

## POETRY

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### UNIT I

#### ***How Soon Hath Time* by John Milton**

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,  
Stol'n on his wing my three and twentieth year!  
My hasting days fly on with full career,  
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.  
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,  
That I to manhood am arrived so near,  
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,  
That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.  
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,  
It shall be still in strictest measure even  
To that same lot, however mean or high,  
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven;  
All is, if I have grace to use it so,  
As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye.

**Milton's theme of time and youth in *how soon hath time***

In this sonnet, *How Soon Hath Time* Milton laments how his years are running out, but he could not achieve much so far his poetic career was concerned. The poem is an early a vowel of the poet's ardent faith in God. His early regret is overcome by his complete faith in god who is called his taskmaster. God, as a stern teacher, exacts the tasks of his devotee late or soon. Moreover, the images in the sonnet have made it a perfect blend of paganism and Christianity and they testify the poet's absolute faith in god.

In the opening line of the sonnet time is composed to 'the subtle thief of youth.' It suggests that time is a clever thief who steals the poet's youthful days secretly and without violence. The word 'wing' introduces the image of a bird and the word 'fly' testifies the image. As a whole, in the eyes of Milton, time is a stealer bird that takes youth on a flight. Through this image Milton wants to present time as a being continually flitting. He waits never and for none. So Milton is keen to utilize time fruitfully and believes that the best use of time can only be done through producing significant poetry.

In the first eight lines the poet regrets that his days are flying hastily and his youth has produced no significant and fruitful works. He has arrived at manhood but his inner maturity has not yet appeared although some happy spirits are endowed with maturity of thought and talent in time. He has done nothing worthwhile yet.

In the sestet, he, however, hopes that soon or late, less or more, his spirit shall be equal to the same lot as other spirits have had in youth. However high or low time will lead him to the same fate by the will of god. If he has grace to use his talent, he will prove successful in the eyes of god, who is the great taskmaster.

We come across the image of late spring that suggests late youth. The poet is now twenty-three years old and so he has attained late youth. But the poet's late youth bears neither buds nor blossoms. Here 'bud' and 'blossom' suggest production by way of writing poetry. As a matter of fact, Milton himself did not belong to the class of prolific writers. He wrote slowly and had a few poetic works in his poetic career ranging from 1629 to 1639.

Thus, the poet overcomes his regret leaving an impression of his own Puritanism – his absolute faith in providence. Neither at the same time he has personified time here, nor as their bird but as the guide, the harbinger of destiny. As a result this sonnet blends paganism and Christianity in harmony.

### **Summary of the poem**

John Milton regrets that he has just completed twenty-three years of his age but he could not produce anything worthwhile this time. His days are flying hastily. The poet looks younger than his actual age. He is not inwardly matured to create anything significant. Though many writers are endowed with timely spirit to achieve something but the poet has not produced any worthwhile yet.

Then the poet expresses his hope that soon or late, less or more his spirit will be led to the lot

by the will of god. He will have god's grace to use his talent and he will prove himself worthy in the eye of god, his great task master.

### ***THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER***

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way  
With blossom'd furze unprofitably gay,  
There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,  
The village master taught his little school;  
A man severe he was, and stern to view,  
I knew him well, and every truant knew;  
Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace  
The days disasters in his morning face;  
Full well they laugh'd with counterfeited glee,  
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he:  
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,  
Convey'd the dismal tidings when he frown'd:  
Yet he was kind; or if severe in aught,  
The love he bore to learning was in fault.  
The village all declar'd how much he knew;  
'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too:  
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,  
And e'en the story ran that he could gauge.  
In arguing too, the parson own'd his skill,  
For e'en though vanquish'd he could argue still;  
While words of learned length and thund'ring sound  
Amazed the gazing rustics rang'd around;  
And still they gaz'd and still the wonder grew,  
That one small head could carry all he knew.  
But past is all his fame. The very spot  
Where many a time he triumph'd is forgot.

### ***The Village Schoolmaster* by Oliver Goldsmith Summary**

Written as a sketch in Goldsmith's "Deserted Village"  
At six years of age Goldsmith's village schoolmaster was Thomas (Paddy) Byrne and it is thought he was the basis of the poem.

The poem is an excerpt from a longer poem by Goldsmith called "[The Deserted Village](#)" and conveys the speaker's sentiments about a teacher. The word "village" in the title clearly suggests that the poem is set in a rural area, probably where the speaker lived and was taught by the subject of the poem. In the first two lines, the speaker mentions exactly where the school was located. The fence beside which the school building was situated is described as "straggling,"

which means that it was dilapidated and probably leaning over. The road leading towards and past the school was lined with flowers, which were "unprofitably gay." The phrase suggests that the flowers that were blooming beautifully were not being admired or appreciated.

In the following [couplet](#) the speaker refers to the the school building itself, a "noisy mansion" bustling with the activity of teaching and learning. The village teacher, equipped to manage a class, taught his lessons there. The term "master" denotes the respect he enjoyed. The speaker goes on to describe the teacher's character and style of teaching. Each description is rounded off in a rhyming couplet.

The teacher was very strict and had a stern look about him. The speaker states that he "knew him well," which means that he had an in-depth understanding of his teacher and could probably read into his expressions and gestures. This familiarity could also have been the result of the many personal and individual encounters he had had with his educator. The word "truant" implies that the speaker may have been one of those who deliberately missed classes and who had been confronted by the teacher about his misdemeanors.

Further aspects about the teacher's personality indicate that he had an expressive face and that his pupils could easily read his mood as a result. They would, for example, know that a certain ominous look spelled trouble coming, especially for those who had been disobedient. They would be trembling in anticipation and fear of what was to come. It is clear that the teacher also had a good sense of humor, for "many a joke had he." The students would feign pleasure at his funny stories and laugh at them, probably to avoid being reprimanded.

Word would quickly spread around the classroom about impending trouble whenever the teacher scowled. The speaker provides a contrast to the teacher's strict demeanor not only by stating that he was humorous at times but also by mentioning that he was kind. The speaker states that if one should take it to the extreme, it could be said that the teacher's greatest flaw was that he loved learning too much.

...or if severe in aught,  
The love he bore to learning was in fault.

The schoolmaster was not only much admired and respected by his students but was evidently also looked up to by the village residents. Everyone seemed to have praise for his great knowledge. It was a known fact in the village that he could write, do mathematics, and predict weather patterns and tides. It was also assumed that he was an accurate surveyor who could determine borders easily. It is apparent that he could also debate intelligently and be involved in discussions with the village parson, a person who was greatly respected by his parishioners. The teacher seemed to be a fierce opponent in such discourse, for he would continue arguing a point even after he had already lost the dispute. The master would use difficult words and emotive language to sound convincing and impress the poorly educated village folk.

People in this rural community were in awe that the teacher could know so much. They could not understand how his small head could contain so much knowledge. The poem ends, however, on a sad and poignant note. The final couplet tells us that all the teacher's achievements have become a thing of the past. The place where he had enjoyed so much success has ceased to exist and has been forgotten.

The eulogistic nature of the poem conveys the speaker's respect and admiration for his erstwhile educator. The poem also reflects the changes that occurred in rural communities when land was divided and property was abandoned or claimed by private landowners. Many inhabitants then emigrated to find a home elsewhere.

## UNIT II

### *Lucy Gray* by William Wordsworth

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray,  
And when I cross'd the Wild,  
I chanc'd to see at break of day  
The solitary Child.

No Mate, no comrade Lucy knew;  
She dwelt on a wild Moor,  
The sweetest Thing that ever grew  
Beside a human door!

You yet may spy the Fawn at play,  
The Hare upon the Green;  
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray  
Will never more be seen.

"To-night will be a stormy night,  
You to the Town must go,  
And take a lantern, Child, to light  
Your Mother thro' the snow."

"That, Father! will I gladly do;  
'Tis scarcely afternoon—  
The Minster-clock has just struck two,  
And yonder is the Moon."

At this the Father rais'd his hook  
And snapp'd a faggot-band;

He plied his work, and Lucy took  
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe,  
With many a wanton stroke  
Her feet disperse, the powd'ry snow  
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time,  
She wander'd up and down,  
And many a hill did Lucy climb  
But never reach'd the Town.

The wretched Parents all that night  
Went shouting far and wide;  
But there was neither sound nor sight  
To serve them for a guide.

At day-break on a hill they stood  
That overlook'd the Moor;  
And thence they saw the Bridge of Wood  
A furlong from their door.

And now they homeward turn'd, and cry'd  
"In Heaven we all shall meet!"  
When in the snow the Mother spied  
The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downward from the steep hill's edge  
They track'd the footmarks small;  
And through the broken hawthorn-hedge,  
And by the long stone-wall;

And then an open field they cross'd,  
The marks were still the same;  
They track'd them on, nor ever lost,  
And to the Bridge they came.

They follow'd from the snowy bank  
The footmarks, one by one,

Into the middle of the plank,  
And further there were none.

Yet some maintain that to this day  
She is a living Child,  
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray  
Upon the lonesome Wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,  
And never looks behind;  
And sings a solitary song  
That whistles in the wind

### **Critical Analysis of the Poem *Lucy Gray***

The poem *Lucy Gray* was written by William Wordsworth based upon a real account of death of a little girl narrated to him by his sister Dorothy. In the poem the poet portrays imagery of a little solitary girl who lived in a house in valley with her father and mother. As she did not have any friend, her most of time was spent in playing alone or helping her parents. Wordsworth further progress by adding that one can get a chance to see a fawn or a rabbit while passing through those valleys (which are usually hard to trace) but you will never be able to see the innocent face of Lucy Gray.

Now Wordsworth takes us back to the sad incident. It was an afternoon and Lucy was at home with her father. Her mother had gone to the town. Her father took his hook and started to pile bundle and instructed Lucy to take the lantern and bring her mother safe before evening because they were anticipation storm. She left for the town but against expected time, the storm arose earlier and Lucy lost the way. She searched for the way back to home but could never find. Her mother came back home. Worried her parents explored the entire valley whole night to catch a sight of Lucy but she was nowhere found.

At the break of the day her parents found patterns of Lucy's small feet in the snow. They started following those footprints which led them to bridge of the wood which was only a furlong far from there house and after that prints disappeared. It was indication that Lucy had died. Her parents lament for her. The dearest child of the nature was gone. But it is still in belief that Lucy is alive and sings her solitary song in the valley.

Noticeable in this poem is that Wordsworth has not stresses upon death of Lucy but after her death her fusion with the nature. He has tries to associate boundaries of birth and death by this beautiful and calamitous ballad. Wordsworth as a poet of nature, in this poem has associated the action of death with the nature. After the death of Lucy also it is believed that she is alive and her song whistles in the air in the valley as if she has become part of the nature. Beautiful imagery, similes are quite seen as the very flair of William Wordsworth.

### **Comments and Critical Appreciation of the Poem:**

*Lucy Gray* was written by Sir William Wordsworth in 1799 and published in the second edition of 'Lyrical Ballad', collection of poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1800. The poem states story of a little girl named Lucy Gray who died early on a stormy night in countryside. She lived somewhere in western countryside with her parents. The clue of living in Western Countryside is given in lines "The minster-clock has just struck two,/And yonder is the moon!" moon

is visible during day time there. She had a small family and no friends. As a solitary child' she had no mate or someone to talk, ply or share.

Poem Lucy Gray starts with the reference to a popular story of Lucy Gray. Wordsworth has represented Lucy as a child of nature. We can notice in the poem Lucy perhaps, often used to help her parents in small house works because when her mother goes out of the town, her father sends her to fetch her mother. But when storm comes before expected time, Lucy lost her way keep searching for the right path and mysteriously dies. Death of an innocent lonely child hits reader deep and leaves an impact of sorrow. In the end of the poem the poet takes help of supernatural theory to keep Lucy alive in hearts. People still believe that Lucy is not dead and her spirit roams and sings the songs which whistles in the air. This supernatural theme indicates how strongly Lucy was attached to her town and singing her solitary song implies how lonely she was. Tragic end of the poem leaves an everlasting impact on the readers.

The ballad is written lyrically. A scenic view stands in front of the eyes while reading the poem and imagery is widely used but nowhere seems to be in the excess. Unfortunate death of the little girl in the end of the poem and then keeping her alive in the hearts with the help of supernatural elements is the very own style of Wordsworth.

### ***Ode to Autumn* by John Keats**

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease;  
For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing<sup>1</sup> wind;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers:  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.



Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—  
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river-sallows, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft  
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

### **Critical Analysis of the Poem *Ode to Autumn***

In this poem Keats describes the season of Autumn. The ode is an address to the season. It is the season of the mist and in this season fruits are ripened on the collaboration with the Sun. Autumn loads the vines with grapes. There are apple trees near the moss growth cottage. The season fills the apples with juice. The hazel-shells also grow plumb. These are mellowed. The Sun and the autumn help the flowers of the summer to continue. The bees are humming on these flowers.

They collect honey from them. The beehives are filled with honey. The clammy cells are overflowing with sweet honey. The bees think as if the summer would never end and warm days would continue for a long time. Autumn has been personified and compared to a woman farmer sitting carefree on the granary floor; there blows a gentle breeze and the hairs of the farmer are fluttering. Again Autumn is a reaper. It feels drowsy and sleeps on the half reaped corn. The poppy flowers have made her drowsy. The Autumn holds a sickle in its hand. It has spared the margin of the stalks intertwined with flowers. Lastly, Autumn is seen as a worker carrying a burden of corn on its head.

The worker balances his body while crossing a stream with a bundle on his head. The Autumn is like an onlooker sitting the juicy oozing for hours. The songs and joys of spring are not found in Autumn seasons. But Keats says that Autumn has its own music and charm. In an autumn evening mournful songs of the gnats are heard in the willows by the river banks. Besides the bleat of the lambs returning from the grassy hills is heard. The whistle of the red breast is heard from the garden. The grasshoppers chirp and swallow twitters in the sky. This indicates that the winter is coming.

*Ode to Autumn* is an unconventional appreciation of the autumn season. It surprises the reader with the unusual idea that autumn is a season to rejoice. We are familiar with Thomas Hardy's like treatment of autumn as a season of gloom, chill and loneliness and the tragic sense of old age and approaching death. Keats sees the other side of the coin. He describes autumn as: "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness! / Close bosom friend of the maturing sun". He understands maturity and ripeness as one with old age and decay. Obviously then, old age is a complement to youth, as death is to life. Keats here appears as a melodist; he seems to have accepted the fundamental paradoxes of life as giving meaning to it. The very beginning of the poem is suggestive of acceptance and insight after a conflict.

The subject matter of this ode is reality itself at one level: Keats depicts the autumn season and claims that its unique music and its role of completing the round of seasons make it a part of the whole. Although autumn will be followed by the cold and barren winter, winter itself will in turn give way to fresh spring. Life must go on but it cannot continue in turn give way to fresh spring. Life must go on but it cannot continue without death that completes one individual life and begins another. This is indirectly conveyed with the concluding line of the ode: "And gathering swallows twitter in the skies". In one way, this gives a hint of the coming winter when shallows will fly to the warm south.

The theme of ripeness is complemented by the theme of death and that of death by rebirth. So, in the final stanza, the personified figure of autumn of the second stanza is replaced by concrete images of life. Autumn is a part of the year as old age is of life. Keats has accepted autumn, and connotatively, old age as natural parts and processes them.

Among the six wonderful Odes of Keats *To Autumn* occupies a distinct place of its own, for it is, in execution, the most perfect of his Odes. Many critics agree in ranking *To Autumn* first among Keats' Odes. Its three eleven-line stanza ostensibly do nothing more than a season; no philosophical reflections intrude. His simple love of Nature without any tinge of reflectiveness and ethical meaning finds expression in *To Autumn*. The scented landscape in the first stanza, and the music of natural sounds in the last stanza would have been enough for most poets, but the effect would have been incomplete without the figures of the winnower, the reaper, the gleaner and the cider-presser which give a human touch to Autumn. Although the poem contains only three stanzas, Keats has been successful in expressing the beauty, the charm, the symphony of Autumn, and the ageless human activities in the lap of Nature.

*To Autumn* is, in a sense, a return to the mood of the *Ode on Indolence*-«making the moment sufficient to itself. It is, apparently, the most objective and descriptive poem, yet the emotion has become so completely through it. There is no looking before and after in this poem as Keats surrenders himself fully to the rich beauty of the season. He is not troubled by the thought of the approaching winter nor by that of the vanished

spring. In this approach to Nature he remains the great artist that he was. Neither philosophy taints his thoughts, nor does sorrow cloud his vision. Other poets have thought of Autumn as the season of decay. But to Keats, Autumn was the season of mellow fruitfulness and happy content. He is content with the autumn music, however pensive it may be.

There are no echoes in it, no literary images; all is clear, single, perfectly attuned. Our enjoyment of the beauty and peace of the season is disturbed by no romantic longing, no classic aspiration, no looking before and after, no pining, for what is not, no foreboding of winter, no regret for the spring that is gone, and no prophetic thought of other springs to follow. *To Autumn* expresses the essence of the season, but it draws no lesson, no overt comparison with human life. Keats was being neither allegorical, nor Wordsworthian. Keats in this poem is almost content with the pure phenomenon. He describes Nature as she is.

This is the secret of Keats's strength, his ability to take the beauty of the present moment, so completely into his heart that it becomes an eternal possession. For him the poetry of the earth is never dead. It is noteworthy that *To Autumn* is the only major poem of Keats that is completely unsexual. Woman as erotic object has been banished from this placid landscape. Keats' sense of the wholeness of life is nowhere communicated so richly or with such concentration as in this Ode. The characteristic tension of the other Odes makes them more passionate, perhaps, but leaves them with a sense of strain. Here all is relaxed and calm, life-accepting.

### UNIT III

#### ***PIED BEAUTY* by G. M. HOPKINS**

Glory be to God for dappled things—  
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;  
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.  
All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: Praise Him.

#### ***Pied Beauty Summary***

The poem opens with an offering: “Glory be to God for dappled things.” In the next five lines, Hopkins elaborates with examples of what things he means to include under this rubric of “dappled.” He includes the mottled white and blue colors of the sky, the “brinded” (brindled or streaked) hide of a cow, and the patches of contrasting color on a trout. The chestnuts offer a slightly more complex image: When they fall they open to reveal the meaty interior normally concealed by the hard shell; they are compared to the coals in a fire, black on the outside and glowing within. The wings of finches are multicolored, as is a patchwork of farmland in which sections look different according to whether they are planted and green, fallow, or freshly plowed. The final example is of the “trades” and activities of man, with their rich diversity of materials and equipment.

In the final five lines, Hopkins goes on to consider more closely the characteristics of these examples he has given, attaching moral qualities now to the concept of variety and diversity that he has elaborated thus far mostly in terms of physical characteristics. The poem becomes an apology for these unconventional or “strange” things, things that might not normally be valued or thought beautiful. They are all, he avers, creations of God, which, in their multiplicity, point always to the unity and permanence of His power and inspire us to “Praise Him.”

## **Form**

This is one of Hopkins’s “curtal” (or curtailed) sonnets, in which he miniaturizes the traditional sonnet form by reducing the eight lines of the octave to six (here two tercets rhyming *ABC ABC*) and shortening the six lines of the sestet to four and a half. This alteration of the sonnet form is quite fitting for a poem advocating originality and contrariness. The strikingly musical repetition of sounds throughout the poem (“dappled,” “stipple,” “tackle,” “fickle,” “freckled,” “adazzle,” for example) enacts the creative act the poem glorifies: the weaving together of diverse things into a pleasing and coherent whole.

## **Commentary**

This poem is a miniature or set-piece, and a kind of ritual observance. It begins and ends with variations on the mottoes of the Jesuit order (“to the greater glory of God” and “praise to God always”), which give it a traditional flavor, tempering the unorthodoxy of its appreciations. The parallelism of the beginning and end correspond to a larger symmetry within the poem: the first part (the shortened octave) begins with God and then moves to praise his creations. The last four-and-a-half lines reverse this movement, beginning with the characteristics of things in the world and then tracing them back to a final affirmation of God. The delay of the verb in this extended sentence makes this return all the more satisfying when it comes; the long and list-like predicate, which captures the multiplicity of the created world, at last yields in the penultimate line to a striking verb of creation (fathers-forth) and then leads us to acknowledge an absolute subject, God the Creator. The poem is thus a hymn of creation, praising God by praising the created world. It expresses the theological position that the great variety in the natural world is a testimony to the perfect unity of God and the infinitude of His creative power. In the context of a Victorian age that valued uniformity, efficiency, and standardization, this theological notion takes on a tone of protest.

Why does Hopkins choose to commend “dappled things” in particular? The first stanza would lead the reader to believe that their significance is an aesthetic one: In showing how contrasts and juxtapositions increase the richness of our surroundings, Hopkins describes variations in color and texture—of the sensory. The mention of the “fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls” in the fourth line, however, introduces a moral tenor to the list. Though the description is still physical, the idea of a nugget of goodness imprisoned within a hard exterior invites a consideration of essential *value* in a way that the speckles on a cow, for example, do not. The image transcends the physical, implying how the physical links to the spiritual and meditating on the relationship between body and soul. Lines five and six then serve to connect these musings to human life and activity. Hopkins first introduces a landscape whose characteristics derive from man’s alteration (the fields), and then includes “trades,” “gear,” “tackle,” and “trim” as diverse items that are man-made. But he then goes on to include these things, along with the preceding list, as part of God’s work.

Hopkins does not refer explicitly to human beings themselves, or to the variations that exist among them, in his catalogue of the dappled and diverse. But the next section opens with a list of qualities (“counter, original, spare, strange”) which, though they doggedly refer to “things” rather than people, cannot but be considered in moral terms as well; Hopkins’s own life, and particularly his poetry, had at the time been described in those very terms. With “fickle” and “freckled” in the eighth line, Hopkins introduces a moral and an aesthetic quality, each of which would conventionally convey a negative judgment, in order to fold even the base and the ugly back into his worshipful inventory of God’s gloriously “pied” creation.

### ***THE BALLAD OF FATHER GILLIGAN* by W. B. YEATS**

The old priest Peter Gilligan  
Was weary night and day  
For half his flock were in their beds  
Or under green sods lay.

Once, while he nodded in a chair  
At the moth-hour of the eve  
Another poor man sent for him,  
And he began to grieve.

'I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace,  
For people die and die;  
And after cried he, 'God forgive!  
My body spake not I!'

He knelt, and leaning on the chair  
He prayed and fell asleep;  
And the moth-hour went from the fields,  
And stars began to peep.

They slowly into millions grew,

And leaves shook in the wind  
And God covered the world with shade  
And whispered to mankind.

Upon the time of sparrow chirp  
When the moths came once more,  
The old priest Peter Gilligan  
Stood upright on the floor.

'Mavrone, mavrone! The man has died  
While I slept in the chair.'  
He roused his horse out of its sleep  
And rode with little care.

He rode now as he never rode,  
By rocky lane and fen;  
The sick man's wife opened the door,  
'Father! you come again!'

'And is the poor man dead?' he cried  
'He died an hour ago.'  
The old priest Peter Gilligan  
In grief swayed to and fro.

'When you were gone, he turned and died,  
As merry as a bird.'  
The old priest Peter Gilligan  
He knelt him at that word.

'He Who hath made the night of stars  
For souls who tire and bleed,  
Sent one of this great angels down,  
To help me in my need.

'He Who is wrapped in purple robes,  
With planets in His care  
Had pity on the least of things  
Asleep upon a chair.'

### ***The Ballad of Father Gilligan* by W.B Yeats summary**

W.B Yeats' "The Ballad of Father Gilligan" is written in the style of ballad with twelve stanzas of four lines. Ballad is a simple narrative poem written in a simple language. The theme of the poem

is about the presence of God everywhere and his love for all. The poem is about a miracle happened in the life of Father Gilligan, an old priest.

The poem begins with the introduction of Peter Gilligan, an old priest. He helps his people, who are under his church. Half of his people are in death bed or buried under the ground due to sickness. He treats the sick people and conducts funeral for the dead. He treats them day and night and thus becomes very tired. One day due to his tiredness he is about to sleep on his chair. The presence of insects indicates it as evening. At that time someone calls for the priest's help. The priest feels upset about being called. His continuous help to the needy people and his tiredness makes him to get upset. Because of his tiredness he says that he does not have rest, happiness or peace as people under his parish die continuously. Immediately he feels sorry for saying such words. He begs God to forgive him because those words are spoken by his body and not by him.

Father Gilligan kneels down on the floor to get forgiveness from God. He leans on the chair and prays and due to his tiredness he sleeps. Now the insects have gone and the stars begin to appear. As night starts the sky is filled with stars. Due to the flow of wind leaves are falling from the trees. God covers the world with darkness and speaks slowly to mankind.

Chirping of sparrows indicate the early hours of morning time. The insects come once again. At that time Father Gilligan wakes up from his sleep. He is shocked to know that he slept for a long time. He blames himself by saying that the person who needed his help might have died. He wakes his horse and rides very fast. He rides rashly over narrow roads and wet lands and reaches the sick man's house. By seeing the Father, the sick man's wife wonders that he has come again.

Father Gilligan asks whether the man died and the wife replies that he died an hour ago. In sadness the priest walks to and fro. The woman replies that after the priest leaves he died in a peaceful manner. Hearing such word Father Gilligan kneels on the floor. He says that God has made the stars at night to comfort the souls. God might have sent one of His angels to help him. God is a king in purple colour robes and takes care of all the planets. It shows that god has many big responsibilities. Even with such responsibility God had pity on a simple person like Father Gilligan when he slept. Father Gilligan feels grateful to God for being kind and merciful to him. The poem shows the love and care of God for whom all the lives are equal and important.

## UNIT IV

### ***Conversation* by Louis Mac Niece**

Ordinary people are peculiar too:  
Watch the vagrant in their eyes

Who sneaks away while they are talking with you  
Into some black wood behind the skull,  
Following un-, or other, realities,  
Fishing for shadows in a pool.

But sometimes the vagrant comes the other way  
Out of their eyes and into yours  
Having mistaken you perhaps for yesterday  
Or for tomorrow night, a wood in which  
He may pick up among the pine-needles and burrs  
The lost purse, the dropped stitch.

Vagrancy however is forbidden; ordinary men  
Soon come back to normal, look you straight  
In the eyes as if to say 'It will not happen again',  
Put up a barrage of common sense to baulk  
Intimacy but by mistake interpolate  
Swear-words like roses in their talk.

### **Critical Analysis of the Poem *Conversation***

Louis MacNeice's "Conversation" describes the discrepancy between the outwardly ordinary appearance of some people and the secret "vagrancy" that sometimes surfaces mid-conversation. This poem also refers to that part of us which does not fit within the parameters defined by society as our "vagrancy." This vagrancy, a tendency to wander within our own minds and depart from what is expected of us

The poem describes the vagrancy as undesirable to the ordinary person: they apologize for it with their eyes, rebuild the common sense in their conversations, and reject the possibility of intimacy that the emergence of the vagrant may have suggested.

MacNeice's poem utilizes an abacbc rhyme scheme in each stanza, and the image of the "vagrant" is an extended metaphor that lasts throughout the poem's three stanzas. The vagrant metaphor conveys the secret and socially unacceptable strangeness and honesty which seemingly ordinary people hide to maintain polite conversation.

Most people will recognize when they have made such an error and will apologize and tell themselves it will not happen again, but sometimes the attempt to conceal the error continues to make the error obvious. The nervous conversationalist might drop "swear-words like roses in their talk" in an attempt to divert attention away from this part of themselves we all pretend does not exist.

MacNeice argues that this forbidden "vagrancy" is kept secret but frequently comes out accidentally in polite conversation, only to be rejected and apologized for by the speaker.



***First Things First* by W.H. Auden**

Woken, I lay in the arms of my own warmth and listened  
To a storm enjoying its storminess in the winter dark  
Till my ear, as it can when half-asleep or half-sober,  
Set to work to unscramble that interjectory uproar,  
Construing its airy vowels and watery consonants  
Into a love-speech indicative of a Proper Name.

Scarcely the tongue I should have chosen, yet, as well  
As harshness and clumsiness would allow, it spoke in your praise,  
Kenning you a god-child of the Moon and the West Wind  
With power to tame both real and imaginary monsters,  
Likening your poise of being to an upland county,  
Here green on purpose, there pure blue for luck.

Loud though it was, alone as it certainly found me,  
It reconstructed a day of peculiar silence  
When a sneeze could be heard a mile off, and had me walking  
On a headland of lava beside you, the occasion as ageless  
As the stare of any rose, your presence exactly  
So once, so valuable, so very now.

This, moreover, at an hour when only too often  
A smirking devil annoys me in beautiful English,  
Predicting a world where every sacred location  
Is a sand-buried site all cultured Texans do,  
Misinformed and thoroughly fleeced by their guides,  
And gentle hearts are extinct like Hegelian Bishops.  
Grateful, I slept till a morning that would not say  
How much it believed of what I said the storm had said  
But quietly drew my attention to what had been done  
—So many cubic metres the more in my cistern  
Against a leonine summer—, putting first things first:  
Thousands have lived without love, not one without water.

**Critical Analysis of the Poem *First Things First***

"First Things First" treats the problem of writing poetry in the era of subjective uniqueness. It depicts the absence of happiness in enjoying nature. The poem begins with the speaker's

listening to the storm in the dark winter night. The speaker was inspired by the storm so much that he wanted to compose a poem.

He chose to compose a poem in praise of the storm. He imagined the storm to be a 'god-child of the Moon and the West Wind'. Being the child of god, it has 'the power to tame both real and imaginary monsters'. You are everywhere and make your impression wherever you are. The speaker was alone and found the storm so loud and pushing him to recollect how that day was spent. He imagined all this amidst peculiar silence when a sneeze could be heard a mile off. He also imagined a walk in the land of lava and cherished it as ageless, valuable, and precious like a rose.

The speaker was also thinking about writing about the commercialism because of which people are so materialistic and blindly lead a busy life forgetting nature. He criticises the life style of Texans and gets annoyed at the 'sand buried sites' visible everywhere. Gentleness is scarcely visible and has become extinct like the ideology of Hegel. Thinking about all these, he slept off.

Next morning, when he woke up, he never thought of last night ideas. His attention was only about the water collected in the cistern. He started worrying about the on coming summer. His concern towards nature is no longer as he thought of lastnight. Like others, he too became quite practical putting first things first. He says at last, "Thousands have lived without love, not one without water".

So, in "First Things First," the noisy storm, which has no sacred public associations, is translated by 'active re-creation' into the memory of a sacred personal moment of silence in a quite different landscape. And it speaks, as a modern poem speaks, to a solitary listener. This is an imposingly great poem.

## Unit V

### *Next Please* by Philip Larkin

Always too eager for the future, we  
Pick up bad habits of expectancy.  
Something is always approaching; every day  
Till then we say,

Watching from a bluff the tiny, clear  
Sparkling armada of promises draw near.  
How slow they are! And how much time they waste,  
Refusing to make haste!

Yet still they leave us holding wretched stalks  
Of disappointment, for, though nothing balks  
Each big approach, leaning with brasswork prinked,

Each rope distinct,

Flagged, and the figurehead wit golden tits  
Arching our way, it never anchors; it's  
No sooner present than it turns to past.  
Right to the last

We think each one will heave to and unload  
All good into our lives, all we are owed  
For waiting so devoutly and so long.  
But we are wrong:

Only one ship is seeking us, a black-  
Sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back  
A huge and birdless silence. In her wake  
No waters breed or break.

### **Critical Analysis of the Poem *Next, Please***

*Next, Please* is a bleak reflection on life and the inevitability of death. He argues that people spend too long fixated on the future, forgetting to live in the present. In this poem he looks at people who have wasted their present, waiting for a future that never comes.

The title, 'Next, Please', effectively summarises the sense of urgency the people feel within the poem. Larkin categorises the characters of the poem, indeed 'we', as impatiently waiting for the future to arrive. The use of the imperative 'next' suggests a tone of impatience, with the title demanding the arrival of the future, similarly to how the people within the poem are also eagerly waiting. In this poem 'Next' symbolises the future, with the demand for its arrival suggesting a dangerous disregard of the present.

A tone of impatience, first suggested within the title, is instantly communicated through the word 'eager' within the first line. This tone of impatience is continued throughout *Next, Please*, characterising the poem.

Larkin creates a certain divide between 'We' and 'Them'. 'We', those who passively wait for the future, and the future actively drawing nearer. This seeming reversal, with the future being the thing moving towards us allows 'we' to take on a passive role. We believe that it is not our duty to chase down the future, expecting and waiting for it to arrive. This is the core of Larkin's argument, and where he finds frustration.

Larkin paints a beautiful picture of the nearing ships, representing the glorious future. 'Golden tits' suggests wealth, but is also sexualisation of the future – romanticised right up until the end of its approach.

The 'we' in the poem spends 'so' much time idolising the future they forgot to think about the present. A whole lifetime wasted by waiting and waiting for something that never came.

At core, this poem is Larkin pointing out the stupidity of asking for the future instead of enjoying the present. While the future does indeed draw closer, so does the inevitability of death.

*Next Please* finds itself upon the extended metaphor of ships in the distance representing the future. This far off 'armada' is glorified, with Larkin's imagery painting the sought future as something remarkable and beautiful. He depicts people as waiting on the shores of the present, looking out over an ocean, longing for their futures. The sudden change from the glorified future to the harsh actuality of approaching death is incredibly depressing.

In conclusion, romanticisation of the future is a dangerous game. Larkin urges the reader to break out of the 'we', to grip the present and not let go. Larkin implores the reader to focus on the present, before it's too late. The entire poem can be read [here](#).

### ***Churning Day* by Seamus Heaney**

A thick crust, coarse-grained as limestone rough-cast,  
hardened gradually on top of the four crocks  
that stood, large pottery bombs, in the small pantry.  
After the hot brewery of gland, cud and udder,  
cool porous earthenware fermented the buttermilk  
for churning day, when the hooped churn was scoured  
with plumping kettles and the busy scrubber  
echoed daintily on the seasoned wood.  
It stood then, purified, on the flagged kitchen floor.

Out came the four crocks, spilled their heavy lip  
of cream, their white insides, into the sterile churn.  
The staff, like a great whisky muddler fashioned  
in deal wood, was plunged in, the lid fitted.  
My mother took first turn, set up rhythms  
that slugged and thumped for hours. Arms ached.  
Hands blistered. Cheeks and clothes were spattered with flabby milk.

Where finally gold flecks  
began to dance. They poured hot water then,  
sterilized a birchwood-bowl  
and little corrugated butter-spades.  
Their short stroke quickened, suddenly  
a yellow curd was weighting the churned up white,  
heavy and rich, coagulated sunlight  
that they fished, dripping, in a wide tin strainer,  
heaped up like gilded gravel in the bowl.

The house would stink long after churning day,  
acidic as a sulphur mine. The empty crocks  
were ranged along the wall again, the butter  
in soft printed slabs was piled on pantry shelves.  
And in the house we moved with gravid ease,  
our brains turned crystals full of clean deal churns,  
the splash and gurgle of the sour-breathed milk,  
the pat and slap of small spades on wet lumps.

### **Critical Analysis of the Poem *Churning Day***

Heaney describes the production of farm-made butter witnessed as a youngster. The poem reveals close observations of the technical stages that accompany a 'magical' transformation. The process is akin to alchemy: the family produces gold from base metal, butter from milk! They are magicians

Heaney's poems often celebrate the skills of the ordinary rural people. This poem reflects Heaney's memory of growing up in the family farm and witnessing the buttermaking process -a regular part of the life of the farm. The poem uses a range of imagery -the sounds and smells of the farm are clear in the writing.

There is also a realistic view of the "butter", "house would stink" – this shows the smell in the house after the "butter" was churned, this shows that it was done by hand as if machinery was used then there would not be any smell left over. In "Churning Day" we can see Heaney is fond of nature as it brings good things, after the hard work, as the butter was made after all the hard work put into it.

"Churning Day" is all about family unity whereas "Churning Day" Heaney is narrating as the 3rd person. We obviously know that children do not use words like that. Although in "Churning Day" Heaney uses "plash" which sounds childish, or one that he has just made up. Which shows he remembers the event clearly.

"Churning Day" has a slight bit of religion in it, as Heaney uses "purified", this is not only for religion but it does remind us of religion. Also churning day is like a ritual. And the family is united in the butter making ritual, just like people are united in the church. Heaney appreciates nature in "Churning Day" as it brings good things, for example butter.

Structurally the poem comes close to free-verse in the lack of a clear rhythmic pattern, which is not to say lines are devoid of their own strong rhythmic tread, as in the opening of the second stanza when the crocks emerge like characters in Disney's Fantasia.

Heaney plays with a half line at the mid-point, to draw attention to the miraculous moment when the 'flabby milk' becomes 'gold flecks' which began to dance for joy and the whole family breathe again, as the butter becomes reality. For butter really is seen as a life-giving element. It is

‘coagulated sunlight’ a metaphor which juxtaposes the negative and positive but focuses on the wonder of the butter, stirred by a ‘whisky muddler’ – apt since whisky is also the ‘water of life’.

The process is brought to life by alliteration and imagery as the poem continues.

Onomatopoeia is used as the ‘plumping’ kettles – giving both sound and shape – are contrasted with the light and speedy ‘busy scrubber’, again giving a clear idea of the sounds heard emanating from within.

The themes in these poems include family relationships, closeness and security in the family, nature, the love of nature but also the negative view of nature, and moving from childhood to adulthood. In “Churning Day” Heaney uses a full stop at the end of each stanza, this could be to show us the next stage of the process.

Magic is a thing of the innocent. Children wonder at the mundane. Heaney explores this here, he revels in the memory of the events and recalls his mother working like some master magician, much in the same way as he reveres his father and grand-father in Digging. However, he leaves the poem rooted in the reality of an older, more experienced man. He has grown up.