

Poetry Analysis

William Blake

The School Boy

I love to rise in a summer morn;
When the birds sing on every tree;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the sky-lark sings with me.
O! what sweet company.

But to go to school in a summer morn,
O! it drowns all joy away;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day,
In sighing and dismay.

Ah! then at times I drooping sit,
And spend many an anxious hour,
Nor in my book can I take delight,
Nor sit in learning's bower,
Worn thro' with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy,
Sit in a cage and sing,
How can a child when fears annoy,
But droop his tender wing,
And forget his youthful spring?

O! father is nether, if buds are ripp'd,
And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are strip'd
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and care's decay.

How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear,
Or how shall we gather what gods do
Or bless the mellowing year,
When the blasts of winter appear.



Background:

"**The School Boy**" is a 1789 poem by **William Blake** (1757 – 1827) and published as a part of his poetry collection entitled Songs of Experience.

Things we need to understand:

1. Romantic Age and Sufism
2. Blake as a poet
3. Metaphor
4. Imagery
5. Songs of Innocence & Experience
6. Rhymes

The Schoolboy

by William Blake

I love to rise in a summer morning,
When the birds sing on every tree;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the skylark sings with me:
O what sweet company!

But to go to school in a summer morn,-
O it drives all joy away!
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay.

Ah then at times I drooping sit,
And spend many an anxious hour;
Nor in my book can I take delight,
Nor sit in learning's bower,
Worn through with dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy
Sit in a cage and sing?
How can a child, when fears annoy,
But droop his tender wing,
And forget his youthful spring!

O father and mother if buds are nipped,
And blossoms blown away;
And if the tender plants are stripped
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and care's dismay,-

How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear?
Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,
Or bless the mellowing year,
When the blasts of winter appear?

Fact Checks:

1. This poem rhymes with *ababb* rhyming structure
2. Blake was a poet who had chronic frustration over socio-economic cultures of England
3. Poetry metaphors:
 - Summer: Happiness
 - School: English Society
 - Schoolboy: Innocence
 - Teachers: Social rule makers
 - Spring: Hay day
4. Black as a Sufi poet and a Romantic poet

Thematic Appreciation:

This poem highlights Blake's affinity for alternative methods of education. Consistently repeated is the draining element of schoolroom education and how it causes students to contribute poor learning and retention for students. Blake instead promotes learning outside the classroom, specifically he believes spontaneous and natural creativity flourishes. Furthermore, this desire to remove oneself from the classroom (a metaphor for society). In this instance, retirement means to remove oneself from society and return to nature in order to rejuvenate the soul and the imagination from the weary doggedness of society. Cooper believed that remaining in society for a long period of time would result in the soul becoming worn down and that nature was the only relief as it helped redevelop the idea of community and benevolence.

The analogy of the bird and the boy is also evidence of the recurring theme of nature within this poem. As a poet of [Romanticism](#), Blake puts an emphasis on nature, the subjective self and on emotions. Within this poem, the allusions to nature are everywhere referencing things such as summer, wind, blossoms, rain showers, birds and spring. Blake equates the seasons of the Earth to the seasons of the boy's life. Blake also analogizes the boy with a caged bird unable to sing, to attain its free place in nature, just like the boy.