

## The Prelude "Skating"

### Theme(s) and Paraphrase:

The major themes in the poem are: nature, celebration of the sense of freedom, childhood memories and solitude. The beauty of nature in the winter is the focal point of the entire poem. The sense of outdoor freedom is clearly traced throughout the lines. The entire experience tackles the memories of Wordsworth's childhood. By the end of the poem, isolation and solitude are glorified since both open a space for nature contemplation.

The poem is a short summary of the poet's early years of boyhood while he grew up in the Lake District of northern England. The poet decides to visit his childhood and leaves behind city life with its frustration and complication. The poem revolves around winter ice skating at night on frozen lakes. The sun sets, and it is time for children to get inside cottages. Nevertheless, they ignore the logical demand to find shelter from the cold and the darkness. They continue their exhilarating outdoor joy in the embrace of wintry nature. The moment represents true happiness and unmistakable freedom, "a time of rapture."

Like a wild "horse," the poet skates "along the polished ice in games." Nature is alive and joins the children their noisy play: "the precipices rang loud; / The leafless trees and every icy crag / Tinkled like iron." Tired of the noisy games of other children, the poet "resigns himself" to a solitary spot to reflect upon the charm of nature. He contemplates the "sparkling" "stars," the "orange sky" and

all natural phenomena surrounding him. In the "silent bay," he begins a skating race with a star and leaves his body to the wind like other children. When he stops wheeling, he feels that "cliffs/wheeled by [him]". The poet feels the motion of earth in "her diurnal round".

The movement of cliffs gets "feebler and feebler", tranquility prevails and the poet watches the magnificence of nature. The poem ends with a moment of true connection with the world of nature.

### Figures of Speech and Language:

The poem abounds in figures of speech which are marked by their originality and uniqueness. "The cottage windows" are metaphorically likened to caring mothers who "summon" their children to get indoors with the coming of darkness. The image sets a comparison between indoor and outdoor life. The children's disregard for their call emphasizes their appreciation of outdoor life in the company of nature. To shed light on the poet's sense of unrestrained freedom, a simile is employed in which free skating on ice is equated to a running "untired horse". In addition to that, the children are likened to a pack of hounds chasing a "hunted hare". The image depicts their wild unlimited pleasure in nature. The companions "flew" like birds with a resounding "din". In reply, all natural elements like trees, crags and hills share the children their play with "an alien sound". Although the image can be interpreted as a personification, the poet keeps the singularity of nature through using the word "alien".

A paradox is clearly seen between "the tumultuous throng" of children and the poet's retreat to "a silent bay". The contradiction affirms how Wordsworth is different from other children. He prefers the solitude that enhances the sensibility of the poet and enables him to directly contact nature. Away from the noise, the poet races the star. The personification likens the star to a child who flees to share the poet his play. In "glassy plain," the poet uses a metaphor that equals the plain in its icy outlook to glass. Near the poem end, nature pulses with life. The cliffs and the entire earth are likened to skaters wheeling round. The personification affirms that nature shares the poet his pleasure and unlimited sense of freedom. The mode of the poem changes in the last lines. In contradiction to all the excitement of skating throughout the poem; by the concluding line, the poet experiences utmost tranquility. A final simile compares the sense of tranquility to a calm "dreamless sleep". The poet is left to enjoy a solitary interaction with a living natural scene.

## Lecture 1 "Skating"

The critical analysis of "Skating" includes the following points:

1. An introduction = Write some biographical information on the poet. Wordsworth's biography is available in the following pages: 36 and 148. You may use also online sources.

2. Themes and paraphrase: Both are available in the papers. ~~you can find the prelude in the papers.~~

3. Form, rhythm and ~~var~~ rhyme scheme:

The Prelude is an epic poem written in 13 books. The epic consists of stanzas of variable length. The excerpt, "Skating", is one complete stanza which includes 39 lines. The stanza is written in blank verse (المشتر المرسل). Most lines are composed of iambic pentameter [explain]: "Till <sup>①</sup> all/was <sup>②</sup> tran/quil <sup>③</sup> as/  
a <sup>④</sup> dreamless <sup>⑤</sup> sleep."

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## Lecture 2 "Skating"

The three remaining points in the critical analysis are as follows:

4. Figures of speech and language: Both are discussed in the papers. You are welcome to add more figures of speech, but you have to support your point of view with evidence from the poem.

5. The features of Romanticism in the poem:

Wordsworth writes poems against the common Neoclassical school which elevated form on content. This feature appears in the poem form and simple theme which stresses childhood and nature. "Skating" celebrates imagination, emotion, freedom, subjectivity and individualism. Other Romantic features that can be traced include spontaneity and love of nature. Nature in the poem moves from a background to a theme. Music and melody are essential to Romantic poets. Both appear in the poem through sweet internal music.

6. Conclusion: End the analysis with a brief conclusion of your own.

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## Lecture 3

### William Blake: "A Poison Tree"

- Read the poem (page 201). You may need the following meanings for difficult words:

wrath = anger                      foe = enemy

Sunned: to provide with sunlight

wiles: evil tricks

bore: past of bear = produce

beheld: saw

veiled: covered with darkness

outstretched: dead

- The poem critical analysis:

1. Introduction: Blake's biography is available in the paragraph under the "Introduction" page 200 or page 26. Online sources also can benefit you.

2. Themes and paraphrase:

The major theme is the consequences of suppressing anger. Other themes include: revenge, evil, death, fear, enmity, greed, and deceit. The paraphrase is given in the book page 201 under the title "Summary". If difficult, study the part under the title "Analysis of the poem" pages 202-203.

3. Form, rhythm and rhyme scheme:

The poem consists of four quatrains. The



poet employs this simple form to help as many readers to understand it. The church and the society at that time encourage politeness and calm emotions. Expressing anger was not accepted. Blake finds these attitudes against human nature. So he uses a simple form to discuss his profound philosophy. The meter is variable.

Iambic tetrameter is used in lines (2, 4, 14 and 16):  
"I <sup>1</sup>told/<sup>2</sup>my <sup>3</sup>wrath,<sup>4</sup>/my <sup>5</sup>wrath/<sup>6</sup>did <sup>7</sup>end." [Explain what is meant by iambic tetrameter]. The remaining lines are written in trochaic trimeter with an extra stressed syllable:

"Night <sup>1</sup>and/<sup>2</sup>morning/<sup>3</sup>with my/<sup>4</sup>tears." [Explain trochaic trimeter]. The poem narrates the story of the poet and his enemy, so it is written in two rhythms. Iamb is the opposite of trochee; both illustrate the theme of enmity. The extra syllable in some lines disturbs the poem and implies the poet's unresolved anger. The rhyme scheme is aabb. Opposed couplets refer to the poet versus his enemy.

## Lecture 4

### William Blake = "A Poison Tree"

- The rest of the critical analysis includes:

#### 4. Figures of speech and language:

The extended metaphor of the poison tree controls the whole poem. The suppressed anger is likened to a tree which "grow[s]" in the poet's heart. "[T]ears" are compared to water that irrigates the tree. Deceiving "smiles" and "wiles" represent the sun beams that help the tree grow. The outcome of anger is likened to "an apple bright" that his enemy "stole". The poet uses many paradoxes to illustrate the ideas of deceit and hidden revenge like "friend" vs. "foe", "night" vs. "morning"... [Give more examples]. Natural anger is encouraged while suppressed anger is discouraged. This idea is illustrated through symbolism: the poison tree is a symbol of unresolved anger, and the apple is a symbol of the harmful outcome of anger. The word "garden" is a metaphor for the place in our heart where we let our anger grow. Antithesis is used between the second and fourth lines through using two balanced paradoxical sentences. Internal music is created by alliteration [Give examples] to make the poem memorable.

The language of the poem is simple. Many opposed words are used. The word "and" is repeated eight times to give a sense of development to the poet's anger. The word "wrath" appears four times to focus attention





to it. Vegetation and growth words are the medium of the poem [Give examples]. Monosyllabic words suggest the quick growth of the tree. Longer words in the last line slow down the rhythm to imply death and end of revenge.

5. Features of Romanticism: Try to imitate my discussion of this point in "Skating".

6. Conclusion: Write a brief summary of your discussion in a short paragraph.