

**Tutorial № 02: British Pre-Romanticism Poets**

Read the Text carefully. Then, answer the questions below.

**The Text:**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>A Poison Tree</b></p> <p>I was angry with my friend; I told my wrath, my wrath did end. I was angry with my foe: I told it not, my wrath did grow.</p> <p>And I waterd it in fears, Night &amp; morning with my tears: And I sunned it with smiles, And with soft deceitful wiles.</p>	<p>And it grew both day and night. Till it bore an apple bright. And my foe beheld it shine, And he knew that it was mine.</p> <p>And into my garden stole, When the night had veild the pole; In the morning glad I see; My foe outstretched beneath the tree.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>William Blake (1793)</b></p>
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**Short Biography of the Poet**

William Blake was born on November 28, 1757 in London, the third of five children. His father James was a hosier, and could only afford to give William enough schooling to learn the basics of reading and writing, though for a short time he was able to attend a drawing school run by Henry Par. William worked in his father's shop until his talent for drawing became so obvious that he was apprenticed to an engraver at age 14.

Blake married Catherine Boucher at age 25, and she worked with him on most of his artistic creations. Together they published a book of Blake's poems and drawings called *Songs of Innocence*. Blake engraved the words and pictures on copper plates (a method he claimed he received in a dream), and Catherine coloured the plates and bound the books. *Songs of Innocence* sold slowly during Blake's lifetime. Indeed, Blake struggled close to poverty for much of his life. More successful was a series of copperplate engravings Blake did to illustrate the Book of Job for a new edition of the Old Testament.

Blake did not have a head for business, and he turned down publisher's requests to focus on his own subjects. In his choice of subject Blake was often guided by his gentle, mystical views of Christianity. *Songs of Experience* (1794) was followed by *Milton* (1804-1808), and *Jerusalem* (1804-1820).

Blake poured his whole being into his work. The lack of public recognition sent him into a severe depression which lasted from 1810-1817, and even his close friends thought him insane. Blake's work received far more public acclaim after his death, and an excerpt from his poem *Milton* was set to music, becoming a sort of unofficial Christian anthem of English nationalism in the 20th century. William Blake died on August 12, 1827, and is buried in an unmarked grave at Bunhill Fields, London.

**Questions**

1. How do the results differ in the two instances of anger in the first stanza?
2. How is this determined by the rhyme scheme?
3. What causes the speaker's anger to grow in stanza 2? What metaphor is being used?
4. How does the anger of the poet come to an end?
5. In line 8, what do you believe "wiles" means? (Consider the adjectives that describe it.)
6. What words in stanza 2 show that the speaker is talking of his anger as if it were a seed or small plant? What serves as a water for the plant? What serves as sunlight?
7. What "grew" from the speaker's anger?
8. What happens to the "foe"? How does it happen?
9. How is conceit (extended metaphor) used throughout this poem? Give multiple examples of the comparison.
10. What is the overall rhyme scheme of the poem?
11. In the story of Adam and Eve, there is a tree whose fruit is not to be eaten. Adam and Eve, however, do eat the fruit, disobeying God. Does anything in this poem remind you of this story? If so, what is the similarity between the two?
12. What are the neoclassical and Romantic features in the above poem?