

Blake's Companion Poems Activity

Songs of Innocence

"The Chimney Sweeper"

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved: so I said,
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

And so he was quiet; and that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight, -
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

And by came an angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds and sport in the wind;
And the angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.

Songs of Experience

"The Chimney Sweeper"

A little black thing among the snow,
Crying! 'weep! weep!' in notes of woe!
'Where are thy father and mother? Say!' -
'They are both gone up to the church to pray.

'Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smiled among the winter's snow,
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

'And because I am happy and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and His priest and king,
Who made up a heaven of our misery.'

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer the following questions on your own sheet of paper. Be sure to answer in complete sentences and to use details from each of the poems.

1. Explain the subject of this pair of poems and the difference between the two.
2. What details about the poem from the *Songs of Innocence* indicate the state of "innocence"? Examine the poem's tone, images, symbols, etc.
3. What details about the poem from the *Songs of Experience* indicate the state of "experience"? Examine the poem's tone, images, symbols, etc.
4. Often in his poems from the *Songs of Experience*, Blake criticizes political, social, and/or religious injustices. What criticism does Blake offer with this poem from the *Songs of Experience*?

Blake's Companion Poems Activity

Songs of Innocence

"Holy Thursday"

'Twas on a holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two and two, in red, and blue, and green:
Grey-headed beadles walked before, with wands as white as
snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames waters flow.

O what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit, with radiance all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunders the seats of heaven among:
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor.
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.

Songs of Experience

"Holy Thursday"

Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land, -
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine,
And their fields are bleak and
bare,
And their ways are filled with
thorns,
It is eternal winter there.

For where'er the sun does shine,
And where'er the rain does fall,
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind appal.

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3. What details about the poem from the *Songs of Experience* indicate the state of "experience"? Examine the poem's tone, images, symbols, etc.
4. Often in his poems from the *Songs of Experience*, Blake criticizes political, social, and/or religious injustices. What criticism does Blake offer with this poem from the *Songs of Experience*?

Blake's Companion Poems Activity

Songs of Innocence

"Infant Joy"

'I have no name;
I am but two days old.'
What shall I call thee?
'I happy am,
Joy is my name.'
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy, but two days old.
Sweet joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while;
Sweet joy befall thee!

Songs of Experience

"Infant Sorrow"

My mother groan'd, my father wept,
Into the dangerous world I leapt;
Helpless, naked, piping loud,
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my swaddling-bands,
Bound and weary, I thought best
To sulk upon my mother's breast.

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3. What details about the poem from the *Songs of Experience* indicate the state of "experience"? Examine the poem's tone, images, symbols, etc.
4. Often in his poems from the *Songs of Experience*, Blake makes some sort of statement. What statement does Blake make with this poem from the *Songs of Experience*?

Blake's Companion Poems Activity

Songs of Innocence

"The Little Boy Lost"

'Father, father, where are you going?
O do not walk so fast!
Speak, father, speak to your little boy,
Or else I shall be lost.'

The night was dark, no father was there,
The child was wet with dew;
The mire was deep, and the child did weep,
And away the vapour flew.

"The Little Boy Found"

The little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wand'ring light,
Began to cry, but God ever nigh,
Appeard like his father in white.

He kissed the child & by the hand led
And to his mother brought,
Who in sorrow pale thro' the lonely dale
Her little boy weeping sought.

Songs of Experience

"The Little Boy Lost"

'Nought loves another as itself,
Nor venerates another so,
Nor is it possible to thought
A greater than itself to know.

'And, father, how can I love you
Or any of my brothers more?
I love you like the little bird
That picks up crumbs around the door.'

The Priest sat by and heard the child;
In trembling zeal he seized his hair,
He led him by his little coat,
And all admired his priestly care.

And standing on the altar high,
'Lo, what a fiend is here!' said he:
'One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy mystery.'

The weeping child could not be heard,
The weeping parents wept in vain:
They stripped him to his little shirt,
And bound him in an iron chain,

And burned him in a holy place
Where many had been burned before;
The weeping parents wept in vain.
Are such things done on Albion's shore?

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3. What details about the poem from the *Songs of Experience* indicate the state of "experience"? Examine the poem's tone, images, symbols, etc.
4. Often in his poems from the *Songs of Experience*, Blake criticizes political, social, and/or religious injustices. What criticism does Blake offer with this poem from the *Songs of Experience*?