

Small Group

Consider ► What lessons can you learn from nature?
How do you define beauty?

Ode to the West Wind

by Percy Bysshe Shelley

1. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Circle any mention of wind or leaves throughout the poem. What are they metaphors for?

2. **MOOD** What is Shelley describing in lines 3–8? Circle the words that reinforce this idea. What mood do these words create?

3. **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE** Underline words that Shelley uses to describe the wind in line 14. What is unique about this pairing of words?

I

1 O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
5 Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

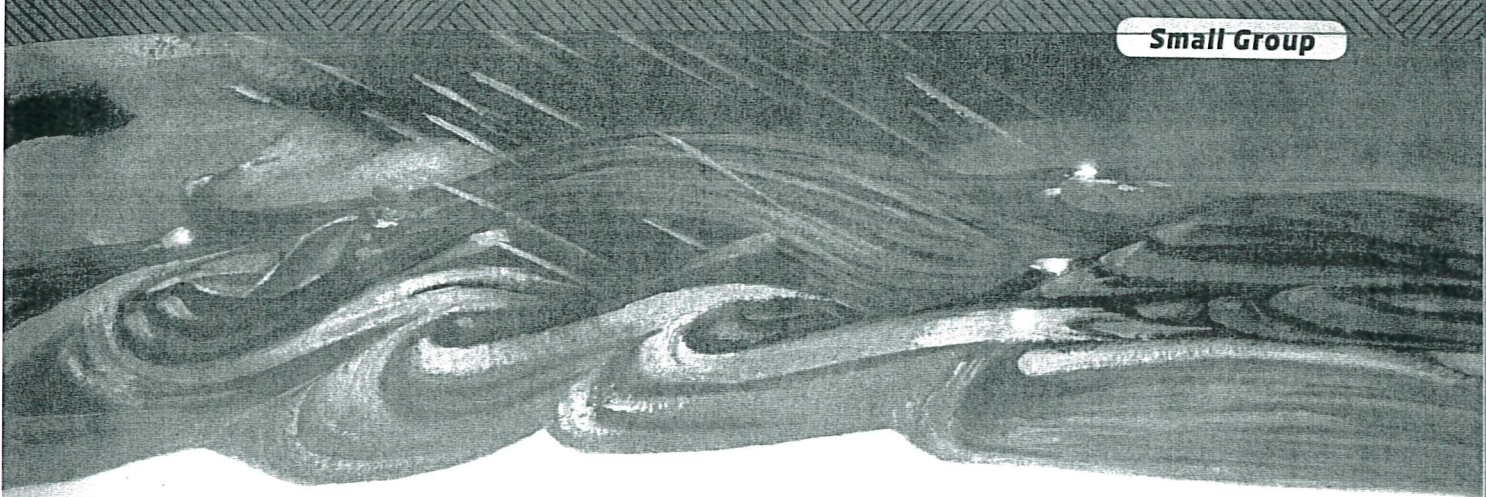
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow
10 Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

II

15 Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
— Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery¹ surge,
20 Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

¹aery airy





Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
 Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
 The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge²
 Of the dying year, to which this closing night
 25 Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,³
 Vaulted with all thy congregated might
 Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
 Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
 30 The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
 Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,
 Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,⁴
 And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
 Quivering within the wave's intenser day,
 35 All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
 So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
 For whose path the Atlantic's level powers⁵
 Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
 The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
 40 The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
 Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
 And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

²dirge funeral song

³sepulchre tomb

⁴pumice isle in Baiae's bay the Bay of Naples, which was the site of the ancient Roman resort Baiae

⁵level powers surface of the water

4. **ALLUSION** In line 21, Shelley alludes to a "fierce Maenad." Maenads were female followers of the Greek god Dionysus, the god of the grape harvest, wine, and celebrations. Maenads were often portrayed as dancing wildly and losing all self-control. What is the effect of this allusion?

5. **CENTRAL IDEA** Compare sections II and III. How does the focus of the central idea differ in each section?

6. **ALLUSION** Look at the footnotes. Circle other allusions that Shelley makes in section III. How do they add to the meaning of the poem?

7. STRUCTURE How does Shelley change the structure of the poem with section IV? What is the effect of this structure?

8. SUMMARY Underline the central idea and most important details in section IV. Then write a brief summary of the section.

9. TONE What tone does Shelley convey in section V? Circle words and phrases that support your choice.

10. INFERENCE What inferences can you make about Shelley's feelings toward nature and beauty?

11. THEME What is the theme of the poem? Underline phrases that help you determine the theme.

12. SYMBOLISM What does Shelley mean by "Winter" and "Spring" in line 70?

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
45 A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be
The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
50 As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed⁶
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
55 A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre,⁷ even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
60 Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
65 And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
70 If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

⁶skiey speed clouds quickly moving across the sky

⁷lyre an instrument whose strings make music when the wind blows over them

CULTURAL EXPERIENCE Shelley was part of the literary movement called Romanticism. In their work, Romantics often responded to problems in society or reacted to world events, such as the French Revolution, industrialization, poverty, and the oppression of workers. In section V, what is Shelley implying about society? What does Shelley see as his role in this world?

To Autumn

by John Keats

- 1 Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
- 5 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
- 10 Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.
- Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
- 15 Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spare the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
- 20 Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozing hours by hours.

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

13 **CENTRAL IDEA** What is the central idea of the first four lines?

14 **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE** What objects does Keats personify in lines 1–4? What is the effect of the personification?

15 **SETTING** What is the setting of this poem? Circle the words and phrases that help you visualize the setting.

16 **SUMMARY** Who is the speaker of the poem addressing in lines 12–22? Summarize the speaker's message.

17 **TONE** Underline words and images that help you understand Keats's attitude toward autumn and spring.

18 **THEME** What message is Keats trying to relate to the reader?



Discussion

Discuss these questions with your group, and together write a paragraph in response to each question. Provide evidence to support your responses.

1. "Ode to the West Wind" and "To Autumn" are both examples of odes. Based on their similarities, what are the features of an ode?
2. Both of these poems have been carefully structured, but in different ways. Identify the rhyme scheme, line lengths, and stanza breaks of each poem. Why would a poet choose to use such a rigid structure?

Comprehension Check

Answer these questions about the selections you have just read. Use details from the selection to support your responses.

1. What is the point of view of "Ode to the West Wind"? Use examples in your response. Then explain how Shelley's choice of narration style contributes to the poem's meaning.
2. Choose an example of imagery from "To Autumn." How does the imagery in the selection help the reader understand the theme of the poem and visualize what the poet is describing?
3. Based on the topics Shelley and Keats write about, what can you infer about their cultural experiences and backgrounds? Use details from the poems to support your answer.

Independent Projects

On Your Own Your teacher may assign you one or both of the following performance tasks.

- ▶ Investigate British Romantic poets.
- ▶ Apply what you have learned about poetry to another canto or section of *The Divine Comedy*.

Inquiry

Write an essay and do a brief presentation on British Romantic poets. In your essay and presentation, you will discuss how Romantic poets changed the style and conventions of traditional poetry to capture the common experiences of humans in a simple language.

Application

Read another canto or section of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. In written responses to a series of questions, you will explain Dante's allusions to religious texts, historical figures, and ancient mythology.