



Pearson
Edexcel

A Level English Literature

Autumn Network
2019

Resource 2:
structuring via
comparison extracts





Student B

The Romantics

Prescribed text

English Romantic Verse, editor David Wright

EITHER

- 11** Explore the ways in which human nature is presented in *Songs of Experience: Holy Thursday* ('Is this a holy thing to see...?') by Blake and in **one** other poem. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors.

(Total for Question 11 = 30 marks)



Blake writes, 'Is this a holy thing to see in a rich and fruitful land, babes reduc'd to misery, fed with cold and uneasy hand?' The religious allusion with 'holy' in the context of this rhetorical question suggests that the lack of compassion for those 'babes reduc'd to misery' (children in poverty) is in fact unholy, and thus a rejection of God. This ~~crime~~ religious crime is further exacerbated by the adjectives 'rich' and 'fruitful', with these positively connoted words serving to emphasise how 'cold' and 'uneasy' society has become in its rejection of God by contrasting it with the 'misery' of the poor. Moreover, by using this as the first line of the poem, Blake places further meaning and stress emphasis on this being the primary message of the poem. Blake perhaps chose to explore this aspect of human nature because of his religious beliefs. Experiencing religious visions throughout his life and following the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, who focused heavily upon the power of Christian redemption, Blake was certainly a faithful Christian. Living in such an era of ~~the~~ social inequality with his faith in Christian teachings likely left Blake with the impression that such injustice and inequity ~~was~~ stood against the teachings of Jesus and were thus unholy. This is perhaps why Blake chose to explore the human capacity for rejecting God, especially in the exercise of maintaining personal wealth and refusing to help the less-fortunate.



Similarly, Byron also chooses to include a rejection of God and traditional Christianity in his poem. Byron writes, 'Better to hold the sparkling grape, than nurse the earth-worm's slimy brood'. Byron's use of grotesque imagery in 'earth-worm' and 'slimy' certainly has negative connotations. We can tell this is a reference to traditional, Anglo-Christian burials as 'earth-worm' suggests that a body will be in the ground. By using such grotesque imagery, Byron ~~attacks~~ ~~with~~ defies typical Christian beliefs of ^{the} sanctity of life and death, as this effectively devalues the corpse and corrupts the peaceful Christian view of death. Furthermore, in the skull 'holding the sparkling grape', Byron is suggesting that it is 'better' for the skull to be used as a way of drinking alcohol than to be buried in the traditional Christian way. Not only is this a rejection of Christianity in it again violating ideas of ^{the} sanctity of life and death, it is further a rejection of the religion as ~~the~~ imagery relating to alcohol ('sparkling grape' implies wine) is used, with drunkenness being seen as a sin in Biblical terms. Byron perhaps chose to choose such a message for his poem as a result of his own dislike for organised religion. Although supposedly being a deist (perhaps as a result of his nanny that raised him, who was fervently Christian), Byron was known to reject the traditional structures and traditions of the Church. Generally being





a rebellious, anti-establishment figure in addition to this, it is fairly clear that Byron's beliefs are reflected in his work. Where both Blake and Byron do emphasise such a rejection of religion in their poems, it is only Byron that portrays this as a fairly good, liberating experience, while Blake is shown to be heavily against it; most likely a result of their contrasting religious beliefs.

Blake is also shown to display a certain level of hopelessness as present within human nature. Blake writes, 'And their sun does never shine, and their fields are bleak and bare, and their ways are fill'd with thorns'. This polysynthetic listing creates a sense that the poverty and misery of England's poor is monotonous and never-ending, implying a degree of hopelessness in their situations. Blake also uses natural metaphors, such as 'sun does never shine', 'fields are bleak', and 'their ways are fill'd with thorns'. The darkness inferred with 'never shine', and 'bleak' and 'thorns' all carry with them negative connotations, once again suggesting a hopelessness that is reinforced with 'never' and, at the end of the stanza, 'eternal winter'; such techniques further implying that there is no hope in their infinite struggle. Blake perhaps chose to emphasise this sense of hopelessness due to his radical liberal beliefs. In a time in which conservatism dominated the sphere of political thinking, Blake was defiant





in his membership of underground political circles that included thinkers like William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, who followed a doctrine of equality and liberty. ~~His~~ Such thinking perhaps inspired Blake to focus on the plight of the 18th Century English poor in his poem, doing so by emphasising the hopelessness of their situation and ~~thereby~~ thus perhaps advocating for political reform.

Byron's poem can also be likened to 'Holy Thursday' in its slightly hopeless tone, although it is more of an advocacy for nihilism than liberal political goals. Byron writes, 'Whoe once my wit, perchance, hath stor'd, in aid of others' let me shine, and when, alas! our brains are gone, what nobler substitute than wine?' This rhetorical question, in its 'substitute' of our brains for wine, creates ~~and not~~ a satirical and humorous tone. This lightens the tone of the poem in its exploration of such a grave topic (death⁹⁰), ~~suggesting~~ perhaps suggesting that we should not value life to such an extent that we take it seriously, which may be interpreted as again devaluing the human experience. Furthermore, the structure of the poem, with four quatrains and a regular, ABAB rhyme scheme, may suggest the consistent and unmovable nature of life, further advocating for a sense of hopelessness and a reduction in meaning of human life. This aids the conveyance of the idea of 'memento mori'



(or 'remember you will die') ~~is~~ that is seemingly present throughout the whole poem, which can be interpreted as an argument used by Byron to advocate nihilism, ~~is~~ and as a result, justifying hedonism. Byron perhaps chose to convey such a message due to his own hedonistic tendencies. Byron was known to drink and party constantly, being ~~very~~ very open in his sexuality as well (which was especially accepted in the conservative, religious society in which he lived). Writing this poem at the age of 19, Byron was certainly living a life of hedonism at this stage in his life. This can be reflected in his lack of traditional morals and his rejection of ~~traditional~~ Christian beliefs put forward in his poem, typical and can be used to explain the ideas of 'memento mori' and 'carpe diem' that his poem appears to suggest. This is of course different to the use of hedonism put forward in 'Holy Thursday'. While Byron embraces hedonism in life as ~~is~~ a joyful and relieving excuse for hedonistic behaviour, Blake uses it as a melancholy example for the plight of the oppressed poor in 18th Century England, politicising his message in a way that the 19 year-old Byron does not do to nearly such an extent.





Student C

12 Explore the ways in which personal reflection is presented in *Sonnet on the Sea* by Keats and in **one** other poem. You must relate your discussion to relevant contextual factors.



personal reflection	
Sonnet	Turn - Petrarchan sonnet
<p>power of nature - eternal whisperings personified</p> <p>103 Edmund 1859</p> <p>Plentitude and multitude</p> <p>'Clubs twice seen</p> <p>103 'O for a life of sensations'</p> <p>'Smallest shell'</p> <p>'Shadowy sound' <u>Silence</u></p> <p>'gentle murmuring'</p>	<p>→ solace and comfort in nature</p> <p>103 Introspective</p> <p>increase pace</p> <p>Interjection and exclamation - high</p> <p>Stab at emotion</p> <p>typical tone - personal reflection on nature.</p> <p>'least' after</p>
R. A. C. A.	
<p>Crised</p> <p>gondas time</p> <p>'sun' 'lighter up heaven' / dark jux</p> <p>111 my = repetition surrounding sense of emotion</p> <p>Romantic escape from mundane</p> <p>111 B. B. - rigidity, formality of scene of grief</p>	<p>Defying Victorian ideals of remembering man forever</p> <p>forgive if I forget thee</p> <p>weaned my young soul from yearning</p> <p>103 Eliza Bell</p> <p>lexical cluster of water.</p>



Keats ~~not~~ personal reflection muses on the power of nature. He describes how the 'eternal whisperings' of the sea surround the desolate shores. Immediately Keats personification of the sea and use of a slight onomatopoeia gives the reader an almost pervasive presence of ~~the~~ the sea's power. Like many other Romantic poets, Keats saw the wondrous power of nature. In 1757 Edmund Burke concluded the sublime was the feeling of wonder, terror and awe. In this poem, Keats uses the typical Romantic notion of the sublime to reflect on the grace and power of the sea. Keats gives a sense of plenitude as he describes how the 'mighty Swell' of the sea would 'glut twice ten thousand caves'. Once again, Keats muses





the power of nature with a hyperbolic statement of the multitude of water. However, Keats also dwells on the 'gentle temper' of the sea which will 'scarcely' move the 'very smallest shell'.

The use of simile creates a sensuous reality of the sea. Keats wrote in a letter in 1818 exclaiming, 'Oh for a life of sensations rather than thoughts!'. The reflection on the unapproachable synthesis of power and grace of the sea conforms to Romantic notions of the sublime as Keats encourages readers to admire both contrasting states of the sea.

Furthermore, Keats not only encourages the admiration of nature but also displays how it can offer solace and comfort. Keats uses the structure of a Petrarchan sonnet, an Italian poem in iambic pentameter which often is centred around love. Keats uses the structure and the turn of the sonnet to increase the pace and the subject matter of the poem. Keats exclaims 'Oh yes ye!' at the beginning of the turn. This sudden interjection and exclamation symbolise a high state of personal emotion as Keats displays to his readers how if their 'eyeballs' were 'lax'd and tir'd' they

