

# **The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats Study Guide**

**The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats by William Butler  
Yeats**

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# **Book 1, The Collected Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 1, Crossways & The Rose**

## **Book 1, The Collected Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 1, Crossways & The Rose Summary**

This book is the first of a set of volumes. This volume is dedicated to the author's poetry. The poetic works were written on both sides of the threshold of the 19th and 20th centuries, 'AD.' The poems are further divided into a small number of major categories. The first of these is Lyrical. The summary chapter covers approximately 50 pages of text found in the book. In this case, this covers those poems within the Lyrical set that come under the headings 'Crossways,' which is labeled 1889 and 'The Rose,' which is dated 1893. Readers should be aware that while the pagination may not be exact, the poem titles and dates should eliminate the vast majority of confusion.

The very first characteristic that the majority of readers will notice is that the poem is written in 'real verse.' In the first poem, 'The Happy Shepherd,' the idea is presented that words are powerful. The other principle presented is that the subjective sense of truth is more significant than are models of objective truth. This reveals a staunch 'poetic bias' in contrast to the 'scientific bias' which can also be termed the 'analytic / objective bias' as regards the truth of life. In terms of philosophy and religion and human attitude and behavior the difference is marked and has longstanding consequences. The second poem entitled 'The Sad Shepherd' is about the relationship between Sorrow, personified and his friend, that Sad Shepherd.

## **Book 1, The Collected Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 1, Crossways & The Rose Analysis**

All in all, there are 16 poems included in the section called 'Crossways.' The author has included more than one classical image in these. The first is the shepherd. Another of these is that of the Hindu Indian, especially as a romantic. After that, the images return to European types, and even more so those of the British. This includes # 8 Ephemera. This is a poem about sorrow and anxiety associated with "waning love." There is a male and a female role in the poem. The male assures the female that new loves await them both, and recommends that they do not mourn thanks to this knowledge.

The Madness of King Goll begins from the perspective of the King. The topic is his reign, his warriors and his lifestyle. He writes of participating in battles and of travels. He makes a reference to a strange energy within himself - "a whirling and a wandering fire" (p. 14). Then the King turned into a wanderer in both woods and towns. The next poem



is The Stolen Child. The first scene is a location in the countryside. Then there is a reference to dancing and people flirting with one another. After that, fishing and conversation are described. There is a 'chorus' in the poem: meaning a repetition. It is the calling away of a human child, to run off with a fairy.

The final three poems in this set are 'ballads.' The Ballad of Father O'Hart is the first of these. This is about the having and the loss of lands. It is about a race of people. Here race is not defined by skin color at all, but more by nationality. It is about a man who makes dowries for his daughters and how they go up in the world through marriage. Meanwhile, a priest named Father O'Hart lives in poverty. The priest was well loved by the people. He died at age 94 and was mourned greatly as he had been well loved. The poem is also about the Irish tradition of keening.

There are 22 poems under the listing 'The Rose.' Included are 'To the Rose upon the rood of Time,' 'The Rose of the World,' 'The Rose of Peace,' and 'The Rose of Battle.' During the first the author brings up themes and images that are quintessential in the ancient history of the British and Irish. The reason is that Druidry was the predominant religion and a part of the social order on the islands for a good 1,000 years.



# **Book 1, The Collected Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 2, The Wind Among the Reeds & In The Seven Woods**

## **Book 1, The Collected Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 2, The Wind Among the Reeds & In The Seven Woods Summary**

These are the next two categories of poems that fall under the heading of Lyrical writings in the volume of poetry. The first poem in this batch is a testimony to the archaic Irish imagery that lives on, or that dwells ghostlike through the psyche of the people of the island nation. It is called The Hosting of the Sidhe. The author writes of some warrior, perhaps with 'flaming red hair' and/or with the mighty warrior's passions...calling, calling like some temptation to the young men of his generation to come away! He has written ancient names, which conjure a half-buried type of pride of tribe and place in the people who have been urged to consider themselves lucky to be in subjugation to the English as part of Great Britain. Readers have a sense of a courageous man with windswept hair and reddened cheeks on the grassy plains of the North Atlantic country. The Sidhe is a distinctively Irish form of ghost or wraith. This type of energy recurs in the poems entitled, 'The Unappeasable Host,' and 'the Host of the Air.'

These include works that revolve around one of life's major emotions- that of love, as in 'The Lover tells of the Rose in his Heart,' and 'The Lover mourns for the Loss of Love,' 'He gives his Beloved certain Rhymes,' 'The Lover asks for Forgiveness because of his Many Moods.' Such titles are mere suggestions as to what the author has embraced during this batch of poems.

Folk heroes such as 'Aengus' are found in this group of poems. These figures and Irish traditions are slipped in amongst the selection of poems in which love remains a main theme. When it is not the lover and his moods as mentioned above, then it about the beloved.

## **Book 1, The Collected Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 2, The Wind Among the Reeds & In The Seven Woods Analysis**

Many forms of love are discussed: maternal love, distant love, romantic love are all included along with the love shared between friends. These themes are reflected in the poems' titles: He tells of a Valley full of Lovers, He thinks of Those who have spoken



Evil of his Beloved, Maid Quiet, and then The Lover pleads with his Friend for Old Friends.

The next section is entitled In The Seven Woods, which is also the name of the first poem therein. It is quite short, at just 14 lines long. It consists entirely of one stanza. This is one of the relatively few of the poems so far that doesn't rhyme. The meter is not uniform throughout the poem, which is also less common for this artist. The meter ranges from pentameter - which is a 'five count' of paired syllables, and includes hexameter as well. There are also 'half feet' with respect to the poetic meter. The poem that follows exhibits rhyming couplets. Many of the poems use quatrains instead, which is when rhyme falls in alternating lines.

The editors have arranged the poems so that they have been numbered. Poem # 85 is about old men. Their rather wretched condition is noted and mainly they are observing the transient nature of life. The poem is only 9 lines long and does rhyme, mainly by couplet.

The Green Helmet and Other Poems is the third group to be covered by this summary chapter. The reason for this really is the number of pages of the original text that are being summarized. By the time readers arrive at this point, the author is writing from the dawn of the 20th century. In this sense, the compendium of writings is artificial.



# **Book 1, The Complete Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 3, Responsibilities & Wild Swans**

## **Book 1, The Complete Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 3, Responsibilities & Wild Swans Summary**

The work continues. By now, readers have been able to develop a sense for the author's voice. He is one of the greatest of poets of the modern era within the European tradition of verse forms. Of course, his brilliance is also a source of Irish and British pride. Readers will have found so far a few things. 1) these poems can be taken individually or in groups. When taken this way, the work makes a great coffee table book for a living room. A moment's break between tasks, a commercial break during television viewing or while a loved one is engaged on the telephone are all brief time periods when reading one or two of these poems would bring a joyful experience for the right amount of time. 2) one can learn to write poetry using proper meter and rhyme by memorizing what William Butler Yeats did, and then by imitating his techniques. 3) Yeats works can be culled for particular themes. 4) The poetry can be used for university studies in this form of literary artwork. 5) Yeats poems offer another link in the bridge between the history of poetry and poetry as a modern, vibrant, living artistic form.

The poem 'The Grey Rock' contextualizes the poem itself but also the world of poetry in general. Yeats addresses the other poets and asserts that he can tell quite a story himself. Here, Yeats conjures up all love of the epic, the glamor of conflict and of warfare. He refers to ancient Kings. The vision of a room full of drunken and passed out men is transformed when he describes them as sated by being full of wine and of meat. How much of this is based in feeling and how much in the atmosphere of the moment is not always clear. The tendency is to think that much of it is the magic of ambiance: the costume party, the good cheer of pleasure, or revelry, with easiness and the psychological stimulation of monumental history and greatness all mixed together with fullness, flavor and wine. What such a vision is for men and what it is to women may be dissimilar.

## **Book 1, The Complete Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 3, Responsibilities & Wild Swans Analysis**

Later, in the section known as The Wild Swans at Coole, there is a poem entitled On Woman. Here, the author extols the virtues of womankind, particularly in relation to men. Great wisdom can be found, and has been developed, according to the author, by the relating of a man to a woman or to women. He refers to King Solomon.



Another one of the many fantastic poems here in the book is entitled Men improve with the Years. This poem is only one stanza but it has a variety of rhymes built into it.

There is no possible way to cover each of the poems in this book in the limited pages of the summary. However, in each chapter, a few will be singled out for further investigation. The poem #159 is entitled On Woman. In this poem he writes about how the friendship and wisdom that men can glean from associating with women is very important. This poem is one stanza. In this case, The Fisherman is poem #160 in this compendium. This poem is all of one stanza and is 40 lines long. He has written the entire piece in trimeter. Trimeter means that there are three poetic metric 'feet' in each and every line.

Readers need to understand that sometimes the poetic meter may appear to be 'off' because there is a difference in the way that the words are pronounced where the author wrote and where one is. During the poem the Fisherman the author writes "To write for my own race" he is referring to the Irish.





# **Book 1, The Complete Poems of WB Years: Chapter 4, The Tower & Winding Stairs**

## **Book 1, The Complete Poems of WB Years: Chapter 4, The Tower & Winding Stairs Summary**

There are two sections handled here. The first one, called The Tower will be included in its entirety. The second one will not, because its contents span across the fifty page norm for material covered by a chapter of the summary. The first poem bears the same title as the section of text. This item has been numbered 205 by the editors. In addition to this, readers do well to know that it one of Yeats' longer poems, running into a few pages of length.

The Tower is divided into several sections, each contains a set of stanzas. The first stanza has a singular structure. This opens with four lines and then proceeds into more typical stanzas. There are three major divisions. In the opening, the author cries out- he is in some kind of despair. His mind flits to longings of physical pursuits but is reigned in by the call of more purely intellectual stimulation. He writes of standing upon battlements, most likely ruins from a bygone era, and sending forth his imagination. A few stanzas further along, the author creates another strong image. This time, the characters within the story are intoxicated. He writes that their minds have gone so far astray that they confuse sunlight and moonlight. Anyone with any sense at all can easily just how far gone they really are to get confused in this particular manner. Later, women as romantic figures enter into the picture. He asks, a few stanzas later, whether a man is apt to dwell more in thought about a woman he has lost or one with whom he is actually involved. Following that the rhythm of the poetry changes. He writes in shorter lines and delves into the matter of writing his will. Here it grows clear that he means the will of his life rather than his last will and testament.

## **Book 1, The Complete Poems of WB Years: Chapter 4, The Tower & Winding Stairs Analysis**

The author shows his true colors during the course of the works, which is clearly intentional. He parades his knowledge of the Western Classical tradition which stems from the Greeks of 2000-2500 years ago. This is a healthy side effect of his education. Another one of the ways that this appears is that he repeatedly conjures up specifically Irish images. While this may not seem like much to contemporary readers outside of Ireland, for those who are connected with the dynamics of submission and dominance within Ireland, it means a lot. The Irish have had many struggles with the English as well as amongst themselves.



His poem *Memory* is extremely brief, at four lines. It is about fleeting beauty with regard to women. Immediately, the editors have followed it up with a much longer poem. This one is entitled *Her Praise*. Here, the author writes of a woman's virtues. Readers will be pleased. This is not shallow. Here is depth.

After this poem is one called *The People*. Yeats writes of paradox. Those who serve their fellows the most seem left in obscurity as unknowns. He also refers to changing circumstances and how he noticed that not everyone would stay with him though his situation had changed. Much of the time, the poem is not about himself but there are moments when it is. This poem would be excellent for analysis in a poetry class.



# **Book 1, The Complete William Butler Yeats : Chapter 5, Sailing to Byzantium**

## **Book 1, The Complete William Butler Yeats : Chapter 5, Sailing to Byzantium Summary**

The author has used more than one meter in the execution of this poem. Here, execution simply means 'to carry out.' Yeats wrote 17 stanzas all as a part of this poem. The Irish poetic genius has used trimeter, quieter and even pentameter lines in the poem. This adds to the complexity of the overall form. The inexperienced may not recognize this for what it is. To those who have had no formal training in poetry, they may only notice that it sounds good. Those who know better will be able to discern one aspect of the poem from another. The stanzas are internally consistent with respect to both rhyme and meter. The differences occur in parts of the poem. The Tower begins with four lines that do not rhyme and end with a question mark. Following this, the rest of the first stanza has lines with alternating rhymes. Every other line rhymes. Every fifth line introduces a new set of words that rhyme: the first rhyme in the poem is 'fanatical with impossible.' This is obviously an imperfect rhyme. It is coupled together with 'eye and fly,' which is a perfect auditory rhyme despite the visual distinctions. The fifth and seventh lines finish with 'back & pack.' These are paired with 'spend and friend.' In both cases, the rhyme is perfect. Here, 'perfect rhyme' is a technical literary term. All serious students of poetry will need to know this.

## **Book 1, The Complete William Butler Yeats : Chapter 5, Sailing to Byzantium Analysis**

Readers should be aware that there are times when the meter of a given poem can be slightly unclear. The most common cause of this is that the pronunciation of the poet or poetess differs from that used by the readers. This is a side effect caused by the lack of presence: this is written poetry in contrast to spoken poetry. When the writer presents poetry live, this type of confusion can be eliminated.

There are three subdivisions within this poem. The author extols the virtues of youth, and asserts that Byzantium is no country for the old. Yeats has used perfect alternating rhyme in his creation of the first stanza. The next stanza comes with its own roman numeral and the identical number of 8 lines. Again, alternating rhyme is used. Here, he claims that a magnificent spirit is the only hope that an aged body has, if it to hold any strength or any value. In the third stanza Yeats writes of his own hope for the soul. He asks for something which will replace the aging, and the feelings of animalistic desires which have grown to be more like a burden to him than a joy. He asks for something new and different in flowery language. "...God's holy fire...Consume my heart away...Into the artifice of eternity," (p. 197). There are 14 stanzas prior to the third division. This

third portion of poetry is actually presented as one long stanza. This begins with trimeter. He has also included some '3 and 1/2 meter' lines which develops further into several consecutive lines which sport 4 meter - 'qua-meter.'

Sailing to Byzantium comes immediately before the larger set of poems that are all part of The Tower. The stanzas in each portion of this poem are longer. Unlike the preceding batch, these are composed of rhyming couplets instead of alternating rhyme.



# **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of WB Yeats : Chapter 6, Winding Stairs to Parnell's Funeral**

## **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of WB Yeats : Chapter 6, Winding Stairs to Parnell's Funeral Summary**

This section includes the final poems from The Winding Stairs. The first poem is extremely short: Swift's Epitaph, it is 6 lines long. It consists of two alternating lines of rhyme and is completed by a rhyming couplet. After that, is a 3 stanza poem, each stanza holding 6 lines.

The midst of The Winding Stairs shows how some themes repeat themselves within the work. One of these is Byzantium; this is listed as poem # 260. Here the theme of conquest and of Empire reassert themselves.

The next poem is quite different, it is called The Mother of God. Of course, the poetry does not state this directly. After all, William Butler is certainly no Byzantine, although he writes about this extensively. The first of these poems is 5 stanzas long, whereas the next is three stanzas. During Byzantium, the lines rhyme one right after the next, but only in some cases is the rhyme perfect. The rhyme changes every two or three lines. To show the contrast and the movement: the first stanza's last words are: recede, abed, song, gong, disdains, is, complexities, veins. The lines of the second stanza are: shade, shade, mummy-cloth, path, breath, summon, superhuman, life-in-death. The third stanza of this poem ends with: handiwork, handiwork, bough, crow, aloud, metal, petal, blood. Those of the fourth are: flit, lit, flame, come, leave, dance, trance, sleeve. The final set of rhymes that occur as the last words of each line in Byzantium are: blood, flood, Emperor!, floor, complexity, yet, beget, sea. It may or may not seem strange to readers to focus upon this single aspect of the poet's work, but the truth is that there is educational value in doing so.

## **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of WB Yeats : Chapter 6, Winding Stairs to Parnell's Funeral Analysis**

There is another set of poems within this greater grouping. The collection is entitled: Words for Music Perhaps. This includes: I. Crazy Jane and the Bishop. Here Jane objects to the loss of Jack. Jack has Jane's virginity, so to speak. II. Crazy Jane Reproved- Here Jane protests against the opinions of sailors. III. Crazy Jane in the Day of Judgment. - Jane points out that true love includes taking the bad with the good. Her lover seems to agree. IV. Crazy Jane and Jack the Journeyman- Crazy Jane is deeply affected by the Journeyman's attractiveness. V. Crazy Jane on God- here Jane



emphasizes that "All things remain in God," p. 263)." She refers to Jack as having been wild. VI. Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop- This is rather bawdy. It includes references to deflating bosoms, and the reality that the sexual organs and place of excretion have been strangely designed near to one another in the living body. VII. Crazy Jane Grown Old Looks at the Dancers- Here she reports that "Love is like a lion's tooth," (p.264). VIII. Girl's Song,-Here Jane observes both a young man and an old one. Something about the effects of time and her attraction makes her cry. IX. Young Man's Song- A young man asks himself if he would still love or be interested in a particular woman were she an old crone. This drops him to his knees.



# Book 1, The Complete Poetry of William Butler Yeats : Chapter 7, Love, Tom & Parnell's Funeral

## Book 1, The Complete Poetry of William Butler Yeats : Chapter 7, Love, Tom & Parnell's Funeral Summary

X. Her Anxiety- "Prove that I lie," (p.266). This line occurs twice. This poem is about the physical aspect of beauty. XI. His Confidence-This poem is about undying love, and includes a reference to stone and to a heart rent in two. XII. Love's Lonliness- This poem connects familial relations with sexual love.

XIII. Her Dream: This poem begins with a description of a woman who has cut her hair as a reaction to some event in her love life. Later in the poem her hair disappears and is burned by another woman. The next poem XIV His Bargain is two stanzas long, rather than only one. The stanzas using perfect rhyme in alternating lines.

XV is called Three Things. This poem has 3 stanzas, each of which has six lines. Two lines repeat: "Sang a bone upon the shore," (p. 268) which appears as the second line in each stanza and the last line of each stanza, "A bone wave-whitened and dried in the wind" (p. 268).

Lullaby, XVII. This poem is what it is titled.

After Long Silence, XVIII. This is about the correctness of speaking again after prolonged silence.

Mad as the Mist and Snow, XIX. This is about wild thoughts and madmen.

XX,Those Dancing Days are Gone. This is lamentation or saying goodbye to an old way of life.

XXI, 'I am of Ireland': This poems has a repeating 5 line chorus. It also includes both a male and female perspective.

XXII,The Dancer at Cruachan and Cro-Patrick- the places are emphasized in these two poems. XXIII, Tom the Lunatic - here Tom is introduced as one character of many. The poem is about passion and faith and seemingly contradictory behaviors.

XXIV, Tom at Cruachon: Here Tom is some kind of folk figure who represents all of ancient Ireland, probably both the Druid and if need be the Christian, and the patron of the entire land. Yeats writes of horses symbolizing the eternal, but he attributes the knowledge and the sharing of this wisdom to this 'Tom.'



XXV, Old Tom Again. This is 6 lines all in one stanza. It is about perfection and sheets and the different ways swathes of fabric can be used.

XXV The Delphic Oracle upon Plotinus: This final one is dedicated to a classical ancient Grecian icon. The oracle at the temple, was normally a female priestess of the pagan deity Apollo. This is the god of the Sun, but also of both music and of healing. This is two stanzas of 5 lines apiece. In the first stanza, the first, third and fourth line end in perfect rhyme. The second and fifth lines rhyme with one another. In the second stanza, the rhyming method is the same. The poem is in imperfect quatameter, meaning that sometimes you only get one syllable on the final poetic foot or your poetic, not metric, meter.

## **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of William Butler Yeats : Chapter 7, Love, Tom & Parnell's Funeral Analysis**

After that comes a new heading entitled A Woman Young and Old. This contains 12 poems, each with its own Roman Numeral and title as shown above. In the first poem there is an objection to a man because of his ill-repute. The speaker is evidently a father. The young woman responds that the same man has extremely attractive physical features, in this case his hair and his eyes. She admits that his eyes are 'cold' rather than 'warm.'

II Before the World was Made is 2 stanzas of 8 lines a piece. This is about a woman making herself attractive and then how she treats a man or men and the way that he or they react to this. Yeats writes her as asking the readers what if she looks at a man lovingly but in truth is unemotional about him. She rhetorically answers the other women's comments by saying that she would have him love "...the thing that was / Before the world was made" (p. 275). In III A First Confession, in the first stanza a female character admits of uses several ruses but in the following 2 stanzas she explains that she does that because she does really want male attention. The rhyming pattern in this poem is distinctive. The first 3 lines end in 'briar, hair and me' respectively. The 3rd and 6th lines rhyme with one another. The 4th and 5th lines rhyme with one another. The second stanza follows the same rhyming pattern but the third stanza does not. In the last stanza, the 1st and 2nd lines rhyme with each other, the 3rd and 6th line rhyme. Finally, the 4th and 5th lines are in exact rhyme with another as both end in the word 'me,' but in the first case it is followed by a question mark whereas in the second case it is part of a statement. IV. Her Triumph is next. It is one stanza long. It is done in pentameter. The main character is a lady who is living under a dragon. She admits that this is because she had not taken love seriously. She is rescued during the poem, and it ends with her experiencing a sense of surprise.





# **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of William Butler Yeats : Chapter 8, New Poems (1938)**

## **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of William Butler Yeats : Chapter 8, New Poems (1938) Summary**

This chapter covers pages 300-350. These pages include another large set of poetic writings. This begins shortly after this set of poems has begun. The second poem, entitled Lapis Lazuli, is the first of this set of pages. There are 34 poems linked together. The rest of the writings covered by this chapter's summary all come under the heading of Last Poems (1938-1939). There are 13 of these. The other 6 poems of the collection will be covered in the following chapter.

Lapis Lazuli is distinctively 20th century in that the author discusses contemporary technology. He refers to the Zeppelin, which went the way of the 8 track audio tape. It was a functional technology but was cut from those systems that maintain a strong position for decades or centuries after a decade or two. The author refers to it together with the aeroplane just as there was a time when the longer term audio cassette recording system was on the same level as the 8-track tape.

## **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of William Butler Yeats : Chapter 8, New Poems (1938) Analysis**

Readers need to be aware of the meaning of the term 'gay' as used in this poem. The definition of the term prior to its co-option as definitive of the homosexual community, especially the male part, simply meant happy, joyful, energetic and enthusiastic. Happy children, happy men, happy women. 'Gay' was a synonym for 'merry,' for 'having a blast' or 'a rollicking good time.'

One of the final poems in the New Poems portion is entitled A Drunken Man's Praise of Sobriety. It has been numbered 347 in The Complete Poetry of WB Yeats. Here the author writes in a way that is easily viewed as 'twofold.' A drunken man writes interactively with someone who might be a very pretty girl or woman and yet this mightn't even be an actual person. The being might simply be an ephemeral feminine quality, which the author has written as part of Sobriety. In this case, he may have personified the idea of sobriety. While this may seem strange, or even amusing, it is also artful poetry that makes for perfectly good literature.

Next, there is another separate leaf marking the changing over from one gathered collection of poems to the next. This batch is referred to as "[Last Poems 1938 - 1939]."

These were all written when the author was living the very last years of his life. The very first poem from this time period is entitled Under Ben Bulben. There has been a need to provide some depth of insight into the poetry. It is hopefully well understood that reading the book summary is not a substitute for reading the poems themselves.



# **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of WB Yeats : Chapter 9, The Wanderings of Oisin**

## **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of WB Yeats : Chapter 9, The Wanderings of Oisin Summary**

The poetry continues on during this section. #371 is entitled A Nativity. Unlike the majority of the other poems, this one is written in couplets. Each couplet acts as its own stanza. The rhyme is imperfect in the beginning and the end but in between there are multiple couplets of perfect rhyme. It is safe to claim that this was done intentionally.

William Butler Yeats is known for having been a Master of poetry in the English speaking world as humanity crossed over from the 19th to the 20th centuries. Time, of course, will be the ultimate judge, meaning the generations of people following after those of us presently living. Some artists, thinkers, innovators and leaders become well established in their fame during their lives. Numerous success stories are only famed during their lives while others have effects that can be felt for centuries after their actions were taken. Yeats was fortunate in that he was able to enjoy at least some fame while he was alive. To have repute, to be known within one's arena can be quite helpful to morale.

## **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of WB Yeats : Chapter 9, The Wanderings of Oisin Analysis**

The Irishman continues to enchant readers with his brilliant craft as a poet. Soon enough the editors have made a decision regarding the arrangement of his writings. They have created an entirely separate region of the book. It is set apart with a page all its own dedicated to Narrative and Dramatic. For the first time, the chronological order doubles back upon itself. What is presented to the readers strictly as forward moving in time has been rearranged to create an entirely false perception to the readers. This part of the book begins with other writings that the author created way back in 1889. As readers had moved forward through time in an already artificially presented speed-play of poetry he produced over the course of many years, this might be a bit strange. The reason for it, is to help poetry people to learn the author's work by category. While this makes perfect sense in its own way, it really does throw readers all the way back from 1939 to 1889 with the simply turns of a couple of book pages.

The Wanderings of Oisin are dedicated to the history of Ireland and some of the transitions that have occurred there. St. Patrick is a main player, but the author writes of him in an unusual manner. He is coupled with Oisin, who represents a remaining pagan

goddess of Ireland. This is a fine, changed way for people to read of the transition in Ireland of paganism with Christianity. In this poem it is as much the truth that a loving union is formed than it is that any conflict has transpired.



# **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of WB Yeats : Chapter 9, Shadowy Waters, Two Kings & the Gift of Harun Al-Rashid**

## **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of WB Yeats : Chapter 9, Shadowy Waters, Two Kings & the Gift of Harun Al-Rashid Summary**

The writings continue at this stage of the book to be short stories in the poetic verse forms used by the Europeans. Amongst those, some have been devised more for the English language than others. Yeats continues to 'wow' his reading audience with stimulating, excellent formations of poetry. There are three of these in this section.

During the dedication the author makes yet another intentional reference to Irish culture. "I have made this poem for you.../...As men in the old times, before the harps began, / Poured out wine for the high invisible ones, (p 414). This note is dated 1900.

The Harp of Aengus follows; it is but one stanza in length and 14 lines long. Within he refers directly to the ancient religion of Druidry. This religion has gone from being dominant, to very small and there is little question that the introduction of Christianity has in some regards 'improved it', if only by reducing or eliminating such practices as human ritual sacrifice, and adding many lessons of Christ to the often more goddess oriented, so-called nature religion. The poem ultimately ensures readers that Midhir, has become an entity that guards faithful lovers. Midhir is used in a twofold manner- both as a place and as a reference to an actual person.

## **Book 1, The Complete Poetry of WB Yeats : Chapter 9, Shadowy Waters, Two Kings & the Gift of Harun Al-Rashid Analysis**

The scene is set by the author: there are 4 characters on board a ship: their locations are provided by the text. Two of the characters have names, the other are simply called 'first & second Sailor.' There is a conversation. During this, readers come to suspect that they are not fishermen but rather the worse sort- pirates. They mention a kind of tiredness caused by being away at sea for long away from any shores and women. There is no reference made to fish at all, but there is discussion of the sinking of a ship.

This leads to behavior known as 'reading the signs.' Here, they do not mean reading road signs which readers are apt to be familiar with doing. The author is referring to a casual version of divination. For thousands of years humans have endeavored to make

predictions by performing 'augery' or other methods of divination. They often seek to answer specific questions.

Woman as fact and as symbol emerges here: "You have dared to touch her?" (p.418) the Second Sailor asks the First Sailor.

The men quickly fall into conversation regarding mythical figures of Ireland. This includes a character called Aengus. He is viewed as an immortal, but at this time he is not called a god, nor an angel, nor a demon. He is some kind of 'wild man'.



# **Book 1, The Complete Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 11, Part Two-Additional Poems**

## **Book 1, The Complete Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 11, Part Two-Additional Poems Summary**

This introduces another type of poetic literary work. It is a two act fairy tale, and includes a set of characters. Like those of the previous section, these are designed to be used in the production of a live theatre form of poetry. A man named Thernot speaks first, in rhyming couplets housed together into a neat 7 line stanza. Colin is the other character in the first poems. His first remark is 14 clean lines long. Like the other man, these words are conveyed in a package of 7 rhymed 'couplets' united into a set of lines like a column of a row of brick work.

Later in the story there is a bit of intrigue added when a female decides to attempt a role normally taken by a man. She begins with some success; to do so, she cross dresses and presents herself as an older man's page. Later, the intrigue grows even more dramatic: the man has fallen in love with a very unrealistic situation. The actual woman- in her disguised role as a man, argues about the woman with another man- who loves her. Naschina- in her male image is not even flattering about herself. She only describes herself as if she were someone else. The other man objects- he is offended by her less than complimentary attitude towards the woman he loves. Fascinating, this coming from the same person. This strange circumstance just shows how real the feelings are, and it clearly displays how well the ruse has worked. Her lover has no idea that he is she in disguise. Of course, this seems impossible! Likely, it is, but even so it makes for a delightful story. Under highly intoxicated conditions something like this might be possible to hide. Even then it is unlikely.

## **Book 1, The Complete Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 11, Part Two-Additional Poems Analysis**

There follows another set of poems. These are labeled with the letter A. The first of these is Love and Death. These lines have been devised for the written word as well as for the spoken one. This shows clearly on the page. There is a longer line, followed by a shorter one in both stanzas. This alternating pattern adds a well ordered visual element to the poem. There is rhyme, and the absence of rhyme in this poem. Alternating lines rhyme. The other lines do not. The author has used triple and quadruple meter during this poem.



What follows is yet another of the author's dramatic poems- this means a short play written in poetic verse. It is like the musical in that it is 'a distinctive type of play.' There are shepherds in this play, and at the beginning they are together with a Knight. However, the Knight is old. It is not necessarily easy for readers to keep this in the proper perspective. The reason for this is twofold: 1) most contemporary readers do not know the sheep business and can't even tell a rich shepherd from a poor one. Certainly readers might see fancier clothing or lesser, but will not be able to distinguish a wealthy shepherd from a poor one in general. Sheep are just sheep to the ignorant and so to the shepherds. This makes such a difference because the difference in social rank between a high class shepherd and retired Knight is not equal to that of a Knight as the peak of his power and the lowliest of shepherds. The entire drama lasts only 3 and a half pages.





# The Complete Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 12, Final Works

## The Complete Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 12, Final Works Summary

There are more examples of love poetry during this final selection of WB Yeats' poems. The first example of this is called 'Love is an immoderate thing' which is also its first line. The author asks a rhetorical question. Half of the poem is the answer to this question. To paraphrase, Yeats asks, what good is love that doesn't last? - He seems to be implying that love should be lifelong and that sexual passion should last all night long. A few pages later there is another short work also called by its opening line: 'Were I but crazy for love's sake'.

There are also some divinely oriented poems here. One is A60, which is about calling to angels to protect a loved one through the power of prayer. Then, poem A77 is called 'O God, protect me'. This is one of the shortest poems in the entire compendium. It is only three lines long. "O God, protect me / From a horrible, deathless body / Sliding through the veins of a sudden" (p.562).

The themes change quite a bit, when in A86, the author has written a poem dedicated to a Major Robert Gregory, who was an airman. Well, in truth, this is not so much a new theme, but in reality it is a modern poem about soldiering. The entire poem is written in alternating rhyming lines. There are four metric feet per line in this poem.

One poem, even shorter than A60 is the one called A93. "Upon the round blue eye I rail, / Damnation on the milk-white horn" (p. 573).

## The Complete Poems of WB Yeats : Chapter 12, Final Works Analysis

There are 129 poems that have been subdivided into 3 summary chapters of Additional Poems. The themes continue to include: God, women, love, heroes and warriors, ancient locations- Irish legends, the 'Western tradition' which comes from the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The author has continued to 'strut his stuff' by using a diverse set of poetic verse forms. These have ranged in type of rhymes and meter used. Doubtless, the more experienced poetry readers will be able to analyze the structure in far greater detail than has been presented here. The poems have also been diverse with respect to their length. Stanzas have been as brief as two lines or over 40 during the course of the book. Within this one portion of the book, the Irish master of poetry has delivered still more dramatic poetry.

This last type of entertainment is well worth the serious consideration of poetry people and theatre people. While the summary writer does not know how often dramatic poems are put on the stages of modern life, it is difficult to imagine a manner of artwork better suited for training thespians in line memorization techniques. Every fun loving human likes at least a bit of rhyme, if only to be silly now and then. So, especially since rhyme and structure are memory aids, the dramatic poem seems ideal for use in the training of actors, short enough for work shops and educational coursework, these brief plays can also be performed as part of a larger theatrical presentation or celebration.



# Characters

## Shepherd appears in First 2 poems of Lyrical segment

In reality there is more than one character. The role of the shepherd occurs more than once, but each time, there is one- typically male who is viewed as

'the shepherd.' In the first poem, the shepherd is a specifically happy one. In the second poem, the shepherd is a sad man. Periodically, during multiple sections of the book, the shepherd as a literary figure comes up again. Often enough, he is in another guise. This is why there is the apparent contradiction that there is 'the shepherd' and that there are a number of different individual characters. If put together into a group there are over 10 shepherds who appear in Yeats poems.

The character of the shepherd is important for a few reasons. One of these is that his line of work was well known in Ireland. In this sense, the Irish shepherd was to readers the man who might now be called 'John Doe' or 'John Q. Public' or 'A Typical Man.' However, for Yeats, this has to do with the profession, so it is equally true to say that 'the shepherd' is what today would be 'the business man', or 'a laborer'.

The author makes good use of a technique that most readers know and use in their daily lives without much thought: the stereotype, the idea, the job label.

'Construction worker,' 'cop,' 'school teacher,' 'bus driver,' each carries with it a set of presumptions.

Readers today are fortunate if they read Yeats' shepherd poems and actually know sheep and shepherds.

## Anashuya appears in Poem # 4

Here is an Indian Hindu priestess. She is also simply 'a woman in love.' She is anxious that a man she is fond of loves another woman. Once her jealousy appears, she is not even remotely nice to the other woman: in fact, Yeats writes that she hopes for something bad to happen to her.

Anashuya asks Vijaya if there is, or has been another woman. He admits this. Anashuya requests, hopes and tries to insist that he not love her anymore. It is not clear whether she is asking him to not have sexual relations with her or if she is purely being emotionally jealous- meaning that even if he is not sexually involved she will suffer from severe jealousy anyways.

In many ways, this makes Anashuya a 'typical woman.' Luckily, not all women are so afflicted by jealousy, but it is very common and certainly worsened if she has been separated from other forms of support- be that financial or emotional.



Here we see that William Butler Yeats has taken to writing about characters immediately upon writing poetry fit for publication.

## God / Brahma appears in Crossways & More

The first mention of God in the book is the form known as Brahma. Admittedly, this is a contentious issue. In this case, however, Brahma is being treated as at least participating in being God in the same way that all the Sunshine comes from the Sun. Brahma is referred to by Anayusha in the 4th poem of the book for the first time. She obliquely refers to this entity by pointing out that she is a temple priestess. At the end of the poem she asks Brahma for protection.

The following poem has God in the title. The author is exploring religious difference here when he calls this poem 'The Indian upon God.' Sure enough, God is directly called upon and referred to in a number of the poems throughout the entire set of poems. There are poems in which he is not mentioned, but by the end of the work it is very clear that the author recognizes Him. Readers will have the impression that WB Yeats believed in God, most likely through practicing as a Catholic Irishman. At the same time, it is clear that he honors his roots and that he is very proud to be Irish. As a consequence, readers all find references to Druidry in the work. While he mentions that religion, he does not indicate any 'gods of it'.

God is mainly addressed as, prominent, the most powerful. He is an entity who apparently has angel. He is called upon for help.

## Mother Mary appears in The Rose

Mary, the Mother of God in the form of Jesus the Christ is written of in the Complete Poetry. There is one poem named for her, and in *The Countess Cathleen in Paradise*, she is directly mentioned. On the off chance that readers do not know: this was a Jewish woman. The story is that she had a premonitory dream that she would get pregnant by an angel, and that this would give the impression of parthenogenesis. Parthenogenesis is when a female becomes pregnant without male involvement. This happens more than never in nature, across various species but it is exceptionally rare amongst mammals.

Mary is viewed as one of the few living Jews who was without sin. Her husband was not the same as the father of her son Jesus. Her husband had a dream in which he was assured that she was a fantastic woman and just to be happy and confident that even with this unusual circumstance she would make a fine wife for him.

Mary is known to have assisted her spectacular son and to also keep 'out of his way' so as to not hold back his progress.

She appears both early and late in this book.



## **Fergus appears in The Rose**

This character only occurs in the poem entitled 'Who goes with Fergus?' He is described as a powerful being, possibly even immortal. He is not ever set 'equal' to God.

## **The Lover appears in Multiple Places**

The Lover, is like the shepherd in that this a role, but it only exists as a living experience when there is someone playing this role. The Lover is not the same all the time, in real life, even when the role is consistently played by one individual. Such a person can be a suitor, a lover, a hopeful, a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a best friend, someone moody, someone full of sensual and sexual delights, a husband or wife.

There is no gender confusion during any occasion in which the role of lover appears in Yeats' poetry. However, during the course of the entire tome of poetry, there is 'the Lover as a man' and 'the Lover as a woman.'

Readers are actually given great insight into what this character is like based upon how the author shares what 'the Lover' is like whether in the poem 'The Lover asks forgiveness for his changing moods,' or 'The Lover Tells of the Rose in his Heart' or the Figure in the dramatic poem The Seeker.

## **Oisin appears in The Wanderings of Oisin**

This is one of the main characters in The Wanderings of Oisin which is presented as a dialogue between Oisin and St. Patrick. Part of it is dialogue but at the same time, Oisin delivers some stories regarding his life: he is sharing this information with the Saint.

## **St. Patrick appears in The Wanderings of Oisin**

This is the Irish Saint of the Catholics. This is not the only saint, and other religions, such as Buddhism have entities who correspond largely but not exactly, to the Christian saint. St. Patrick is the saint that Oisin speaks with during the writing The Wanderings of Oisin. As such, he is a main character and has the other speaking part.

## **Aengus appears in The Harp of Aengus**

Aengus is some kind of minor immortal. There is no pretense that he is god, but he has some kind of supernatural or superhuman power that gives him the ability to take some actions through time periods that otherwise don't make sense.

Aengus is a strong supporter of romance. His favored instrument is the harp.



## **Aibric appears in The Shadowy Waters**

This character is highly important in the story. He is the most loyal to the man leading the ship. In fact, early on in the story he prevents his boss from being murdered as a mutiny because the sailors have grown insecure on the voyage and are not happy with his decision-making.

Aibric calls his boss Master, which is not to be misconstrued as some kind of an insult.

## **Forgael appears in The Shadowy Waters**

Forgael is actually the Captain of a boat. He is not a Captain in the same sense of the military rank, but he is the boss. There are only 3 men under him as the small crew can handle the work that is needed. He only appears in the drama The Shadowy Waters.

## **Queen Maeve appears in The Old Age of Queen Maeve**

This woman is the Queen of Cruachan, which is indicative of ancient Ireland in some manner. She is incredibly important within this context. She is referred to in at least one other poem but her name does not cross through a large number of poems the way that Oedipus does.

## **Oedipus appears in Various**

Oedipus is a fictional character. He is a main character created by the famous Grecian tragedian Sophocles. He is the lead character in the tragic plays: Oedipus Rex, Oedipus at Colonus and Antigone. The short version of his fictive 'life' is: he was born to royal parents. He was abandoned for 2 reasons: 1) because there was a horrible prophesy about him which his parents had found out about, 2) his mother had mercy on him so that he was abandoned rather than killed. Oedipus grows up and becomes a rather powerful man. He is 'gifted.' He finds a woman and they fall in love, even though she is 'an older woman.' The two are shocked and horrified when they find out that they are actually mother and son- and that they have both committed incest and fulfilled the dark prophesy about him by doing so. Oedipus is so upset that, amongst other actions, he gouges out his own eyes and lives through the rest of his fiction-dimension life as a blind man.



## Objects/Places

### **Byzantium - This recurs from the very beginning appears in Multiple**

Byzantium is a former empire of the Arabians. It occurs repeatedly throughout the works.

### **Ireland appears in Numerous places**

This is the author's homeland. There are numerous references to the island done in a number of ways. He refers to this place during various times in history.

### **King appears in Numerous**

This is a leader who doubles as a politician and warrior. A King is not an object in the usual sense. While it would not be strange to have found him listed amongst characters, in this case, he appears as an object because 'he' is a social role and therefore can, in this sense, double as an object. There are many kings in Yeats' poems.

### **Moon appears in Multiple**

Referred to repeatedly but especially in one poem later in the work where men are so intoxicated that they confuse the Sun and Moon.

### **Sun appears in Multiple**

Also repeatedly referred to, often obliquely when the god Apollo's Temple at Delphi is mentioned, due to the oracular divination provided by priestesses on who lived on site.

### **Delphic Oracle appears in Winding Stairs and other**

This is a set of priestesses who were used to transmit the message of the pagan god Apollo to worshipers. It was located at an Apollonian temple at the city-state of Delphi, hence the name

\*The Winding Stars: XXV: The Delphic Oracle upon Plotinus is the first time it is mentioned in a title, but not the only time to which it is referred. Normally, in modern society, the temple is referred to honorably but with the underlying assumption that the mighty Sun is not the god Apollo and that the personified Apollo everyone has heard of is not a true God, but was a false god of a pagan people.



## **Tower appears in The Tower & Elsewhere**

This is a tall building, associated with a few special tasks. One is the ability to see great distances to protect a given territory, another has often been to hold prisoners, and the last has been to be a strong location from which to launch attacks.

## **Cruachan appears in The Winding Stairs & Old Queen Maeve**

8- Cruachan: This is a place in Ireland, that comes up during The Winding Stair and Other Poems. This is the Irish/Gaelic name for Ireland.

## **Sophoclean Trilogy appears in Multiple**

The literary trilogy Oedipus Rex, Oedipus at Colonus and Antigone. Originally written in Greek during the era of city-states and Greek cultural power in the Mediterranean Sea region, these stories are so good that young and mature readers alive today often like them very much. This is some of the most intense drama ever written. It is known to have been a work of fiction.

## **The Ghost of Roger Casement appears in Roger Casement & The Ghost of Roger Casement**

The Ghost of Roger Casement- This is just that. He appears in a poem that has been set immediately after the poem which includes information regarding his death.

## **Harp appears in The Harp of Aengus**

In this case, this means the harp played by Aengus, who is always supportive of people being in love. It appears in a poem by that title and also in the story The Shadowy Waters.

## **Milk appears in Multiple**

This common but important nurturing substance is almost always a type of mother's milk- whether it is coming from a human woman, or a cow, or a wolf, or a goat. It is a well known fact that suckling is best done by members of the same species, but that animals can substitute for the true mother. Milk is referred to in numerous poems during The Complete Works.





## **Unicorns appears in Poem # 212**

This animal is mythological. It is referred to clearly during The Tower in a piece numbered 212, VII. I see Phantoms of Hatred and of the Heart's Fullness and of the Coming Emptiness. These animals were said to be horses, or a type of deer-like creature, that grew a single horn. In real life today, there are goat unicorns which have been bred solely for the purpose of recreating living unicorns due to the love that humankind has had for this magical creature. So much has mankind longed for them to be real, that both breeding and surgical means have been used in attempts to produce these. There has been some success with goats in this regard as of the late 20th century.

## **Purgatory appears in The Pilgrim**

This appears in the poem The Pilgrim #348. Purgatory is a place that allows a soul/spirit to be purified between the living world and Heaven. This is not necessarily an easy process. It is one in which metallurgy may well apply.

## **Bottle appears in Multiple**

Here the word is interpreted to mean a glass bottle containing drinkable intoxicating alcohol. It often in appears in poems that include discussion of drinking alcohol and drunkenness. This is probably due to the context. In other scenarios, this would have nothing to do with alcohol and everything to do with babies and children under 3 years old.

## **Muses appears in Multiple**

These are more entities than they are objects, but they are a very unusual type of entity. These are ephemeral, sometimes but not always personified. They are the source or means through which a particular artist is inspired.

## **Money appears in Three Marching Songs**

Money, gold: this well known object comes up more than once during the poems of this compendium of works. One example location is in the third of Three Marching Songs, which are in the Last Poems section.

## **Kindred appears in Last Poems**

Kindred: this is not an object in the normal sense either. This is a reference to some kind of strong blood tie. The phrase 'kindred spirit' means that despite the lack of familial blood relation, there is a relation between the living spirits that is as strong as the blood



of relatives. Here 'spirits' is a reference to intangible aspects of the human character that are exhibited through the lifetime, mainly through the combination of thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Dispositions and the physical bodies that are part of any given individual are all a part of a living spirit that is a human. Shared interests, tendencies, and this sort of thing are all indicative of 'kindred spirits'.

## **Shroud appears in Cuchulain Comforted**

Shroud: this is a burial cloth used in some cultures. It appears in the poem Cuchulain Comforted, which is number 359 of the Last Poems.



# Themes

## Tradition

One of the main themes during these poems is tradition. This occurs in more than one way. The author makes extensive use of forms and techniques that have been developed for poetic verse for centuries. At least some of these have had their origin in the oral tradition. For this reason, the forms themselves and the use of them is an act of preserving the tradition through using it and thereby, the tradition remains alive. Poetic rhyme and meter are not the only way that William Butler Yeats furthers tradition in his poetry.

He protects and fosters the history of Ireland. The island nation has its own culture. At least, it did. Here, the author acts as a cultural savior to his own people whenever he dares to write of the history of Ireland. His recurrent references to Kings and to Druids across a multitude of his poems stand as quite a testament to those aspects of the culture's history. Unlike some authors, William Butler Yeats was not writing purely fictive forms: his references to Druids are simply a reminder of both the goods and evils of one of the island's so-called home grown religions. While many of its attributes were benign, there was a time when human sacrifices were used. This is one regard in which the majority, even those who hearken back to the day with nostalgia will tend to readily admit that the arrival of Christianity brought some genuine human advancement. The end of such ritual sacrifices, at least in general, is quietly held to be one of the best changes in religious practice that mankind has ever made. Within that limitation, the author advocates his homeland, its native culture and its cultural memory, including the fact that Druidry which still exists in a modern form as one of the land's smaller religions, was dominant in the region. Much lore, including history and poetry were included in the kinds of knowledge that Druidic priests and priestesses had.

## Grecian cultural artifacts

The author uses his poetry to participate in the cultural history that has a written 'life' as 'Western literary tradition.' This stream of consciousness and body of creative writing is presently quite well known. Readers who have themselves participated in this a great deal will recognize it easily. Those coming to it from the outside may well not. There are names. If all those mentioned were living, one could claim that the author was 'name dropping.' Some of those named are from the Grecian literature that was produced centuries before the life of Jesus the Christ, who only has the middle initial H when his name is used euphemistically or as a means of alleviating stress while calling upon his guidance, at least for patience. Under such conditions, the middle initial H has been used, but unlike the rest of his name it is known to be a fallacy, used as a literary device for the sake of emphasis and perhaps as a reference to those worlds said to exist post mortem- which in English both begin with this same letter. The relevant characters from the ancient Grecian realm are multiple.



There are both deities and literary figures. Oedipus, for instance, is known to be a fictional character used as a major figure in a trilogy of some of the best Greek tragedy ever created by mankind. Somehow, the role of the fictional Oedipus and his illicit yet innocent relationship with his own mother has been co-opted by people who devised, over a millennium later, a science named "psychology." While today's readers are used to this, and have heard of Oedipus in the context of psychological theory, the strange truth remains, that Oedipus was the main tragic figure from a trilogy of Greek tragedies. This is on the same social level as the present fame of figures such as Batman and Hamlet. Oedipus is but one example of the many names that William Butler Yeats has used within his poetry. He has intentionally invoked and evoked their powers. In some cases, he names gods that have come to be viewed as having been 'false gods,' the result of humanity's ignorance.

While Greece continues to exist as a functional European nation it continues to suffer from having seemed to carry on millenia past its own cultural dominance. There are so many elements of culture that have become widespread that had there origin in the Grecian area that it, like some of the other Mediterranean Sea's surrounding people, have developed the reputation for being the birthplace of 'Western mankind.' Technology and culture grew in that realm. There have been other areas of the world that also harbored such incredible growth, but for the Europeans, Arabians and many Africans, the Mediterranean really was 'it.'

Grecian deities, Grecian heroes, Grecian literature have all been included in the cultural and literary tradition within which the poet William Butler Yeats has written. They are mentioned as the icons they really are, whether they were false gods, fictional characters or, in many other cases, real live people who were immortalized through their actions.

## Poetic Expression of Truth

Early on in the book, the author refers to a particular attitude towards the truth. He describes this approach as being more of the mind, and of being subjective in quality. He does this intentionally to set it apart from the whole idea that some schools of philosophy and the world of empirical science in general advocate- that the bulk of truth is in fact objective. Subjectivity, is typically viewed as a combination of factual information with changing conditions and perceptions. Perceptions, including emotions and thoughts composed as ideas or in words are considered as not necessarily entirely true even though they are also often less than completely false.

This in reality is a complex issue. It is about truth, which is of great importance to many as it influences personal self-confidence about many details of life. It is used to evaluate religious information and scientific data. Falsehood is considered to be information which conflicts with, and directly contradicts the facts of a case. If someone is white, to call him or her blue is false.



this part is not confusing. When someone lies, effective evidence of the truth, will reveal both the truth and the lie that had been used to hide the truth.

The challenging levels of this are those that involve emotions and other elements of thought that do not seem to be so dependent upon physical facts for their existence. While it is true that the colors white and blue are different whenever they can be distinguished from one another, it is true that a person can favor one of these. If another individual favors a different color, it isn't necessarily because either person is wrong. There might not be any falsehood or error in judgment occurring at all and yet these truths are not identical. It is this type of 'thing' that matters a great deal when the artist advocates the idea of truth being as much a personal matter as it has to do with any 'facts.'

William Butler Yeats is not the first artist to advocate this viewpoint. The Englishman who was also a major poet, William Blake also held this view. In reality, it is liable that more extensive discussion of the 'level's of truth and reality that are being addressed should be included in the religious, philosophical and scientific versions of truth. As it happens, some form of an organized attitude towards the truth that includes both objective and more subjective elements has been created and proposed in 'occult philosophy' and other versions of this approach are found in religious practices that include meditation and other types of intentional mental training.



# Style

## Point of View

The author is one of the greatest poets of the past two hundred years. He passed away in 1939. Born in the 1850s, he is an example of an Irish man whose life spreads across two centuries. Readers of today, many of whom are living across not simply centuries, but even millenia will appreciate this. He is a Pulitzer Prize winner. He represents the industrialized man, the British and the modern English artisan. During his life, the Irish were subjected to the British, and the native language and culture were actively suppressed by the English. At the same time, the Irish being part of the main islands of Britain, they were granted high status with respect to the British Empire on the whole. More than a colony if still somehow treated as 'less than' the English, Ireland and the Irish held a special place.

Since he was educated in the English language and as part of the British Empire, the author was able to engage the British literary tradition. This allows him to function as one of the greats in the same line as William Blake whereas, if the Irish had not been Anglicized, this might well not ever have happened. The Irish themselves had a strong oral tradition with Druidry prior to the arrival of Christianity in the form of Catholicism. The Irish were amongst those who had, for centuries, a unique blend of Christian and pagan practices and values that were symbolized by such items as the well-known Celtic Cross.

The artist was certainly a scholar. He was able to draw upon a vast wealth of literary history. There was also a very rich folklore and residues of ancient knowledge that had been handed down and preserved through the oral tradition. Readers are reminded that here 'oral' literally means 'spoken & heard' in contrast to the written and the read.

The author then had the Roman Catholic Irish male perspective. There had already been a great deal of technological advancement prior to his birth and this trend continued during his lifetime.

Thanks to the educational system and both the oral and written traditions of the British Isles, the William Butler Yeats was able to create new poems that, like ornate tapestries, exemplified the heights of forms of verse along with the scope of topics that the culture and historical period granted him.

## Setting

The poetry is set in what can be termed 'poetic space'. This means that it is intended and expected that many of the readers are familiar with the literary traditions of the language and the region. This is viewed as being but one aspect of the setting.



Ireland, and more broadly speaking the British Isles themselves. Of course, as mentioned above, the position in time was also relevant to the poetry. The verse forms had been passed on through time and in that respect represent another element of the setting.

The heart and mind of humanity, though a seemingly vague description is also an integral part of the setting. These poems are meant to engage the most subjective parts of an individual human perception. In this regard they are expressive of the author. They also uniquely relate to each reader after the manner of human interaction.

## Language and Meaning

The author is nearly exclusively limited to the English language in these poems. This is worth pointing out since much of the literary tradition of Europe included French, Latin and Greek as well as English. Naturally, since the author is Irish, it would have also been possible for him or for those of a generation or two before him to have created poetry in the Irish language.

When it comes to poetry, the ability of each word to be used with discernment remains important. However, there is another factor involved when it comes to poetry and that of course is the meter. How each word plays alongside its neighbor has greater significance in poetry than it does in prose. As such, its length, its division into syllables and the music of it harbors more meaning that might otherwise be the case.

Of course, the other aspect of word selection that holds such value in the world of poetry is the nature of its ending. How it might rhyme with another word is incredibly meaningful. If the tone or definition of a given word holds a poem together by rhyming with another then it can do more for a poem than it could otherwise. When there is a relationship between words and also a rhyming sound then the quality or depth of the connection between the terms has increased.

When poetry is done in the written form there are additional traits of words that can be used for the purpose of 'poetic design.' How the words literally look when spelled out upon a page makes an impact on the reading. While a dimension has been lost in terms of sound, another has been added with sight.

The process of creating the poetry can be quiet. However, whether it is done purely mentally, or written with a pen or pencil or quill or typed on an old, loud typewriter does influence the experience of it. Creating with a steady 'clickety-clack' on a typewriter or using word processing and a light - touch keyboard alters the experience. The mind and the word processors are the most forgiving for changes and erasures.

Whether designed to be sung, spoken, read or all of these, the language and the choice of words within the language are inherently a part of the experience of poetry.



## Structure

The volume of William Butler Yeats Complete Poetry is a compendium. This is a creation of the literary cultural tradition. This item was not possible until the end of the author's career as a writer and at the end of his life. This is simply because he did not produce all of his works at once.

The work is organized according to the time that they were written. Within this context, sets of poems have been given subheadings. For those who are passionate about the poet, these headings likely supply guidelines that can lead readers to re-discovering his works in terms of the order in which they were devised and published.

The book is very lengthy, at over 700 pages. Granted that, it is also very neatly presented. The pages are certainly filled, but none of the poems has been 'cramped' unduly onto any given page along with another.

The headings have been taken largely from one of the poems it contains as signifying the year in which a number of works were produced or packaged together in their original.

The book is organized as just one book, with a number of sections that contain sets of poetry. At the same time, as noted at first, the book has been published as one volume of a multiple volume set containing writings by this particular artistic genius. While it can be taken by itself, the editorial staff and publishing house have both arranged for it to come together as a series.





## Quotes

"I am worn out with dreams; / A weather-worn, marble triton," (p. 136)

"Though I'd my finger on my lip, / What could I but take up the song? / And running crowd and gaudy ship / Cried out the whole night long," (p.87)

"The woods of Arcady are dead, / And over is their antique joy; / Of old the world on dreaming fed; / Grey Truth is now her painted toy," (p. 1)

"Although you hide in the ebb and flow / Of the pale tide when the moon has set, / The people of coming days will know / About the casting out of my net," (p. 54)

"Your mother Eire is always young, / Dew ever shining and twilight grey; / Though hope fall from you and love decay, / Burning in fires of slanderous tongue," (p. 55)

"Made out of a wild thought, is in my marrow." (p. 77)

"O hurry where by water among the trees / The delicate-stepping stag and his lady sigh, / When they have but looked upon their images- / Would none had ever loved but you and I!" (p. 81)

"Maybe I shall be lucky yet, / Now they are silent,' said the crane. / 'Though to my feathers in the wet / I've stood as I were made of stone / And seen the rubbish run about, / It's certain there are trout somewhere / And maybe I shall take a trout / If but I do not seem to care.' (p. 112)

"And yet in flying fling into my meat / A crazy joice that makes the pulses beat / As though I had been undone / By Homer's Paragon," (p. 174)

"His element is so fine / Being sharpened by his death, / To drink from the wine-breat / While our gross palates drink from the whole wine," (p. 232)

" I am of Ireland, / And the Holy Land of Ireland, / And time runs on,' cried she." (p. 271)

"Swear by what the Sages spoke / Round the Mareotic Lake / That the Witch of Atlas knew, / spoke and set the cocks-a-crow." (p. 333)

"And demons be broken in pieces, and trampled beneath them in death. / And demons afraid in their darkness; deep horror of eyes and of wings," (p. 390)

"Thernot. With fiery song I'll drown yon puny voice." (p. 462).

"Beloved, hear my bitter tale! - / Now making busy with the oar, / Now flinging loose the slanting sail, / I hurried from all woody shore, / And plucked small fruits on Innisfree. / (Ah, mournful Danaan quicken tree!)," (p. 541)



"With shield and armour wrought with gold, / A hurting beam of light, / Amid a cloud of banners, / stood there the Norman knight," (p. 540).

"The Delphian rock has spoken out, now must a wicked mind," (p. 574)

"Oedipus' nurse, mountain of many a hidden glen, / Be honoured among men; / A famous man, deep-thoughted, and his body strong; / Be honoured in dance and song," (p. 575)

"For this one thing above all I would be praised as a man, / That in my words and my deeds I have kept those laws in mind / Olympian Zeus, and that high clear Empyrean," (p. 574)

"Who met in the hidden glen? Who let his fancy run / Upon nymph of Helicon? / Lord Pan or Lord Apollos or the mountain Lord / By the Bacchantes adored?" (p. 575)

"A Voice. Fickle the guiding his arrow shall find! / some goblin, my servant, on wings that are fleet, / That nestles alone in the whistling wind, / Go pilot the course of arrow's deceit!" (p. 470)

"The girl goes dancing there / On the leaf-sown, new-mown, smooth / Grass plot of the garden; / Escaped from bitter youth, / Escaped out of her crowd, / Or out of her black cloud. ? Ah dancer, as sweet dancer!" (p. 302)

" I love a man in secret," (p. 303)

"Endure what life God gives and ask no longer span;" (p. 230)

"Midnight has come and the great Christ Church bell / And many a lesser bell sound through the room; / And it is All Soul's Night. / And two long glasses brimmed with muscatel / Bubble upopn the table. A ghost may come; / For it is a ghost's right, / His element is so fine," (p. 232)



## Topics for Discussion

What is the significance of the fact that William Butler Yeats was Irish?

What is your favorite poem? Why? If you do not have only one favorite then discuss a small number of your favorites.

Which is your favorite type of poetic verse? Why?

Do you think the traditional verse forms are still important in this day and age? If so, why? If not, why not?

Is there a noticeable difference to you between the later poetry and the earlier? Briefly discuss this.

Do you like the longer poems as well as the shorter, or do you prefer the shorter?

Which is your favorite type of rhyme? Do you know why? If so, then provide the reason.

Is Yeats one of your favorite poets? Tell why or why not.