



1. Poem Details

- Title: The School Boy
- Author: William Blake (1757-1827)
- Written / Published: 1789
- Collection: Songs of Innocence
- Form: Lyric poem with six stanzas, written in regular rhyme and metre.
- Theme: Criticism of formal schooling; joy of childhood and harmony with nature.

2. Literary Period

- Age / Period: Romantic Era (late 18th century - early 19th century)
- Characteristics of the Period:
- Emphasis on nature, emotion, imagination, and

individual experience

- Reaction against industrialisation and rationalism of the Enlightenment
- Celebration of innocence and the natural world

3. Key Points of Blake's Poetic Theory

- Primacy of Imagination and Emotion:
- Poetry should reflect inner feelings and spontaneous emotion rather than rigid rules.
- Criticism of Institutions:
- Blake opposed oppressive structures like schools, churches, and governments that restrict freedom.
- Innocence vs Experience:
- Humans pass through innocence (childhood, joy, freedom) and experience (adult knowledge, oppression, sorrow).
- *Songs of Innocence* - focuses on joy, purity, and freedom.
- *Songs of Experience* - explores corruption, suffering, and societal oppression.

4. Nature as Moral and Spiritual Guide:

- Nature is a source of moral wisdom and emotional health, unlike artificial institutions.

5. Use of Symbolism and Allegory:

- Blake often uses birds, plants, seasons, and light as symbols for freedom, growth, and joy.

4. Key Themes / Points in The School Boy

- Childhood should be joyful, free, and in harmony with nature.
- Formal schooling is oppressive, joyless, and destructive.
- The poem uses seasonal and botanical imagery as metaphors for life stages.
- Emphasizes the long-term consequences of suppressing childhood happiness

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

1. The opening lines present a summer morning as a symbol of natural joy, freedom, and freshness in a child's life.
2. The child's love for rising early shows spontaneous happiness and energy, typical of innocence.
3. Birds singing on every tree symbolise freedom, harmony, and abundance in nature.
4. The distant huntsman's horn is a soft pastoral sound, representing human activity in harmony with nature.
5. The skylark symbolises joy and spiritual freedom, singing with the child and showing unity between nature and human life.
6. The exclamation "O! what sweet company" highlights the child's delight and suggests that nature itself offers true companionship.
 - **Imagery (Auditory & Visual)**
Birds singing, horn sounding, skylark singing.
 - **Alliteration & Consonance**
"School in a **s**ummer **m**orn"
 - **Symbolism**
Summer morning - joy and freedom.
Skylark - natural happiness.
 - **Exclamation (Ecphosis)**
"O! what sweet company" expresses spontaneous emotion.

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.

1. The conjunction "But" creates a sharp contrast with the earlier joy of the summer morning, signalling a sudden shift from happiness to suffering.
2. Going to school in a summer morning destroys natural joy, suggesting that formal education suppresses a child's instinctive happiness.

3. The exclamation "O! it drives all joy away" emphasises emotional pain and total loss of delight.
4. The phrase "cruel eye outworn" symbolises strict authority figures, such as teachers, whose tired and harsh supervision crushes creativity and freedom.
5. "The little ones" highlights the innocence and vulnerability of children subjected to such treatment.
6. Spending the day "in sighing and dismay" shows exhaustion, fear, and mental suffering, reinforcing Blake's criticism of an oppressive education system.

- **Antithesis / Contrast**

Summer joy vs school oppression.

- **Exclamation (Ecphonesis)**

"O! it drives all joy away".

- **Metonymy**

"Cruel eye" stands for the oppressive authority of school.

- **Imagery (Emotional)**

"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.

1. The exclamation "Ah!" expresses sorrow and emotional fatigue, indicating the child's deep distress.
2. "Drooping sit" suggests physical tiredness as well as mental and emotional depression caused by forced schooling.
3. "Many an anxious hour" highlights prolonged mental strain, fear, and pressure rather than meaningful learning.
4. The inability to take delight in books shows that joyless teaching kills curiosity and love for knowledge.
5. "Learning's bower", a metaphor comparing education to a pleasant garden or shelter, ironically shows how learning has lost its beauty and comfort.
6. The phrase "worn thro' with the dreary shower" symbolises continuous pressure and monotony, suggesting that repeated stress exhausts the child's spirit.

- **Transferred Epithet**

"anxious hour" (anxiety belongs to the child, not the hour).

- **Metaphor**

"learning's bower" (learning compared to a shaded garden).

- **Consonance**

"dreary shower".

- **Imagery**

Physical and emotional exhaustion.

**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?

1. The rhetorical question highlights the natural contradiction between freedom and confinement.
2. The bird "born for joy" symbolises a being meant for freedom, happiness, and natural expression.
3. The cage represents restrictive institutions like school, which suppress natural instincts and creativity.
4. The comparison suggests that forced discipline destroys joy, just as imprisonment silences a bird's song.
5. The child is directly paralleled with the bird, emphasising innocence and vulnerability.
6. "Fears annoy" refers to constant anxiety, punishment, and pressure within oppressive schooling.
7. "Droop his tender wing" symbolises loss of confidence, energy, and emotional vitality.
8. "Youthful spring" stands for childhood joy, growth, and potential, which are forgotten under fear and repression.

- **Rhetorical Question (Erotesis)**

"How can the bird...?", "How can a child...?"

- **Metaphor**

Bird in a cage = child in oppressive education.

- **Symbolism**

Cage - restriction.

Youthful spring - childhood.

O! father & mother, if buds are nip'd,

And blossoms blown away,

And if the tender plants are strip'd

Of their joy in the springing day,

By sorrow and cares dismay.

1. The exclamation "O!" conveys urgency and emotional appeal, showing the child's plea to parents.
2. Addressing father and mother highlights parental responsibility in shaping a child's growth.
3. "Buds" symbolise children at an early stage of life, full of potential.
4. "Nipp'd" suggests damage caused prematurely, implying early suppression of joy and freedom.
5. "Blossoms" represent developing talents and happiness, which are destroyed before maturity.
6. "Tender plants" emphasise children's fragility and need for care and nourishment.

7. Being “stripp’d of their joy” shows emotional deprivation caused by fear and strict discipline.
8. “Springing day” symbolises childhood, the natural season of growth and happiness.
9. “Sorrow and care’s dismay” represent anxiety, pressure, and oppressive control that ruin natural development.

- **Apostrophe**

Direct address to “father and mother”.

- **Metaphor (Botanical)**

Buds, blossoms, tender plants = children.

- **Symbolism**

Springing day - early childhood.

- **Consonance**

“sorrow and care”.

- **Exclamation (Ecphrasis)**

Emotional urgency.

**How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear?**

1. The lines are framed as rhetorical questions, expressing doubt and concern rather than expecting an answer.
2. “Summer” symbolises maturity, happiness, and the fulfilment of life.
3. “Arise in joy” suggests a positive, emotionally healthy adulthood.
4. “Summer fruits” represent the results of proper growth—achievement, wisdom, and moral development.
5. Blake implies that without a joyful and nurturing childhood, such fulfilment is impossible.
6. The lines reinforce the central idea that destroying childhood happiness prevents future success and contentment.

- **Rhetorical Question (Erotesis)**

Questions emphasising impossibility of joy.

- **Extended Metaphor (Seasonal)**

Summer - maturity

Fruits - achievements

- **Symbolism**

Summer – growth and development