HOLT, RINEHART AND WINSTON, INC.

aspects of english

# MAJOR BRITISH AUTHORS

## EARLY MODERN POETS

## MAJOR BRITISH AUTHORS

*C. A. Enroth, General Editor*

SELECTED CANTERBURY TALES, Daniel Cook
SPENSER AND MILTON, Robert B. Pearsall
ENGLISH ESSAYISTS, John J. Sheedy
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY POETS, James Lill
THE AUGUSTANS, Rebecca Price Parkin
BOSWELL AND JOHNSON, William H. Halewood
FOUR ROMANTIC POETS, Roland Dille
TENNYSON AND BROWNING, James J. Greene
VICTORIAN PROSE, James J. Greene
• EARLY MODERN POETS, C. A. Enroth
JOYCE AND LAWRENCE, C. A. Enroth
FIVE MODERN BRITISH POETS, David Lougée

C. A. ENROTH is Professor of English, Sacramento State College, California. He has taught at the high school level, as well as at the University of Minnesota and Cairo University, Egypt, where he was a Fulbright Professor.

aspects of english

# EARLY MODERN POETS

## HARDY, HOPKINS, HOUSMAN, YEATS

*C. A. Enroth*

HOLT, RINEHART AND WINSTON, INC.
NEW YORK • TORONTO

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following publishers and agents for their generous permission to reprint copyrighted materials.

HOLT, RINEHART AND WINSTON, INC. for "Loveliest of trees, the cherry now," "Others, I am not the first," "On the idle hill of summer," "With rue my heart is laden," "Now hollow fires burn out to black," "When I was One-and-Twenty," "Into my Heart an Air that Kills," "Farewell to barn and stack and tree," "Shot? so quick, so clean an ending?" "Terence, this is stupid stuff" from "A Shropshire Lad"—Authorised Edition—from *The Collected Poems of A. E. Housman.* Copyright 1939, 1940 © 1959 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. Copyright © 1967, 1968 by Robert E. Symons. Reprinted by permission. For "The laws of God, the laws of man," "Here dead lie we because we did not choose," "In the morning, in the morning," "Stars, I have seen them fall," "To stand up straight and tread the turning mill," "Eight O'Clock," "The chestnut casts his flambeaux," "Now dreary dawns the eastern light" from *The Collected Poems of A. E. Housman.* Copyright 1922 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. Copyright 1936, 1950 by Barclays Bank Ltd. Copyright © 1964 by Robert E. Symons. Reprinted by permission.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY and THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA LTD. for "Waiting Both," "In Church," "While Drawing in a Churchyard," "The Singing Woman," "Hap," "The Subalterns," "The Man He Killed," "The Convergence of the Twain," "Transformations," "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations,'" "Neutral Tones," "Nature's Questioning," "The Oxen," "Channel Firing," from *Collected Poems* by Thomas Hardy. Copyright 1925 by The Macmillan Company; renewed 1953 by Lloyds Bank, Ltd. Reprinted by permission.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY for "Down by the Salley Gardens," "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," "The Song of the Wandering Aengus," "He Reproves the Curlew," "He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven." Copyright 1906 by The Macmillan Company; renewed 1934 by William Butler Yeats. "The Folly of Being Comforted." Copyright 1903 by The Macmillan Company; renewed 1931 by William Butler Yeats. "No Second Troy," "That the Night Come." Copyright 1912 by The Macmillan Company; renewed 1940 by Bertha Georgie Yeats. "September 1913," "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing," "The Magi." Copyright 1916 by The Macmillan Company; renewed 1944 by Bertha Georgie Yeats. "The Wild Swans at Coole," "Lines Written in Dejection," "Tom O'Roughly." Copyright 1919 by The Macmillan Company; renewed 1946 by Bertha Georgie Yeats. "Easter, 1916," "The Second Coming," "A Prayer for My Daughter." Copyright 1924 by The Macmillan Company; renewed 1952 by Bertha Georgie Yeats. "Sailing to Byzantium." Copyright 1928 by The Macmillan Company; renewed 1956 by Georgie Yeats. "An Acre of Grass," "Lapis Lazuli," "Politics," "The Circus Animals' Desertion." Copyright 1940 by Georgie Yeats. All poems from *Collected Poems* by William Butler Yeats. Reprinted by permission.





03-080765-4
901234-3-987654321

# CONTENTS

# Introduction

The period between the birth of Thomas Hardy in 1840 and the death of William Butler Yeats in 1939 was one of Britain's great ages. Her empire was at its height, her military power was formidable, she was banker and manufacturer to the world, she offered unparalleled liberty in political and religious thought, and she had a sense of her own destiny. Her literature, too, flourished. But before the nineteenth century was out, her mood of buoyant confidence and optimism had been supplanted by one of doubt, pessimism, and anxiety. To understand such a profound change in outlook, we should perhaps glance at Victorian England.

Britain under Queen Victoria, who reigned from 1837 to 1901, was a prosperous, powerful empire. The statement "the sun never sets upon the British Empire" was literally true. Since about one fourth of the inhabited world was ruled by Britain, the sun, at any time of day, was shining upon some portion of the Empire. The phrase also had a metaphorical meaning for the British. Other great empires had had their day until the sun had figuratively set for them forever; but there was little reason to think that the British Empire would follow that pattern. Britannia ruled the waves; England, in being the first country to industrialize, had taken a long lead over other competitors; English currency, language, and law were known and respected all around the globe; and the British people had a sense of having been chosen to rule over "the lesser breeds." Nearly every British family had a son in some distant part of the Empire: in India or Australia or Canada or Africa. Such an empire, controlled by a hardworking, self-disciplined people, might well last forever.

But England had been described by one of her prime ministers as two nations, the rich and the poor. A century earlier, England

had been an agricultural nation in which wealth and power derived from ownership of the land. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution was virtually completed. Coal mining and manufacturing were the new sources of wealth. Whereas in the past wealth and power had been handed down from father to son in the great landed families—many of whom traced their titles back to the Norman Conquest in 1066—now great fortunes were made overnight, and a new class of people came to power. Whole villages that had been inhabited continuously for centuries were abandoned as farm laborers moved to the crowded industrial cities and the mining towns. Smoke from what a visionary and revolutionary poet called the "dark satanic mills" blackened the cities. Tuberculosis and other diseases ravaged the industrial slums. Five-year-old children worked sixteen hours a day pulling coal carts in mine passages too low for mules or tending dangerous machinery in the cotton mills. The life of the common people was, in Thomas Hobbes' phrase, "poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

For the moneyed classes, however, life was quite different. The public schools (really private and exclusive) and the ancient universities confirmed the upper classes in their belief that they ruled by right, that they were superior to the common people from whom their wealth derived. They enjoyed great material comfort as well as their favored position of authority, which they serenely believed they deserved.

Among the old landowning families, wealth and social rank had often been accompanied by a sense of responsibility toward the tenant families who labored on the large estates. The new industrial magnates, however, rarely felt any such responsibility. A fixed scale of wages and the belief that it was dangerous to tamper with supply and demand gave these prosperous new middle classes their moral justification for ignoring the poverty of their employees. Low wages, recurring depressions, and the lack of pensions kept workers tied to their jobs. Because children could bring in a little money by working, they left school as soon as possible, if they ever attended at all.

In such circumstances, when most people owned nothing—usually not even their tools or the cramped, unsanitary houses in which they lived—and a privileged few led graceful, comfortable lives in prosperity, it would be only reasonable to expect that England would be racked by revolutions like those that broke out elsewhere in Europe. Instead, however, Victorian England was remarkably quiet. One of the chief reasons why the poor accepted their lot was that their religion taught them to accept things as they

are. Man's earthly life was important chiefly as a means for earning the reward of heaven. Hardships, even injustices, were thus heaven-sent opportunities for demonstrating faith, endurance, and disregard for earthly things. There had always been rich and poor, and everything was in the hands of God; to question the social system was thus to question the goodness or the wisdom of Providence. Hard work, thrift, sobriety, and piety were what counted. Life was to be endured, not necessarily enjoyed. Pleasure, in fact, was a snare of Satan, and so the pious man took care to distrust his senses and not to laugh too much. Man's sexual nature was an unfortunate necessity and an ever-present danger to his immortal soul. In this life, God had made some men rich and some poor; the justice of it was hard to see, but all would be set right in the next world.

Much of what we now mean by "Victorianism" comes from this rigid, solemn outlook on life, which was personified by Queen Victoria herself, a hard-working, serious-minded woman more notable for her piety than for her intellect. This puritanical code, with its taboos, its emphasis upon decorum, its elaborate system of correct behavior, may have been especially attractive to the middle classes because, unlike the landed aristocracy who had ruled England for centuries, they were unaccustomed to power and unsure of themselves. Side by side with this repression of gaiety and animal instincts, there was in Victorian England a great deal of sensuality and luxury. The contrast between what Victorians preached and what many actually practiced gives us a term often associated with the Victorian age—hypocrisy. By the easy-going standards of our own times, the Victorians were prudish, smug, stuffy, hypocritical, and repressed; in the early twentieth century, when the English were shaking off what they regarded as the bondage of the age just ended, "Victorian" became a term of contempt.

Whatever harsh judgment we might make of the Victorian outlook, it was an outlook admirably suited to managing an empire. Church and school taught duty, obedience, loyalty to queen and country, self-discipline, disregard for hardship, suspicion of pleasure, and faith in the absolute justice of an afterlife in which every sin would be punished and every virtuous act rewarded. The well-bred Englishman did not need a head full of knowledge; too much cleverness or articulateness, in fact, was thought unbecoming in a true Englishman. Instead, he had what was much more useful: a few moral precepts and years of training by family and school with the object of making him habitually know and do "the right thing" without thinking too much about it. And he had an absolute

confidence that God was in His heaven and that the English had been especially chosen to do God's work on earth.

Thus the foundation upon which Victorian society was built was religious belief, but that foundation was to be undermined by two books. In 1830, Sir Charles Lyell published *Principles of Geology,* which asserted that the earth must be immensely older than the few thousand years calculated from biblical genealogies. In 1859, Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species,* a work arguing that the various animal species, including man, had evolved over millions of years from more primitive species. Two inferences could be drawn, both disturbing: that the account of man's creation as given in Genesis was not literally true and that man was not the purpose for which the universe had been created but instead was merely another animal species.

The effect of these two scientific treatises was to undermine belief in the literal accuracy of the Bible. Thus, the famous Victorian conflict between religion and science emerged. If one book of the Bible could not be taken literally, could the others? And if the authority of the Bible was questionable, then all of Christian belief stood on very shaky ground.

Faced with a choice between the findings of science and the teachings of the Bible, Victorian thinkers and artists took various positions. Some reaffirmed their religious beliefs and refused to consider the conflicting scientific evidence. Others reluctantly abandoned their Christian faith and either did without religion or sought out non-Christian beliefs. Still others reconciled the two by regarding the Bible as true in the way that fables and parables are true—as stories illustrating moral truths, not as literally accurate history. And others kept religion and science in separate watertight compartments in their minds and thus solved the problem of reconciling the two by not attempting to do it. But whatever response the Victorian mind made to the problem, it was shaken by the conflict —the old certainties that sustained and justified the Empire were gone.

Here we see, then, some historical reasons for two recurring notes in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature—loss of religious faith, without any satisfying belief to take its place, and the sense that a great era was ending. Again and again, a note of melancholy sounds, a note of world-weariness, of man's having lost his way in a dark wood. Having lost his old religious certainties, man did not lose his need for some sort of organizing belief that would give a sense of purpose and a sense of community with others. The early twentieth-century mind was preoccupied

with this search for values in a universe from which the old values seemed to have disappeared.

If one determining force in late nineteenth-century British life was religion, another was economics. British middle-class prosperity derived not only from mining and manufacturing at home but also from investments abroad. England's overseas possessions provided raw materials to be processed in England and shipped back to the outposts of the Empire as manufactured goods. A system of taxes and other restrictions kept the imperial possessions from developing their own industries. Large tracts of the best agricultural land abroad were also owned by Englishmen, many of whom had never visited their holdings and had little or no interest in them except to make sure that they returned a profit.

Perhaps the most striking example of a British possession whose inhabitants suffered under English absentee ownership and restrictions on domestic manufacturing was Ireland. After centuries of intermittent fighting, the English finally won almost complete military control over Ireland in the sixteenth century. The English made themselves the owners of Irish lands and charged rent. When in times of famine the starving Irish peasants could not pay the rent, the distant English owners ordered the peasants driven from the land and their huts burned. The English imposed severe penalties on the Irish Roman Catholics, who made up nearly the entire population. When the Irish rebelled, as they did from time to time, the English suppressed the rebellions with ruthless military power and imposed new penalties and charges upon the desperate Irish people. It was a policy of extermination, one in which both economic greed and religious bigotry played their parts.

The moral burden of ruling an empire weighed heavily on the consciences of sensitive and thoughtful Englishmen, and even the crassest defender of the imperial idea could see military and economic threats to Britain's preeminent position. Both Germany and the United States were gaining on England in industrial and military power, particularly naval power. Depressions, a one-sided and unpopular war against the Dutch farmers in South Africa, poverty and misery in the industrial slums, the destruction of rural England's great natural beauty to meet commercial demands, the ever-increasing power of the money-minded middle classes—all these contributed to the uneasy sense that things were getting out of control, that England as a noble ideal was irretrievably lost.

It would be misleading to suggest that the late-Victorian outlook was entirely gloomy and pessimistic. Although the established social and religious system resisted change, still change came

about at a faster rate than ever before. The vote was gradually extended to more and more Englishmen, though only to male property owners. Laws regulating the employment of women and children were adopted. The slave trade was prohibited, prisons and mental institutions were improved, the army was reformed, elementary education was extended, pension plans and aid for the aged and the sick were adopted, and sanitation was improved. Each of these was a hard-won victory, usually accompanied by predictions of bankruptcy and moral decay.

Probably most Englishmen were almost totally unaffected by the moral and religious crises that beset the artists and intellectuals. In any age, the percentage of the population that is seriously concerned with ideas is tiny, and usually fifty to a hundred years elapse between the first appearance of an idea among a society's thinkers and the general dissemination of that idea, in crude simplification, among the society as a whole. It is of British artists and intellectuals that we speak when we describe the grim, pessimistic outlook that prevailed at the end of the Victorian period.

This brief introduction should explain some differences between a mid-nineteenth-century outlook and a mid-twentieth-century outlook; but so far we have examined religious and economic factors only. Another important element was in the area of psychology—a profoundly changed concept of man's mental processes.

The late eighteenth-century Americans who drafted the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution could talk about "common sense," the idea that all men's mental processes were about the same. They and their British counterparts thought of man as a rational being who, if he could be shown where his self-interest lay, would act in accordance with that self-interest. Eighteenth-century man confidently believed that an age of reason had supplanted an age of superstition and blind habit. It remained only for science to address itself to human problems; then man would triumph over nature. Science was the key by which all the mysteries of the universe would eventually be unlocked. Besides, they believed there was a force in the universe operating to improve things, to make tomorrow better than today—this was the idea of Progress. Man differed from all the other animals in possessing intellect, and all of man's actions could be explained in light of his following his self-interest. Man was a greedy and sometimes ruthless animal, but he was rational.

A new view arose in the late nineteenth century to challenge the eighteenth-century view of man as a rational animal. This view

held that man's intellect developed very late in his evolution, that his rationality was only a very thin veneer over his nonrational, animal nature. While man had no difficulty in thinking up perfectly reasonable explanations for his actions, those explanations were really elaborate self-deceptions. The real source of man's actions lay far beneath the threshold of reason. Man's awareness was like an iceberg—perhaps one ninth visible and eight ninths hidden. Man had persuaded himself that he was a rational being, but mostly he is a creature of powerful drives and impulses of which his conscious mind knows nothing.

Artists, including writers, have always known that man's emotional and intuitive nature is much more powerful than his intellect. Sigmund Freud, a pioneer among scientists in studying man's unconscious, said that most of what he knew about man's nature he had learned from poets and novelists, not from other scientists. If the most powerful responses in man come not from his conscious mind but from his unconscious, then the problem of the writer is to discover a language that addresses itself to the unconscious rather than to the intellect. Such a language, like the language of dreams, might not be logical. It might operate by random association or in images or by the sounds of words rather than by their assigned meanings. Its syntax might be different from that used in language that addresses itself to the conscious mind. It might even be possible to discover what man's mental life was like before his intellect evolved.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, many writers worked to develop one kind of nonlogical language, that of symbolism. A symbol embodies or illustrates an idea. The idea of loneliness, for example, is conveyed intellectually by the word *loneliness,* which is either a cluster of sounds or smears of black ink on white paper. Neither of these embodies or illustrates loneliness. A picture of an island, however, might *symbolize* loneliness; it is a single object surrounded by a dissimilar element. Loneliness can be of different sorts: One may be lonely in a crowd of people or lonely in solitude. One can be lonely and feel unworthy, or lonely and feel unjustly neglected. One can feel lonely but ready for company, or lonely and hostile. All of these degrees and kinds of loneliness could be symbolized by islands that are either rocky and barren or lush and tropical; set in a stormy or a peaceful sea; mist-enshrouded or baked by the sun. A symbol displays its meaning.

If symbolism were merely an alternative language, it would be interesting but no more than that. Its great power comes instead from its ability to do what cannot be done in any other way. If,

for example, to our picture of the island, we added subtle colors—if we made the island a pale yellow-green and the sea a muddy brown, let us say—we would have added another dimension of meaning. If we added still other elements, such as a jagged coastline combined with gently sloping mountains, we would soon have a symbol of such complexity and multiplicity of meanings that our intellects could hardly take account of it all. Yet we would respond to it and "understand" it perfectly by means of some nonintellectual awareness. The symbol, that is, would have gone beyond or below intellect to elicit its response.

Symbolist poetry obviously makes great demands upon readers. To the no-nonsense Victorian middle-class business and professional men—whom Matthew Arnold had called "Philistines" for their smug self-righteousness and their suspicions toward artistic, intellectual, or spiritual concerns—symbolism was simply one more slap at respectable society. Besides, it came from France and was therefore probably immoral.

By the 1890's, the middle classes were firmly in control of England. Worldly, practical-minded men, they wanted literature to be useful. Art, including poetry, should teach, they thought, and should teach the ideas and the values of the middle classes. The artists, however, found the middle classes dull, narrow-minded, and vulgar. The Education Act of 1870, in extending elementary education, had produced a public that could read but that had little taste for subtlety, elegance, or any other characteristics of great art. As a result, the late Victorian artists and intellectuals drew farther and farther away from the public, a tendency that has continued into the twentieth century. They insisted upon "Art for Art's sake"; that is, they insisted that art should be a worthwhile end in itself and not merely a means to some other end, such as morality or patriotism.

Whatever remained of Victorianism was shattered in 1914 by the outbreak of World War I. Europe had not seen a major war since the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, a century earlier. No one believed that the war would last more than about six weeks. It was thought of by many as a refreshing novelty, an opportunity for men to wear colorful uniforms and make some splendid cavalry charges. But by 1916 the war had turned into a stalemate. The entrenched armies fought bitterly for months over a few hundred yards of terrain. A whole generation of young men was slaughtered in the mud of France. Gas warfare, the destruction of cities, atrocities against civilians, mass starvation used as a weapon—all these destroyed old illusions and lingering beliefs in man's humanity and

in his ability to control his technology. Pessimism, doubt, fatalism, and cynicism were the characteristics of the post-war period. Mass unemployment, a general strike that came close to revolution, the rise of fascism and the police state, and a worldwide depression marked the brief period between the two world wars.

# Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) turned to poetry late in life after a long career as a novelist. When the Bishop of Wakefield burned a copy of Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure* as a public protest against the book's frank treatment of sex, Hardy took up poetry in the belief that that medium would allow him freedom to say what he thought. In other respects, too, Hardy's thought conflicted with the official Victorian belief. Brought up in the orthodox Christian faith, Hardy as a youth had read Darwin and Thomas Henry Huxley and had lost his faith. He reluctantly concluded that man was not the center of the universe and that the universe was indifferent, if not hostile, to man.

Hardy's poems show no consistent philosophy. A persistent note, though, is that since the universe operates according to laws that were not designed for man's benefit and that may be incomprehensible to man it is useless to apply man's moral standards to the universe. If there is a "Cause of Things," a creator, it may not be conscious; or perhaps the creator is dead or dying; or perhaps it has forgotten about this tiny and unimportant planet. Whatever laws may govern the universe, Hardy said, it is certain that men make life much worse than it need be.

Although Hardy's outlook must be called pessimistic, still it has an optimistic side. Hardy called himself a meliorist, one who thinks that things tend to improve. If man is doomed to defeat at the hands of fate, man thereby takes on a tragic dignity, and his courage and moral purpose in struggling against and trying to find meaning in a meaningless and indifferent universe must be admired. Besides, the forces that society considers good, such as law, the church, and an organized social system, may well be thought evil by a poet, since they often stifle the human spirit. So whatever new ideas threaten these old institutions may bring about defeats for society but also victories for man's spirit.

In poetical technique, Hardy was a curious mixture of Victorian and twentieth-century man. The poet W. H. Auden, himself a fine craftsman, pointed to Hardy's "rhythmical clumsiness" and "outlandish vocabulary" but said also that no English poet used so many and such difficult stanza patterns. Hardy learned from John Donne and Robert Browning how to use harsh, colloquial language effectively; here he contrasts markedly with the smooth, flowing tones of Tennyson. He is simple and intense. Like most twentieth-century poets, he eliminated every unnecessary word. In some of his poems, he turned to symbolism rather than expository language, especially when he was concerned with the influence of the prehistoric past upon modern man, or with man's responding unconsciously to profound and irresistible forces deep within him. Yet for all his modernity, Hardy seemed not to have noticed the revolutionary changes being made in poetry by T. S. Eliot and others toward the end of his long career.

## *Hap*

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

## *The Subalterns*

I

"Poor wanderer," said the leaden sky,
"I fain would lighten thee,
But there are laws in force on high
Which say it must not be."

II

—"I would not freeze thee, shorn one," cried
The North, "knew I but how
To warm my breath, to slack my stride;
But I am ruled as thou."

III

—"To-morrow I attack thee, wight,"
Said Sickness. "Yet I swear
I bear thy little ark no spite,
But am bid enter there."

IV

—"Come hither, Son," I heard Death say;
"I did not will a grave
Should end thy pilgrimage to-day,
But I, too, am a slave!"

V

We smiled upon each other then,
And life to me had less
Of that fell look it wore ere when
They owned their passiveness.

## *The Man He Killed*

"Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

"But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

"I shot him dead because—
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

"He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Off-hand like—just as I—
Was out of work—had sold his traps—
No other reason why.

"Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown."

## *Channel Firing*

That night your great guns, unawares,
Shook all our coffins as we lay,
And broke the chancel window-squares,
We thought it was the Judgment-day

And sat upright. While drearisome
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:
The mouse let fall the altar-crumb,
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, "No;
It's gunnery practice out at sea
Just as before you went below;
The world is as it used to be:

"All nations striving strong to make
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters
They do no more for Christés sake
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

"That this is not the judgment-hour
For some of them's a blessed thing,
For if it were they'd have to scour
Hell's floor for so much threatening. . . .

"Ha, ha. It will be warmer when
I blow the trumpet (if indeed
I ever do; for you are men,
And rest eternal sorely need)."

So down we lay again. "I wonder,
Will the world ever saner be,"
Said one, "than when He sent us under
In our indifferent century!"

And many a skeleton shook his head.
"Instead of preaching forty year,"
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,
"I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer."

Again the guns disturbed the hour,
Roaring their readiness to avenge,
As far inland as Stourton Tower,
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.

## *The Convergence of the Twain*

*(Lines on the Loss of the "Titanic")*

I

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,
Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls—grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?". . .

VI

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

VII

Prepared a sinister mate
For her—so gaily great—
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

IX

Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,

X

Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event,

XI

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said "Now!" And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

## *Transformations*

Portion of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew,
Bosomed here at its foot:
This branch may be his wife,
A ruddy human life
Now turned to a green shoot.

These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,
Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I often tried to know
May be entering this rose.

So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and veins abound
In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they were!

## *In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"*

I

Only a man harrowing clods
    In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
    Half asleep as they stalk.

II

Only thin smoke without flame
    From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
    Though Dynasties pass.

III

Yonder a maid and her wight
    Come whispering by:
War's annals will fade into night
    Ere their story die.

## *Waiting Both*

A star looks down at me,
And says: "Here I and you
Stand, each in our degree.
What do you mean to do,—
    Mean to do?"

I say: "For all I know,
Wait, and let Time go by,
Till my change come,"—"Just so."
The star says: "So mean I:—
    So mean I."

## *Neutral Tones*

We stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,

And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;
—They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles of years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing. . . .

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

## *Nature's Questioning*

When I look forth at dawning, pool,
Field, flock, and lonely tree,
All seem to gaze at me
Like chastened children sitting silent in a school;

Their faces dulled, constrained, and worn,
As though the master's ways
Through the long teaching days
Had cowed them till their early zest was overborne.

Upon them stirs in lippings mere
(As if once clear in call,
But now scarce breathed at all)—
"We wonder, ever wonder, why we find us here!

"Has some Vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?

"Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains? . . .
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

"Or is it that some high Plan betides,
As yet not understood,
Of Evil stormed by Good,
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achievement strides?"

Thus things around. No answerer I. . . .
Meanwhile the winds, and rains,
And Earth's old glooms and pains
Are still the same, and Life and Death are neighbours nigh.

## *In Church*

"And now to God the Father," he ends,
And his voice thrills up to the topmost tiles:
Each listener chokes as he bows and bends,
And emotion pervades the crowded aisles.
Then the preacher glides to the vestry-door,
And shuts it, and thinks he is seen no more.

The door swings softly ajar meanwhile,
And a pupil of his in the Bible class,
Who adores him as one without gloss or guile,
Sees her idol stand with a satisfied smile
And re-enact at the vestry-glass
Each pulpit gesture in deft dumb-show
That had moved the congregation so.

## *While Drawing in a Churchyard*

"It is sad that so many of worth,
Still in the flesh," soughed the yew,
"Misjudge their lot whom kindly earth
Secludes from view.

"They ride their diurnal round
Each day-span's sum of hours
In peerless ease, without jolt or bound
Or ache like ours.

"If the living could but hear
What is heard by my roots as they creep

Round the restful flock, and the things said there
No one would weep."

" 'Now set among the wise,'
They say: 'Enlarged in scope,
That no God trumpet us to rise
We truly hope.' "

I listened to his strange tale
In the mood that stillness brings,
And I grew to accept as the day wore pale
That show of things.

## *The Singing Woman*

There was a singing woman
Came riding across the mead
At the time of the mild May weather,
Tameless, tireless;
This song she sung: "I am fair, I am young!"
And many turned to heed.

And the same singing woman
Sat crooning in her need
At the time of the winter weather;
Friendless, fireless,
She sang this song: "Life, thou'rt too long!"
And there was none to heed.

## *The Oxen*

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
'Now they are all on their knees,'
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,

If someone said on Christmas Eve,
'Come; see the oxen kneel,

'In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,'
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

*Hap*

1. The title means "Chance," as does *Casualty* in line 11. Notice that the poem has three parts, each a step in the argument: (a) If my suffering benefited a god, (b) then I could tolerate my suffering, (c) but my suffering benefits nobody—it is the result of sheer chance. In stanza 1, paraphrase the god's statement. Why, if he made such a statement, would he be "vengeful"?
2. Line 6 could be paraphrased "strengthened by knowing that the god's wrath has descended despite my innocence." Why would that thought be consoling? Why could one not be fully eased but instead be only "half-eased"?
3. Line 9 asks why it so often happens in this world that good is defeated ("joy lies slain"). This is, of course, one of the perennial problems in theology. (For another statement of it, see Hopkins' "Thou art indeed just, Lord. . . .") Here the problem is stated in metaphors from gardening: Why does good seed ("hope") not grow and bloom? How does line 11 answer that question and continue the gardening metaphor?
4. Line 12 shifts to another metaphor. Time, in the sense of Fate or Destiny, is gambling with dice. In throwing the dice that govern my destiny, Time could just as well cast "gladness" as "a moan"; my miseries are not the result of logic, not even divine malice—they result from an unlucky throw of the dice, from "hap." What effect does this comparison between dice-throwers and whatever supernatural forces control man's fortunes have upon our attitude toward those forces?
5. In line 13, *purblind* means "nearsighted" or "partially" blind. Doomsters are Casualty and Time, who together determine my fate. How does the Doomsters' partial blindness help answer the question asked in line 9?
6. In the poem's last line, the word *pilgrimage* reveals another dimension. Comparing a man's life to a journey is often done in poetry

and in folk wisdom. A pilgrimage is a journey undertaken usually for a religious or moral purpose, often involving great hardship to the pilgrim; but it is undertaken in the belief that life has some purpose or meaning. In this poem, considering the kind of divine control depicted in the last stanza, is the idea that life is a pilgrimage ironical? (See **irony** in the Glossary, p. 100.) Explain.

### *The Subalterns*

1. A subaltern is a person of low rank, one who carriers out orders but does not issue them. In this poem, who are the subalterns? What orders do they carry out? What is their attitude toward those orders and toward the human beings affected by such orders?
2. Lines 19 and 20 may be paraphrased "of that sinister appearance life had before they acknowledged their obligation to carry out orders." Why does the speaker find that idea reassuring?
3. Many words in this poem are old-fashioned: *fain, wight, hither.* How does this old-fashioned **diction** (see Glossary, p. 100) support the poem's idea?
4. The pattern of lines having four main stresses alternating with lines having three is called "ballad stanza." A **ballad** (see Glossary, p. 99) usually tells or implies a story, often one that illustrates such basic human concerns as love, struggle, death, and the effort to find some meaning in life. How does the choice of the ballad stanza pattern support this poem's idea?

### *The Man He Killed*

1. What sort of man is the speaker? How do you know? Is the speaker Thomas Hardy? (See **persona** in the Glossary, p. 101.)
2. In stanza 3, what do phrases like "Just so" and "That's clear enough" tell us about the speaker's mind?
3. Why did the man he killed enlist ("'list") in the army? (The word *traps* here means tools or belongings.) Why did the speaker enlist? In what sense are the two men enemies?
4. Is the speaker's statement in the last stanza a satisfactory explanation for the killing? Why does the poet choose to make the speaker in this poem so unsophisticated?

### *Channel Firing*

1. This poem was written in April 1914, four months before war broke out between England and Germany. The title refers to gunnery practice by warships in the English Channel. The sound of heavy gunfire "awakens" the speaker. Where is the speaker, and in what circumstances? (A *chancel* is part of a church.)

2. Notice that the first sentence continues into the second stanza. Stanza 1 expresses a complete thought; therefore the additional three words carried over into stanza 2 come as a surprise. Describe the **tone** of stanza 1 (see Glossary, page 102), and explain how the three words at the beginning of stanza 2 abruptly change the tone.
3. Similarly, in line 9, when God calls "No," we assume that this is a complete thought, meaning that God has decided not to tolerate war any longer. However, we discover that God's sentence continues and that a somewhat different statement is being made. Explain how these momentary misunderstandings (see question 2 above, also) are useful in this poem.
4. In stanzas 3–6 God is quoted at some length. Are you impressed by God's mentality as presented here? In answering, point out specific details that led you to your answer. ("Mad as hatters" is probably an allusion to *Alice in Wonderland. Christés* is an archaic form of "Christ's." The trumpet in line 22 announces the end of the world, as described in Revelation 11:15.) What is God's joke in line 21, ("It will be warmer . . ."?)
5. In stanza 6, God suggests that the Last Trumpet may not ever be blown. Two possibilities are suggested: (a) that God does not know whether the trumpet will be blown and (b) that God knows but is teasing the listeners by withholding information. What are the implications of these two possibilities for human beings?
6. In stanzas 7 and 8, the skeletons discuss man's refusal to learn from the experience of previous wars. In line 28, *indifferent* might mean "like any other" or "unconcerned." Are both readings possible?
7. In line 31, Parson Thirdly (maybe so named from his preacher's habit of saying "firstly, secondly, thirdly . . .") decides that his preaching to men about war has been in vain. Line 32 might mean either "Instead of wasting my time on preaching against killing, I should have preached against evils that I had some chance of overcoming in my parishioners, such as tobacco and beer" or "Instead of wasting my time on preaching, I should have allowed myself such pleasures as tobacco and beer." Either way, what does the poem suggest is the likelihood that man will act in a sensible and Christian way and not go to war again?
8. In the last stanza, Stourton Tower is an invented name for a place in Dorset; Camelot is the site of King Arthur's court; and Stonehenge is a 3500-year-old circle of huge stones on Salisbury Plain. Thus the sound of the guns moves not only inland but also backward in time. What does that fact suggest about man's age-old impulse toward war?

*The Convergence of the Twain*

1. The steamship *Titanic*, declared by her builders to be unsinkable, was widely regarded as a symbol of man's triumph over nature: man had finally built something that nature could not destroy. But on her maiden voyage in 1912, the *Titanic* sank when she struck an iceberg, with loss of 1,517 persons, many of them rich and famous. It was as if man had challenged nature and nature had accepted the challenge. Some historians date the "beginning" of the twentieth century from that event—that is, the start of a characteristic twentieth-century attitude that man, for all his technological achievements, is deluding himself if he thinks that he can in any important way control his own destiny. To what extent does this poem share that view?
2. Stanzas I–V describe the sunken ship and emphasize the difference between what man intended for her and what actually became of her. For example, in stanza II, the fire rooms intended for heat are now cold; in stanza IV, jewels intended to flash brilliantly in the light now lie in darkness. In each of those stanzas, how does the third line differ markedly, in form and in idea, from the first two lines?
3. Stanza III is perhaps the most richly symbolic: Explain all your responses to mirrors, opulent passengers, grotesque slimed dumb sea-worms, sea-worms crawling over mirrors. What do you think of these in association with each other?
4. In stanzas VI–XI, we find an extended metaphor of mating. Pick out the words that develop this metaphor. How is the idea of mating appropriate for this event?
5. Sometimes Hardy used ornate words and phrases to produce his effects. At other time he relied on short, simple words. Explain how the word *Well* functions in stanza VI, and *Now!* in stanza XI.

*Transformations*

1. This poem mentions several transformations, the chief ones being the transformation of dead bodies into living plants. In stanza I, what was once ruddy becomes green. Point out as many other transformations as you can.
2. Ideally, everything in a poem is included for a purpose. Our job as readers is to extract as much meaning from the poem as we can. If it is not possible to account satisfactorily for some element in a poem, then either the poem is at fault or the reader is. In this poem several dead people and several plants are presented. Are they interchangeable? Would it be just as satisfactory, for example, to

have the dead man enter the rose and the fair girl enter the yew tree? Explain. In lines 7–9 does her having prayed for repose have anything to do with her becoming grass, or is the poet just trying to fit his rhyme scheme? Similarly, what, if anything, does line 11 contribute to the poem's meaning?

3. Hardy was a gloomy poet most of the time, and he wrote a good many poems about graves. To what extent is this poem, which is concerned with the dead, nevertheless not gloomy? What explicit statements and metaphors, especially in the last stanza, support your answer?

*In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"*

1. This poem, whose title alludes to Jeremiah 51:20, was written during World War I, a time when great empires were being broken. What does the poem say is permanent and what is transitory?
2. This is perhaps Hardy's best-known poem. How can you account for its lasting appeal? To what extent does its effect depend upon its brevity and its quiet dignity?

*Waiting Both*

1. In line 8, *my change* presumably means "my death." Why is the word *change* used instead of *death*?
2. The diction ascribed to both star and man is ordinary and colloquial. That is perfectly understandable for the man. Does the poem's effect also depend on the star's using that same flat, unemotional diction? Explain.
3. This poem deals with a tremendously important subject—man's attitude toward his own death and toward other aspects of the world over which he has no control but which nevertheless profoundly affect his life. Why is such an enormously important subject not developed in more detail?
4. Since the star and the man express the same attitudes, what purpose does the star serve in this poem?

## ASSIGNMENTS FOR WRITING

1. Hardy's attitude toward man's position in the universe is fairly consistent from poem to poem. Describe it, and cite supporting evidence from the poems.
2. Hardy (1840–1928) lived in both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. His poetry and his thought bear the marks of both centuries. In an essay, point out two or three characteristics of each century that you can find in the poems.

# Gerard Manley Hopkins

Whereas Hardy turned away from orthodox Christianity, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889) turned toward it. Brought up as a Protestant, Hopkins became a Roman Catholic while a student at Oxford and, some years later, entered the priesthood of that church. As Hardy, confronted with a seeming conflict between reason and faith, chose reason, so Hopkins chose faith. What seems to have attracted him particularly in Roman Catholicism was its emphasis on mystery, ritual, and tradition, none of which could be successfully attacked by reason. When he joined the Society of Jesus, a religious order organized on military lines and requiring strict discipline and obedience, Hopkins, as an act of self-mortification, burned all his youthful poems (the Slaughter of the Innocents, he later ambiguously called that act).

When serving as a parish priest in an industrial slum, Hopkins was appalled at what a commercial society had done to human values. Even more important to him was spiritual impoverishment: a secular, merely rational outlook of society made the world a pale, colorless place. Hopkins, in contrast, found the physical universe thrilling, not least because of its wildness, irregularities, contradictions, and seeming imperfections. To respond to nature, and to a divine presence, required intuition, not intellect; man's rationality cut him off from a sustaining and nourishing relationship with nature and nature's God. In this view, Hopkins looks backward to Wordsworth; in seeing the modern world as a spiritual and emotional wasteland, he looks forward to T. S. Eliot.

The belief that nature reveals the divine order is an old idea. To it Hopkins gave a new name, *inscape*, on the analogy of *landscape*. Just as a landscape is not merely a jumble of objects but instead is one object in the observer's mind, so an inscape is a single thing, a complex composed of objects or sensations or states of

being perceived to have some unity among themselves. The many different things mentioned in "Pied Beauty," for example, form an inscape. They are all spotted, freckled, pied, various. What holds an inscape together Hopkins called *instress*. Often several senses operate together in perceiving an inscape: sight, hearing, touch, perhaps. Most important, inscapes confirm the belief that the universe is orderly, planned, beautiful, and presided over by a Creator.

How was one to present an inscape in poetry? Here Hopkins found the nineteenth-century poetical language of Tennyson inadequate. Like Wordsworth, Hopkins needed to remake the language. Just as an inscape suddenly reveals itself to an observer, so a poem must suddenly explode into meaning. Thus, the poem must be stripped of every unnecessary word; words must be packed tight (for example, *throughther* which means something like "throughout each other"); new words must be coined if necessary; syntax must be made to bear the greatest possible load of meaning; and rhythms must also be made to convey meaning.

Hopkins' language remains an obstacle to readers—"a dragon in the doorway," his editor said. Hopkins' friend, the Poet Laureate Robert Bridges, who published Hopkins' poems in 1918, long after the poet's death in 1889, regretted their "oddness" and "obscurity." To many present-day readers, in contrast, Hopkins' language is what makes him great. It is, they say, as if language itself were speaking. Hopkins may well come to be thought the nineteenth century's greatest poet. Certainly he has influenced twentieth-century poets far more than his more famous contemporaries, Browning and Tennyson.

## *Heaven-Haven*

*A Nun Takes the Veil*

I have desired to go
    Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
    And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
    Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
    And out of the swing of the sea.

## *The Habit of Perfection*

Elected Silence, sing to me
And beat upon my whorlèd ear,
Pipe me to pastures still and be
The music that I care to hear.

Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:
It is the shut, the curfew sent
From there where all surrenders come
Which only makes you eloquent.

Be shellèd, eyes, with double dark
And find the uncreated light:
This ruck and reel which you remark
Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight.

Palate, the hutch of tasty lust,
Desire not to be rinsed with wine:
The can must be so sweet, the crust
So fresh that come in fasts divine!

Nostrils, your careless breath that spend
Upon the stir and keep of pride,
What relish shall the censers send
Along the sanctuary side!

O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet
That want the yield of plushy sward,

But you shall walk the golden street
And you unhouse and house the Lord.

And, Poverty, be thou the bride
And now the marriage feast begun,
And lily-coloured clothes provide
Your spouse not laboured-at nor spun.

## *God's Grandeur*

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

## *The Starlight Night*

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!
Down in dim woods the diamon delves! the elves'-eyes!
The gray lawns cold where gold, where quickgold lies!
Wind-beat whitebeam! airy abeles set on a flare!
Flake-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare!
Ah, well! it is all a purchase, all is a prize.

Buy then! bid then!—What?—Prayer, patience, alms, vows.
Look, look: a May-mess, like on orchard boughs!
Look! March-bloom, like on mealed-with-yellow sallows!

These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
The shocks. This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse
Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.

## *Spring*

Nothing is so beautiful as spring—
    When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
    Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
    The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
    The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
    A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden.—Have, get, before it cloy,
    Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
    Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.

## *The Sea and the Skylark*

On ear and ear two noises too old to end
Trench—right, the tide that ramps against the shore;
With a flood or a fall, low lull-off or all roar,
Frequenting there while moon shall wear and wend.

Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeinèd score
In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
And pelt music, till none's to spill nor spend.

How these two shame this shallow and frail town!
How ring right out our sordid turbid time,
Being pure! We, life's pride and cared-for crown,

Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:
Our make and making break, are breaking, down
To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime.

## *The Windhover*

*To Christ Our Lord*

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in
his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl
and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! and the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

## *Pied Beauty*

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.

## *Hurrahing in Harvest*

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks arise
Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour
Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
And, eyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder
Majestic—as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!—
These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet.

## *The Caged Skylark*

As a dare-gale skylark scanted in a dull cage
Man's mounting spirit in his bone-house, mean house, dwells—
That bird beyond the remembering his free fells;
This in drudgery, day-laboring-out life's age.

Though aloft on turf or perch or poor low stage,
Both sing sometimes the sweetest, sweetest spells,
Yet both droop deadly sómetimes in their cells
Or wring their barriers in bursts of fear or rage.

Not that the sweet-fowl, song-fowl, needs no rest—
Why, hear him, hear him babble and drop down to his nest,
But his own nest, wild nest, no prison.

Man's spirit will be flesh-bound when found at best,
But uncumbered: meadow-down is not distressed
For a rainbow footing it nor he for his bónes rísen.

## *Spring and Fall: To a Young Child*

Márgarét, are you gríeving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leáves, líke the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Ah! ás the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you wíll weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sórrow's spríngs áre the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It ís the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

## *"As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame"*

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies dráw fláme;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves—goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells;
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came.*

Í say móre: the just man justices;
Kéeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
Chríst—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

## *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*

Earnest, earthless, equal, attunable, | vaulty, voluminous, . . . stupendous
Evening strains to be time's vast, | womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all night.
Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, | her wild hollow hoarlight hung to the height
Waste; her earliest stars, earl-stars, | stárs principal, overbend us,
Fire-féaturing heaven. For earth | her being has unbound, her dapple is at an end, as-
tray or aswarm, all throughther, in throngs; | self ín self steepèd and páshed—qúite
Disremembering, dísmémbering | áll now. Heart, you round me right
With: Óur évening is over us; óur night | whélms, whelms, ánd will end us.
Only the beak-leaved boughs dragonish | damask the tool-smooth bleak light; black,
Ever so black on it. Óur tale, O óur oracle! | Lét life, wáned, ah lét life wind
Off hér once skéined stained véined variety | upon, áll on twó spools; párt, pen, páck
Now her áll in twó flocks, twó folds—black, white; | right, wrong; reckon but, reck but, mind
But thése two; wáre of a wórld where bút these | twó tell, each off the óther; of a rack
Where, selfwrung, selfstrung, sheathe- and shelterless, | thóughts agaínst thoughts ín groans grínd.

## *"I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day"*

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
What hours, O what black hoürs we have spent
This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

With witness I speak this. But where I say
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him that live alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
Selfyaest of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

## *"Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend"*

*Justus quidem tu es, Domine, si disputem tecum: verumtamen justa loquar ad te: Quare via impiorum prosperatur? etc.*

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend
With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.
Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
Disappointment all I endeavour end?
Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost
Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust
Do in spare hours more thrive than I that spend,
Sir, life upon thy cause. See, banks and brakes
Now, leavèd how thick! lacèd they are again
With fretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes
Them; birds build—but not I build; no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.
Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

## *Carrion Comfort*

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
In me ór, most weary, cry *I can no more.* I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.

But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me? scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruisèd bones? and fan,
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee and flee?

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.
Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,
Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, chéer.
Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling flung me, fóot tród
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

## *"No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief"*

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
Woe, wórld-sorrow; on an áge-old anvil wince and sing
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No lingering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief'.

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

## *"To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life"*

To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life
Among strangers. Father and mother dear,
Brothers and sisters are in Christ not near
And he my peace my parting, sword and strife.
England, whose honour O all my heart woos, wife
To my creating thought, would neither hear
Me, were I pleading, plead nor do I: I weary of idle a being but by where wars are rife.

I am in Ireland now; now I am at a third
Remove. Not but in all removes I can
Kind love both give and get. Only what word
Wisest my heart breeds dark heaven's baffling ban
Bars or hell's spell thwarts. This to hoard unheard,
Heard unheeded, leaves me a lonely began.

## *"Patience, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray"*

Patience, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray,
But bid for, Patience is! Patience who asks
Wants war, wants wounds; weary his times, his tasks;
To do without, take tosses, and obey.
Rare patience roots in these, and, these away,
Nowhere. Natural heart's ivy, Patience masks
Our ruins of wrecked past purpose. There she basks
Purple eyes and seas of liquid leaves all day.

We hear our hearts grate on themselves: it kills
To bruise them dearer. Yet the rebellious wills
Of us we do bid God bend to him even so.
And where is he who more and more distils
Delicious kindness?—He is patient. Patience fills
His crisp combs, and that comes those ways we know.

## *"My own heart let me more have pity on; let"*

My own heart let me more have pity on; let
Me live to my sad self hereafter kind,
Charitable; not live this tormented mind
With this tormented mind tormenting yet.
I cast for comfort I can no more get
By groping round my comfortless, than blind
Eyes in their dark can day or thirst can find
Thirst's all-in-all in all a world of wet.

Soul, self; come, poor Jackself, I do advise
You, jaded, let be; call off thoughts awhile
Elsewhere; leave comfort root-room; let joy size
At God knows when to God knows what; whose smile
's not wrung, see you; unforeseen times rather—as skies
Betweenpie mountains—lights a lovely mile.

## *That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection*

Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows ' flaunt forth, then chevy on an air-
built thoroughfare: heaven-roysterers, in gay-gangs ' they throng; they glitter in marches.
Down roughcast, down dazzling whitewash, ' wherever an elm arches,
Shivelights and shadowtackle in long ' lashes lace, lance, and pair.
Delightfully the bright wind boisterous ' ropes, wrestles, beats earth bare
Of yestertempest's creases; ' in pool and rut peel parches
Squandering ooze to squeezed ' dough, crust, dust; stanches, starches
Squadroned masks and manmarks ' treadmire toil there
Footfretted in it. Million-fuelèd, ' nature's bonfire burns on.
But quench her bonniest, dearest ' to her, her clearest-selvèd spark

Man, how fast his firedint, | his mark on mind, is gone!
Both are in an unfathomable, all is in an enormous dark
Drowned. O pity and indig | nation! Manshape, that shone
Sheer off, disseveral, a star, | death blots black out; nor mark
Is any of him at all so stark
But vastness blurs and time | beats level. Enough! the Resurrection,
A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, | joyless days, dejection.
Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam. | Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; | world's wildfire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

*Heaven-Haven*

1. For the moment, disregard the poem's title and italicized explanatory line, and consider the poem's **literal** statements (see Glossary, p. 101). What qualities (for example, beauty, excitement, security) characterize the place sought by the speaker? What does each of lines 2–4 and 6–8 contribute to the picture of this ideal physical setting?
2. Now consider the poem in light of its title. Each literal statement about the physical aspects of a place (fields with a few lilies, gentle weather, and reliable water supply, or a safe, quiet harbor, unaffected by the storms and currents of open ocean) apparently now must be taken as a **metaphor** (see Glossary, p. 101). Explain how each literal statement about a physical setting in lines 2–4 and 6–8 could be considered a metaphorical statement about heaven.
3. Now consider the italicized explanatory line, "A Nun Takes the Veil." Can the poem be read as a statement about the kind of life the nun expects to lead on earth, not merely in heaven? Account for each statement in line 2–4 and 6–8 in that light.
4. It appears that the poem can be read as a literal description of a safe and quiet physical setting, as a metaphorical description of

heaven, and as a metaphorical description of a nun's earthly environment. The statements about heaven and about the nun's life would certainly have been easier to understand had they been made literally rather than metaphorically. Why then would any poet deliberately make **ambiguous** statements (Glossary, p. 99)? Give some examples of ambiguity used in ordinary language, such as in jokes, slang, or advertising.

## *The Habit of Perfection*

1. Each of the first four stanzas is based upon a **paradox** (Glossary, p. 101). In the first stanza, for instance, Silence is audible. Identify the other paradoxes in these stanzas.
2. In the second stanza, *shut* seems to be a noun. What other oddities of language do you find in this poem? In using language in new ways, do you think poets damage the language or extend its usefulness?
3. This poem requires some knowledge of traditional Christian belief and of Roman Catholic worship. For example, in stanza 6, the "golden street" of heaven comes from Revelation 21:21, and the lines "unhouse and house the Lord" refer to a part of the Roman Catholic service of worship. Notice the other scriptural **allusions** (Glossary, p. 99), such as that in the last two lines of the poem (Matthew 6:28–9). Recognizing the religious references seems necessary to a full understanding of the poem; but to what extent is it necessary that a reader actually share the poet's religious views in order to respond to the poem?
4. Stanzas 2 and 3 seem to distinguish between physical sound and light on the one hand and some kind of nonphysical sound and light on the other. Explain the distinction, and show how this contrast between the physical and the nonphysical appears in some form in each stanza.
5. Stanza 6 might be paraphrased as follows: "O my hands that enjoy the feel of primroses, you shall be permitted to touch the consecrated vessel containing the embodiment of the Lord when, during the service of worship, you take it from and return it to the altar's tabernacle; and you, my feet, that would like the yielding feeling of plush-like grass beneath you, you shall have the pleasure some day of walking the golden streets of heaven." This paraphrase, you would probably agree, is much clearer than the original stanza; in what ways, however, is the original more interesting than this paraphrase?
6. In stanza 5, notice the many *s*, *st*, and *sh* sounds. (Look up **consonance** and **alliteration** in the Glossary, page 99.) Don't overlook

those occurring in the middle of words or those spelled differently, such as the first sound in *censers*. Show how the poet uses these repeated sounds to tie together related words. Do the same with the *st* sounds in stanza 4.

7. In the title, the word *habit* might mean "accustomed pattern" or "costume" (as a monk's habit). Show how both meanings are relevant to this poem. Show especially how the last stanza is related to the title.

## *God's Grandeur*

1. How is the statement made in the last six lines logically related to that made in the first eight?
2. In a discussion of this poem, Hopkins explained that light glinting from shaken gold foil resembles lightning. How does this information help account for the words *charged, flame out,* and *shining*? Also explain the comparison in the opening lines of the poem between God's grandeur and "the ooze of oil/Crushed."
3. How does the repetition of the phrase *have trod* function in the poem? What purpose is served by the similar-sounding words *seared, bleared,* and *smeared*? (Look up **assonance** in the Glossary, p. 99.) How does the repeated *sm* sound in "wears man's" and in "shares man's.") How do the *l* sounds in lines 6–8 tie significant words together?
4. The last four lines say that though black night is a part of life so is bright morning. How is that statement related to those made in the first stanza about the way man has dirtied up the physical world?
5. The last few lines further explain that what makes the morning follow the night is the Holy Ghost's watching over the world. How does the comparison of the Holy Ghost to a bird (*broods, warm breast, wings*) convey the idea of watchfulness, tender care, and dependability?
6. Evidently the bird-figure reveals its bright wings suddenly. Relate the idea of suddenness to the words *springs* (line 12) and *ah!* (line 16). Also show how this idea of suddenness ties the last few lines of the poem to the lightning imagery of the poem's first few lines.

## *The Starlight Night*

1. The first eight lines (octave) of this **sonnet** (see Glossary, p. 101) make several comparisons to the stars; explain each. ("Delves" are

pits or mines; line 6 refers to trees—especially abeles, or poplars—that suddenly show the white undersides of leaves when the wind blows.) The last five lines concentrate on a single class of images, those drawn from farming. How does line 7 tie the octave and the sestet together?

2. Explain lines 8 and 9. (*What?* probably has the sense of "With what shall I buy or bid?").
3. The two sentences beginning at line 12 could be paraphrased "The stars are the barn, within which are housed the shocks or sheaves of grain. This fence ('paling'), that is bright in some places, encloses the home of Christ, his mother, and all the saints ('hallows')." How does this imagery of barn, harvest, and safe home pull together the earlier images of fire-folk, citadels, feathers fluttering when chickens are afraid, orchard boughs, and meal?
4. Which statements end with exclamation marks? Which do not? How can you account for the differences?

## *Spring*

1. In the octave, spring is literally a season of the year, characterized by all the beauty, freshness, and richness described in those lines. In the sestet, spring is metaphorically both a time in man's history—the time of Eden—and a part of any person's life—his youth. Point out some of the relationships among these literal and metaphorical concepts of spring.
2. In the sestet, a second metaphor is developed, that of juice or wine that is once clear and sweet but later cloying, cloudy, and sour. Give a literal explanation of that metaphor.
3. Notice the rhyme words of the sestet: *joy, cloy, boy* and *beginning, sinning, winning*. How do these rhyme words emphasize important and related ideas?
4. The last sentence is about as syntactically complicated as any in Hopkins' poetry. Restate it in normal word order.
5. The last sentence ingeniously ties together related words by means of repeated vowel or consonant sounds. Among the many relationships are these: *get-it; cloy-cloud-Christ; lord-sour; sour-sinning; sinning-innocent-in-winning; mind-Mayday-most-maid's; day-boy; child-choice; child-thy; thy-worthy; worthy-winning*. Identify each of these relationships as assonance, consonance, or alliteration. In light of this ingenious and highly purposeful progression of sounds within the sentence, does the momentary confusion caused by the unusual word order in the last sentence (see question 4) seem justified? Explain.

*The Sea and the Skylark*

1. Hopkins explained that he thought of the lark's song, in lines 5–8, as falling from the sky toward earth, not vertically but "tricklingly or wavingly," as a skein of silk might unwind, or as a fishing line might unwind from a reel or winch. The lark's song is ever fresh, ever new, hence "rash-fresh re-winded new-skeined"; and the song of the lark, unwinding from its skein or winch, could be visualized as a musical score. How is a circular, downward movement used again later in the poem?
2. What aspects of the "two noises"—that of the sea and that of the lark—"shame" the town and "ring out" our time?
3. In the last line, "man's first slime" probably refers to the idea that the human species evolved millions of years ago from a primitive form of life in the sea and the slime near the seashore. "Man's last dust" may refer to the biblical account of man's creation from a handful of dust as well as to the familiar idea (echoed in Christian burial services) that man not only comes from dust but returns to it after death (see Genesis 3:19). How is it, in the last two lines, that man is moving toward both the "last dust" and the "first slime"?
4. Show how the rhyme words are otherwise related.

*The Windhover*

1. The windhover or kestrel, a falcon, is described as "morning's minion" and "kingdom of daylight's dauphin" (heir to the throne). Explain each of these metaphors.
2. The falcon, drawn by or toward the dappled dawn, is "caught" or observed in his "riding/Of the rolling level underneath him steady air." How does the long string of words modifying *air* give the reader some sense of what it might feel like to be a falcon hovering in the wind?
3. To ring upon a rein (line 4) is to move about a fixed point, as a horse might describe a circle whose radius is a rein held by a trainer. *Wimpling* means "rippling" or "wandering" like a stream. The next simile comes from figure skating. How do all these figures of speech convey not only what the windhover's flight looks like to an observer but also what it might feel like?
4. The word *Buckle!* in line 10 has many meanings that might apply here: among them are (a) "fasten"; (b) "crumple"; (c) "prepare for action vigorously," as in "to buckle down." Show how each of these meanings might apply.
5. The "chevalier" (horseman, nobleman) in line 11 presumably is both

the windhover and Christ. (See the dedication line.) Explain how a devout Christian, especially a priest in a Roman Catholic order organized along military lines, might see each of the windhover's actions and characteristics as equally applicable to Christ.

6. The last three lines pick up the fire metaphor of line 10. Lines 12 and 13 refer to the way in which freshly plowed soil ("plough down sillion") shines, and lines 13 and 14 point out that burning coals, which are "blue-bleak" when covered by ashes, suddenly turn "gold-vermilion" when they fall and shake off their ashes. Thus the sillion and the embers, both dull, ordinary objects, suddenly become brilliant when overturned or slashed. How is that change like the sudden sweep of the windhover after it has been hovering nearly motionless? How is that change related to the idea of Christ as chevalier or knight? How is it related to the sudden stirring of the speaker's heart (line 7) at the sight of the bird?
7. Considering your answers to question 6, what is being said metaphorically about the change that Christian faith can make in a believer's otherwise dull, gray, ordinary life?
8. If we as readers happen not to be Christians, to what extent can we nevertheless respond to this poem?

### *Pied Beauty*

1. The first six lines list many "dappled things," that is, things either two-colored or in some other way made up of contrasting elements; explain how each thing mentioned is "dappled." ("Brinded" is brindled, or streaked.)
2. The second stanza extends the contrasting elements to movements, tastes, and behaviors. For each, give an example from your own experience.
3. The last line and a half asserts that the being that creates (*fathers-forth* means "sends forth as a father might bring up a child") all this changing beauty is himself unchanging. How is that idea related to the parenthetical "who knows how?" of line 8?
4. Point out some examples of alliteration and explain the logical relationships among the words thus connected.

### *Hurrahing in Harvest*

1. In the first stanza, our attention is drawn first to the stooks (shocks or bundles of grain) and then to the autumn skies. How is the idea of harvest, suggested by the stooks, also conveyed by the skies? ("Meal-drift" is drifted meal or ground grain.)

2. In line 6, we look up at the skies, but the effect is as if we were looking down at a harvest field, from which we "glean our Saviour." To glean is literally to pick up the grains that the harvesters failed to collect and metaphorically to pick up information bit by bit. Which meaning of *glean* operates here? Do both? Explain. And how does gleaning suggest a Christian interpretation of the harvest scene?
3. Stanza 2 introduces another note—the response to a lover's greeting. (In line 8, *rounder* means both "more curved" and "more outspoken or direct," as in a round answer.) Which words and phrases in lines 7–10 suggest either human or animal strength or sweetness or physical beauty?
4. In lines 10 and 11, "but the beholder/Wanting" could be paraphrased "lacking only the beholder." When the beholder and "these things" once meet, the beholder is swept off his feet; or, here, the world is hurled out from under his feet. How is that idea related to his (our Saviour's) "world-wielding shoulder"? to the lover's response (question 3 above)? to the idea in stanza 2 that up and down are interchanged (question 2)?

### *The Caged Skylark*

1. This sonnet makes an extended comparison between a caged skylark and man's spirit. In stanza 1, what are the points of comparison? (*Scanted* means "inadequately provided for." *Bone-house,* a modernization of an Old English poetical expression, is the skeleton or the body. *Fells* refers to upland pastures or wastelands.)
2. In stanzas 2 and 3, what are the points of comparison between the caged skylark and man's spirit?
3. The last line of the sonnet refers to the Christian idea that, after death, man's spirit will be rejoined with his body; and the body will be flawless; line 12 also suggests that idea. "But uncumbered" (unencumbered) in line 13 suggests that, in heaven, the body will house the spirit but will not cage it as in the earthly life of stanzas 1 and 2. How is that new freedom of man's spirit related to the statements about the skylark in stanza 3?
4. The last stanza introduces a new figure: the rainbow touching ("footing it") but not distressing the meadow. How is the relationship between rainbow and meadow like the relationship between spirit and body? How does stanza 3 provide a transition between the skylark comparison and the rainbow comparison?
5. Genesis 9:13 tells how, after the flood that destroyed all living things except for those in Noah's ark, God declared that the rainbow would thenceforth symbolize God's promise not to allow all life to be destroyed in another such flood. By extension, the rainbow sym-

bolizes man's promised life after death. In this poem, how does the allusion to the rainbow reinforce the poem's statements about the relationship between body and spirit?

### *Spring and Fall: To a Young Child*

1. *Goldengrove* is a grove of trees whose leaves are falling ("unleaving"). Line 6 may be paraphrased, "Though all the trees in the world may lose their leaves one by one" (*leafmeal*, analogous to *piecemeal*; also that the leaves disintegrate into powder or meal). Lines 10–15 may be paraphrased, "It does not matter what name you call sorrow by—the source of all sorrows is the same. The source of all sorrows is perceived emotionally and spiritually (heart and ghost or spirit), not verbally or intellectually (mouth and mind): both man and tree must die." In this extended comparison, explain how the words *fresh* (line 4), *springs* (line 11), and *blight* (line 14) apply to both Margaret and the trees. In the same way, account for the title.
2. Explain the relationships among the rhyme words.
3. Point out several examples of alliteration used to tie together related words.

### *"As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame"*

1. The general sense of the octave is that each thing in the world expresses its own individuality and that the world would be incomplete without everything in it. Thus stones express their inner nature when they strike the bottoms of wells; likewise, each plucked ("tucked") string expresses itself alone, and the sound of each bell is unique. Each mortal thing "deals out that being" that dwells inside it—each mortal thing characterizes itself (*selves* here is a verb) and says, "I express myself in what I do, and my purpose in existing is to do what I do." Such an idea addresses itself to the reader's intellect; but how does the poet also involve the reader's physical senses? Give specific examples.
2. The sestet takes the idea a step further. A man not only embodies a certain characteristic, such as justice or grace; he preserves and "deals out" that characteristic. Thus the just man "justices" (as a dancer dances or a swimmer swims); and he not only "keeps" grace, but by making grace be the organizing principle of all his activities ("keeps all his goings"), he "graces." Christ, in the poet's view, sums up and best exemplifies all aspects of nature, as well as all abstract characteristics such as justice and virtue. In that sense, Christ *is* the whole world. But from another point of view, the world is made up of things and men; they, then, in some sense must *be* Christ (things

equal to the same thing are equal to each other). Explain, in that light, lines 11–14.

*Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*

1. This difficult poem, which Hopkins called the longest sonnet ever written, depicts evening changing into night. In that process, all colors vanish, leaving only black and white. This reduction of complexity to stark, simple opposites—"black, white; right, wrong"—is like the situation each man will find himself in on the day of judgment. Then, the poem suggests, there will be no shadows, no shades of gray, no dappled patches of light; instead, the judgment will be sharp and clear, the choice will be between only two alternatives. Show how colors and mixtures of various kinds in the poem are gradually replaced by harsh, clear opposites.
2. In line 2, how is night at once womb, home, and tomb?
3. Explain how we move in line 6 from a description of night to a statement about the self when it is most intensely itself ("steeped" in itself and "pashed" or squeezed, as one might squeeze tea leaves).
4. In line 7, the heart tells the truth ("rounds me right") in seeing a comparison between night and our own fate. It is "Our tale, O our oracle!" What words in lines 9 and 10 convey the idea of harshness and hardness?
5. Lines 10–12 introduce two new figures. In one, life toward its end is compared to fleeces of wool, all stained and streaked in a variety of patterns, being wound onto only two spools, presumably each a different color. In the other, life toward its end is compared to a division of flocks into only two sheepfolds, one for black and one for white. What stories from pagan mythology or from the Bible are suggested by these figures? How are those stories relevant to this poem?
6. In lines 13–14, we are told to remember always that eventually our lives will be judged and that only two judgments are possible. In that world, of which we should be "ware," no compromises, uncertainties, or second chances will be possible. Then each person, thinking back over his life and realizing how often he disregarded the fact of this final judgment, will be stretched, so to speak, upon a mental and spiritual torture rack. Explain the last line, paying special attention to *selfwrung* and *selfstrung*.
7. The sibyl, in ancient mythology, was an oracle, a priestess who could foretell the future. Show how these elements in the title are developed within the poem: (a) pagan belief, (b) foretelling the future, (c) leaves.
8. This astonishing poem exploits nearly all the resources of language.

Point out some passages in which alliteration, assonance, consonance, and rhyme contribute to the poem's meaning. (Check these terms in the Glossary.)

9. The vertical marks in each line indicate pauses. Explain how the pauses and the extremely long lines set up a rhythm and establish a pace that are appropriate to the poem's meaning.

### *"I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day"*

1. In the octave of this sonnet, the speaker awakens when day has not yet come. That is literal. Lines 5–8, however, make the darkness metaphorical. Explain.
2. Paraphrase lines 9–11. How are they related to the ideas expressed in the octave?
3. Explain the metaphor of yeast and dough in line 12. Evidently "selfyeast" is the wrong kind of yeast to use. What better kind of yeast is implied?
4. Paraphrase what is said about the damned ("the lost") in the last sentence. How is that sentence related to the ideas in lines 9–11?

### *"Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend"*

1. The Latin epigraph, which is translated in the sonnet's first three lines, comes from Jeremiah 12:1. Show how the rest of the poem restates the questions asked in lines 3 and 4.
2. In line 9, an extended comparison between the speaker and nature begins. Explain it. "Fretty chervil" is a carrot-like plant with jagged leaves.)
3. How does the metaphorical statement in the last line relate the speaker to the rest of nature?
4. You may have noticed that Hopkins divides some of his sonnets into an octave and a sestet, others into two four-line stanzas (quatrains) and two three-line stanzas (tercets), and still others into two quatrains and a sestet. Presumably the form chosen reflects the logic of the poem. In this sonnet, how does the form reflect the logic?

## ASSIGNMENTS FOR WRITING

1. In many of his poems, Hopkins presents religious and philosophical concepts which ordinarily we would deal with with our minds. However, Hopkins always manages to get not only our minds involved

but also our emotions and our physical senses. In an essay, point out some of the ways in which Hopkins manages to do this, and give specific examples.

2. Hopkins' poems are often difficult to understand on first reading, chiefly because he uses unfamiliar words, or uses familiar words in unusual ways (nouns as verbs, for example), or rearranges the normal word order in his sentences. Yet, on closer inspection, we see that such oddities of language are really necessary to the poem's effect. In an essay, cite several characteristic oddities in Hopkins' language, and explain what useful purposes they serve. Give examples.
3. You have observed how carefully organized Hopkins' poems are. The various parts of the poem are tied together by means of rhyme, assonance, consonance, alliteration, stanza form, extended metaphor, and imagery. Choose any one of Hopkins' poems, and point out in an essay all the ways in which the various elements of the poem are tied together.

# A. E. Housman

Alfred Edward Housman (1859–1936) is a minor poet both because he produced only a hundred or so poems and because his range of themes and styles was limited. "Minor" does not necessarily mean "inferior," however; within his limitations, Housman is a skillful and subtle poet. His themes are thwarted love, betrayal, defeat. Death comes as a welcome deliverance from a life that, if prolonged, brings only misery and dishonor. All this unhappiness is set against a physical universe whose great beauty is the more poignant because it is accidental and purposeless. In such a world, the wise man stoically trains "for ill and not for good."

Like Hardy, Housman lost his Christian faith early and turned first to a new paganism and then to atheism. After winning a scholarship to Oxford, he astonished everyone by failing the examination for his degree. Some scholars trace the pessimism and morbidity in Housman's poems to that early failure. He studied the classics independently, published learned articles, and eventually was honored by Cambridge University with a professorship in Latin literature.

Housman admired and imitated the lean, compressed, understated classical poetry that he studied so carefully. His own poems are usually short and always clear. The many monosyllables and the skillful use of old-fashioned, forceful, plain English give his verse a quiet but impressive simplicity. Nearly every poem is ironical.

If the intellectual content of Housman's poetry is not very considerable, that is because Housman thought poetry more emotional than intellectual. In *The Name and Nature of Poetry,* he developed that idea and cited some great English poems containing ideas that remained almost totally inaccessible. Knowledge, Housman thought, is an end in itself, a civilized game played in a meaningless

universe. Whereas the middle-class mind regards knowledge as a means to some end, Housman saw it as supremely useless and therefore interesting, like chess or crossword puzzles. For his chief scholarly work, Housman chose to edit the writings of an obscure and relatively untalented Latin poet. In thinking that a man's activities have only such importance as he himself assigns to them, and in contemptuously disregarding the values of middle-class society, Housman was very much in agreement with the artists of his time.

## *"Loveliest of trees, the cherry now"*

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

## *"Farewell to barn and stack and tree"*

"Farewell to barn and stack and tree,
    Farewell to Severn shore.
Terence, look your last at me,
    For I come home no more.

"The sun burns on the half-mown hill,
    By now the blood is dried;
And Maurice amongst the hay lies still
    And my knife is in his side.

"My mother thinks us long away;
    'Tis time the field were mown.
She had two sons at rising day,
    To-night she'll be alone.

"And here's a bloody hand to shake,
    And oh, man, here's good-bye;
We'll sweat no more on scythe and rake,
    My bloody hands and I.

"I wish you strength to bring you pride,
    And a love to keep you clean,
And I wish you luck, come Lammastide,
    At racing on the green.

"Long for me the rick will wait,
And long will wait the fold,
And long will stand the empty plate,
And dinner will be cold."

## *"Others, I am not the first"*

Others, I am not the first,
Have willed more mischief than they durst:
If in the breathless night I too
Shiver now, 'tis nothing new.

More than I, if truth were told,
Have stood and sweated hot and cold,
And through their reins in ice and fire
Fear contended with desire.

Agued once like me were they,
But I like them shall win my way
Lastly to the bed of mould
Where there's neither heat nor cold.

But from my grave across my brow
Plays no wind of healing now,
And fire and ice within me fight
Beneath the suffocating night.

## *"On the idle hill of summer"*

On the idle hill of summer,
Sleepy with the flow of streams,
Far I hear the steady drummer
Drumming like a noise in dreams.

Far and near and low and louder
On the roads of earth go by,
Dear to friends and food for powder,
Soldiers marching, all to die.

East and west on fields forgotten
Bleach the bones of comrades slain,
Lovely lads and dead and rotten;
None that go return again.

Far the calling bugles hollo,
    High the screaming fife replies,
Gay the files of scarlet follow:
    Woman bore me, I will rise.

## *"Shot? so quick, so clean an ending?"*

Shot? so quick, so clean an ending?
    Oh that was right, lad, that was brave:
Yours was not an ill for mending,
    'Twas best to take it to the grave.

Oh you had forethought, you could reason,
    And saw your road and where it led,
And early wise and brave in season
    Put the pistol to your head.

Oh soon, and better so than later
    After long disgrace and scorn,
You shot dead the household traitor,
    The soul that should not have been born.

Right you guessed the rising morrow
    And scorned to tread the mire you must:
Dust's your wages, sŏn of sorrow,
    But men may come to worse than dust.

Souls undone, undoing others,—
    Long time since the tale began.
You would not live to wrong your brothers:
    Oh lad, you died as fits a man.

Now to your grave shall friend and stranger
    With ruth and some with envy come:
Undishonoured, clear of danger,
    Clean of guilt, pass hence and home.

Turn safe to rest, no dreams, no waking;
    And here, man, here's the wreath I've made:
'Tis not a gift that's worth the taking,
    But wear it and it will not fade.

## *"With rue my heart is laden"*

With rue my heart is laden
    For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
    And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
    The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
    In fields where roses fade.

## *"Now hollow fires burn out to black"*

Now hollow fires burn out to black,
    And lights are guttering low:
Square your shoulders, lift your pack,
    And leave your friends and go.

Oh, never fear, man; nought's to dread;
    Look not left nor right:
In all the endless road you tread
    There's nothing but the night.

## *"Terence, this is stupid stuff"*

'Terence, this is stupid stuff:
You eat your victuals fast enough;
There can't be much amiss, 'tis clear,
To see the rate you drink your beer.
But oh, good Lord, the verse you make,
It gives a chap the belly-ache.
The cow, the old cow, she is dead;
It sleeps well, the horned head:
We poor lads, 'tis our turn now
To hear such tunes as killed the cow.

Pretty friendship 'tis to rhyme
Your friends to death before their time
Moping melancholy mad:
Come, pipe a tune to dance to, lad.'

Why, if 'tis dancing you would be,
There's brisker pipes than poetry.
Say, for what were hop-yards meant,
Or why was Burton built on Trent?
Oh many a peer of England brews
Livelier liquor than the Muse,
And malt does more than Milton can
To justify God's ways to man.
Ale, man, ale's the stuff to drink
For fellows whom it hurts to think:
Look into the pewter pot
To see the world as the world's not.
And faith, 'tis pleasant till 'tis past:
The mischief is that 'twill not last.
Oh I have been to Ludlow fair
And left my necktie God knows where,
And carried half-way home, or near,
Pints and quarts of Ludlow beer:
Then the world seemed none so bad,
And I myself a sterling lad;
And down in lovely muck I've lain,
Happy till I woke again.
Then I saw the morning sky:
Heigho, the tale was all a lie;
The world, it was the old world yet,
I was I, my things were wet,
And nothing now remained to do
But begin the game anew.

Therefore, since the world has still
Much good, but much less good than ill,
And while the sun and moon endure
Luck's a chance, but trouble's sure,
I'd face it as a wise man would,
And train for ill and not for good.
'This true, the stuff I bring for sale
Is not so brisk a brew as ale:
Out of a stem that scored the hand
I wrung it in a weary land.

But take it: if the smack is sour,
The better for the embittered hour;
It should do good to heart and head
When your soul is in my soul's stead;
And I will friend you, if I may,
In the dark and cloudy day.

There was a king reigned in the East:
There, when kings will sit to feast,
They get their fill before they think
With poisoned meat and poisoned drink.
He gathered all that springs to birth
From the many-venomed earth;
First a little, thence to more,
He sampled all her killing store;
And easy, smiling, seasoned sound,
Sate the king when healths went round.
They put arsenic in his meat
And stared aghast to watch him eat;
They poured strychnine in his cup
And shook to see him drink it up:
They shook, they stared as white's their shirt:
Them it was their poison hurt.
—I tell the tale that I heard told.
Mithridates, he died old.

## *"The laws of God, the laws of man"*

The laws of God, the laws of man,
He may keep that will and can;
Not I: let God and man decree
Laws for themselves and not for me;
And if my ways are not as theirs
Let them mind their own affairs.
Their deeds I judge and much condemn,
Yet when did I make laws for them?
Please yourselves, say I, and they
Need only look the other way.
But no, they will not; they must still
Wrest their neighbour to their will,
And make me dance as they desire

With jail and gallows and hell-fire.
And how am I to face the odds
Of man's bedevilment and God's?
I, a stranger and afraid
In a world I never made.
They will be master, right or wrong;
Though both are foolish, both are strong.
And since, my soul, we cannot fly
To Saturn nor to Mercury,
Keep we must, if keep we can,
These foreign laws of God and man.

## *Eight O'Clock*

He stood, and heard the steeple
    Sprinkle the quarters on the morning town.
One, two, three, four, to market-place and people
    It tossed them down.

Strapped, noosed, nighing his hour,
    He stood and counted them and cursed his luck;
And then the clock collected in the tower
    Its strength, and struck.

## *"Here dead lie we because we did not choose"*

Here dead lie we because we did not choose
    To live and shame the land from which we sprung.
Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose;
    But young men think it is, and we were young.

## *"When I was one-and-twenty"*

When I was one-and-twenty
    I heard a wise man say,
'Give crowns and pounds and guineas
    But not your heart away;

Give pearls away and rubies
    But keep your fancy free.'
But I was one-and-twenty,
    No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
    I heard him say again,
'The heart out of the bosom
    Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
    And sold for endless rue.'
And I am two-and-twenty,
    And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

## *"Into my heart an air that kills"*

Into my heart an air that kills
    From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
    What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
    I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
    And cannot come again.

## *"The chestnut casts his flambeaux, and the flowers"*

The chestnut casts his flambeaux, and the flowers
    Stream from the hawthorn on the wind away,
The doors clap to, the pane is blind with showers.
    Pass me the can, lad; there's an end of May.

There's one spoilt spring to scant our mortal lot,
    One season ruined of our little store.
May will be fine next year as like as not:
    Oh ay, but then we shall be twenty-four.

We for a certainty are not the first
    Have sat in taverns while the tempest hurled
Their hopeful plans to emptiness, and cursed
    Whatever brute and blackguard made the world.

It is in truth iniquity on high
    To cheat our sentenced souls of aught they crave,
And mar the merriment as you and I
    Fare on our long fool's-errand to the grave.

Iniquity it is; but pass the can.
    My lad, no pair of kings our mothers bore;
Our only portion is the estate of man:
    We want the moon, but we shall get no more.

If here to-day the cloud of thunder lours
    To-morrow it will hie on far behests;
The flesh will grieve on other bones than ours
    Soon, and the soul will mourn in other breasts.

The troubles of our proud and angry dust
    Are from eternity, and shall not fail.
Bear them we can, and if we can we must.
    Shoulder the sky, my lad, and drink your ale.

## *"In the morning, in the morning"*

In the morning, in the morning,
    In the happy field of hay,
Oh they looked at one another
    By the light of day.

In the blue and silver morning
    On the haycock as they lay,
Oh they looked at one another
    And they looked away.

## *"Now dreary dawns the eastern light"*

Now dreary dawns the eastern light,
    And fall of eve is drear,
And cold the poor man lies at night,
    And so goes out the year.

Little is the luck I've had,
    And oh, 'tis comfort small
To think that many another lad
    Has had no luck at all.

## *"Stars, I have seen them fall"*

Stars, I have seen them fall,
    But when they drop and die
No star is lost at all
    From all the star-sown sky.
The toil of all that be
    Helps not the primal fault;
It rains into the sea,
    And still the sea is salt.

## *"To stand up straight and tread the turning mill"*

To stand up straight and tread the turning mill,
To lie flat and know nothing and be still,
Are the two trades of man; and which is worse
I know not, but I know that both are ill.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

*"Loveliest of trees, the cherry now"*

1. Summarize the poem's statement about the beauty of the physical world and about the brevity of human life. To what extent is the poem's statement implied in the first two lines, if the word *now* is emphasized?
2. *Eastertide* in line 4 introduces a Christian note, and line 5 alludes to Psalm 90. Does the rest of the poem suggest that man's earthly life will be followed by some sort of afterlife, or does it suggest that this life is the only one man has? Explain.

*"Farewell to barn and stack and tree"*

1. Terence, in this poem and in "Terence, this is stupid stuff," is Terence Hearsay, a pseudonym for the poet. Evidently the speaker is quoting someone else. Who is being quoted? How is the quoted speaker related to Maurice?
2. Stanza 4 presents images of both sight and touch. How do the handshake, the bloody hand, and the sweat all help the reader not only to understand the situation but also to experience it with his physical senses?
3. The last two stanzas give many details of rural life and the concerns of young men: strength, love, racing. How do these details, like those in question 2, make the situation vivid? To whom would the details of the last two lines gradually bring the realization that something terrible has happened?
4. In the last stanza, the rick and the fold are associated respectively with agriculture and sheepherding. In the poem, a man kills his brother and becomes a wanderer. Of what biblical story is this poem an echo? Some details of this poem are different from those in the biblical story, perhaps implying that the events of that tragic story recur in human history; explain.
5. "Lammastide," line 19, is the time around August 1 when bread made from the first of the newly ripened grain is consecrated. In view of this poem's events, how is the mention of Lammastide here ironical? (Check the Glossary, p. 100, for a definition of *irony*.)

*"Others, I am not the first"*

1. "Reins," line 7, are kidneys or loins; generally, the location of animal feelings like fear or desire, as distinguished from mental awareness. *Agued*, line 9, literally means "afflicted with ague," an illness marked by chills and fever; figuratively, it means "alternately feverish and cold." "The bed of mould," line 11, is the grave. Lines 13 and 14 refer to an old belief that a sudden cool breeze across one's face has first blown across the place where one will eventually be buried. In this poem, point out all the uses of hot and cold; of difficulty in breathing; of illness and cure.
2. A key word is *healing*, line 14. Explain it. Is it used literally or ironically?

*"On the idle hill of summer"*

1. Trace the pattern of sleep, dreams, and rising.
2. Show how the rhyme words are related to one another.

3. This poem uses assonance, consonance, and alliteration especially effectively. Point out some examples.
4. In the last line, "Woman bore me" means "I am no different from anybody else." How is it that the speaker, after explaining how stupid and pointless war is, nevertheless expects to join the army? ("Files of scarlet," refers to redcoats, British soldiers.)

*"Shot? so quick, so clean an ending?"*

1. For what is the speaker praising the lad he is addressing?
2. Stanza 4 skillfully uses assonance, consonance, and alliteration to tie related words together. Point out some examples.
3. Stanza 4 alludes to Genesis 3:19, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." That allusion might suggest a traditional Judeo-Christian framework, including the idea of a life after death. To what extent are the statements in the last stanza compatible with that idea?
4. Running through this poem is an implied comparison between a man's life and a journey along roads ending in rest at home. Point out the details of this comparison.

*"With rue my heart is laden"*

1. Stanza 2 states what stanza 1 implies: that the lads and maidens are now dead. Some additional meanings, however, are implied. Since real roses fade (line 8), what could we assume would have happened to the beauty of the "rose-lipt girls" had they not died? Similarly, what do we conclude about the death of the lads when we realize that the brooks are "too broad for leaping"?
2. Would this poem have been more effective had it been longer? Explain.

*"Now hollow fires burn out to black"*

1. How do the images in the first two lines relate to the statements in the second stanza?
2. Show how assonance, consonance, alliteration, and rhyme add to this poem's meaning.

*"Terence, this is stupid stuff"*

1. Notice that the first 14 lines are in quotation marks. Evidently someone is giving his opinion of Terence's poetry. Lines 7 and 8 are

a parody of Terence's poems. The rest of the poem is Terence's defense of his morbid poetry. What, briefly, is his reason for dwelling so on disappointment and death?

2. Lines 17–20 mention Burton-on-Trent, a town known for its many breweries. Some wealthy brewers were given peerages in return for their financial contributions to political parties. Lines 21–22 mention malt, which is used in brewing, and refer to the opening passage of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which the poet set out to "justify the ways of God to men." Explain all these comparisons between ale and poetry. How seriously are they to be taken?
3. The rest of this verse-paragraph explains the usefulness and the limitations of alcohol. Summarize it; pay special attention to lines 23–26. Account for the curious phrase "lovely muck."
4. Lines 43–58 give a more serious explanation of the poet's gloomy poetry. Summarize this section.
5. The last section gives the story of the means by which Mithridates VI, King of Pontus in Asia Minor during the first century B.C., gradually accustomed himself to various poisons, with the result that, despite many attempts to poison him, "he died old." How does that story apply to Terence's poetry?
6. Now go back to the poem's first section and point out how all these seemingly unimportant details are later worked into the poem: stupidity, eating "victuals," drinking "beer," "good Lord," "belly-ache," "death before" one's time, dancing.

### *"The laws of God, the laws of man"*

1. Briefly state the argument made in this poem.
2. Note that the first two lines and the last two lines are much alike. How is that repetition useful?
3. The meter of this poem is quite regular except in line 3, where " Not I" stands out partly because it is so short and partly because both words are accented. Why did the poet choose to make these two words so prominent?

### *Eight O'Clock*

1. "The quarters" in line 2 are quarters of the hour; the clock evidently strikes then. The clock is not a mere fixed object; it seems to actively sprinkle and toss the quarters. In line 8, too, it is the clock that acts. Explain how it is useful to make the clock itself, rather than some human executioner, seem to decide when the condemned man will die.

2. Notice all the *st* sounds: *stood, steeple, tossed.* Also notice the *k* sounds: *sprinkle, counted, collected.* Find other instances of these two sounds. What words do they tie together? What sounds do you hear in the poem's very last word?

### *"Here dead lie we because we did not choose"*

1. Which of the ideas found in other poems by Housman appear in this short poem?
2. Notice that each of the first four words is accented. Why should these particular words be emphasized?
3. Lines 3 and 4 take both a young man's and an old man's view of death. Why is it useful to present both?
4. This poem is in the ancient Greek and Roman tradition of the epitaph: brief, understated, compressed. Housman, a classical scholar and translator, would have known many ancient epitaphs, such as this one by Simonides (556–467 B.C.) on the Lacedaemonians (Spartans) who died defending Thermopylae against a vastly superior force:

   Tell them in Lacedaemon, passer-by,
   That here obedient to their word we lie.

   To what extent does Housman's poetry in general, and this poem in particular, display classical characteristics?

## ASSIGNMENTS FOR WRITING

1. A skillful **parody** (see Glossary, p. 101) of a literary work imitates its subject matter, philosophical attitude, meter, diction, stanza form, etc., in a playful and often mocking way. Housman himself said that the following poem by Hugh Kingsmill was the best parody of his work that he had ever read:

   What, still alive at twenty-two,
   A clean, upstanding chap like you?
   Sure, if your throat is hard to slit,
   Slit your girl's and swing for it.

   Like enough, you won't be glad,
   When they come to hang you, lad.
   But bacon's not the only thing
   That's cured by hanging from a string.

When the blotting-pad of night
  Sucks the latest drop of light,
Lads whose job is still to do
  Shall whet their knives and think of you.

In an essay, point out several ways in which Kingsmill's poem accurately parodies Housman's poems. Carefully examine the various elements (diction, meter, etc.) mentioned in the first sentence of this assignment.

2. Write your own parody of Housman. Keep in mind that your object is not merely to write amusing verse. A skillful parody must be based upon close observation of its original. Be prepared to show on what aspects of Housman's poetry your parody is based.
3. Both Hardy and Housman took a gloomy view of life, but they differed in many ways. In an essay, compare and contrast these two poets and their views. Concentrate on only a few points of similarity or difference so as to have room for developing and illustrating your assertions.
4. Occasionally Housman displayed a certain wry humor. In an essay, give some examples.

# William Butler Yeats

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) is considered by many competent critics to be the greatest poet of his time. His poetry is in itself a literary history of the two centuries his life bridged. The early poetry, which is still most admired by some readers—probably because it is deceptively simple—is in the dreamy, escapist manner of the late nineteenth-century Aesthetic Movement. The later poetry, from about 1914 onward, is harsh, colloquial, frankly erotic, and toughly intellectual.

Like so many artists and intellectuals of the time, Yeats early lost the Christian faith in which he had been reared; the scientists, he complained, had robbed him of his faith without replacing it with anything. Seeking some acceptable new belief, Yeats studied magic, pre-Christian Irish legend, oriental mysticism, spiritualism, and theosophy, a composite of the beliefs common to several major religions. Out of his search came an elaborate private mythological system, part of which he said had been transmitted to him by spirits with the aid of his wife, who wrote while in a state of trance.

To readers who admire Yeats' poetry, all this cultish business of visions, mysterious symbols, and trances is vaguely embarrassing: Yeats obviously was one of the greatest poets ever to write in English, but his ideas are intellectually unacceptable to anyone brought up in the scientific, rational tradition. Yeats seems deliberately ambiguous on this point. At times he seemed to believe literally in his system of spirals and phases of the moon, but at other times he appeared to regard it as merely a rich source of symbols for his poetry. Other poets have used mythological or cosmological systems in which they did not literally believe: Milton used the Ptolemaic concept of the solar system even though he knew it was outmoded; Tennyson drew heavily upon Greek and Roman mythology without believing in it, and Housman alluded

frequently to Christian stories whose claim to truth he had rejected.

Whatever we make of it, we should know a little about the system Yeats constructed. The Christian idea of history could be represented by a straight line, having a beginning and an end yet to come, and every event on that line occurring only once. Yeats' system, in contrast, can be represented in several ways: as a moon that goes through twenty-eight phases and begins over again, as a circle made up of interconnected smaller circles, or as two interpenetrated whirling gyres or cones, with the apex of one at the center of the other's base. Readers interested in the details of this complicated system may want to read Yeats' *A Vision*. But it is sufficient to understand that, in Yeats' system, history moves in cycles of about two thousand years each, the present cycle having begun with the birth of Jesus—we are thus near the end of our era. Each era ends in cataclysm and is replaced by a new era having opposite characteristics. Each individual person, too, goes through a cycle, from pure animality in infancy through intellectual preoccupations in middle life and back to animality in old age.

Another idea, shared with many twentieth-century poets and some psychologists, is that the collective experience of the human race is somehow transmitted to each newborn child, so that each person has not only the memory of his own experiences in life but also a memory of his ancestors' lives back to the most remote ages. This collective or racial memory lies deep within man and emerges into his conscious mind only in the form of symbols to which he responds powerfully without knowing why. The poet or artist, who may well be a biological freak like people with photographic memories or extrasensory perception, somehow preserves better than other men the mental processes that prehistoric man used before the human intellect evolved. And the poet or other artist, also being rational, can create the nonlogical symbolic "language" in which the racial memory "speaks." Responding to such works of art, then, requires that one switch off his intellect and switch on his intuition. Many are unwilling to do that, with the result that some of the greatest and most original art remains incomprehensible to them.

Not all of Yeats' concerns were so strange. He was caught up in politics, which preoccupies the twentieth century as religion did the nineteenth. Yeats had set himself the enormous task of reconstructing Irish life and the Irish view of the world. Ireland, he thought, had not been corrupted by the modern world as the rest of Europe had and therefore offered a hope that a new heroic attitude toward life could be constructed there to supplant the

anonymous, fragmented, nervous existence imposed upon man by the secular industrial state. Seeking suitable models, he investigated pagan Irish legend and wrote poems and plays about Ireland in the remote days of her greatness. But an uprising against the British, civil war, and service in the Irish Free State's senate interrupted his labors to remold the modern consciousness.

Though the world kept crowding in on Yeats, still he persisted in making art triumph over mere reality. He transformed his friends into characters in a vast myth of the modern world. From his early escapist poetry he moved to a tough-minded grappling with harsh fact. He looked directly at the savage modern world, and he looked into the barbarous depths of himself; and he made what he saw into great poetry. Like the great artists of every age, by means of his art he made reality comprehensible to others.

## *Down by the Salley Gardens*

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

## *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes
dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the
cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

## *The Song of Wandering Aengus*

I went out to the hazel wood,
Because a fire was in my head,
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
And hooked a berry to a thread;
And when white moths were on the wing,
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire aflame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And some one called me by my name:
It had become a glimmering girl
With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

## *The Folly of Being Comforted*

One that is ever kind said yesterday:
'Your well-belovèd's hair has threads of gray,
And little shadows come about her eyes;
Time can but make it easier to be wise
Though now it seem impossible, and so
All that you need is patience.'
Heart cries, 'No,
I have not a crumb of comfort, not a grain.
Time can but make her beauty over again:
Because of that great nobleness of hers
The fire that stirs about her, when she stirs,
Burns but more clearly. O she had not these ways
When all the wild summer was in her gaze.'

O heart! O heart! if she'd but turn her head,
You'd know the folly of being comforted.

## *No Second Troy*

Why should I blame her that she filled my days
With misery, or that she would of late
Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways,
Or hurled the little streets upon the great,

Had they but courage equal to desire?
What could have made her peaceful with a mind
That nobleness made simple as a fire,
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern?
Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn?

## *September 1913*

What need you, being come to sense,
But fumble in a greasy till
And add the halfpence to the pence
And prayer to shivering prayer, until
You have dried the marrow from the bone;
For men were born to pray and save:
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet they were of a different kind,
The names that stilled your childish play,
They have gone about the world like wind,
But little time had they to pray
For whom the hangman's rope was spun,
And what, God help us, could they save?
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Was it for this the wild geese spread
The grey wing upon every tide;
For this that all that blood was shed,
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,
All that delirium of the brave?
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet could we turn the years again,
And call those exiles as they were
In all their loneliness and pain,
You'd cry, "Some woman's yellow hair

Has maddened every mother's son":
They weighed so lightly what they gave.
But let them be, they're dead and gone,
They're with O'Leary in the grave.

## *To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing*

Now all the truth is out,
Be secret and take defeat
From any brazen throat,
For how can you compete,
Being honour bred, with one
Who, were it proved he lies,
Were neither shamed in his own
Nor in his neighbours' eyes?
Bred to a harder thing
Than Triumph, turn away
And like a laughing string
Whereon mad fingers play
Amid a place of stone,
Be secret and exult,
Because of all things known
That is most difficult.

## *That the Night Come*

She lived in storm and strife,
Her soul had such desire
For what proud death may bring
That it could not endure
The common good of life,
But lived as 'twere a king
That packed his marriage day
With banneret and pennon,
Trumpet and kettledrum,
And the outrageous cannon,
To bundle time away
That the night come.

## *The Magi*

Now as at all times I can see in the mind's eye,
In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale unsatisfied ones
Appear and disappear in the blue depth of the sky
With all their ancient faces like rain-beaten stones,
And all their helms of silver hovering side by side,
And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to find once more,
Being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied,
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor.

## *The Wild Swans at Coole*

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

## *Lines Written in Dejection*

When have I last looked on
The round green eyes and the long wavering bodies
Of the dark leopards of the moon?
All the wild witches, those most noble ladies,
For all their broom-sticks and their tears,
Their angry tears, are gone.
The holy centaurs of the hills are vanished;
I have nothing but the embittered sun;
Banished heroic mother moon and vanished,
And now that I have come to fifty years
I must endure the timid sun.

## *Easter, 1916*

I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth-century houses.
I have passed with a nod of the head
Or polite meaningless words,
Or have lingered awhile and said
Polite meaningless words,
And thought before I had done
Of a mocking tale or a gibe
To please a companion
Around the fire at the club,
Being certain that they and I
But lived where motley is worn:
All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent
In ignorant good-will,
Her nights in argument
Until her voice grew shrill.
What voice more sweet than hers
When, young and beautiful,
She rode to harriers?
This man had kept a school
And rode our wingèd horse;
This other his helper and friend
Was coming into his force;
He might have won fame in the end,
So sensitive his nature seemed,
So daring and sweet his thought.
This other man I had dreamed
A drunken, vainglorious lout.
He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet I number him in the song;
He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road,
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minute by minute;
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse plashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minute by minute they live;
The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.

O when may it suffice?
That is Heaven's part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last has come
On limbs that had run wild.
What is it but nightfall?
No, no, not night but death;
Was it needless death after all?
For England may keep faith
For all that is done and said.
We know their dream; enough
To know they dreamed and are dead;
And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died?
I write it out in a verse—
MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

## *The Second Coming*

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it

Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?

## *Sailing to Byzantium*

I

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

## *He Reproves the Curlew*

O curlew, cry no more in the air,
Or only to the water in the West;
Because your crying brings to my mind
Passion-dimmed eyes and long heavy hair
That was shaken out over my breast:
There is enough evil in the crying of wind.

## *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

## *Tom O'Roughley*

'Though logic-choppers rule the town,
And every man and maid and boy
Has marked a distant object down,
An aimless joy is a pure joy,'

Or so did Tom O'Roughley say
That saw the surges running by,
'And wisdom is a butterfly
And not a gloomy bird of prey.

'If little planned is little sinned
But little need the grave distress.
What's dying but a second wind?
How but in zig-zag wantonness
Could trumpeter Michael be so brave?'
Or something of that sort he said,
'And if my dearest friend were dead
I'd dance a measure on his grave.'

## *A Prayer for my Daughter*

Once more the storm is howling, and half hid
Under this cradle-hood and coverlid
My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle
But Gregory's wood and one bare hill
Whereby the haystack- and roof-levelling wind,
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;
And for an hour I have walked and prayed
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.

I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
And under the arches of the bridge, and scream
In the elms above the flooded stream;
Imagining in excited reverie
That the future years had come,
Dancing to a frenzied drum,
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

May she be granted beauty and yet not
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,
Or hers before a looking-glass, for such,
Being made beautiful overmuch,
Consider beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness and maybe
The heart-revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never find a friend.

Helen being chosen found life flat and dull
And later had much trouble from a fool,
While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray,
Being fatherless could have her way
Yet chose a bandy-leggèd smith for man.
It's certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat
Whereby the Horn of Plenty is undone.

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;
Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned
By those that are not entirely beautiful;
Yet many, that have played the fool
For beauty's very self, has charm made wise,
And many a poor man that has roved,
Loved and thought himself beloved,
From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.

May she become a flourishing hidden tree
That all her thoughts may like the linnet be,
And have no business but dispensing round
Their magnanimities of sound,
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.
O may she live like some green laurel
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

My mind, because the minds that I have loved,
The sort of beauty that I have approved,
Prosper but little, has dried up of late,
Yet knows that to be choked with hate
May well be of all evil chances chief.
If there's no hatred in a mind
Assault and battery of the wind
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.

An intellectual hatred is the worst,
So let her think opinions are accursed.
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born
Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,
Because of her opinionated mind
Barter that horn and every good
By quiet natures understood
For an old bellows fall of angry wind?

Considering that, all hatred driven hence,
The soul recovers radical innocence
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,
And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will;
She can, though every face should scowl
And every windy quarter howl
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;
For arrogance and hatred are the wares
Peddled in the thoroughfares.
How but in custom and in ceremony
Are innocence and beauty born?
Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

## *An Acre of Grass*

Picture and book remain,
An acre of green grass
For air and exercise,
Now strength of body goes;
Midnight, an old house
Where nothing stirs but a mouse.

My temptation is quiet.
Here at life's end
Neither loose imagination,
Nor the mill of the mind
Consuming its rag and bone,
Can make the truth known.

Grant me an old man's frenzy,
Myself must I remake
Till I am Timon and Lear
Or that William Blake
Who beat upon the wall
Till Truth obeyed his call;

A mind Michael Angelo knew
That can pierce the clouds,
Or inspired by frenzy
Shake the dead in their shrouds;
Forgotten else by mankind,
An old man's eagle mind.

## *Lapis Lazuli*

(*For Harry Clifton*)

I have heard that hysterical women say
They are sick of the palette and fiddle-bow,
Of poets that are always gay,
For everybody knows or else should know
That if nothing drastic is done
Aeroplane and Zeppelin will come out,
Pitch like King Billy bomb-balls in
Until the town lie beaten flat.

All perform their tragic play,
There struts Hamlet, there is Lear,
That's Ophelia, that Cordelia;
Yet they, should the last scene be there,
The great stage curtain about to drop,
If worthy their prominent part in the play,
Do not break up their lines to weep.
They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay;
Gaiety transfiguring all that dread.
All men have aimed at, found and lost;
Black out; Heaven blazing into the head:
Tragedy wrought to its uttermost.
Though Hamlet rambles and Lear rages,
And all the drop-scenes drop at once
Upon a hundred thousand stages,
It cannot grow by an inch or an ounce.

On their own feet they came, or on shipboard,
Camel-back, horse-back, ass-back, mule-back,
Old civilizations put to the sword.
Then they and their wisdom went to rack:
No handiwork of Callimachus,
Who handled marble as if it were bronze,

Made draperies that seemed to rise
When sea-wind swept the corner, stands;
His long lamp-chimney shaped like the stem
Of a slender palm, stood but a day;
All things fall and are built again,
And those that build them again are gay.

Two Chinamen, behind them a third,
Are carved in lapis lazuli,
Over them flies a long-legged bird,
A symbol of longevity;
The third, doubtless a serving-man,
Carries a musical instrument.

Every discoloration of the stone,
Every accidental crack or dent,
Seems a water-course or an avalanche,
Or lofty slope where it still snows
Though doubtless plum or cherry-branch
Sweetens the little half-way house
Those Chinamen climb towards, and I
Delight to imagine them seated there;
There, on the mountain and the sky,
On all the tragic scene they stare.
One asks for mournful melodies;
Accomplished fingers begin to play.
Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes,
Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay.

## *Politics*

*'In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning in political terms.'*—THOMAS MANN

How can I, that girl standing there,
My attention fix
On Roman or on Russian
Or on Spanish politics?
Yet here's a travelled man that knows
What he talks about,
And there's a politician
That has read and thought,

And maybe what they say is true
Of war and war's alarms,
But O that I were young again
And held her in my arms!

## *The Circus Animals' Desertion*

I

I sought a theme and sought for it in vain,
I sought it daily for six weeks or so.
Maybe at last, being but a broken man,
I must be satisfied with my heart, although
Winter and summer till old age began
My circus animals were all on show,
Those stilted boys, that burnished chariot,
Lion and woman and the Lord knows what.

II

What can I but enumerate old themes?
First that sea-rider Oisin led by the nose
Through three enchanted islands, allegorical dreams,
Vain gaiety, vain battle, vain repose,
Themes of the embittered heart, or so it seems,
That might adorn old songs or courtly shows;
But what cared I that set him on to ride,
I, starved for the bosom of his faery bride?

And then a counter-truth filled out its play,
*The Countess Cathleen* was the name I gave it;
She, pity-crazed, had given her soul away,
But masterful Heaven had intervened to save it.
I thought my dear must her own soul destroy,
So did fanaticism and hate enslave it,
And this brought forth a dream and soon enough
This dream itself had all my thought and love.

And when the Fool and Blind Man stole the bread
Cuchulain fought the ungovernable sea;
Heart-mysteries there, and yet when all is said
It was the dream itself enchanted me:

Character isolated by a deed
To engross the present and dominate memory.
Players and painted stage took all my love,
And not those things that they were emblems of.

III

Those masterful images because complete
Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?
A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,
Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone,
I must lie down where all the ladders start,
In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

### *Down by the Salley Gardens*

1. In the last line, the word *now* suggests that some time has passed between the events mentioned in the poem and the speaker's recollection of them. What changes in the speaker's attitude toward those events have taken place? How do you know? Account for the speaker's tears.
2. Much of this deceptively simple poem's effect derives from the seemingly irrelevant setting. For example, the "salley" (sallow, or willow tree) is often associated with mourning (one variety is called the weeping willow). Young lovers meeting in a salley garden might not realize that they were surrounded by emblems of grief. But older people, on recalling that earlier meeting and having learned what time can do to youth, beauty and love, might sadly realize the poignant contrast between the young lovers' hesitancy and the significant setting. Similarly explain how the "snow-white" color of the young girl's feet would have one meaning for a young man and a movingly different meaning for an old man.
3. In the second stanza, too, the setting invites interpretation. A flowing river is a traditional symbol for the passage of time or for the course of a person's life. A "weir," however, obstructs a river's flow. If we think of youthful love as being as right and natural as the river's flow, then what in the speaker's attitude toward love would correspond to the weir?

4. A further subtlety emerges from line 7. The river is natural; the weir is man-made. Youthful love is natural; hesitations, fears, or objections based upon social conventions are man-made. As we grow older, we realize that our youthful fears and hesitations were unnecessary; but by the time we realize that fact, we are no longer young. Eventually we come to understand that a young man's "foolish" refusal of love is itself to be expected; "that's life," we say with regret. Explain how all this is stated metaphorically not only by means of the river and the weir but also by means of the grass (natural) growing on the weir.
5. What elements in this poem make it seem age-old, as if it were a folk song passed down through many generations? Considering its subject, how is this air of folk wisdom useful in the poem?

*The Lake Isle of Innisfree*

1. Judging from the last stanza, is the speaker now in the city or in the country? What aspects of the island especially appeal to him?
2. How do the long lines contribute to the poem's effect? The last line of each stanza gains emphasis by being short. Why are the ideas presented in the last lines of stanzas 1 and 3 emphasized?
3. This is Yeats' most popular poem. It appears in most anthologies, and it was always requested by audiences when Yeats read his poems publicly. Yet in his later career, Yeats came to dislike the poem and to think that it was sentimental and merely pretty. How do you account for the poem's great and lasting popular appeal? What standards of taste would one have if he, like Yeats, found the poem unappealing?

*The Song of Wandering Aengus*

1. Aengus, a figure from pagan Irish mythology, is a lover who pursues an ideal. Though he has never been able to find the glimmering girl who called his name and fled as daylight came on, and though the search for her has made him old, still he continues to hope that he will find her. How does line 2 suggest that Aengus is no ordinary man?
2. In legend, a state of perfection is represented by the combination of gold and silver (see the last two lines of the poem). Point out all the references to gold (or yellow) and silver (or white) in this poem.
3. Why do you suppose the glimmering girl, who is associated with twilight, silver, and water, disappears when confronted either with the light of the sun or the yellow fire of the domestic hearth? What

is being said metaphorically about visions and ideals when they are brought into contact with everyday reality?

4. Poets for centuries have associated the moon with femininity, intuition, insanity, and the transforming power of imagination. Similarly, they have associated the sun with masculinity, rationality, and the everyday normal world. Twilight is a halfway state, neither moonlight nor sunlight. With that information, explain the poem's use of light. Also explain why, in the last two lines, Aengus expects to pluck apples of both sun and moon when he finally finds the glimmering girl.
5. The girl is not entirely an abstraction. She takes the physical form first of a fish and then of a girl, in the latter form wearing "apple blossom in her hair." Are we to understand that human beings cannot really imagine abstractions and so must impose upon them some sort of physical form, preferably human? Explain, and give examples from science, mythology, politics, or other nonliterary fields.
6. The word *dappled* in line 21 suggests that the grass is not uniformly illuminated by sunlight. Considering your answer to question 4, explain why dappled grass would be especially appropriate in a situation that reconciles the ideal with the ordinary. Also, with what word in the last few lines of the poem does *dappled* rhyme? Does the rhyme thus carry over the "dappled" idea to that word? Explain.
7. By everyday standards of normal behavior, Aengus spends his life in a foolish and fruitless search. Should he be praised, in your opinion, or censured? That is, to what extent are lunatics, lovers, and poets alike in being different from "normal" people? In what ways are they superior to, or more interesting than, "normal" people?

## *The Folly of Being Comforted*

1. "One that is ever kind" tells the speaker that his "well-beloved" is growing old and that the passing of time will bring a comforting wisdom that now seems impossible. Such a statement would not seem comforting except, we infer, if the "well-beloved" did not love in return. Then the kind speaker would be saying something like "The woman you so desperately love is growing less attractive with age; and as you yourself grow older and less passionate, you will be less and less tortured by her beauty." What does the speaker's heart say in reply to that "comforting" speech?
2. Do the last two lines mean that being comforted is impossible, or that it is undesirable? If the latter, why would anyone in distress not desire comfort?

3. Some words associated with comfort are *threads, grey, little, shadows, patience, crumb, grain.* Some words associated with not being comforted are *beauty, great, nobleness, fire, stirs, burns, clearly, wild, summer, gaze.* Comment on these two lists.

## *No Second Troy*

1. The woman referred to evidently is a passionate revolutionary who has failed to set one social class at war with another only because her followers lacked courage. Presumably the speaker disapproves of her political activities. Also, we learn in lines 1 and 2, she has filled his days with misery. Yet he does not blame her. How so?
2. With what are her mind and her beauty compared? How do those comparisons contribute to the effectiveness of the poem's title and last line?
3. The first Troy was the city finally burned by the Greeks after ten years of bitter and costly warfare. The war began over Helen, a great beauty. Thus the comparison implied in the title between the woman of this poem and Helen of Troy is a tribute to beauty and power over men. How is it also an ironical comparison between heroic Troy and petty, contemptible modern times? Is it entirely complimentary to the woman of the poem? Explain.

## *September 1913*

1. The poem is addressed to the Irish people of the time. In the first stanza, which characteristics does the speaker find especially contemptible in them?
2. Ordinarily we might respect people who pray. Here, however, what can we infer about the motives of the people doing the praying from the word *shivering* and from the nearness of the statement about adding prayers together to the statement about adding coins together?
3. Lines 1 and 6 say that the people are doing what they should be doing; but what evidence do we have that those lines are ironical?
4. Notice the last line in each stanza; such a repetition is called a **refrain** (see Glossary, p. 101). O'Leary and the men mentioned in the third stanza were all leaders in Ireland's long struggle for independence. The "wild geese" in line 17 are the Irish nobles who exiled themselves when penalties were imposed upon Roman Catholics. All of these are "romantic" in the sense that they cared more for a principle or a cause than they did for their personal profit or safety. In line 22, their struggles are called "delirium," and in line 1 the shopkeepers are described as "being come to sense." In the terms

of this poem, which is more admirable, the delirium of the revolutionaries or the sanity of the shopkeepers? Explain.

5. In stanza 4, how do the shopkeepers explain the unselfish and therefore foolish behavior of the revolutionaries? Relate the word *maddened* in line 29 to *delirium* and *sense.*
6. The refrain gives emphasis to the words rhyming with its final word, *grave.* In stanza 1, the rhyme word, associated with the shopkeepers, is *save.* In stanza 4, the rhyme word, associated with the revolutionaries, is *gave.* Explain how the contrast between *save* and *gave* sums up much of the poem's statement.

### *To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing*

1. Paraphrase the first eight lines.
2. In lines 9–10, "a harder thing/Than Triumph" is presumably not defeat but adherence to a self-imposed code, or "being honour bred." That is, the opponent cares only for triumph and will use any means, however unscrupulous, to win. The friend, on the other hand, will use only honorable means and therefore is at a disadvantage. In lines 11–13, the "place of stone" in which "mad fingers play" on a stringed instrument is presumably a madhouse. What sort of music might be produced in such circumstances? And if the music be erratic, is that the fault of the string or of the player? What consolation, then, does the speaker in lines 9–16 offer to a friend whose work has come to nothing?
3. In line 3, *brazen* literally means "made of brass" and figuratively means "impudent or shameless." When we first read line 3, we give the word its figurative meaning. But when we come to the simile of the stringed instrument in line 11, we perhaps give *brazen* its literal meaning also and think of the "brazen throat" as some kind of brass instrument—a trumpet, for example. Consider the competition between people of two quite different moral natures as if it were a competition between a brass instrument and a stringed instrument. Point out several ways in which such an analogy operates in the poem.

### *That the Night Come*

1. How is "her soul" like a king on his wedding day?
2. Evidently her soul is aristocratic. It desires what is proud and cannot endure what is common (lines 3–5). The king, too, is of course an aristocrat. Is the way the king whiles away his marriage day a bit absurd, and maybe even childish? If so, how does your attitude toward her soul change? Might her soul be both admirably aristo-

cratic and at the same time a bit absurd in scorning "the common good of life"? Explain.

3. As precisely as you can, describe the attitude conveyed by the speaker in his choice of such words as *packed, outrageous,* and *bundle.* (The attitude taken in a poem toward its subject and toward its reader is called its *tone* [Glossary, p. 102]. Thus a poem may treat a subject playfully, solemnly, casually, etc.)

## *The Magi*

1. The magi, "the pale unsatisfied ones," are the Wise Men who, in the biblical story, came from the East to see the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:1). "Calvary's turbulence" refers to either the earthquake and other physical upheavals accompanying the Crucifixion (Matthew 27:45) or to the profound political, social, and religious upheaval that followed the introduction of Christianity into the ancient world. Either way, the magi are looking for another such upheaval—a new era to replace the Christian era. The magi thus become mysterious figures who appear at the beginning of each era in human history; they are associated not solely with the beginning of the Christian era. What words and images suggest their immense antiquity? their nonhuman qualities?
2. The "bestial floor" in last line could be either the floor of the stable in Bethlehem or the earth itself as seen from the sky. Why is it bestial?
3. Christians think of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem as a unique event, planned by God. *Uncontrollable,* however, in the last line, suggests that such events are not under divine control. Similarly, Christians regard the visit of the magi as an event occurring only once in history; but in this poem, the magi return again and again, perhaps at the beginning of each era in human history. In that light, paraphrase the poem's last three lines.

## *The Wild Swans at Coole*

1. Coole Park, in County Galway, was the residence of Lady Augusta Gregory, Yeats' friend and patron. He wrote this poem nineteen years after his first visit there. In the interval, Yeats had met many personal disappointments. In the poem, he contrasts his condition to that of the swans; he is growing old in body and spirit, but they seem unchanging. Point out some of the explicit contrasts, especially in stanza 4.
2. As in "Down by the Salley Gardens," the setting in this poem is

significant. Why is the poem set in autumn? Why mention that the "woodland paths are dry"? (If we think of a path as a traditional symbol for the course of a man's life, what would be meant by a dry path?) Why is the poem set at twilight? (See questions on "The Song of Wandering Aengus," pp. 89–90.)

3. This symbolic dryness is in contrast to the water in which the swans are seen. How is the sense of the water's vitality emphasized by its being "brimming"?
4. In stanza 2, the swans in flight instinctively form portions of circles ("great broken rings"). The circle is an ancient symbol of perfection. What is being said here about the swans' instinctive relationship to nature?
5. By the time we reach the last stanza, we see that the swans, though literal, also have symbolic significance. Explain, then, the last two lines with this in mind.

### *Lines Written in Dejection*

1. Reread the comments on the sun and the moon in the questions for "The Song of Wandering Aengus" (pp. 89–90). In this poem the speaker, having "come to fifty years," finds that the creatures of the moon are no longer visible to him; he must, instead, bitterly "endure the timid sun." Explain the significance of sun and moon here, and explain the words *embittered* and *timid*. Also account for the title.
2. "The dark leopards of the moon" are probably Yeats' invention; yet he expects us to understand what he means. If the mysterious, feminine, intuitive, instinctive moon has any animals on it, might they not be "dark leopards" with "round green eyes" and "long wavering bodies"? Explain your answer.
3. Witches, too, are associated with imagination, night, and the moon. In line 5, *for* means "in spite of": that is, despite all the silly business of broomsticks, the witches are "noble ladies." They are admirable partly because they are "wild" and because they shed "angry tears." Compare the witches to the leopards, and contrast them to the "timid" sun.
4. Centaurs, too, like witches and leopards of the moon, are fantastic creatures from legend, half man and half horse. In what sense are they "holy"? What has happened to the fifty-year-old man to make him lose his ability to see all these fantastic creatures?

### *Easter, 1916*

1. In Easter Week, 1916, a group of Irish revolutionary leaders, all of whom Yeats knew personally, launched a rebellion aimed at securing

independence from England. The uprising was quickly put down by British troops, and the leaders were executed. The rebellion, staged with more reckless daring than careful organization, was the sort of romantic gesture that in "September 1913" had been called "dead and gone." In the first stanza, what does the speaker say his attitude had been toward his countrymen? (*Motley* in line 14 is a clown's costume.)

2. Stanza 2 refers to the revolutionary leaders, male and female. The "drunken, vainglorious lout" who had "done most bitter wrong/To some who are near my heart" was Major John MacBride, who had married Maud Gonne, a beautiful actress and political leader with whom Yeats was hopelessly in love during most of his life. Other leaders are named in the poem's last few lines. The "casual comedy" refers to the idea, introduced in stanza 1 with the word *motley*, that life in Ireland had been trivial before the Easter Rebellion gave it tragic dignity. Explain the refrain "A terrible beauty is born."
3. Stanza 3 introduces a new idea, that singleness of purpose, such as the determination to gain independence for Ireland, transforms human hearts into stone. A stone is hard and unyielding, but it is also nonhuman. Show how stanza 3 develops both of these aspects of the stone.
4. Stanza 4 says that only Heaven can decide how much sacrifice is necessary to free Ireland. The living have the responsibility of keeping alive the memory of the executed leaders. This statement leads into a comparison: the living in relation to the dead revolutionaries as a mother to her child who is sleeping after a day of strenuous play. This comparison suggests not only the mother's tender love for the child but also her sense of relief that the child is finally sleeping. How might a people who had recently lived through an unsuccessful military uprising take the same ambiguous attitude toward the dead leaders?
5. The lines "And what if excess of love/Bewildered them till they died?" recall the shopkeepers' contempt for excessive behavior toward the end of "September 1913." From other poems by Yeats, what can you say about the poet's attitude toward madness, reckless daring, and futile but heroic gestures?

### *The Second Coming*

1. The images in the first stanza establish a world getting out of control and becoming destructive. The falcon, a ferocious bird of prey, is no longer under the control of a human falconer. Anarchy is loosed. "The blood-dimmed tide" could mean either that the clear seawater is dimmed with blood or that a tide of dimmed blood (that is, leaders

of "good blood" have been replaced by the rabble, people of common origin) has been loosed. From other poems we deduce that the "ceremony of innocence" means something like the time-honored aristocratic traditions of people whose breeding is so fine that they know instinctively how things should be done—in that sense they are innocent, like other instinctive creatures. In this light, explain line 3; what exactly is "the centre"?

2. To Christians, the Second Coming means the return of Christ, an event preceded by tremendous disorders; thus the chaos and anarchy depicted in the first stanza might lead a Christian to make the statement given in lines 9 and 10. But what follows, in lines 11–18, is instead a vision drawn by the speaker from the *Spiritus Mundi* or collective memory, a portion of man's consciousness supposedly inherited like instinct. The vision suggests that the Christian era will not be followed by the Last Judgment and other events described in Revelation and in Matthew 24; instead, a new era will supersede the Christian era and will have the characteristics symbolized by the Sphinx-like figure. What sort of society would have the violence and animal appetites of a "lion body"? This animality is directed by "the head of man," but evidently this phrase means mere intellect without compassion or restraint—"a gaze blank and pitiless as the sun." Characterize, then, the era that, according to that vision, will soon supplant the Christian era.
3. The last two lines, with their vision of the monstrous age soon to come, are very often quoted. What words in those lines strike you as especially effective? Show how assonance and consonance are used in these lines to tie key words together. (Pay attention to sounds, not spelling: Thus *what*, *rough*, and *come* all have the same vowel sound though spelled differently.)

*Sailing to Byzantium*

1. This, generally recognized as one of the supremely great poems of the century, is concerned with the relationship between reality and art. The speaker, an old man, finds himself out of place in the physical world and longs to be transformed into something artificial, such as a golden nightingale. In the first line, *That* could be any country. Judging from the rest of the stanza, why is it "no country for old men"?
2. In the first stanza, a contrast between the physical and the intellectual is established, as well as a contrast between that which ages and changes and that which does not. Show how each of the following fits into those contrasts: "young," "birds in the trees," "dying

generations," "song," "mackerel-crowded seas," "summer," "whatever is begotten, born, and dies," "sensual music," "unageing intellect."

3. In the second stanza, the aged man is compared to a scarecrow. How is he thus metaphorically related to the birds in the first stanza?
4. In stanza II, the "mortal dress" of the soul is presumably the body, and a "tatter" is thus an illness or other bodily infirmity. Why should the soul be pleased ("clap its hands and sing") at the body's decay? Are body and soul natural enemies? Why? Which (body or soul) more concerns young men? Which more concerns old men?
5. Lines 5 and 6 of stanza II suggest that the only way souls can learn to sing well is by studying great songs of the soul. (The singing in stanza I is "sensual music," music of the body, not of the soul.) So the speaker has come to "the holy city of Byzantium." Byzantine art (its songs—the word presumably is not confined to singing but includes poetry and all other forms of art) is typically abstract, learned, intellectual, stylized—an appropriate kind of song for the soul, not for the body. At this point, go back through stanzas I and II and pick out all the references to songs, singing, and music; to birds and scarecrows; to mortality and immortality.
6. In Byzantium (later Constantinople, now Istanbul; but more important, a state of mind rather than a place), the old man sees a mosaic of sages standing in a fire. Perhaps these are the wise men who, according to the Book of Daniel, were cast into a fiery furnace but were not burned because their faith was great. That story is a triumph of the spiritual over the merely physical (the fire). Also in this stanza is the idea of the purifying fire that burns away everything mortal and leaves only the immortal. Explain why the speaker wants his heart burned away, and explain what it is that is "fastened to a dying animal."
7. In stanza IV, the speaker considers what form his soul should take once it has got rid of its mortal body ("out of nature"). He chooses to be an artificial bird. Go back through the poem and relate both *artificial* and *bird* to the rest of the poem.
8. The artificial bird will sing to "lords and ladies," not to the common people. What other evidence do you find in "No Second Troy," "September 1913," "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing," and "The Second Coming" that would suggest a preference for aristocratic listeners? Would we be safe in assuming that the speaker in this poem expresses Yeats' own views? What are the dangers in assuming that the speaker in a poem is necessarily the poet? What kinds of evidence would make us believe that a poem's speaker probably speaks for the poet?

9. In the last few lines, it seems to be a matter of indifference to the speaker whether he sings of the past, the present, or the future. That raises these questions: Does the importance of a poem depend upon the importance of its subject matter? And is there a sense in which art, including poetry, is truly timeless?

## ASSIGNMENTS FOR WRITING

1. The Questions for Discussion for "Down By the Salley Gardens" (pp. 88–89) and "The Wild Swans at Coole" (pp. 93–94) indicate how the details of a poem's physical setting become part of the poem's total meaning. In an essay, point out as many components of a poem's meaning as you can. Using any one poem by Yeats as your example, show how these components contribute to the poem's total meaning.
2. Yeats' attitude toward his countrymen changed dramatically between "September 1913" and "Easter, 1916." In an essay, compare and contrast his attitudes in the two poems.
3. Look at question 8 for "Sailing to Byzantium" (p. 97). The problem there is whether a poem necessarily reflects the beliefs and experiences of the poet. Drawing your examples from any poems you have read, whether in this book or elsewhere, show how some poems obviously speak for the poets and others obviously do not. Then, using poems by Yeats as your evidence, explain in some detail what might lead you to the conclusion that the speaker in a particular poem is the poet.
4. In many of Yeats' poems, madness is made to seem more interesting or admirable than sanity, intuition more than reason, recklessness more than caution, pain more than comfort. In an essay, first point out several instances of these comparisons, and then present arguments to support Yeats' position. If you wish, extend your argument to show how all poets and other artists are likely to be at odds with the "normal" world.

# A GLOSSARY OF CRITICAL TERMS

**accent** See **versification.**

**allegory** See **figures of speech.**

**alliteration** repetition of similar sounds, usually consonants, and usually at the beginnings of words or syllables; for example, "Sing a song of sixpence." See also **versification.**

**allusion** reference to a historical event, another literary work, or some bit of information outside the work containing the allusion. "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts" *alludes* to the story of the Trojan horse in Homer's *Iliad.*

**ambiguity** multiplicity or layers of meaning. "The blood-dimmed tide" might mean "the tide of water dimmed by blood" or "the tide of dimmed or diluted blood" or both.

**anapest** See **versification.**

**apostrophe** See **figures of speech.**

**assonance** repetition of vowel sounds, as in "He was alone with his cold, stony hope." See also **versification.**

**ballad** a narrative, or story-telling, poem, often intended to be sung. The *ballad stanza* is composed of four lines, the first and third having four **accents** and the second and fourth having three; usually the second and fourth lines rhyme.

The subject matter of the ballad may be love, heroic deeds, commonplace events in the lives of ordinary people, or the supernatural. The *folk ballad,* composed anonymously, is traditionally one which has been passed along orally from generation to generation, often in differing versions. The *literary ballad* is composed by a known author in imitation of the folk ballad.

**blank verse** See **versification.**

**caesura** See **versification.**

**conceit** See **figures of speech.**

**connotation** the emotional overtones or suggested meanings of a word as compared to its most restrictive meaning, which is its **denotation.** Both "boy" and "lad" *denote* a young male, but "lad" *connotes* affection and approval, which "boy" does not.

**consonance** repetition of identical consonant sounds, such as the *l* sounds in Hopkins' "With a flood or a fall, low lull-off or all roar." The term **alliteration,** a form of consonance, is usually reserved for repetition of consonants at the beginnings of words. Also see **versification.**

**couplet** See **versification.**

**dactyl** See **versification.**

**denotation** See **connotation.**

**diction** characteristic and individual choice of words and syntax.

**elegy** in modern usage, a poem expressing grief.

**ellipsis** ommission of words in such a way as to require the reader to supply them; for example, "He is stronger than I."

**epigram** a short, witty saying.

**feminine ending** See **versification.**

**figures of speech** devices for speaking about one thing in terms of another. In a **simile,** the point of comparison between one thing and another is made explicit, as in "He's as untrustworthy as a snake." In a **metaphor,** the point of comparison is merely implied, as in "He's a snake," or "a sharp mind" or "golden years." An elaborate, ingenious, and extended comparison is called a **conceit.**

**Allegory** is an extended **metaphor,** usually one presenting abstractions like Truth or Envy either as events in a narrative or as parts of a description; a narrative having meaning beyond or behind the story.

An **apostrophe** addresses an absent person as if he were present, or a nonliving thing as if it were capable of understanding, as in "O Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!"

**Personification** gives human characteristics to something abstract or inanimate, as when Keats addresses a Grecian urn as "Thou foster-child of silence and slow time."

**Metonymy** substitutes a term for another with which it is associated, as when "the White House" (meaning "the President") speaks.

**Figurative** language, then, must be interpreted; **literal** language need not. In Longfellow's lines "Lives of great men all remind us/We can make our lives sublime,/And, departing, leave behind us/Footprints on the sands of time," the first two lines are literal, the last two figurative.

**foot** See **versification.**

**free verse** See **versification.**

**iamb** or **iambus** See **versification.**

**image** the representation of any sense experience. An image may call upon any of the five senses, not upon sight alone. *Imagery* is the use of images.

**internal rhyme** See **versification.**

**irony** a difference between what is said and what is meant or between what is expected and what is received. Among the

many kinds of verbal irony are **sarcasm** and **satire.** Circumstances may also be **ironical,** as when a plan miscarries in some strikingly inappropriate way.

**literal** See **figures of speech.**

**lyric** usually a short poem, not a narrative, that expresses emotion.

**masculine ending** See **versification.**

**metaphor** See **figures of speech.**

**meter** See **versification.**

**mood** the emotional atmosphere created by the sounds, rhythms, and images of a literary work.

**octave** See **versification.**

**onomatopoeia** the use of words whose sounds imitate the sounds of the meaning of the words; for example, *bubble, hiss, buzz, click.*

**paradox** a statement or state of affairs that seems to contradict itself, as in "The child is father of the man."

**paraphrase** restatement in different words.

**parody** a comic imitation that carefully follows the characteristics of the original.

**persona** the fictional role or identity adopted by an author in a particular literary work. The author rarely, if ever, speaks in his own voice; he adopts the character or *persona* of another. A twenty-year-old poet, for example, may speak in the voice of an old man, a woman, etc.

**personification** See **figures of speech.**

**pyrrhic** See **versification.**

**quatrain** See **versification.**

**refrain** a repeated word, phrase, or line, often at the end of each stanza.

**rhyme** See **versification.**

**run-on line** See **versification.**

**sarcasm** a cutting remark; bitter irony.

**satire** a literary work ridiculing a person or state of affairs, with the intention of correction or improvement. Often satire pretends to praise while really censuring; in that case, it is *ironical.*

**sestet** See **versification.**

**simile** See **figures of speech.**

**sonnet** See **versification.**

**spondee** See **versification.**

**stanza** See **versification.**

**symbol** something that stands for or suggests something else by similarity or association. The characteristics of the "something else" are apparent in the symbol. A green light signals that a motorist may proceed, but neither a light nor the color green embodies the idea of proceeding. A rosebud, by contrast, symbolizes youthful beauty: It is not yet fully developed; its texture is like that of young skin; it soon withers, and it is a natural object. The symbol, in other words, illustrates its meaning.

**tercet** See **versification.**

**tone** representation of the attitude taken by a writer toward his subject and toward his readers.

**versification** a term used interchangeably with *prosody* to refer to the technical aspects of poetry, including accent, meter, rhyme, and stanza form.

**Accent** is the stress placed on a syllable. In the word *open,* the accent or stress falls on the first syllable; in *depend,* on the second. A word like *independent* puts primary stress or accent on *-pen* and secondary accent on *in-.*

**Meter** is the rhythmical pattern of a line of verse, as determined by the number and kind of *feet* in it. Usually both the kind and number of feet are named, as in "iambic pentameter" or "trochaic hexameter." The study of meter is called *metrics.*

A **foot** is a metrical unit consisting of two or more syllables, at least one of which is accented. The commonest feet are **iamb** or **iambus,** an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one, as in be*gin;* **trochee,** an accented syllable followed by an unaccented, as in *men*tion; **anapest,** two unaccented syllables followed by an accented, as in silhou*ette;* and **dactyl,** an accented syllable followed by two unaccented, as in *for*cibly. Two additional feet are used in some metrical systems but in others are regarded as portions of adjoining feet. They are the **pyrrhic,** two unaccented syllables, and the **spondee,** two accented syllables. The adjectival forms of these names are respectively *iambic, trochaic, anapestic, dactylic, pyrrhic,* and *spondaic.*

A **line** consists of one or more feet. Lines are named for the number of feet in them. A line of one foot is called *monometer;* of two feet, *dimeter;* of three feet, *trimeter;* of four, *tetrameter;* of five, *pentameter;* of six, *hexameter.* In both poetry and ordinary speech, pauses mark the end of phrases, clauses, and sentences. If a pause occurs at the end of a line of verse, the

line is called *end-stopped;* if not, it is called **run-on.** A pause within a line is called a **caesura.**

**Rhyme** (sometimes spelled *rime*) is the correspondence between sounds of one word or group of words and those of another. Although **assonance, consonance,** and **alliteration** are forms of rhyme, the term *rhyme* is usually reserved for identity of accented vowels and of any following vowels or consonants. Rhyme occurring within a line is called **internal rhyme:** "We were the first that ever burst." Rhyme at the ends of lines, *end rhyme,* is called **masculine** if the last syllable is stressed (de*clare*/com*pare*) and **feminine** if the last syllable is unstressed (*chosen*/*frozen*). All these are examples of *identical* or *true* or *perfect* rhyme—the terms are used interchangeably. When vowel sounds are only fairly close, the term *slant rhyme* or *half rhyme* is used (dome/fame). *Eye rhyme* pairs words having similar spellings but different pronunciations (dome/come).

A **stanza** is a division of a poem, corresponding to a paragraph of prose. Usually a stanza contains a complete thought expressed in a fixed pattern of lines and, sometimes, of rhymes. Some stanzas are named for the number of lines they contain. A two-line stanza is a **couplet;** three lines, a **tercet;** four lines, a **quatrain;** six lines, a **sestet;** eight lines, an **octave.**

An important stanza pattern is the **sonnet,** which is composed of fourteen iambic pentameter lines. The two chief types are the *Italian* or *Petrarchan sonnet,* which consists of an octave and a sestet, and the *English* or *Shakespearean sonnet,* which consists of three quatrains and a couplet. Usually these divisions underscore the sonnet's thought; for example, the octave may ask a question which the sestet then answers. The *unbroken sonnet,* a form used by John Milton and others, does not divide the thought.

**Free verse** follows no set pattern. **Blank verse** is unrhymed iambic pentameter. Free verse and blank verse are sometimes arranged in *verse paragraphs* of varying length rather than in set stanzas.

# A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


**Hardy**

Blackmur, R.P. "The Shorter Poems of Thomas Hardy," *Form and Value in Modern Poetry*. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1957. This important essay discusses the sometimes crippling impact of ideas on the poet's sensibility.

Guerard, Albert J. (ed.). *Hardy, A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963. This paperback collection is concerned principally with Hardy's fiction, but it includes four essays on the poetry and a selected bibliography.

Ransom, John Crowe (ed.). *Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961. This paperback presents Hardy's best poems and an introductory essay by a distinguished poet and critic.

**Hopkins**

Gardner, W.H. (ed.). *Gerard Manley Hopkins, A Selection of His Poems and Prose*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1953. This paperback includes poems, letters, and journal selections. An illuminating introduction and many useful notes on the poems.

Hartman, Geoffrey H. *Hopkins, A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966. A paperback containing essays on the poet's life, thought, and poetical practice. Bibliography.

The Kenyon Critics. *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1945. Essays by Austin Warren, Robert Lowell, F.R. Leavis, and others.

Weyand, Norman, S.J. (ed.). *Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins*. London: Sheed & Ward, Ltd., 1949. Essays by Hopkins' fellow Jesuits. Also contains an "Interpretive Glossary of Difficult Words" in the poems and a bibliography.

**Housman**

Haber, Tom Burns. *A.E. Housman*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967. The editor of the Centennial Edition of Housman's poems discusses the relationship between the poems and the poet's life. Useful appendix giving biblical sources for phrases in the poems. Bibliography.

Housman, Laurence. *My Brother, A.E. Housman.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938. This graceful biography gives letters, unpublished light verse and parodies, and a view of the poet's cheerful and playful side.

Marlow, Norman. *A.E. Housman, Scholar and Poet.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958. Biographical sketch and discussion of the poet's use of diction and meter.

**Yeats**

Ellman, Richard. *Yeats: The Man and the Masks.* New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1958. This Everyman Paperback is a distinguished critical biography.

———. *The Identity of Yeats.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1964. This Galaxy Paperback is a detailed study of Yeats' poetry with copious notes.

Hall, James, and Martin Steinmann (eds.). *The Permanence of Yeats.* New York: P.F. Collier, Inc., 1950. This paperback was one of the first collections of essays on Yeats by various critics, and it remains one of the best.

Rosenthal, M.L. (ed.). *Selected Poems of William Butler Yeats.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962. This paperback offers an excellent introduction and a generous selection from the poems, as well as two plays. Notes, glossary, and bibliography.

Unterecker, John. *A Reader's Guide to W.B. Yeats.* New York: The Noonday Press, 1959. This paperback summarizes Yeats' ideas and complicated mythological system and gives a poem-by-poem analysis.

——— (ed.). *Yeats, A Collection of Critical Essays.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963. Essays by several critics, chronology, and bibliography.