶

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
 Where palsy* shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,²⁰⁷ *a wasting illness* 25
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs;
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow. 30

4.²⁰⁸

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
 Not charioted by Bacchus²⁰⁹ and his pards*, *leopards*
 But on the viewless* wings of Poesy, *invisible*
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards.
 Already with thee! tender is the night, 35
 And haply* the Queen-Moon is on her throne, *by chance*
 Clustered around by all her starry Fays*²¹⁰, *fairies*
 But here there is no light²¹¹,
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
 Through verdurous* glooms and winding mossy ways. *richly green* 40

²⁰⁴ A spring on Mount Helicon that was sacred to the Muses, a source of inspiration to poets. A poetically elaborate reference to wine.

²⁰⁵ Two possible meanings: unnoticed by the world, but also without noticing the world. Note how these lines express Keats' desire to disappear or fade away from the world. Compare this with the ending of 'The Eve of St Agnes', or 'When I have fears that I may cease to be'.

²⁰⁶ Stanza 3 describes the miserable world of Man that Keats wishes to escape, one wracked by illness and death. Keats admitted that he wrote this stanza when he was particularly conscious of Tom's suffering (who had died the year before). The association between Tom's illness and the nightingale may well have come from Shakespeare's *King Lear*: in his own copy Keats had underlined the words 'poor Tom' in the line 'The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of a nightingale'. Keats himself had (unknowingly) already contracted the disease that would kill him. Trace references to fevers, death, and wasting away in this stanza.

²⁰⁷ Trace how Keats uses imagery of death and sickness in this stanza. Note the use of emphatic monosyllables in a spondaic rhythm here for emphasis on the brutal realities of aging: "a few, sad, last, grey hairs". The accumulated listing of adjectives serves to emphasise Keats' picture of age and mortality. Compare the presentation of time and aging with 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', or contrast this with 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'.

²⁰⁸ The exclamation "Away! Away!" serves as a break from the previous stanza, and Keats reflects on his desire to escape "on the wings of Poesy". The link between the nightingale and poetry is made explicit, and Keats' speaker for a brief moment envisions the fantastical, transcendent world of the Nightingale, amongst "Queen-Moon on her throne", only to be undercut by the bathetic "But here ..." in line 38.

²⁰⁹ The god of drunk revelry, who in myth sat in a chariot pulled by leopards (relating to Keats' earlier proposed use of drinks: he clarifies he is not being literal and advocating drunkenness).

²¹⁰ "Queen-Moon" is a reference to the Faerie Queen, associated with the moon. Consider the connotations of Keats' reference to fairies in this stanza, and contrast this to his reference to the "deceiving elf" in Stanza 8. Compare this with references to fairies in other poems, like 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' or 'The Eve of St Agnes'.

²¹¹ "But here ..." recalls us to the present circumstances of the speaker in Stanza 1, and serves as a transition into Stanza 6: "Darkling, I listen ..."

5.²¹²

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet²¹³,
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
 But, in embalmed* darkness, guess each sweet *balmy but also treatment for a corpse*
 Wherewith the seasonable month* endows *May*
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild - 45
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine*; *wild briar rose*
 Fast fading violets covered up in leaves;
 And mid-May's eldest child,
 The coming musk-rose*, full of dewy wine, *normally opens in June*
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves. 50

6.

Darkling* I listen; and, for many a time *in darkness*
 I have been half in love with easeful Death²¹⁴,
 Called him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,
 To take into the air my quiet breath;
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die, 55
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad²¹⁵
 In such an ecstasy!
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain - **funeral song*
 To thy high requiem* become a sod**. ***a piece of ground* 60

7.²¹⁷

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!²¹⁸
 No hungry generations tread thee down;²¹⁹
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown*: *peasant*
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path 65
 Through the sad heart of Ruth²²⁰, when, sick for home²²¹,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam

²¹² Stanzas 5 and 6 first describe the speaker's bathetic inability to access Nature, and thus to "fly to thee". Note how Stanza 5's description of Nature subtly incorporates references to death and fading, a reflection of the speaker's macabre mood. Stanza 6 sees the speaker reflect on death's attractions as he considers his dejected state.

²¹³ Recall the speaker's desire to access Nature in Stanza 2: here, where there is "no light", the speaker finds himself "unable to see the flowers at my feet". Consider what this poem is saying about depression's impact on man's ability to connect with or appreciate nature, and compare this to 'Dejection: An Ode'.

²¹⁴ The adjective "easeful" (to ease or cease in one's suffering) suggests the speaker's motivations in being "in love" with Death.

²¹⁵ "Abroad" = outdoors. Keats is still addressing the Nightingale.

²¹⁶ Note the word "requiem" associated with the Nightingale: a beautiful, sacred hymn sung for the dead. In contrast, Keats' speaker associates himself with a "sod": mere dirt. Sods of earth, in conjunction with the requiem, suggest the image of a funeral service.

²¹⁷ In Stanza 7, the speaker praises the poetic Nightingale and expounds on its qualities. Note the alternating nature of the argument, in which the speaker moves continually between his transcendent vision and his miserable circumstances.

²¹⁸ Contrast this with the image of Man's world in Stanza 3.

²¹⁹ As opposed to Keats' experience as a poet?

²²⁰ Keats has combined two episodes from the 'Book of Ruth' in the Bible and an echo from Wordsworth's poem 'The Solitary Reaper'. In the Old Testament, Ruth had to leave her country to labour in the fields of Boaz at Bethlehem: here she symbolises the migrant, lost in a foreign land.

²²¹ Where exactly is "home"? Ruth's longing echoes Hebrews 11:13: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Of perilous seas, in faery lands ²²² forlorn*.	<i>lost, distant</i>	70
8. ²²³ Forlorn! ²²⁴ the very word is like a bell To toll me back from thee to my sole* self!	<i>solitary</i>	
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well As she is famed to do, deceiving elf. ²²⁵		
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades		75
Past the near meadows, over the still stream, Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep In the next valley-glades: Was it a vision, or a waking dream? Fled is that music - Do I wake or sleep? ²²⁶		80

²²² Note the three items here “magic casements”, “the foam of perilous seas”, and “faery lands”, and the association with magic and fantasy.

²²³ The final stanza features Keats’ speaker emerging from his reverie to find the Nightingale is flying away: he is left bereft at the departure of the bird, and the beauty it represented.

²²⁴ The word “forlorn” that ends Stanza 7 is here repeated to mean: “lost and without hope”. The speaker is brought back to mind of his current circumstances.

²²⁵ “Elves”, or faeries, were famous for enchantment and bewitchment. “Fancy” (or imagination) is here compared to a “deceiving elf” that has failed to cast her spell on Keats. Compare this to ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’.

²²⁶ Note how this poem ends on a question, and a sense of uncertainty. This poem presents a vision or a dream: consider how ‘Kubla Khan’ also presents the experience of receiving artistic inspiration.

Ode to Psyche (p. 187)

O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung	verses	
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,		
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung		
Even into thine own soft-conchèd* ear:		<i>i.e. ear resembling a seashell</i>
Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see	5	
The wingèd Psyche with awakened eyes?		
I wandered in a forest thoughtlessly*,		<i>without a care</i>
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,		
Saw two fair creatures*, couchèd side by side*		<i>Psyche and Cupid; sleeping next to each other</i>
In deepest grass, beneath the whispering roof	10	
Of leaves and tremblèd blossoms, where there ran		
A brooklet, scarce espied*:		<i>difficult to make out</i>
'Mid hushed, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,		
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,		
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;	15	
Their arms embraced, and their pinions* too;		<i>poetical term for wings</i>
Their lips touched not, but had not bade adieu,		
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,		
And ready still past kisses to outnumber		
At tender eye-dawn of aureorean* love:	20	<i>of the sun/rose-coloured</i>
The wingèd boy* I knew;		<i>Cupid</i>
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?		
His Psyche true!		
O latest born and loveliest vision far		
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!	25	
Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-regioned star,		
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;		<i>Hesperus, god of the evening star (planet Venus)</i>
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,		
Nor altar heaped with flowers;		
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan	30	
Upon the midnight hours;		
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet		
From chain-swung censer teeming;		
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat		
Of pale-mouthed prophet dreaming.	35	
O brightest! though too late for antique vows,		
Too, too late for the fond* believing lyre,		<i>devoted, reverend</i>
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,		
Holy the air, the water, and the fire;		
Yet even in these days so far retired	40	
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans*,		<i>shining, glowing wings</i>
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,		
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.		
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan		
Upon the midnight hours;	45	
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet		
From swingèd censer teeming -		
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat		
Of pale-mouthed prophet dreaming.		

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane 50 *temple*
 In some untrodden region of my mind,
 Where branchèd thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
 Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
 Far, far around shall those dark-clustered trees
 Fledge the wild-ridgèd mountains steep by steep; 55
 And there by zephyrs*, streams, and birds, and bees, *gentle breezes*
 The moss-lain Dryads* shall be lulled to sleep; *wood-nymphs*
 And in the midst of this wide quietness
 A rosy sanctuary will I dress
 With the wreathed trellis of a working brain, 60
 With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
 With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign*, *invent*
 Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:
 And there shall be for thee all soft delight
 That shadowy thought can win, 65
 A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
 To let the warm Love in!

Genre, context and title: John Keats wrote the poem in the spring of 1819, making it the first of his 'Great Odes' written in the same year as 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'Ode to a Nightingale'. This is a defining poem which sums up Keats' allegiance to classical poetry and love, both embodied in the figure of the goddess Psyche, who acts as his muse.

Keats based his poem on a Roman satirical work 'The Golden Ass' by Apuleius. Psyche is a mortal woman whom Cupid, the God of love, falls in love with. Cupid visits Psyche nightly in darkness, slipping into her room through the window, but insists that she not turn to look at him. One night Psyche lights a lamp in order to see who he is, Cupid gets angry at her disobedience and leaves her, whereupon Psyche wanders the earth seeking him until the gods take pity on her and elevate her to a goddess. The story ends with the final image of a window glowing and beckoning the traveller in the night, conveying the idea that it is through light that the eye perceives beauty, and it is the lamp of imagination which has created the vision of love. The name 'Psyche' is Greek for 'soul' (or 'life' or 'spirit'): there is a philosophical reading of the story of Psyche or the Soul or imagination seeking to be united with Cupid, or passion. Incidentally, Keats described the world (life) as a 'vale [valley] of Soul-making' in a letter to his brothers just before composing the poem.

In this poem, Keats sets out to pay tribute to Psyche whom he argues has been ignored in history, elevating her status and establishing her as the epitome of beauty and love.

1 "these tuneless numbers" Keats is referring self-deprecatingly to his own poetry; these are 'tuneless' verses because poems are also known as 'songs'.

5 - 6 "Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see/The wingèd Psyche with awakened eyes?" A key Romantic idea: the power of the imagination to bridge the gap between dream and reality; the idea that the imaginative perception is a heightened form of everyday seeing.

6 "wingèd Psyche" – Keats depicts Psyche (rather unconventionally) as a dove here, an image probably derived from Mary Tighe's 'Psyche' (1805), a poem Keats admired, in which the goddess is described as a 'Pure spotless dove.'

7 – 15 "I wandered in a forest thoughtlessly ..." The natural setting depicted here is, like in many of Keats' poems (e.g. 'Ode to a Nightingale'), an idealized version of nature, not an ordinary realistic place, but a sensory-rich, tranquil and timeless idealized space of imagination. Consider the appeal to all the physical senses evoked in the rich description of the forest: it has **"deepest grass"**, **"whispering roof/Of leaves and trembled blossoms"**, a **"scare-espied"** small river, and **"hushed, cool-rooted"** and **"fragrant-eyed"** flowers that are **"Blue, silver-white, and budded"**.

9 "two fair creatures" The goddess Psyche and the god Eros (Cupid) are discovered by the poet embracing in a forest, thus symbolizing the union of the Soul (Psyche) and Love (Eros).

14 "Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian" The flowers are purple or crimson, after a dye made at the Middle Eastern city of Tyre.

17 "Their lips touched not, but had not bade adieu" The lovers are in a suspended moment of love, as if gently parted by sleep (disjoined by soft-handed slumber), with their embrace (arms and wings) still entwined, almost touching to kiss, therefore embodying eternal, unconsummated beauty and desire. Consider the similar depiction of the lovers in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', who, etched in cold marble, are

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forever preserved in art, almost touching but never able to consummate their love ("**Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss**"), conveying the idea of frozen, unfulfilled desire and eternal potential.

22 "The wingèd boy I knew;/who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?/His Psyche true!" There is a sense of an epiphany, an awed discovery that the companion with Cupid is the goddess Psyche.

24 - 25 "O latest born and loveliest vision far/Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!" The poet's praise of Psyche implies that her beauty is superior to all the ancient Greek gods who dwell in Mount Olympus; that these gods have faded into myth.

26 "Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-regioned star" a complimentary reference to the moon, of which Phoebe (one of the synonyms of Artemis) was the goddess.

28 - 34 "though temple thou hast none,/Nor altar heaped with flowers;/Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan/Upon the midnight hours;/No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet/From chain-swung censer teeming;/No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat/Of pale-mouthed prophet dreaming" – The poet uses a series of negations and imagery pertaining to the church, to religious worship and ritual ("**choir**", "**incense censer**", "**shrine**") to convey his disappointment that Psyche has not been acknowledged in history. In lines 44 – 49 the poet repeats the same words pertaining to church imagery to assert his desire to reinstall Psyche.

50 – 51 "Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane/Some untrodden region of my mind/Where branchèd thoughts" To rectify such an error (Psyche's lack of historical recognition), the poet seeks to pay tribute to Psyche in a way similar to the priest's enactment of a church ritual, using his imagination ("**Some untrodden region of my mind**"), depicting his thoughts as branching out of a tree.

51 - 60 "Far, far around shall those dark-clustered trees/ Fledge the wild-ridgèd mountains steep by steep;/And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees, ... this wide quietness/A rosy sanctuary will I dress/With the wreathed trellis of a working brain" The idea of the poet's mind being likened to a tranquil space in the idyllic realm of nature is expressed using rich detailed imagery, an extension of the rich, sensory description of the forest (in lines 7 – 14).

64 - 67 "And there shall be for thee all soft delight/That shadowy thought can win,/ A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,/To let the warm Love in!" The "**bright torch**" is an allusion to the lamp carried by Psyche (see above notes) which she uses in order to see her lover Cupid, thus representing the capacity of the imagination to appreciate beauty and love.

Incidentally, Keats wrote this ode when he was living at Wentworth Place with Fanny Brawne next door. Both their houses had tall windows which opened into the garden, which would allow Keats to see Fanny frequently, therefore aiding the flourishing of their relationship. The open casement, or window, like the window through which Cupid (Love) gains access to Psyche (the Soul) expresses the poet's fervent hope that love, beauty and spiritual connection can be achieved through the power of imagination and poetry.

To Autumn²²⁷ (p. 219)

I
Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,²²⁸
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun²²⁹,
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees, 5
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd*, and plump the hazel shells *the flesh of the fruit*
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease, 10
For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.²³⁰

II
Who hath not seen thee²³¹ oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless* on a granary floor, *carefree*
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind; 15
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,²³²
Drowsed with the fume of poppies²³³, while thy hook* *reaping blade*
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner* thou dost keep *harvester*
Steady thy laden head across a brook; 20
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last ooziings hours by hours.²³⁴

III

²²⁷ **Genre, context and title:** This poem, the last of Keats' great lyrics, was probably composed on Sunday 19 Sept 1819 after the poet had returned from a country walk near Winchester in Hampshire. Whilst it might seem like a straightforward tribute to nature, consider the connotations of 'Autumn' and Keats' awareness of his own mortality (he was already sick with the illness that would kill him). This poem requires sensitive attention to how Keats is treating the metaphor of Autumn, and his careful deployment of individual images and symbols.

²²⁸ Pay close attention to both the colours and the tactile imagery employed in the first stanza. Keats praises the richness and ripeness of Autumn for, drawing our attention to the warm, earthy colours of the season, as well as using diction suggestive of the idea of overflowing / bursting (e.g. "swell", "plump", "o'er-brimmed") to convey the notion of excess. There are also several instances of long vowel sounds (assonance - e.g. "Seasons", "trees") throughout the poem that seem to draw out the idyllism of the scenes by slowing down our reading pace.

²²⁹ The sun ripens the earth's produce, though it itself might also be seen as maturing as the year wanes.

²³⁰ Literally, the narrow honeycomb of the bees is overflowing. Note however that "clammy" can also be a term to describe sweats and fevers, and a "cell" can be a narrow, close room - this possible reference to discomfort / illness might be a subtle foreshadowing that such glorious abundance in nature is not meant to last forever.

²³¹ Keats addresses personified Autumn using a rhetorical question: of course, everyone has seen Autumn out "amid thy store". This line thus serves to closely associate autumn with harvesting (i.e. the process of filling the 'store'), while also suggesting that autumn's effects are impossible not to notice.

²³² Winnowing and reaping are traditional activities performed during the end of the Summer harvest. Do note that the act of reaping can also be associated with death (i.e. the Grim Reaper), where dying is euphemistically viewed as a harvesting of the ripe soul. Compared to the first stanza, the imagery in this stanza seems to convey the idea of death and dying, even as our overall focus remains on the richness of the harvest.

²³³ A reference to the poppy's narcotic properties.

²³⁴ Note how time has passed between stanzas: instead of looking at the ripe produce awaiting harvesting, we are now in the middle of the harvesting process (e.g. apples have been harvested for cider, which is why we are watching the "last ooziings" at the cider-press).

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?²³⁵

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too -
 While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day, 25
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river salallows*, borne aloft *willows*
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
 And full-grown lambs²³⁶ loud bleat from hilly bourn*²³⁷; *boundary* 30
 Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
 The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.²³⁸

1821.

²³⁵ Spring: the season symbolically associated with new life, new beginnings, and vitality. Interestingly, the speaker does not answer the question of where the “songs of Spring” have gone, merely asking that we “Think not of them” and instead listen to Autumn’s “music”. This seems to suggest that the life and hope of Spring have passed on, and that we have no answer as to why - this thus introduces a sense of bleakness and melancholy into what has hitherto been a celebratory poem.

²³⁶ An unusual oxymoron. Emphasis on the “full-grown” size of the lamb may suggest that it is a lamb intended for slaughter (since it would be tender at that age), or perhaps imply a loss of innocence (which lambs are often symbolically associated with) as the animal reaches maturity.

²³⁷ Keats’ elegiac tone suggests an echo of Hamlet: ‘The dread of something after death,/The undiscovered Country, from whose Borne No Traveller returns’.

²³⁸ The “gathering” of the “swallows”, presumably in preparation for migration to a warmer clime during a cold season. The animals described in the third stanza either clamouring or in motion, suggesting action in contrast to the passivity / indolence found in the preceding stanzas; this may create a sense of anticipation, ending the poem with the sense that something (Winter? Death?) is being expected.

To Fanny²³⁹ (p. 238)

I

Physician Nature! let my spirit blood!²⁴⁰

O ease my heart of verse and let me rest;

Throw me upon thy tripod till the flood

Of stifling numbers* ebbs from my full breast.

poetic lines

A theme! a theme! Great Nature! give a theme;

5

Let me begin my dream.²⁴¹

I come - I see thee, as thou standest there,

Beckon me out into the wintry air.

II

Ah! dearest love, sweet home of all my fears,

And hopes, and joys and panting miseries,

10

To-night, if I may guess²⁴², thy beauty wears

A smile of such delight,

As brilliant and as bright²⁴³

As when with ravished, aching, vassal eyes,

Lost in a soft amaze,

15

I gaze, I gaze!²⁴⁴

III

Who now, with greedy looks, eats up my feast?

What stare outfaces now my silver moon!

Ah! keep that hand unravished at the least;

Let, let the amorous burn -

20

But, prithee, do not turn

The current of your heart from me so soon.

O save, in charity,

²³⁹ **Genre, context and title:** One of the last poems an increasingly fatalistic Keats was to write. For much of his courtship of Fanny Brawne, Keats was bitterly aware of how his poverty made it impossible for them to marry. Keats left England for Rome in 1820 on his doctors' advice, in the knowledge that he would most likely never see Fanny again. At the start of the poem, Keats / the speaker exhorts "**Physician Nature**" to give him a "**theme**" to write a poem about, upon which he sees a "**dream**" - a vision of Fanny. Keats / the speaker then praises Fanny's beauty (stanza II), even as he worries about rivals in love (stanza III) and the inconstancy of women (stanza V). He begs Fanny for her indulgence (IV) and for her to preserve herself for him as his "**Holy See**" if she cares for him at all; otherwise, he wishes to die (to avoid seeing her give her love to someone else).

²⁴⁰ Keats is by now quite familiar with physicians. "**Bleeding**" was the (entirely ineffective) 18th century practice of draining a patient's 'excess' blood to balance their humours. Note here Keats addresses *Nature* as his metaphorical Physician: even though he is dying, Keats still looks to Nature as a source of 'spirit[ual]' guidance and poetic inspiration.

²⁴¹ Consider that for one of his final poems, it is *Fanny* who makes up Keats' dream. His dream of her conveys his desire for her, but also implies the fantastical quality of that desire in how like a dream, it is ungrounded from reality (i.e. it cannot come true).

²⁴² Because Fanny is physically absent.

²⁴³ The ambiguous syntax in these lines means that the "**brilliant and ... bright**" smile could belong to *both* Fanny (whose beauty "**wears**" the smile) and Keats (who is gazing at that beauty in "**Amaze[ment]**"). This seems to imply (at least in Keats' dream) a certain synchronicity and intimacy between the two, where their emotions are mirrored in each other.

²⁴⁴ Consider how the repeated short clauses of "**I gaze**", in conjunction with the truncated line length, suggest a culmination of tender emotion. The shorter lines in 15-16 (especially in contrast to the other stanzas) might create a pause in the reading pace that reinforces the image being described, where Keats is "**Lost**" and speechless, unable to do anything more than "**gaze**".

The quickest pulse for me!

IV

Save it for me, sweet love! though music breathe 25
 Voluptuous visions into the warm air,
 Though swimming through the dance's dangerous wreath,
 Be like an April day,²⁴⁵
 Smiling and cold and gay,²⁴⁶
 A temperate lily, temperate as fair; 30
 Then, heaven! there will be
 A warmer June for me.

V

Why this - you'll say, my Fanny! - is not true;
 Put your soft hand upon your snowy side,
 Where the heart beats; confess - 'tis nothing new - 35
 Must not a woman be
 A feather on the sea,
 Swayed to and fro by every wind and tide?²⁴⁷
 Of as uncertain speed
 As blow-ball* from the mead**? *dandelions / meadow* 40

VI

I know it - and to know it is despair
 To one who loves you as I love, sweet Fanny,
 Whose heart goes fluttering for you everywhere,
 Nor, when away you roam,
 Dare keep its wretched home. 45
 Love, Love alone, has pains severe and many:
 Then, loveliest! keep me free
 From torturing jealousy.

VII

Ah! if you prize my subdued soul above
 The poor, the fading, brief pride of an hour, 50
 Let none profane my Holy See of Love,²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ April is Spring, and June is Summer. In this simile, Keats draws on the symbolic connotations of Spring as a season of new life and new beginnings to describe Fanny, seemingly asking her to offer him such new life (by not loving another man - if she did, as he states in the closing lines of the poem, he would rather die). Compare the poet's use of seasonal symbolism here to 'To Autumn'.

²⁴⁶ Note how the poem wittily uses "cold" here as both temperature (in Spring) and emotional register (for Fanny to other suitors). In the next line "Temperate" can mean mild temperature, but can also mean moderate in action and feeling.

²⁴⁷ Keats uses the metaphors of feathers / petals being tossed about on the wind / waves to describe the inconstancy of women. The references to nature in these images might suggest his belief of this quality being ingrained in all women (i.e. it happens as it would in nature), or given Keats' well-documented reverence for nature, suggests how he continues to adore Fanny even as he accuses her of fickleness.

²⁴⁸ The "Holy See" is Rome, the centre of the Catholic Church. Keats draws on a religious metaphor to emphasize his own staunch allegiance to love as an emotion, as well as his deep reverence for Fanny as the object of his affection. Compare his language here to 'Ode on Melancholy' or to Coleridge's 'Love', where the various emotions / Love are compared to deities that command one's devotion.

Or with a rude hand break
The sacramental cake;²⁴⁹
Let none else touch the just new-budded flower;
If not - may my eyes close,
Love! on their last repose.

55

²⁴⁹ The "**sacramental cake**" is the holy communion wafer, which Keats (elaborating on his religious metaphor) forbids other suitors from breaking. It is also, in context, a reference to the hymen.

To Sleep²⁵⁰ (p. 186)

O soft embalmer²⁵¹ of the still midnight,
 Shutting with careful fingers, and benign,
 Our gloom-pleas'd eyes*, embower'd** from the light, *eyes pleased by darkness / hidden away*
 Enshaded in forgetfulness divine.²⁵²

O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close 5
 In midst of this thine hymn²⁵³ my willing eyes,
 Or wait the "Amen," ere the poppy* throws *flower from which opium is produced*
 Around my bed its lulling charities.

Then save me, or the passed day will shine²⁵⁴
 Upon my pillow, breeding many woes,- 10
 Save me from curious Conscience, that still hoards
 Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
 Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards*, *oiled locks*
 And seal the hushed Casket* of my Soul²⁵⁵. *coffin*

²⁵⁰ **Genre, context and title:** Written towards the end of his life, 'To Sleep' is a sonnet that praises the virtues of sleep as a refuge from "curious Conscience" and the woes of reality. The poem makes liberal use of imagery associated with darkness and death, perhaps reflecting Keats' morbid mood at the close of his life and suggesting that mortality was closely on his mind. The poem is a modified sonnet with an unusual rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD BC EF EF, placing the volta in the middle much like a Petrarchan sonnet.

²⁵¹ An 'embalmer' prepares a corpse for burial.

²⁵² The poem associates death, sleep, and forgetfulness. "Forgetfulness divine" suggests what the poem's argument is in terms of why sleep is praised: as an answer to the pains of consciousness (see also line 11). Compare this poem to 'Ode on Melancholy' and 'Ode to a Nightingale', with their very different attitude to sleep and forgetfulness in the opening lines.

²⁵³ The language of divinity is used throughout to describe sleep. Forgetfulness is "divine", the poem is a "hymn" of praise, and the speaker calls on sleep as a saviour.

²⁵⁴ Translation: 'Save me, Sleep, or my memories of the days past will shine upon my pillow and torment me with woes'. Consider how this poem presents consciousness and regret in contrast with dreams and forgetfulness. Whilst this poem and 'Something Childish but Very Natural' both praise sleep, they both do so for very different reasons.

²⁵⁵ Note the reference to death in the image of the Casket. What associations are being made between sleep, peace, and death here?

APPENDIX: TIMELINE / POETIC WORKS					
1768	Mob destroys the house of James Hargreaves, inventor of the Spinning Jenny, for crashing the local price of yarn. The Industrial Revolution would eventually reproduce such disruptive events all across society as traditional ways of living were changed forever.		1804	Napoleon as Emperor of France Napoleonic wars will continue until 1815 Death of Keats' father in a riding accident Coleridge moves to Malta (partly to get over Sara Hutchinson)	
1772	Birth of Samuel Taylor Coleridge		1805	British victory at Battle of Trafalgar	
1775	American War of Independence Invention of the Steam Engine		1808	Coleridge separates from Sara Fricker	
1778	Coleridge attends Ottery Grammar School		1810	Death of Keats' mother from tuberculosis Coleridge quarrels with Wordsworth, alienated from family	
1781	Defeat of Britain in the American War of Independence		1811	Luddite unrest in Britain against factory owners	
1789	Beginning of the French Revolution		1812	Coleridge's famous lectures on <i>Hamlet</i> rescue the play's reputation	JK: 'On Peace' (1814)
1791	Coleridge attends Jesus College, Cambridge		1815	Defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo Economic depression in Britain	STC: 'Human Life'
1792	France declared a Republic Beginning of the Terror (lasting till 1794)		1816	Keats reads George Chapman's translations of Homer Keats abandons his medical career Coleridge under live-in care for opium addiction	JK: 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', 'Written in Disgust of Vulgar Superstition', 'To My Brothers'
1793	War between Britain and France	STC: 'Sonnet to the River Otter'	1817	Keats has a tentative romance with Isabella Jones	JK: 'On the Sea', 'To Leigh Hunt, Esq.'
1794	Coleridge meets Robert Southey and plans Pantisocracy Coleridge engaged to Sara Fricker PM William Pitt represses radical reformers	STC: 'Pantisocracy'	1818	Keats meets Fanny Brawne for the first time Death of Keats' brother Tom, from tuberculosis Keats snubbed in a literary magazine	JK: 'To a Lady Seen ...', 'To Ailsa Rock', 'To Mrs Reynold's Cat', 'When I have fears...', 'Hush, Hush!...', 'Isabella'
1795	Failure of Pantisocracy Coleridge marries Sara Fricker Coleridge befriends William and Dorothy Wordsworth Birth of John Keats	STC: 'The Eolian Harp'	1819	Coleridge meets young John Keats Keats unofficially engaged to Fanny Brawne, but bitterly aware of his lack of financial prospects British troops massacre peaceful protestors	JK: All four Odes, 'Bright Star!', 'To Autumn', 'Lamia', 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', 'The Eve of St Agnes', 'To Sleep', 'To Fanny'
1796	Coleridge accidentally gets addicted to opium Birth of Hartley Coleridge	STC: 'Sonnet composed on a Journey Homeward'	1820	Hartley Coleridge expelled from university John Keats increasingly ill, leaves England to recuperate, but knowing he will not return	STC: 'To Nature'(?)
1797	Sara Fricker suffers a miscarriage	STC: First version of 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison'	1821	Death of John Keats	STC: 'Work Without Hope' (1825)
1798	At the urging of French general Napoleon, France invades Switzerland Birth of Berkeley Coleridge	STC: 'France: An Ode', 'First at Midnight', 'Love', 'The Nightingale'	1828		STC 'Constancy to an Ideal Object'
1799	Coleridge meets with and falls in love with Sara Hutchinson	STC: 'Something Childish but Very Natural'	1831	Charles Darwin travels on the <i>Beagle</i>	
1800	Birth of Derwent Coleridge	STC: 'The Keepsake', 'Ode to Tranquillity' (1801)	1832	Reform Act provides some limited change, but women are formally not allowed to vote	
1802	Temporary peace between Britain and France Birth of Sara Coleridge Coleridge stays with the Wordsworths	STC: 'Dejection: An Ode', 'Answer to a Child's Qn', 'The Pains of Sleep' (1803)	1834	Slavery abolished in Britain Death of Samuel Taylor Coleridge	STC: Second version of 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner'

Glossary of Selected Poetic and Literary Terms – Poets' Use of Figurative Language

As you identify the following features found in the poems, you need to think of HOW these devices (usually in conjunction with other devices) bring about LITERARY EFFECT, i.e. how do they create and intensify mood and atmosphere, as well as aid in conveying key ideas?

Note: titles of poems are abbreviated here.

Term	Definition	Keats	Coleridge
Allegory	A literary work in which the characters, events, settings, and other literal elements of the story have a second symbolic meaning (sometimes a moral lesson).	'Lamia' as allegory depicting the conflict between the Classical/pagan/feminine world and the Christian/male-dominated religion; between passion and cold reason.	One reading of 'The Rime of The Ancient Mariner': as an allegory exploring the inherent struggle of humans facing the ideas of sin and redemption.
Alliteration	The repetition of a certain sound at the <u>beginning</u> of successive words or phrases. It is used to create rhythm through repetition and to evoke emotion through associations with certain sounds. (Often used in conjunction with consonance.)	<i>With <u>b</u>eaded <u>b</u>ubbles winking at the <u>b</u>rim</i> <i><u>F</u>ade <u>f</u>ar away, dissolve, and quite <u>f</u>orget (Nightingale)</i> <i>Season of <u>m</u>ists and <u>m</u>ellow fruitfulness,</i> <i>Close bosom-friend of the <u>m</u>aturing sun (Autumn)</i>	<i>In Xanadu did <u>K</u>ubla <u>K</u>han</i> <i>A stately pleasure-<u>d</u>ome <u>d</u>ecree: (...)</i> <i>Five <u>m</u>iles <u>m</u>eandering with a <u>m</u>azy <u>m</u>otion</i> <i>The <u>f</u>air <u>b</u>reeze <u>b</u>lew, the white <u>f</u>oam <u>f</u>lew,</i> <i>The <u>f</u>urrow <u>f</u>ollowed <u>f</u>ree; (Mariner)</i>
Allusion	A reference to something outside the text: a person, place, thing, idea familiar to the reader; historical events or people, other literary works, mythology, or popular culture.	<i>Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes (Chapman's Homer)</i> <i>The wingèd boy I knew (Psyche)</i>	<i>From bleak Helvetia's icy caverns sent (France)</i> <i>If even a soul like Milton's can know death (Lime Tree)</i>
Anaphora	A figure of speech in which words <u>repeat</u> at the beginning of successive clauses, phrases, or sentences.	<i>With every morn their love grew tenderer,</i> <i>With every eve deeper and tenderer still; (Isabella)</i> <i>What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?</i> <i>What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?</i> <i>What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy? (Grecian)</i>	<i>This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,</i> <i>This beautiful and beauty-making power. (Dejection)</i> <i>Ye Cloud! ... Ye Ocean-waves! ... Ye Woods! (France)</i>
Aphorism	A saying that concisely expresses a moral principle or an observation about the world, presenting it as a general or universal truth. Rather similar to epigram.	<i>'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all</i> <i>Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.' (Grecian)</i>	<i>In Nature there is nothing melancholy. (Nightingale)</i> <i>Water, water, everywhere,</i> <i>Nor any drop to drink. (Mariner)</i>
Apostrophe	A figure of speech in which a speaker <u>directly addresses</u> someone or something (that is imaginary, or dead).	<i>Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art</i> <i>Thou still unravished bride of quietness</i> <i>(Grecian Urn)</i> <i>O eloquent and famed Boccaccio!</i>	<i>Ye Clouds! that far above me float and pause, ...</i> <i>Ye Ocean-Waves! that, wheresoe'er ye roll, ...</i> <i>Ye Woods! that listen to the night-birds singing</i> <i>(France)</i>

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		<i>Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon;</i> (Isabella)	<i>Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side</i> (Lime Tree)
Assonance	A figure of speech in which the same <u>vowel sound</u> repeats within a group of words (internal rhyme)	<i>across a brook ... patient look ... oozi<u>ngs</u></i> (Autumn) <i>Not in lone splend<u>or</u> hung alo<u>ft</u> the night</i> (Bright Star)	<i>that solitu<u>d</u>e, which su<u>i</u>ts / Abstru<u>s</u>er musings</i> (Frost) <i>In Xanadu did Kubla Khan</i> ('u' and 'ah' sounds)
Ballad	A type of poem that tells a story and was traditionally set to music. English ballads are typically composed of four-line stanzas that follow an ABCB rhyme scheme.	'The Eve of St Agnes' 'Isabella, or The Pot of Basil' 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'	'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' 'Love'
Blank Verse	Unrhymed iambic pentameter	Keats uses blank verse in his epic poems 'Hyperion' (not in the collection)	'The Eolian Harp', 'Frost at Midnight', 'The Nightingale', 'The Keepsake'
Caesura	A <u>pause</u> that occurs within a line of poetry, usually marked by a period, comma, ellipsis, or dash; it can be placed anywhere after the first word and before the last word of a line.	<i>Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath, And so live ever - or else swoon to death.</i> (Bright Star!)	<i>If dead, we cease to be; if total gloom Swallow up life's brief flash for aye, we fare As summer-gusts, of sudden birth and doom,</i> (Human Life')
Chiasmus	Inversion of order of parallel phrases e.g. <i>Ask not what <u>your country</u> can do for <u>you</u>; ask what <u>you</u> can do for <u>your country</u>.</i>	<i>Beauty is truth, truth beauty</i> (Grecian)	<i>Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve, And Hope without an object cannot live.</i>
Chivalric romance, medieval romance	A type of prose and verse narrative popular in noble courts of medieval and modern Europe; about <u>chivalric</u> knights with heroic qualities who go on a quest.	'La Belle Dame sans Merci' 'The Eve of Saint Agnes'	'Love'
Compound adjectives	Word (adjective) made up from two other words, and <u>hyphenated</u>	<i>soft-conched ear, cool-rooted, silver-white, pale-mouth'd, moss-lain</i> (Psyche) <i>gloom-pleased eyes</i> (Sleep) <i>Before high-pil'd books, in charactery, Hold like rich garners the full-ripened grain;</i> (Fears)	<i>up-springing lark, bright-eyed floweret, snow-white silk</i> (Keepsake) <i>Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame!</i> (Pains of Sleep) <i>On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.</i> (Eolian Harp)
Consonance	The repetition of the same <u>consonant</u> sound within a group of words (Related to alliteration)	<i>For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.</i> (Autumn)	<i>with ceaseless turmoil seeth<u>ing</u>,/As if <u>this earth</u> in fast <u>thick</u> pants were breath<u>ing</u></i> (Kubla Khan)
Diction	A collective term describing a writer's unique choice and arrangement of words; it also refers to the writer's frequent use of specific words or phrases in his works.	narcotic diction: 'aches', 'drowsy', 'numbness', 'pains', 'hemlock', 'drunk', 'dull', 'opiate', 'sunk'. (Nightingale)	diction related to sleep: <i>So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt, Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!</i> (Frost)

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Dramatic monologue	A poem written in the form of a speech of an individual character; which compresses into a single vivid scene a narrative sense of the speaker's history and psychological insight into his character.	'Bright Star!' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'	'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison' 'Ode to Tranquillity' 'Something Childish, but very Natural' 'The Eolian Harp'
End-stopped lines	The opposite of enjambment (run-on lines) A metrical line ending at a grammatical boundary or break (e.g. a dash or closing parenthesis; or with punctuation such as a colon, a semicolon, or a period.	<i>Thou still unravished bride of quietness, Thou foster-child of silence and slow time, (Grecian)</i>	<i>A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear, A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief, Which finds no natural outlet, no relief, In word, or sigh, or tear - (Dejection)</i>
Enjambment	The continuation of a sentence or clause across a line break. Also called run-on lines.	<i>Sylvan historian, who canst thus express A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme: (Grecian Urn)</i>	<i>From off her glowing cheek, she sate and stretched The silk upon the frame, and worked her name Between the Moss-Rose and Forget-me-not— (Keepsake)</i>
Epigram	A short and witty statement, usually written in verse, that conveys a single thought or observation. Epigrams typically end with a punchline or a satirical twist. Rather similar to aphorism.	<i>Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know. (Grecian) Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on; (Nightingale)</i>	<i>Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve, And Hope without an object cannot live.</i>
Epigraph	A short quotation, phrase, poem placed at the beginning of another piece of writing to encapsulate the main themes of that work and to set the tone.		'Dejection; An Ode' begins with a stanza from <i>Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence</i> .
Heroic couplets	A rhyming couplet, or two lines of poetry, written in iambic pentameter. Each line in iambic pentameter consists of 5 iambs and totals 10 syllables. Often used in epics because they have an elevated effect.	<i>...There she stood About a young bird's flutter from a wood, Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread, By a clear pool, wherein she passioned To see herself escaped from so sore ills, While her robes flaunted with the daffodils. (Lamia)</i>	<i>Thy spirit rests! Satiety And Sloth, poor counterfeits of thee, Mock the tired worldling. Idle Hope And dire Remembrance interlope, To vex the feverish slumbers of the mind: The bubble floats before, the spectre stalks behind. (Tranquillity)</i>
Line break	The point where a line of text ends and a new line starts, indicated by a forward slash	<i>Yet did I never breathe its pure serene / Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold (Chapman's Homer)</i>	<i>No more endure to weigh The Shame and Anguish of the evil Day (Pantisocracy)</i>
Metaphor	A direct and vivid <u>comparison</u> between two things usually considered distinct or unrelated. Metaphors discover the	<i>I see a lily on thy brow, With anguish moist and fever-dew,</i>	<i>Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature Gives it dim sympathies with me who live, Making it a companionable form,</i>

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	connections between unique things and emphasize their similarities poetically without being taken literally.	<i>And on thy cheeks <u>a fading rose</u> Fast withereth too.</i> (La Belle)	<i>Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit By its own moods interprets, every where Echo or mirror seeking of itself, And makes <u>a toy of Thought</u>.</i> (Frost)
Ode	An elaborately structured poem praising, glorifying an event or person, describing nature intellectually as well as emotionally. It has classical origins (i.e. from ancient Greece).	'Ode on Melancholy' 'Ode to Autumn' 'Ode to Psyche' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'	'Ode to Tranquillity' 'Dejection: An Ode' 'France: an Ode'
Onomatopoeia	The use of words which sound like that which they describe	<i>murmuring</i> (Isabella) <i>oozings, bleat, twitter</i> (Autumn)	<i>Flew creaking o'er thy head</i> (Lime-Tree)
Oxymoron	A figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction	<i>sweet enforcement, delicious moan, pleasant pain</i> (Psyche)	<i>dismal sheen</i> (Mariner)
Paradox	A seemingly absurd or contradictory statement or proposition which when investigated may prove to be well founded or true.	<i>Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard Are sweeter; therefore ye soft pipes, play on</i> (Grecian)	<i>Water, water, every where Nor any drop to drink.</i> (Mariner)
Parallel structures	The use of the <u>same pattern of words</u> and sentence structure to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance.	<i>To-morrow will I bow to my delight, To-morrow will I ask my lady's boon.</i> (Isabella)	<i>Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;</i> (France)
Pathetic fallacy	The attribution of <u>human emotion</u> to inanimate objects, nature, or animals. Usually the use of weather, the elements or geographical landscape to convey the emotional or psychological state of the speaker/poet/character	<i>But when the melancholy fit shall fall Sudden from heaven <u>like a weeping cloud</u> That fosters the droop-headed flowers all And hides the green hills in an April shroud</i> (Melancholy)	<i>So two nights passed: <u>the night's dismay</u> <u>Saddened and stunned the coming day.</u></i> (Pains of Sleep)
Personification	The attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something non-human, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form.	Humanised depiction of Autumn: <i>Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, <u>Close bosom-friend</u> of the maturing sun, <u>Conspiring</u> with him how to load and bless ...</i> (Autumn)	<i>When France in wrath <u>her giant-limbs</u> upreared, And with that oath, which smote air, earth, and sea, <u>Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free,</u></i> (France)
Rhetorical question	A question asked in order to create a dramatic effect or to make a point rather than to get an answer.	<i>Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?</i> (Autumn)	<i>Such griefs with such men well agree, But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?</i> (Pains of Sleep)
Simile	a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another	<i>And sometimes <u>like a gleaner</u> thou dost keep Steady thy laden head across a brook;</i> (Autumn)	<i>For hope grew round me, <u>like the twining vine</u>,</i> (Dejection)

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	thing of a different kind, indicated by the use of 'as' or 'like' (e.g. as brave as a lion)	<i>A smile of such delight, As brilliant and as bright As when with ravished, aching, vassal eyes, (Fanny)</i>	<i>And all that noise, <u>as of a rushing crowd</u>. With groans, and tremulous shudderings - all is over – (Dejection)</i>
Sonnet	A poem of fourteen lines using any of a number of formal rhyme schemes, in English typically having ten syllables per line. Common types are Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets.	'O Solitude! If I must with thee dwell' 'On Peace' 'To Sleep' 'To Mrs Reynold's Cat' 'Bright Star!' 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' 'To Leigh Hunt, Esq.' 'To My Brothers' 'When I have fears that I will cease to be' 'Sonnet. Written in Disgust of Vulgar Superstition' 'To Ailsa Rock' 'Time's Sea Hath Been Five Years at its Slow Ebb' 'On the Sea' 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles'	'Work without Hope' 'To the River Otter' 'Pantisocracy' 'Sonnet Composed on a Journey Homeward' 'To Nature'
Symbolism	An object, person, situation or action that has a literal meaning in a poem but also suggests other (abstract) meanings. It usually has universal meaning/s (e.g. a candle represents life, or enlightenment) or meaning/s peculiar to a poet/writer.	The Grecian urn Eros and Psyche as symbols for the imagination (Ode to Psyche)	The albatross in 'Ancient Mariner' Religious symbolism in 'Ancient Mariner'
Synaesthesia	The mixing of senses; the experience of a sensation in terms of another sense e.g. describing a feeling as a colour, or movement.	<i>(A draught of vintage) Tasting of Flora and the country green Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth! (Nightingale) His soul shall taste the sadness of her might (Melancholy)</i>	<i>And now, its strings Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes Over delicious surges sink and rise, Such a soft floating witchery of sound A light in sound, a sound-like power in light (Eolian Harp)</i>
Syntactical Inversion, inverted syntax	The reversal of the normal order of the words and phrases in a sentence, often placing unexpected emphasis on objects or verbs in sentences.	<i>Much have I travelled in the realms of gold ... Then felt I like some watcher of the skies (Chapman's Homer)</i>	<i>In Xanadu did Kubla Khan A stately pleasure-dome decree: (Kubla Khan)</i>

More terms

Connotation - The array of associative emotions and ideas suggested by a word *in addition* to its dictionary definition (denotation). Words can have positive, negative or neutral connotations. Most words carry meanings, impressions, or associations apart from or beyond their literal (denotative) meaning. Words can have positive, negative or neutral connotations. E.g. 'slim' and 'skinny' mean the same, but 'slim' has a more flattering connotation than 'skinny' when used to describe a person.

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Hyperbole - intentional exaggeration and overstatement for emphasis and effect

Metamorphosis - A fundamental transformation, such as from human to animal (or the reverse) e.g. Lamia changes from serpent to woman.

Metonymy - the substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant

E.g. *She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,/Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train/Pass by* (Agnes)

sweeping train(s) = skirts = people/women

Neologism – a newly coined word or expression e.g. *cirque-couchant* (Lamia)

Synecdoche - Synecdoche refers to a literary device in which a part of something is substituted for the whole

E.g. Fans = wings; representing divinity (Psyche)

Acknowledgements

MH Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*

<https://literaryterms.net/>

<https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms>

Marian Cox, *The Poetry of John Keats*

What is a sonnet?

In order to fully appreciate both poets' use and adaptation of the sonnet, it is important to have a basic understanding of what the sonnet is.

A sonnet is a fourteen-line poem written in iambic pentameter, usually following a rhyme scheme corresponding to one of two basic patterns:

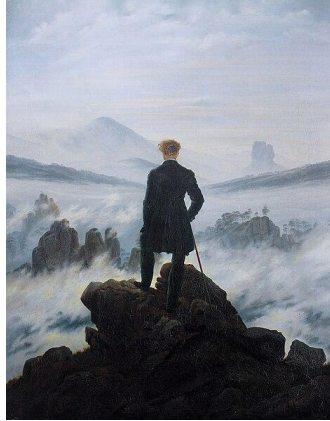
1) The **Italian** or **Petrarchan** rhyme scheme contains an *octave* (or *octet*) rhyming ABBA ABBA and a *sestet* which may rhyme in any of a number of ways, including such patterns as CDDCEE, CDCCDC, CDCDCD, CDECDE, etc. The Italian sonnet tends to involve the development of an idea or theme through the eight lines of the octave, and then a rethinking or redirecting of that theme in the sestet. This form is useful for arguments with two parts: *a* happens (octave), therefore *b* (sestet). Another use is to tell a brief story or allegory (octave) and draw a conclusion from it (sestet). The transition from octave to sestet is called the *volta*, or the *turn*.

2) The **English** or **Shakespearean** rhyme scheme contains three *quatrains* and a *couplet*, rhyming ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. The poet using this sonnet form usually develops an idea or elaborate metaphor in the opening quatrain, then explores the same idea from different angles in the following two quatrains, and closes with a pithy commentary or reflection in the couplet.

3) (Additional) There is also **Spenserian** rhyme scheme, created and pioneered by Sir Edmund Spenser, author of *The Faerie Queene*, in his sonnet sequence, *The Amoretti*. It is one of the more difficult sonnet forms because the rhyme interlocks: ABAB BCBC CDCD EE.

The word sonnet comes from the Italian word for 'room', and poets working in the genre are very conscious of the form as a small space or enclosure. It was first developed as a form suitable for love lyric, and particularly for the expression of frustrated, unrequited love of the sort Francesco Petrarch described in his lyric poetry (14th c. Italy). Poets working in the tradition of Petrarch wrote what is referred to as 'Petrarchan love poetry'; it was all the rage in 16th-century England, and many writers wrote sonnets on the subject of unrequited love for a fair-complected, virtuous, distant lady. They used both the Italian (Petrarchan) rhyme scheme and the English (Shakespearean). But Petrarch had also used the sonnet to explore religious devotion (meditation on spiritual matters, expression of love of and desire for God) and political themes, and these uses of the sonnet gradually worked their way into English poetry as well. Traditionally, sonnets are filled with elaborate metaphors (also called 'conceits'), puns, oxymorons, paradoxes, and imagery that draws on natural beauty, precious gems and metals, and the language of religious devotion. Sonnets are often very 'meta-poetic', commenting on the nature of poetry and of sonnets in particular even as they explore their declared subject.

APPENDIX: ROMANTIC ART



"Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog", Caspar David Friedrich, 1818



"Snowstorm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps", J.M.W. Turner, 1812



"Manchester, from Kersal Moor after a painting by W. Wylde", Edward Goodall, 1840



"Malvern Hall: Warwickshire", John Constable, 1809



"Hadleigh Castle", John Constable, 1829