The Gift: Poems by the Great Sufi Master Study Guide

The Gift: Poems by the Great Sufi Master by Hafez

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Preface and Introduction

Preface and Introduction Summary

The preface to Daniel Ladinsky's translation of Hafiz's poems, entitled "The Gift," describes Hafiz as a poet who has inspired some of the world's greatest poets and who attained a level of intimacy with God only equaled by such men as Rumi, Francis of Assisi, Ramakrishna, Lao-Tzu and the like. Hafiz invites people into the same intimacy, to be liberated from the fear and guilt-driven control of organized religion and instead become engrossed in a surrendered, celebratory friendship with the Infinite. Ladinsky points out that, over Hafiz's life, he wrote between five and seven hundred poems, but that an unknown number of them were destroyed by a fundamentalist Islamic leadership who believed it was blasphemy for anyone to claim intimacy with God. According to Hafiz, God is too powerful and benevolent to need to resort to intimidation or condemnation in order to elicit devotion from His children.

Throughout the centuries that have elapsed since his writing in the fourteenth century, Hafiz's poetry has not only been cherished for its wisdom and encouragement, but has also been consulted in the same way people consult horoscopes or astrologers for guidance, even by such dignitaries as Queen Victoria of England. Even today, in Shiraz where Hafiz lived, there are as many copies of his Divan as copies of the Quran, even as tightly controlled and fundamentalist-leaning as the climate is there. He is regarded as an oracle, so intimate with God that he was able to administer pure truth, singing with the very voice of God.

Ladinsky explains that he approached his own translation with the guidance of H. Wilberforce Clarke's 1891 translation and extensive footnotes close at hand, and gives an enthusiastic description of the imagery Hafiz used to allow his poems to speak on several levels of meaning at once. In addition to preserving that many-layered truth and symbolism, Ladinsky explains that he incorporates modern words and expressions in order to bring forward the playful and light-hearted spirit in which Hafiz was speaking into the language of modern readers. He explains that Hafiz sometimes speaks about himself in the third-person in his poetry as a means of signing his poems. He also tells readers within his poems that he is speaking universal truths, meant to free people to celebrate and revel in the divine.

The Introduction to the collection of poems is the essay entitled "The Life and Work of Hafiz" by Henry S. Mindlin. The essay begins by explaining that Hafiz lived roughly from 1320 to 1389, and was a contemporary to Geoffrey Chaucer. His home city of Shiraz was one of the few south Persian cities undamaged by the Mongol and Tartar invasions, which allowed for a picturesque, if simple, existence. Hafiz was the son of a coal merchant who died when Hafiz was a teenager, and he was the youngest of three boys. He studied the classical medieval subjects of Islamic law and theology, grammar, math, astrology, and on his own, calligraphy, working as a baker's assistant to pay for school, and afterward, as a copyist using his skill in calligraphy. Poetry was a major part of

Persian culture, the most influential poets of the day being Saadi of Shiraz, Farid-un-din Attar and Jalal-ud-din Rumi. For his part, even as a child Hafiz was a gifted poet and eventually he won the patronage of several rulers and noblemen as well as positions as a teacher, a court poet and a college professor. When the day's ruling regime became more fundamental than allowed it to condone such liberating poetry, Hafiz would be forced into exile, making his whole life a back-and-forth, and his poetry a combination of literal and symbolic poetry, depending on his need to disguise the Object of his poetry. History sees him as a perfect seer of the divine, a reputation helped along by the admiration of Zoroastrian master Meher Baba who said that Hafiz's poetry contains all of the secrets of the spiritual path.

Hafiz's life as a student of Sufism began as a youth and lasted most of his life. He was to become a Sufi master in his sixties, but embarked on his journey following, according to his legend, a quest for the heart of a local beauty. He was so in love with her that he devoted all of his poetic energies to her, creating poems that became beloved throughout Shiraz, while Hafiz was oblivious and engrossed with his beloved. He devoted himself to a forty-day vigil at the tomb of a saint said to be able to grant the deepest desire of anyone who could accomplish the task. At the end of the forty days, upon seeing the beauty of the archangel Gabriel, he discovered that the true desire of his heart was bigger than the local beauty, but the Source of all beauty itself, and he gave himself to Muhammad Attar to be taught Sufism and spiritual poetry.

His time under Attar's tutelage taught him about poetry, chemistry, theology, nature and harmonious living, and amounted to a collection of rigorous years of study and austerity. After about forty years, the death of his son, his wife, and his hopes for ever becoming a master, Hafiz undertook another forty-day vigil, sitting in a circle and fasting until the angel appeared again and asked him what he wanted. His instant reply was that he wanted only to serve his teacher, and he returned to find his teacher welcoming him as an equal with a glass of wine. The introduction closes with a description of the perfection of love and communion with the divine that Hafiz had attained, saying "A Perfect Master personifies perfect joy, perfect knowing, and perfect love and expresses these qualities in every activity of life."

Preface and Introduction Analysis

There is no analysis for the above per se, as it is largely historical and biographical information. The rest of the sections, being the poetry itself, will have analysis sections located beneath them.

Chapters 1-3

Chapters 1-3 Summary

Chapter One's poems are simple and light-hearted, using imagery from nature, music, dining, fishing, hunting, war, and even childhood games to tell Hafiz's readers what he wants them to know. "Startled by God" uses the image of birds startled by a broken stick. "Let's Eat" compares the blessings of God to items on a menu. "When the Violin" uses a violin to represent a soul freed to make music in God's hands. "Looking for a Good Fish" uses the metaphor of shopping in the wrong markets and following dumb animals into deserts looking for water. "A Hunting Party" compares spiritual seekers to cooperating hunters. "This Sane Idea" compares people's tempers to guns. "We Have Not Come to Take Prisoners" uses war imagery to encourage freedom from oppressors. "I Can See Angels" fantasizes about celebrating angels. "You're It" describes God playing tag, and "I Rain" compares Hafiz's poetry to rain on dry ground.

Chapter Two's poems are from the perspective of Hafiz as a salesman of his poetry as a source of wisdom, telling about his own learning experiences. "I Have Learned So Much" compares his learning to being consumed in a fire. "God Just Came Near," The Sun Never Says" and "The Seed Cracked Open" all use imagery from nature and gardening to describe humanity's interaction with God. Hafiz speaks to the shame it is to keep conversation shallow by defining baser selves as animals in "Why Just Ask The Donkey." In "Who Wrote the Music" Hafiz describes himself as the composer of men's thoughts. He describes the eternal communion between souls in "Your Mother & My Mother." He reveals his own shyness in asking for divine affection in "Mismatched Newlyweds" and in "Your Seed Pouch" he returns to images of gardening to describe cultivation of happiness and benevolence. "That Magnificent Storm" symbolizes God's sweeping over a soul.

The third chapter moves a little deeper into the human psyche, and uses object lessons to teach universal truths. "Removing the Shoe from the Temple" describes any place where one is praying as the temple of God. "Against My Own Hand" sensuously describes the long-sought presence of God. "Out of This Mess" asks believers to live by a standard that will help people understand the God they follow, and he uses guests at a holy party as object lessons to make the same request in "If God Invited You to a Party." He uses the imagery of "To Build a Swing" to describe building character, and "A Crystal Rim" to describe his own compassionate extension of himself to humanity. Compassionate rescue from slavery characterizes "This One is Mine", and silence is the key to freedom in "Curfews." In "The Ear that was Sold to a Fish", Hafiz sends body parts with far-flung animals to help him spy on God. In "An Infant in Your Arms," intimacy with God is symbolized in a baby.

Chapters 1-3 Analysis

Chapter One flows like a step-by-step instruction manual for setting out on a spiritual journey, as Ladinsky arranges the poems in a progressively logical sequence, each one carrying forward or adding to the premise of the last. Hafiz's first poem, "Startled by God" speaks to the intimacy and immediate closeness Hafiz experienced of the presence of God. It is as a result of this intimate proximity that Hafiz's awe and affection for God comes pouring out of him. In "Let's Eat" Hafiz invites the reader to indulge deeply in the experience of God. Following that invitation, "When the Violin" describes the freedom of a soul to live fully and know, live in and create beauty as a result of having let go of its burdens. The poem entitled "Looking for a Good Fish" speaks to people who have been looking for spiritual nourishment where it cannot be found, and to invite people to learn from Hafiz.

"A Hunting Party" makes the case for that search for spiritual nourishment to take place communally rather than all alone, and that its being done in a spirit of cooperation is more successful than if it is done in a spirit of conquest. The point is carried on into the poem "This Sane Idea" that asks people to leave their tempers and tendencies to do harm behind when setting out on their search for God. It is striking that in the next poem, "We Have Not Come to Take Prisoners," that when Hafiz is talking about running from anyone who threatens one's spiritual vision and allowing everyone around to experience the beauty of spiritual wholeness, obedience is what he asks his readers to surrender to. His premise is that only when one is obedient to the parts of obedience that invite him to play is one free, suggesting that God commands His children to celebrate, rejoice and play. Hafiz even suggests in "I Can See Angels" that the knowledge of how to access one's ability to celebrate in worship, even to dance with the angels is written on everyone's heart, it is so universally accessible a gift.

"You're It" suggests a reason for celebration in the idea that God has disguised Himself and kissed every person, ensuring that His benevolence will gift them with something spectacular when something wonderful is least expected. And, if all hope of blessing is lost, Hafiz offers the assurance in "I Rain" that he hears the longing in people's hearts for truth, love, beauty and God, and that is the reason he sends his poems into the world like rain for thirsty souls.

Ladinsky's second chapter delves more deeply into Hafiz's own spiritual experience, and the ways in which it uniquely qualifies him to offer wisdom. It begins with "I Have Learned So Much" in which Hafiz says he can no longer identify with any one faith, nor even any sex or corporeal definition, he is so burned up and freed. "God Just Came Near" suggests that a reader in search of love will find not only love, but God in the poetry of Hafiz, and be equipped to build a relationship with the deity they have encountered. "The Sun Never Says" uses the metaphor of the sun giving light to the earth to suggest that God gives His love without condition, never expecting those on whom it shines to give Him anything to earn it. In "The Seed Cracked Open," the secret that the seed of Hafiz's faith kept cracked open to reveal the intimate closeness in which

God exists with His children, as if the two beings share a body, and scheme to use it together to spread God's love to the world.

"Why Just Ask the Donkey" invites readers into a similar kind of communing love, in which the highest, most eternal parts of their beings can explore truth and beauty together. Similarly, "Who Wrote the Music" records Hafiz's realization that he has been the source, or the conduit by which God gave humanity, of the expressions of all manner of emotional experiences of holiness. It is in that holy communion with one another that the two of them can be most fully human and whole. Fearless enjoyment of life is a holy birthright in "Your Mother and My Mother" since, through the bond of shared humanity and immortal souls, people are able to approach God in prayer and count on good things, and live this life in the knowledge that God intends joy and lightheartedness for His children. Following the confession of an insatiable appetite for God's affection and reassurance in "Mismatched Newlyweds," "Your Seed Pouch" refers to a soul filled with the truth of God's words as a field ready to be planted. Hafiz asks the reader to make his life work of loving more, being happy, and rejoicing even in the daily work of living and learning. The chapter's closing poem, "That Magnificent Storm," Hafiz's metaphor of him as a storm-ravaged cypress after the tempest of God's presence allows him to ask how such an intimate, soul-shaking encounter is not infidelity, when God offers the same strong presence to all of His children.

The scope becomes a bit more broad in the third chapter, encompassing topics like interpersonal relations, God extending Himself to humanity at large, and the universal enslavement of humanity to disillusionment. The first poem is entitled "Removing the Shoe from the Temple" and describes the holiness of the place in which one stands to pray. Whenever and wherever one steps into the presence of God, God is there, and so the very ground becomes holy, according to Hafiz, and so he playfully posits that kneeling is the only way of removing one's shoes from God's temple. Hafiz uses a metaphor about tracking a deer to describe looking for the presence of God in "Against My Own Hand" and the sensual and intimate description of God's body for just a moment against his hand when contact is finally made.

"Out of this Mess" is a poem asking followers of God to live lives beyond reproach, so that people watching them live do not mis-characterize God, and (a little cynically) so that He will be generous with His blessings as a reward to them. Good behavior is also the theme of "If God Invited You to a Party," in which Hafiz asks his readers to suppose everyone around them is God's specifically chosen guest, and they are all dancing on jeweled floors. The alchemy of the choices one makes in deciding how to live is the subject of "To Build a Swing," in which Hafiz implores his readers to choose the highest quality people, and make the very best choices in behavior and belief, in order that the resulting mix produces joy instead of nightmare. Hafiz explains his role as a poet it "A Crystal Rim" describing his soul flying from him into heaven to sing with God, and leaving the tip of one wing in contact with the earth — his poems of invitation, instruction and celebration — as a means for those who choose to join in celebrating what he is seeing in heaven.

In a similar theme of offering rescue from darkness and hopelessness, "This One is Mine" describes a God who will not let sadness and disillusionment possess His beloved, but will do anything He can, including using Hafiz, to have them as His own. "Curfews" describes noise as the cruel ruler, and silence as the invitation to celebration and music. "The Ear that was Sold to a Fish" describes the time God reprimanded Hafiz for giving away too many of His holy secrets for free, and the moon put a price on his head. Hafiz said it was the fault of prayer, since he is too overloaded with riches to keep them to himself, and so sells his eye to a bird and his ear to a fish to be his spies on the movements of God. His connection of his story to the discussion of art that appears in the beginning is that art is the conversation between lovers, and the awakening of the most playful part of the soul. "An Infant In Your Arms" closes the chapter, and teaches that when fears are quieted and reality has taken its proper shape, God will be as real as a babe in arms, and we will understand creation to be our tender responsibility, like a mother nursing a child.

Chapters 4-6

Chapters 4-6 Summary

The forth chapter begins with "I Hold the Lion's Paw," in which God is an untamed lion with Whom Hafiz dances. "If the Falling of a Hoof" proposes that everyday occurrences should point to God and inspire praise. "What the Hell" uses Hafiz's crush on a girl to symbolize his ebullient affection for God. "Someone Untied Your Camel" uses the imagery of a caravan to symbolize right thinking. "When I Want to Kiss God" metaphorically uses creation to represent God, and Hafiz describes God's offer of His affection as payment "For a Single Tear." "That Shapes the Eye" contrasts youth and age with symbols of play and art. "So Many Gifts" represent unclaimed blessings. "Love is the Funeral Pyre" returns to the idea of burning away what is destructive, and "Allah, Allah, Allah" describes meditation with the symbol of a drum.

In the fifth chapter, "Don't Die Again" opens a chapter about the work of the spiritual life, and encourages seeking God throughout one's life. The next poem encourages believers to make themselves sources of love and hope, "Like a Life-Giving Sun." "The Great Work" encourages becoming students of those who are living well, and "Effacement" describes the agony of shedding selfishness. "Some Fill with Each Good Rain" encourages people only to give their most intimate affection to those who will requite it, and thereby keep each symbolic well filled, and equal care is encouraged as "The Vintage Man," restoring delicate works of art. "Everywhere" describes all of the ways God can be found in every day living, and "Lifts Beyond Conception" symbolizes God with a Golden Nightingale taking the soul soaring. The ocean's defying gravity symbolizes a life in the supreme safety of "God's Bucket," and "Just Looking for Trouble" describes the assurance that comes from faith.

Chapter Six opens with Hafiz's wish to bless the world with truth in "The Gift." The unity of God and his worshipers is expressed in "Laughing at the Word Two." "Life Starts Clapping" is about the collective worship of creation. Approachability is "The Foundation of Greatness" in the next poem, and compassion to the weak is the theme in "Courteous to the Ant." Humanity are God's precious fruit in "His Winter Crop." Hafiz is an animal quivering with "The Scent of Light" and God's dance is the source of all movement in "No Conflict." Hafiz rebukes his teacher's light-hearted jabbing in "Stop Calling Me a Pregnant Woman," and "A Strange Feather" describes flawed understanding before spiritual maturity.

Chapters 4-6 Analysis

Worship as a transformer of perspective and character is the common thread throughout the poems of the forth chapter. "I Hold the Lion's Paw" records Hafiz's offer to teach his readers how to befriend God, since he holds His untamed hand in his moments of worship, and will help the reader experience the same communion with all

of creation. In "If the Falling of a Hoof," Hafiz instructs that if one is able to see cause to celebrate in the mundane, the tragic and the beautiful equally, then God has shown that person the reason for existence, and he should run through the streets giving out that divine love. "What the Hell" is a confession of Hafiz's own inability to keep his ecstatic love to himself, told with the metaphor of a girl whose house he decorates with poems. "Someone Untied Your Camel" describes the hopelessness and lack of compassion that characterize people who have lost their way, and to whom Hafiz offers his guidance.

He makes the point that expressing affection for God can be done by being good to himself and enjoying creation in the next poem, and assures people that God offers His presence as the only reasonable payment "For a Single Tear." In "That Shapes the Eye," Hafiz describes the purity and easy happiness of youth, and the benefits of focusing on God in age, allowing actions to be shaped by love. "So Many Gifts" describes the blessings that are a birthright that remain unopened because people don't know to look for them using vivid metaphors to describe blessings there for the taking while attention is elsewhere. In "Love is the Funeral Pyre," Hafiz describes the process of allowing his imperfections and flawed thinking being burned out of him and replaced by love and divine character as a result of devotion. The chapter closes with "Allah, Allah, Allah" in which he uses the metaphor of a drum playing in his head to describe his constant meditation.

The work of walking on the spiritual path, and the beauty of the process of spiritual growth arise as themes in the poems of Ladinsky's fifth chapter. The first, "Don't Die Again," implores readers to use their lifetimes to find and cultivate the divine beauty in themselves, making every action a swing of the pick to find the ruby that symbolizes God's intended purpose and wholeness, rather than dying again (assuming reincarnation) without having found it. "Like a Life-Giving Sun" takes that idea to its next reality, in which a life is lived holding out truth to the world as a guide to everyone around, there as a result of intimacy with God. "The Great Work" describes the process of growing in love and knowledge by making oneself a student of someone who already mastered those things, as the most important work of a life. "Effacement" describes the process of putting to death selfishness and the lesser way of thinking that is natural to men, but to which they cling for its familiarity.

Hafiz uses metaphors of suicide to describe the process of the path to rebirth. "Some Fill with Each Good Rain" describes the precious, intimate love within each heart that ought never be offered to anyone except those who will take it upon themselves to nurture and protect the one offering it. "The Vintage Man" describes the delicate work of refining character without breaking it, and it contrasts sharply with the reckless exuberance with which Hafiz rejoices at seeing God "Everywhere." "Lifts Beyond Conception" describes the transcendence of the process of becoming more like God every day one walks on the Sufi path. In "God's Bucket," Hafiz talks about the value and miracle of life, like the ocean sitting on the bottom of the earth without spilling, life is too sacred ever to end. The final poem in the chapter describes a student of Hafiz's once paralyzed with fear, and so liberated by his understanding of Truth that now he goes out looking for trouble.

Practical application of God's love and wisdom unite the poems in Chapter Six. In the first poem in the sixth chapter, Hafiz vows his friendship by promising the reader that he will address every one of his needs, both physical and spiritual, as his act of love. This is the poem for which the book is named. The unity of friendship finds an echo in the second, "Laughing at the Word Two." In "Life Starts Clapping," all of creation applauds in the warmth of the gaze of God, and Hafiz praises humility in "The Foundation for Greatness" and gentle control of power in "Courteous to the Ant." "His Winter Crop" centers on the question of suffering if God is benevolent, and Hafiz's answer is that suffering is meant to strengthen and purify humanity, so that it will be made of stronger stuff than could be consumed by the flames of His intense love. The next two poems fixate on God's beauty, and Hafiz makes sense of his gift of poetry in "Stop Calling Me a Pregnant Woman." The final poem in Chapter Six describes the understanding that comes with patient study as having swallowed "A Strange Feather" that finally leaves the system when understanding is complete.

Chapters 7-9

Chapters 7-9 Summary

Chapter Seven deals with right understandings of things, and opens with "Really Just a Tamborine" in which everything is God's musical instrument. "Stairway of Existence" discourages legalistic religion, and "What Do the White Birds Say" uses the symbolism of blooming nature to describe the blossoming revelation of God. He encourages readers to let everyone be a teacher in "How Do I Listen?" and "The Earth Braces Itself" for the presence of God, preparing to flirt and dance with Him. "The Difference Between" tells the story of the prince, the master, and the Perfect One, and the emissaries who go to the prince in order to highlight the content of the heart over the image or riches of the body. Hafiz supposes the angels can sympathize with his longing for God in "The Angels Know You Well" while man's listening to his worst self is the caution in "Crooked Deals." God's plunging to the deepest parts of the heart is represented by "The Millstone's Talents" and the chapter closes with praise of meditation in "Let Thought Become Your Beautiful Lover."

The eighth chapter opens with "Get the Blame Straight," granting humanity permission to blame, as well as credit, God for everything that happens. "Rewards for Clear Thinking" similarly gives God responsibility, with the symbolism of pawns on a chess board. "Please" uses the symbolism of people carrying water like rivers and getting muddy, asking for clarity. "This Constant Yearning" describes people as instruments longing for God's hands, and "The Sad Game" uses financial imagery to describe the theft done by guilt. "That Regal Coat" symbolizes joy, and Hafiz defines religions as shrines to the past in "Stop Being So Religious." The view from a window symbolizes understanding of God in "Friends Do Things Like This." Sunlight on a rose is used to describe love in "It Felt Love." Animals represent ways of enjoying God in "Look! I Am a Whale!" and captivity to image makes a bear weep in "Two Bears." "The Sky Hunter" describes the search for God once He has been tasted, and "Forgive the Dream" asks the reader to forgive this illusory life for its painfulness.

Chapter Nine opens with "The Prettiest Mule," in which people are represented by dumb, herding mules. Life is a day at the market in "Today" and in "Wise Men Keep Talking About" God is a beautiful woman and life is a love factory. People live awaiting the time when they will be turned "Back Into Herself," as God in the next poem, and the mule on which Hafiz explores God's wonder gets lost in "The Mule Got Drunk and Lost in Heaven." Hafiz asks "Why Abstain" from love when life is so short, and "The Warrior" battles worry, regret and bad habits. "Dividing God" uses the imagery of a concert in the heavens, and the tedious work of breaking God apart into tidy definitions. "I Saw Two Birds" represents the future communion of believers, and "Muhammad's Twin" uses spider-web-weaving to describe the way finding God's representatives leads to finding God.

Chapters 7-9 Analysis

Sorting out truth from counterfeit, and a right understanding of the relationships between humans and earth, earth and God, and humans and God are the issues that find contemplation in the seventh chapter's poems. "Really Just a Tamborine" describes the universe as the instrument God plays in His own celebration, and life itself, rather than religion, the means of finding our way to God in "The Stairway of Existence." The intensity of celebratory worship continues in "What Do the White Birds Say," when Hafiz uses the symbols of the illusory earth falling away and the fullness of God opening like a rose in his heart. In this poem, physical reality is less real than the watching angels and God revealing Himself is the overwhelming, engrossing reality. Hafiz describes the value he ascribes to the people speaking around him in the next poem, and the rejoicing of the earth at the feet of the lovers of God in "The Earth Braces Itself."

"The Difference Between," one of Hafiz's longer poems, emphasizes purity of heart over image, and is told with humor and playfulness, as the Perfect One's representative is so very uncouth. It also ends with an invitation from Hafiz for the reader to end the story as he sees fit. In a departure from his usual focus on the steadfast attentiveness of God, Hafiz describes a feeling of abandonment in the midst of his spiritual journey in "The Angels Know You Well." Man's own duplicity is the theme of "Crooked Deals" in which Hafiz asks people to cultivate their higher voice rather than deferring to the madman that exists in every mind. "The Millstone's Talents" describes God's unique ability to speak to the heart's deepest longings and places of most intense pain, and His using Hafiz to sink to those depths of human suffering and speak His truth. In the final poem of the chapter, "Let Thought Become Your Beautiful Lover" Hafiz invites his readers into the beauty of meditation as an experience of Truth.

Chapter eight centers around the theme of humanity's need for divine guidance and truth, and opens with the poem, "Get the Blame Straight" in which responsibility for everything that happens on earth down to the atomic level falls squarely and completely on God, allowing humanity to rejoice in the grace of an eternity with no blame. That theme is carried on into a poem about predestination, called "Rewards for Clear Thinking," in which humanity is only responsible to be what it was created to be, and by simply surrendering to God's guiding hand like a pawn, allowing Him to rule one's actions, surrendering what Hafiz calls the illusion of free will, can naturally be living by the highest moral code. "Please" similarly characterizes humanity's understanding as through muddied eyes, while God invites humanity to come to His clarity.

The next two short poems describe humanity as instruments yearning for the Master's hand, and blame as the thief of all of humanity's wealth. "That Regal Coat" refers to the joy that comes from living in God's love, and compassion as a drop in one's eye that allows one still to see the suffering of men who haven't found it. "Stop Being So Religious" is a good example of the irreverence for organized religion that caused so much trouble for Hafiz, in which he describes it as a way of remaining stuck in the past, and already, in the fourteenth century! As an alternative, Hafiz offers the sharing of understandings and observations of God from one friend to another as a superior way in

"Friends Do Things Like This." "It Felt Love" uses a rose opening to sunlight to demonstrate the opening and thriving people do in the warmth of love freely offered, something that replaces their fear of rejection and lets them show the beauty of their unguarded hearts. In the poem, "Look! I Am a Whale," Hafiz calls earth the sun's playground and characterizes the business of life as dancing to God's music, getting ever closer as one gets more caught up in the dance. "Two Bears" returns to the theme of image at the expense of genuine, fulfilled living. "The Sky Hunter" describes the state of the human heart once it has understood and come near the truth and beauty of God as having been ruined for anything but endless and constant search for Him. Finally, Hafiz refers to life on earth as a dream that has caused deep wounds in "Forgive the Dream" and explains that one can only experience wholeness and the nourishment and joy of truth when one has forgiven this life for the pain it has caused.

The universality of the divine, even existing as both masculine and feminine, and in every detail of creation and life recurs throughout the poems in the ninth chapter. The unifying element, however, is Hafiz's offering metaphors for life that help explain to the reader God's intentions toward people in this life. It opens with a poem in which Hafiz explains that people are like mules in that we desire a master with a strong whip to lead it to where it will be happiest, and that is why he strives to be winsome enough ("The Prettiest Mule") that people will follow his example. "Today" reiterates the theme that everything is sacred and a part of the divine, and that walking in that knowledge changes the way one approaches every action and relationship. "Wise Men Keep Talking About" calls life a workshop where people strive to build enough love to become free, see and know God in every experience, even in suffering. "Back Into Herself" defines life as the time we are waiting to be turned into God, and Hafiz suggests living a life that will be pleasant music to God's ears during the wait.

Hafiz returns to the theme of life as an education and exploration in "The Mule God Drunk and Lost in Heaven" and to a recurring observation that women are smarter about love than men. His invitation in the poem is to abandon fear and embark on the adventure of living and shedding the comfortable and familiar for the holy and true. "Why Abstain?" issues a similar invitation, pointing out that life is for loving and being happy, and won't be long. "The Warrior" refers to the work each individual has to do throughout life to root out the parts of the past that haunt with guilt or worry and allow the germinating seed of divinity to bloom and lift the consciousness to what is true and eternal. "Dividing God" speaks to the eternal, transcendent, organic universality of God in contrast with the carefully defined and therefore limited God of organized religions. Hafiz says only those who allow God to be whole can afford His most elaborate shows, since their God hasn't been shrunk by an accountant who shrinks Him down, divided into pieces for every disagreeing group. The beauty of worship in unity continues in "I Saw Two Birds," when Hafiz asks his friend to unite with him in worship, expressing only need for God, and leading easily into the description of searching that characterizes "Muhammad's Twin."

Chapters 10-12

Chapters 10-12 Summary

"Tiny Gods" describes the lesser role specialized gods offer to play, leaving them incomplete in the beginning of Chapter Ten. God is symbolized by a passing bird dipping His wing in "This Union," "When You Can Endure" describes the time the heart is most able to learn, and Hafiz describes himself as simply "This Talking Rag" in the next, and to creation as his charge in "Who Will Feed My Cat?" Guilty consciences steal joy in "Burglars Hear Watchdogs" and "A Still Cup" uses the imagery of the kitchen to describe learning. Meditation has made Hafiz "The Lamp That Needs No Oil" and the chapter closes with "Too Wonderful," which describes Hafiz's union with God.

The whole of creation is as fragile as a sprout under the foot of an elephant in "Elephant Wandering" at the beginning of the eleventh chapter. In "An Old Musician," Hafiz explains how fellow believers should meet and part, and fellow creatures share in reveling in God in "The Fish and I will Chat." "The Heart is Right" describes the rightness of mourning when goodness is decreased. Hafiz catches blessings from "Out of God's Hat" and offers them to the world, compounding the pleasure. "The Clay Bowl's Destiny" talks about surrendering to the violence of God's refining and using a soul. Hafiz confesses to expressing the experiences of all of humanity in "I Hope You Won't Sue This Old Man." A "Faithful Lover" of God is described as a reflection of God's love the same way the moon reflects the sun, and the chapter closes with "Now is the Time," which calls people to remember that everything they think, do and say are sacred, and meant to be motivated and characterized by love and truth.

In the twelfth chapter, "Counting Moles" uses the imagery of lovers to describe intimacy with God. "Hafiz" is about the love contest Hafiz never loses. God is the wind in "The Body a Tree" and "A Great Need" uses the symbolism of climbing a mountain and love as holding on. Life is a battle, and acknowledging that everything happens because God allows it is the key to victory in "There Could be Holy Fallout." In "Trying to Wear Pants," people who are trying to live separately from God are like fish trying to wear pants, and love is wings when one is flying in "This Sky." Life is a game with no fun when God isn't around in "It is Unanimous" and the chapter closes with "Two Puddles Chatting," comparing life on earth to a puddle's duration, urging people to enjoy life while they can.

Chapters 10-12 Analysis

The characteristics of a life united with God's reappear throughout the poems of the tenth chapter, of which "Tiny Gods" is the first. It asks readers to shun the gods who don't claim to be omnipresent, universal and omnipotent as counterfeits and demigods, incapable of quenching the soul and ruling the universe, those things that are the one true God's domain. "This Union" describes unity with God as a place from which one must invite others to join in and experience jubilant freedom. "When You Can Endure"

speaks to the moment when one is able to sit in the pain of longing and emptiness and listen intently to what God offers to that very particular need. Hafiz calls himself "This Talking Rag" in the next poem, highlighting his own humility in contrast to the wild majesty of his Message, and calls the wind, fire and water the pet he will leave behind in "Who Will Feed My Cat?" referring to the elements of which he strove to be a steward in this life. The guilty consciences of the suspicious are the burglars in "Burlgars Hear Watchdogs," since those who believe that God gives freely and continues giving, instead of assuming they'll have to trick God into blessing them. "A Still Cup" speaks to trusting God again, pointing out that a student must be attentive and still in order to receive from the teacher. He calls himself "The Lamp That Needs No Oil" in the next poem, so unified with God is he, and so completely cleansed of the pain and longing that tied him to earth and the material world. The final poem of the chapter is called "Too Wonderful," which describes the bliss of that unity.

Chapter Eleven centers around the freedom for living and purity of worship that comes from faith and a right understanding of God. A tiny and vulnerable universe sits at the mercy of God's wandering, in a departure from Hafiz's usual poems about God's deliberate compassion, in "Elephant Wandering." Hafiz tells fellow believers to regard each other with the tender care the instrumentalist takes with his instrument in the metaphorical poem, "And Old Musician." In "The Fish and I Will Chat," Hafiz points out the commonality of a life of worship between animals and humans, as both are creations basking on God's love and provision. Hafiz describes the pain of seeing a decrease in love or understanding in the world, saying it is correct for those things to be painful to a heart with right priorities in "The Heart is Right."

In "Out of God's Hat", Hafiz uses imagery from nature to describe himself as a carrier of God's blessings eager to share them and see them flourish on fertile ground, since God is also eager to see His love and bounty blessing His children. Hafiz surrenders to the breaking hand of God in "The Clay Bowl's Destiny," realizing that surrender is freedom and God's intent for life on earth. In "I Hope You Won't Sue This Old Man," Hafiz explains that his purpose in writing is to put words to the longings of human hearts. The moon serves as an object lesson for humanity in "Faithful Lover," as humanity's purpose is simply to follow the course God set for it, and reflect the light of God to the world. The final poem of the chapter, "Now is the Time," continues the theme of the last and reiterates that the present is meant for worship, faithful obedience, and an acceptance of God's grace that will erase guilt and fear.

God's love for humanity is meant to translate into the love passed among humans, as a preparation for an eternity of loving in Chapter Twelve. It opens with "Counting Moles" and uses the intimacy between lovers to describe Hafiz's playful intimacy with God. In the poem he names for himself, Hafiz describes his work as a love contest he never loses, and thereby invites readers in. In "The Body a Tree," angels gather to watch, amazed, when a life is moved by God the way a tree is moved by the wind. In "A Great Need," love is the only thing that allows people to keep their footing as they walk the treacherous paths of life. "There Could Be Holy Fallout" compares life to a battle against the causes of fear and insecurity, and the declaration of faith in God's will as bringing luminous rain of the joy of trusting God. In "Trying to Wear Pants," Hafiz uses a mislead

fish to symbolize people experiencing the confusion of a life in which they have not yet learned to love the hardest people to love, instead trying heroic deeds to win God's favor. He reiterates the same point, of love being the key to living well, in "This Sky," and again compassion draws God near and brings joy back into life in "It Is Unanimous." In "Two Puddles Chatting," Hafiz points out the tragedy of worrying about death by pointing to the things that even puddles have to enjoy before the sun evaporates them. To complete the thought, Ladinsky closes the chapter with Hafiz's poem "His Ballet Company" that calls the management of life and treasure a long audition for the divine ballet company.

Chapters 13-15

Chapters 13-15 Summary

In the first poem of Chapter Thirteen, "Reverence," everything in creation is a part of God's body, and so deserves to be revered. In "That Tree We Planted," Hafiz remembers his teacher at his grave. He praises the qualities that relationship with God cultivates in people in "I Vote for You For God." In "A One-Story House," Hafiz is grateful that his teacher's house only had one floor, since his rejoicing made him fall out of its windows, and he encourages a similar bailing out from churches in favor of the lifeboats of poetry in "The Great Religions." He speaks to the effects of positive company in "What Happens to the Guest," describing the refinement of taste and character. In "I Want Both of Us," he compares the relationship of believing friends to that of married people, and images from nature to the postures of love in"Like Passionate Lips." Finally, "Cucumbers and Prayers" uses the images of a parade and thrown cucumbers to describe the jubilant worship of God.

In Chapter Fourteen, the first poem is "A Cushion for Your Head" in which Hafiz is a sort of bed nurse for those exhausted by their separation from God. "Those Beautiful Love Games" lovers play become languages of worship, and "The Bag Lady" becomes a metaphor for Hafiz offering his own wares. "The Ambience of Love" encourages people to make music or swing clubs in expression of holy love. "Tired of Speaking Sweetly" describes a God at the end of his patience, wishing to shake His children free of the things that weigh them down and cause them pain. The symbolism of the roots of trees describes the connection God has to every action and living thing on earth in "A Root in Each Act and Creature." "Our Hearts Should Do This More" describes Hafiz wrestling with God when he is craving His presence, and God's pleasure in it. Hafiz uses the metaphor of a prostitute for God, promising good directions in "Turn Left a Thousand Feet From Here." God gives substance to illusion to create the physical world in "Imagination Does Not Exist." Hafiz declares himself finished and ready to be cooked and served in the fish metaphor in "Throw Me On a Scale." Egos become hats to be left at the door in "The Hatcheck Girl" and a fish finds himself on a camel in "Damn Thirsty."

In Chapter Fifteen, "Two Giant Fat People" demonstrates the relationship between Hafiz and God, and in "Scratching My Back" Hafiz is a dog scratching his back on the moon. In "If You Don't Stop That" the anthropomorphized characters are confused and pain threatens to leave if Hafiz doesn't stop worshiping."Elegance" describes a person who doesn't speak ill of others."A Hole In a Flute" describes Hafiz's relationship with God. "Until" proposes that people live in fear until they know God. "Why Aren't We Screaming Drunks?" uses the imagery of drinking God's greatness and the discontentment that comes from comparison breaking the wine glass. "Dropping Keys" uses the symbolism of men in prison to describe those the small men have locked up, while the sage drops keys. People are genetically linked to God in "All the Talents of God", and Hafiz praises the resemblance. In "The Great Expanse," God is the ocean and anger is the thing that sinks men's boats. In the last poem of the chapter, Hafiz is a bottle of champagne

splattered with ecstasy and destined to fall from the heavens forever in "I Imagine Now for Ages."

Chapters 13-15 Analysis

Chapter thirteen opens with the poem called "Reverence" in which Hafiz points out that, since everything is a part of God, everything is sacred, and there is nothing to be feared. He remembers his teacher, Muhammad Attar, in "That Tree We Planted," still longing for his affection, and tells his readers how they can perfect the character of God in "I Vote for You for God," praising truth-telling, integrity and kindness as ruling virtues. "A One-Story House" playfully describes the ecstasy Hafiz experienced at his teacher's revelations of truth. He calls poets the life-savers of those wisest of people who left organized religions in "The Great Religions" and describes the refinement of every aspect of a life that learns directly from God and His creation in"What Happens to the Guest." The relationship between teacher and student is the stuff of "I Want Both of Us," in a relationship as intimate as if they two and God were all married, and further describes expressions of love in"Like Passionate Lips." The chapter closes with "Cucumbers and Prayers" in which God encourages rowdy worship, and Hafiz looks forward to it every day.

Hafiz offers tender promises of divine love and soul-quenching knowledge in each of the poems Ladinsky has gathered in the next chapter. The first poem in chapter fourteen is "A Cushion for Your Head" in which Hafiz offers comfort to those exhausted by their trying to exist separated from God. Hafiz encourages what he calls love games as ways of exploring affection with God in "These Beautiful Love Games." He acknowledges the continued offerings of the most lowly of worshipers offering all they have to those they encounter in"The Bag Lady." In "The Ambiance of Love" he encourages a similar offering of praise in whatever language people speak. "Tired of Speaking Sweetly" is another playful poem in which Hafiz tells his readers that sometimes God gets tired of softly spoken love, and He wants to shake his children my the shoulders, take the things away from them that steal their joy, and beat sense into them, and Hafiz considers it a shame that people run from Him in His aggressive moments.

"A Root in Each Act and Creature" describes the life-giving and earth-beautifying of the sun as an expression of divine affection, and the joy that belongs to people when they recognize that every element of life is an expression of divinity. Hafiz points to the times when humanity sits in loneliness until it can't stand it anymore, and then violently demands affection and attention from God, much to God's delight, in "Our Hearts Should Do This More." The next poem in line is a good example of the language of poetry disguising its true Subject, when Hafiz promises to help his reader find the woman capable of delivering the best sex, instead of the God who will deliver the deepest spiritual satisfaction in "Turn Left a Thousand Feet From Here." Hafiz brings humanity into the reality of God, in which everything from the wildest of human imaginations is every day play in the infinite world of possibilities that is God's reality in "Imagination Does Not Exist." He is a fish ready to be eaten in "Throw Me on a Scale," so cleansed and finished by love that he is knowledge personified, ready to be

consumed. "The Hatcheck Girl"symbolizes the necessity of leaving ego behind when approaching God, and the final poem of the chapter describes humanity as a fish on a camel when it is living separated from God.

Hafiz teaches his readers how to let the love of God expressed to them so abundantly translate into a life lived to express the same unconditional affection and grace to humanity in the poems of Chapter Fifteen. Hafiz's relationship with God is all friendship and giggling in "Two Giant Fat People" and he offers the same playfulness and gracious acceptance to everyone who approaches his poetry in "Scratching My Back." Confusion and pain are forced to leave him to make room for his merry worship in "If You Don't Stop That." "Elegance" is how Hafiz describes individuals who have stopped thinking ill of others, and recommends them as friends and examples to follow, and following the theme of himself as a vessel that delivers holy affection to humanity, he calls himself merely "A Hole in a Flute" that God plays.

He describes the idea that "perfect love casts out all fear" (I John 4:18, Holy Bible) in "Until", and is only able to explain how jubilation over God's love hasn't make everyone drunk with happiness by supposing that judgment of fellow men kills the possibility of over-abundant happiness. Continuing on the theme of judgment, he calls a small man the judge while the wise man spends his time loving people as they are, and teaching them to be free. He praises God for the wisdom He has put in him to put to words in "All the Talents of God" and compassion and dignity over anger in "The Great Expanse." The final poem of the chapter is "I Imagine Now for Ages" and Hafiz so offers himself to be obliterated by love that even the blown-apart pieces of him falling from the sky for ages to come is a pleasant thought.

Chapters 16-18

Chapters 16-18 Summary

In Chapter Sixteen, "Spiced Manna" describes the kind of sustenance Hafiz offers in his poetry. "A Hard Decree" warns against not finding joyful work and being swallowed up by the world. "And For No Reason" describes spontaneous worship. "Sometimes I Say to a Poem" describes a poem as an ornery sprite determined to be heard. "The Suburbs" of God is where complaint is possible. "Love Lifts Me" is the response of the bird defying gravity and gloom. "We Might Have to Medicate You" is what Hafiz says to people who don't understand the constant reality and proximity of God. "The Idiot's Warehouse" is the place full of distractions from the divine. "When You Wake" describes communing worshipers as two cups of water poured into the same pitcher. Hafiz describes the challenge of teaching in "This Teaching Business Isn't Easy", and in "The Mountain Got Tired of Sitting," Hafiz describes the jubilation of creation and the reality of God.

In Chapter Seventeen, Hafiz declares that everything is a portal to the holy in "Where is the Door to the Tavern?" "Becoming Human" is a conversation Hafiz has with a man who says he is having divine visions. "In Need of the Breath" describes Hafiz as an unset jewel in need of the hand of God to set it and display its glory. "The Heart's Coronation" happens when it makes itself God's pawn. Hafiz is "The Thousand-Stringed Instrument" in God's hands. "Then Winks" describes creation, a rabbit in particular, getting ready for a cosmic celebration, in a realm far more real than the lunatic's sphere of physicality. "And Then You Are" describes several manifestations of God all inspiring Hafiz to worship. "The Intelligent Man" is the one who doesn't trust in wealth. "The Chorus in the Eye" describes the beauty of creation constantly pointing to God. "Find a Better Job" encourages people to let go of worry, and "The Lute will Beg" describes a saint coming into his usefulness, when God's lute begs for his hands.

Chapter Eighteen opens with "When the Sun Conceived a Man" in which deity is the fruit of creation, and then its prized possession and source of joy. "A Mime" tells the story of creation and Christ, and renders his audience silent for days. "The Quintessence of Loneliness" describes the solitude in which communion with God can best be found. "Needing a Mirror" speaks from God's perspective as the Supreme Lover of humanity's heart. "Zikr" is the word for remembrance in which humanity best meditates on the qualities of God. "The Tender Mouth" describes the offering of one's body to earth after death. Creation gives Hafiz his poems in "Greeting God," and in "Reaching Toward the Millet Fields," the beauty of creation makes believers expect to hear the voice of God.

Chapters 16-18 Analysis

In Chapter Sixteen, Hafiz explores the realities of intimacy with God, as it pertains to his inspiration, creation's response and daily living as a believer. In the opening poem, the same way manna from heaven saved the lives of the Hebrew slaves wandering in the Egyptian wilderness, Hafiz offers his songs, sung in unison with God, as "Spiced Manna" to save his readers from their own slavery, and he issues the same warning of the possibility of imprisonment to work people were created to do in "A Hard Decree." In the poem "And for No Reason," the inspiration for his inexplicable joy becomes the only Reality that matters as he becomes united with God in purpose and perspective at the end of the poem. He is pursued by a playful and persistent poem that demands to be put to paper at the least convenient moments in "Sometimes I Say To a Poem," in the same way people used to say someone "has" a genius that haunts them, or a muse that guides their art.

In "The Suburbs," Hafiz observes that discontentment only happens when people are only getting an idea of God instead of coming all the way into His truth and relationship with Him, and he makes a similar observation about love lifting the bird who flies even in boggy, heavy darkness in "She Responded." He considers it pure craziness to claim independence from God in the poem "We Might Have to Medicate You." In "The Idiot's Warehouse," Hafiz refers to the mindless activity that keeps people too busy in this life to sit and meditate, praising God for life itself. "When You Wake" describes the complete unity of fellowship with another believer, and their ability to bring Muhammad near them and rejoice with creation together. Hafiz compares teaching to shooting water arrows at the sun, or asking an ant to capture an elephant in "This Teaching Business Isn't Easy." Finally, in "The Mountain Got Tired of Sitting," Hafiz describes every evolution of creation — the rising of the mountains from the earth, people from the primordial ooze, the sun, clouds, as expressions of praise coming from the created to their Creator.

Chapter Seventeen directs humanity's attention to the reality of God, to which the only rational response is to be swept up and inspired. In "Where is the Door to the Tavern?" Hafiz says God can be found in every detail of creation. In "Becoming Human," Hafiz explains that instead of spiritual insights being used to glorify an individual, they are only genuine or useful insofar as they make an individual more tender and compassionate toward his fellow creature. In "In Need of the Breath", Hafiz describes himself as a thing of beauty completely dependent on the nearness of God to be able to be enjoyed, like light on a faceted stone, or breath through a reed instrument, and "The Heart's Coronation" makes a similar point about humanity's dependence on God. God writes poetry with the hand of Hafiz in "The Thousand-Stringed Instrument" in further demonstration of the point. All of creation revels in happiness, from the elements to the planets to the animals, and Hafiz observes that their jubilation is the only sane response to reality, whereas those people who call him crazy for being too happy are the crazy ones in "Then Winks." In "And Then You Are," Hafiz describes several manifestations of divinity and how they all inspire him to worship. He points out the powerlessness of gold in "The Intelligent Man" and returns to the subject of the sweet, creation-inspiring character of God in "The Chorus in the Eye." In the final two chapters of the poem, Hafiz

encourages worriers to find more useful work, and points to the praises of God as the supreme occupation of one's time.

Longer poems delve more deeply into the longing for God men experience on earth, and His transcendent relevance in Chapter Eighteen. "When the Sun Conceived a Man" is a poem exploring the beginnings of God, in Hafiz's mind, as an outgrowth of creation, and an occasion that made all of creation rejoice, and still sweeps men and creation up into an uncontrollable rejoicing. In "A Mime," the story of inspirational creation and divinity are told by a mime on the gallows so convincingly that creation fell speechless for days as a result of the vivid recognition. "The Quintessence of Loneliness" describes the yearning in Hafiz for a world cleared of everything except God and truth - "that ground of Conscious Nothing / Where the Rose / Ever blooms" - having tasted God purely, and now longing for that concentrated truth and sovereign beauty like a heroine addict. Hafiz observes the same phenomenon in men from God's perspective in "Needing a Mirror." "Zikr" is the form of worship in which people, by remembering God, fill their soul's cups with Him again, allowing them to share His love with the people they meet. Earth becomes an old friend, a companion in worship, in "The Tender Mouth," and he describes their joint worship in "Greeting God." In the final poem of the chapter, he returns to the subject of longing for God in this life, and to the theme of creation's making itself beautiful as an offering to God, in "Reaching Toward the Millet Fields."

Chapters 19-22

Chapters 19-22 Summary

In Chapter Nineteen, a chapter devoted to the wonder of God, "Lousy at Math" symbolizes God in a large and priceless jewel broken apart by men. Hafiz describes people who don't know their glory as "The Sun in Drag." "Between Our Poles" compares humanity's ability to display the characteristics of God to the banks of a river. In "Stay Close to Those Sounds," Hafiz returns to the idea of the physical world being temporary and the importance of maintaining connected to things that bring eternity and divinity to mind. "An Invisible Pile of Wood" is how God feeds Hafiz's zeal. "It Has Not Rained Light" uses the metaphor of a desert caravan to represent people lost without knowledge of God. "Berserk" describes Hafiz's worship. "No More Leaving" describes the state of perpetual union with God. "Wow" describes the source of real poetry, and "What Should We Do About the Moon?" describes the futile questions with which men become preoccupied.

The two poems in Chapter Twenty discuss the learning there is to be done from people, beginning with Hafiz describing himself as "Cupping My Hands Like a Mountain Valley." He receives and distributes the blessing among the people he touches. The final poem, "Why Not Be Polite," finds Hafiz inviting everyone to listen to everyone else around them as if God were speaking through them.

Chapter Twenty-One opens with the invitation from God to dance in "The God Who Only Knows Four Words." "You Were Brave in that Holy War" comforts people who have been earnestly searching for God among bad teachers. "Bring the Man to Me" tells the story of a master who knows there is a slave praying for freedom and has his servants bring him to be released from his chains. "Too Beautiful" describes the intensity of the love of God and its ability to cleanse a person. "My Eyes So Soft" describes the change in a person when they have been made ready to surrender to God. "The Diamond Takes Shape" uses the metaphor of a parrot to describe teachers with no wisdom. "That Does Perish" describes Hafiz as an earth that dies without the sun of God's presence. "Chain You to My Body" describes Hafiz's desire to keep his students with him and teach all the time. "Covers Her Face with Both Hands" is how the moon reacts to people who refuse to act with kindness. "Dog's Love" uses the feverish pursuit of male dogs for females in heat as the standard for people's pursuit of God.

In Chapter Twenty-Two, the first poem is "Stay with Us" in which the fellowship is defined by those who have shed guilt and see themselves as legitimate children of God. "I am Full of Love Tonight" metaphorically positions God as lover and humanity as beloved as He invites her on a night of sailing and courtship. "Many Lives Ago" contrasts the carnality of desires with those refined of God's wisdom. "It Will Stretch Out Its Leg" compares poetry to a man tripping someone to make them stop and listen, and uses imagery from flirtation to describe the process of learning. "Some of the Planets are Hosting" reminds people of the invitation to worship that comes from their senses

and calls the rational mind the part that makes them forget. "What is the Root?" describes the need for new descriptions of love that motivated Hafiz's poetry. "The Same Suntan" decries the tendency of men to narrow God to familiar definitions instead of letting Him be infinite. "For Three Days" encourages long periods of time alone in a closet as the best possible teacher.

Chapters 19-22 Analysis

The challenges of being distracted by the world's shallow preoccupations, and losing sight of what is able to transform the soul into a conduit of God's wisdom and affection run as a thread throughout the poems of Chapter Nineteen. The first poem of the chapter is "Lousy at Math," in which Hafiz returns to the tragedy of divided religions, comparing them to people who have found a stone of great worth, and have shattered it so they can all have a piece. He returns to the subject of man's inherent glory, telling him he is God and the sun in disguise, trying to live uncomfortably in a world too small and simple outside of the knowledge of God in "The Sun in Drag."

"Between Our Poles" describes the way that people limit God's power moving through us by the scope we allow compassion and forgiveness to take on in their characters. Hafiz calls visible creation illusion made manifest in "Stay Close to these Sounds," and urges people to keep their focus on the true and lasting things, testifying in the next poem, "An Invisible Pile of Wood," that God keeps the fire of his focus lit, demonstrating that his faith is a gift, and nothing of his own doing. He warns against worshiping parts of the illusion, grabbing onto whatever can be found when God is harder to find in "It Has Not Rained Light" because of the disease it brings to the soul. "Berserk" describes the involuntary explosion of worship that springs up in him at the slightest nod from God, and promises that eventually, there will be no more desert times, but all worship and unity in "No More Leaving." In "Wow," he points to the brevity of life, and its soul purpose being the recognition of the gift of life and beauty from the only Source that can give it. In contrast, the final poem of the chapter describes the trivial questions that occupy people's attention when all they are meant to be doing is enjoying the blessings of life in "What Should We Do About That Moon?"

Chapter Twenty is devoted to two poems only, one of which is quite long, and gives voice to Hafiz's understanding of the purpose of God's teaching. The second poem discusses the way in which God teaches. "Cupping My Hands Like a Mountain Valley" describes Hafiz's role as a cup accepting the wisdom and grace of God, and allowing it to flow through and from him onto humanity. The whole poem is a back and forth between accepting blessings and inviting his readers to come and allow him to share God's grace and affection with them, and teach what he has learned about how people can demonstrate divine affection toward one another in their every action. The only other poem in the chapter establishes every single person as a speaker of divine truth, and asks, "Why Not Be Polite" and listen to what they have to teach.

In the twenty-first chapter, Hafiz's poems praise the transformational power of God's wisdom, and the weaknesses in humanity that keep them from seeking it out. The first

poem is called "The God Who Only Knows Four Words" and Hafiz contrasts gods of rules and who adhere to expectations with the God who only invites his children to celebratory worship. In "You Were Brave in that Holy War," Hafiz speaks to someone who has been looking, in all earnestness for God in the wrong places, and is thereby exhausted, and filled with mistaken ideas about the character of God. The compassion and determination with which God pursues those who are lost and seeking His help are described in "Bring the Man to Me," highlighting God's determination to answer prayers offered in earnest and free captive hearts. Hafiz describes the fear that keeps some people from subjecting themselves to the honest and thorough-as-fire soul-cleansing that living close to God would mean in "Too Beautiful," and encourages them to let the pain of things like loneliness do their soul-refining work in "My Eyes So Soft." In "The Diamond Takes Shape," Hafiz warns against teachers who have learned to repeat wisdom without having been penetrated and shaped by wisdom themselves. He characterizes genuine affection for God as having become so close that, if God were to stop constantly kissing a faithful one, he would die, in "That Does Perish." He confesses his equally intense desire to share God's truths with other people in "Chain You to my Body." In lives that are not characterized by kindness, creation itself, since it is so well acquainted with God, "Covers Her Face with Both Hands." In the final poem, "Dog's Love," Hafiz says that to find the fullness of the truth, love and beauty of God, one would have to be more dedicated to the task than male dogs to finding a female in heat!

Themes of dedication to the search for God, the celebrations that ensue when He is found, and the laying aside of definitions unite the poems in Chapter Twenty-two. In the first, Hafiz characterizes guilt as something humanity puts on falsely, and that alienates him from those of God's followers who recognize that grace has made them extensions of the divine in "Stay With Us." The next poem, "I Am Full of Love Tonight," is a metaphorical invitation from lover to wooed, in which the lover is God, and he is inviting the girl, who symbolizes humanity, on a boat ride in which they will make nature jealous, there will be such love. "Many Lives Ago" speaks to the refinement of appetites that comes from intimacy with God, whereas people used to pine for sex and money, now they long for deeper connection with God. Hafiz offers the kind of truth that will do such a work of refining in the invitation, "It Will Stretch Out His Leg." Hafiz issues another invitation, to a cosmic celebration of God, in "Some of the Planets are Hosting." He explains that new words had to be invented to describe the wonders of God's love in "What is the Root?" and the silliness of narrowing God to any definition at all in "The Same Suntan." The chapter's final poem is "For Three Days," in which Hafiz encourages people to dedicate themselves to solitary meditation for the most complete mental, physical and spiritual cleansing that can be had.

Chapters 23-25

Chapters 23-25 Summary

"A Clever Piece of Mutton" that gets stuck and so continues to command attention is the poetry Hafiz wishes to write, and opens the twenty-third chapter. "Who Can Hear the Buddha Sing?" points out the distraction from deeper things the sexual appetite is when allowed to run rampant. "Buttering the Sky" describes worship that has become mundane. "How Fascinating" speaks to the mistake of thinking we know anything about life after death. "Where Great Lions Love to Piss" discusses the folly of building temples instead of just worshiping in nature. "A Potent Lover" tells about how the cosmos shiver at the sight of Hafiz's maleness. "An Astronomical Question" is equally playful and asks what a wet kiss from God might be like. In "I Wish I Could Speak Like Music," Hafiz wishes to be able to capture the beauty of nature into words and inspire people that way. Next Hafiz warns against seeking guidance "In a Circus Booth," and tells the story of a lady fish looking for a lover in "Maybe Even Lucrative." "Troubled?" offers Hafiz as a balm for whatever troubles people in his poetry.

Opening Chapter Twenty-Four is "The Silk Mandala" in which a spider in love with a lizard spins a holy mandala in her pursuit of him. "A Forest Herb" uses the imagery of healing plants to describe the way in which Hafiz wants to be useful to whatever needs people have. "Your Camel is Loaded to Sing" is a metaphor in which a camel holds a falcon eager to escape. "Stealing Back the Flute" describes the way Hafiz wants to reclaim music for use among his fellow believers. "Where the Drum Lost its Mind" invites people to worship describing their commonality and place of worship. "Every City is a Dulcimer" metaphorically describes the way everything is created for the glory of God, and birds learned to fly in pursuit of His music. "Ruin" allows Hafiz to describe himself in the state of being obliterated by the ecstasy of love. He describes the proximity of God in "Between Your Eye and This Page", and the chapter closes with "Practice this New Birdcall" in which he encourages people to speak the language of happiness and blessing as a new habit of thought and deed.

The final chapter opens with "I Know I Was the Water" in which Hafiz testifies to having been the water that quenched Christ's thirst and having been present at several other sacred moments in history. "With that Moon Language" asks people to give the love humans habitually request from other people. "Without Brushing my Hair" describes the eagerness with which Hafiz goes to worship. "Integrity" is the mark of a true hero. "There" describes the homage with which Hafiz submits to every creature in creation as worship of God. "When Space is not Rationed" describes the mental process of coming to familiarity with the beauty and grandeur of God. "Birds of Passage" describes the mind in the absence of the Teacher with metaphorical birds with broken wings. "Act Great" encourages people to behave benevolently as a way of untangling a disordered mind. "The Only Material" describes the materials of art a great meditator has to use to create a mental place for God. "I Got Kin" encourages people to behave in a way that makes God call them family. The "Only One Rule" is to have fun in the Beloved's Game.

"Your Thousand Limbs" describes being slayed by love, and the book closes with "And Love Says" and the promise that God and love will take care of humanity.

Chapters 23-25 Analysis

Play is the chalice in which Hafiz delivers his wisdom in Ladinsky's twenty-third chapter. Hafiz sets out to create the kind of poem that lodges inexplicably in one's attention in the first poem, "A Clever Piece of Mutton." He takes a swing at it with the poem "Who Can Hear the Buddha Sing?" in which he describes the distraction of the lesser, more carnal appetites of men. In "Buttering the Sky," he describes worship that has become like a morning chore, and in "How Fascinating," just how little we know about life beyond this life. The liberty God gives those He loves and the lack of necessity for building any place to worship other than nature characterizes "Where Great Lions Love to Piss" and he makes playful claims about the grandeur of his maleness in "A Potent Lover." He contemplates the physics of God's kissing earth in "An Astronomical Question" and surrenders completely to the pleasures of love-making for an invitation to seduction in "I Wish I Could Speak Like Music." He reminds his readers of the foolishness of seeking guidance from the stars and the magicians in "In a Circus Booth," and the chapter closes with one more playful poem about seeking, and one called "Troubled," in which he offers himself as the means to burn away everything that frightens from the heart, and replace it with divine satisfaction.

The uniting theme in the twenty-forth chapter is worship, and the reality and proximity of God. Everything, even the misguided, when done genuinely, can be an act of worship, and beautiful for God to behold, in "The Silk Mandala." Hafiz promises to be whatever he needs to be, to use whatever poetic trick he can conjure, to become a salve for the wounds of his readers in "A Forest Herb," and he continues to praise poetry's ability to unleash truth in "Your Camel is Loaded to Sing." He even claims that the gift of music and poetic delivery of truth has been hijacked by the no better acquainted-with-God Krishna of Hindu philosophy in "Stealing Back the Flute." In "Where the Drum Lost its Mind," Hafiz defines his fellowship of believers as those who cannot forget God's beauty, but set aside all dignity to worship him. He speaks to the highest purpose of creation in "Every City is a Dulcimer," proposing that love inspires everything in creation to evolve in ways that let it find, hear, and make God's music better. In "Ruin," Hafiz is so enraptured in the experience of God, he asks not to live to experience anything else, but to die just as he is. "Between Your Eye and This Page" allows Hafiz to communicate just how close God is to the experiences of humanity, and how eager Hafiz is to make Him real to its perception. Closing the chapter, "Practice This New Birdcall" teaches that humans invite into their minds and lives everything they receive, and so Hafiz wishes to teach them to invite in blessings and truth.

Transcendent truths like living with benevolence and integrity, the beauty and transformational power of meditation, and the unity of truth throughout creation and history pervade the poems in the book's final chapter. The first is "I Know I Was the Water," in which Hafiz speaks to the depth and scope of his revelation of truth, feeling no envy of — even feeling personally a part of — every holy moment history records, as

well as a part of the truths that nourish souls in the present day. In "With that Moon Language," Hafiz invites people to give the love they know instinctively every human being wants to receive from the people around them instead of joining everyone else in requesting it. "Without Brushing my Hair" describes the eagerness that allows no thought for appearances with which the eager worshiper rushes into the presence of God.

He calls "Integrity" the true mark of a hero in the next poem, and reminds his readers about the presence of God in every thing of beauty on earth in "There." He speaks to the most powerfully teaching moments of meditation in "When Space is Not Rationed," in which the mind has to form new words to define what it finds, and freedom is complete. In "Birds of Passage," the first teacher, whose absence creates mental havoc, is the earthly teacher; but when God arrives and lifts the mind into new revelations, He is the Teacher who introduces a whole new kind of mental disarray. He offers a more personally managed means of ordering the mind in the poem, "Act Great," in which he says benevolence in thought, word and deed will bring order and meaning to one's mental landscape. "The Only Material" praises the goal of making one's resting place the reality of God, since God is everywhere, instead of out of physical elements that will perish. In "I Got Kin," Hafiz encourages people to live with the kind of character that will lead God to identify with them, and so build a friendship. All of creation, the sky in particular, invites Hafiz to worship in "Only One Rule," and beauty slays him in "Your Thousand Limbs." The final poem of the book is entitled, "And Love Says," and promises nurture and provision to all of creation.

Characters

Hafizappears in throughout

Hafiz is a poet in fourteenth-century Persia in the Sufi tradition that encompassed Gnosticism, the wisdom schools of Pythagoras and Plato as well as many of the principals and formulations of Islam. He was schooled in the traditional medieval tradition, which meant he studied Koranic law and theology, grammar, mathematics and astronomy. On his own, he studied calligraphy, which was the only permitted art in the Islamic world at the time, since it could be used to transcribe and preserve the Koranic law. His acquaintance with the Koran, a book he memorized as a child, alongside his love for and intimate love of poetry, which was also celebrated in his childhood hometown of Shiraz, allowed him to find employment as a royal poet and college professor.

His poetry was fruit of the poetic tradition of the day, but also raw and intimate on a level that was unfamiliar, and that earned him exile from the more fundamentalist regimes as rulers changed over the course of his life. For that reason, his poetry exists along a spectrum of metaphor, sometimes speaking in completely clear language about God, and sometimes disguising him in metaphors as a kind merchant, a lover, an uncle, and various elements of nature in order to keep his poetry available to the people of Persia.

Godappears in Throughout

Rather than being contained by strict theological definitions, the God presented in Hafiz's poetry is bigger and more creative in His benevolence than can be contained by any definition. For that reason, Hafiz dedicates whole poems to the task of pointing out the ways in which organized religion divides God, cuts Him into parts, leaving others out, and limits in that way the number of people and needs they invite Him to address. According to Hafiz, God is playful, inviting people to equally playful and abandoned, undignified worship. He is affectionate, sending notes of His affection by way of nature, trial, and the people around. He is seductive, and as intimate a lover as any one might find on earth under any definition.

Hafiz refers to God as several things throughout, including poems in which God is metaphorically represented as an intimate friend, a lover, a brother, a spouse, a teacher, the sun, a merchant, an uncle, a teacher, and love itself. At the same time, God is also presented as the un-containable, undefinable and omnipotent Master of universes, and the object of every life's quest, whether consciously recognized as such or not.

Ralph Waldo Emersonappears in Preface

Read Hafiz in German in the 1800s, and did several of his own translations into English. Then in 1858, he wrote "Essays on Persian Poetry" and called Hafiz a poet for poets.

Goetheappears in Preface

Wrote the 1819's "The West-Eastern Divan," including "The Book of Hafiz" in which he praises Hafiz's poetry and spiritual insight and calls himself Hafiz's twin.

Queen Victoriaappears in Preface

Consulted Hafiz's poetry like an astrological guide.

H. Wilberforce Clarkeappears in Preface

Wrote the most respected English translation of Hafiz's poetry, first published in India in 1891, and used as a consulted work in the translation Ladinsky presents here.

Henry Mindlinappears in Introduction

Writes the introduction to the book, laying out the history of Hafiz's life.

Meher Babaappears in Preface, Introduction

A Zoroastrian master whose intense respect and affection for Hafiz's poetry made it a major part of his own teaching. He told students that "the love poetry of Hafiz contained all the secrets of the spiritual path — for the true subject matter of spirituality is love."

Sir William Jonesappears in Preface

Wrote one of the first English translations of Hafiz's poetry, published in 1771.

Rumiappears in Preface, Introduction

Another master poet and teacher in a Sufi school.

Muhammed Attarappears in Introduction

Hafiz's spiritual mentor.

Objects/Places

Circle of Fastingappears in Introduction

The circle in which Hafiz gave himself to fasting and prayer, first for the girl he admired, then for spiritual enlightenment and the end of his study under Attar.

Shirazappears in Introduction

Hafiz's home town in Persia, a garden city.

Hafiz's Divanappears in Introduction

Hafiz's first published collection of poems, now owned in numbers greater than the Koran in his home town of Shiraz, Persia.

Attar's Graveappears in Chapter Thirteen

The place where Hafiz and Muhammad Attar planted a tree together, under which Hafiz sat to remember his old master.

Hafiz's Graveappears in Introduction

At the foot of a cypress tree he had planted in a rose garden in Shiraz, kept sacred for five hundred years, and then, in 1925, reinforced with a structure and its gardens restored.

Natureappears in Throughout

The best place to learn to celebrate God, since that is what nature is doing all the time.

A Closetappears in Chapter 22,

The place to stay for three days for the profound learning that comes from meditation.

Churchesappears in Chapter 13,

Places to be abandoned in favor of the study of poetry and meditation.

The One-Story Houseappears in Chapter 13,

The house Muhammad Attar lived in, out of which Hafiz would fall when he was dancing in ecstasy as he learned more and more about the love of God.

the Templeappears in Chapter 3,

The temple of God is anywhere a person prays, and that is why Hafiz says to kneel, in order that one's shoes not be in the temple.

Themes

God's Unconditional Acceptance

Throughout Hafiz's poetry, he presents the idea of humanity's being inherently, by definition, a part of deity itself. Rather than acceptance being something to be earned, or even requested, it is simply a fact to be recognized and enjoyed. Hafiz describes all of nature as equally elemental with God, part of the same divine expression, and as legitimate and whole as God Himself. In an element shared with Christianity, man begins his life adrift from God, and life is the time granted for the process of regaining connection with the Eternal Soul only only lasting reality from which he began. Since that is the case, and all of creation is already a part of God, needing only to wake up to the reality and become re-acquainted with His truths and manner of loving, there is no place for guilt, blame or regret. They are simply, according to Hafiz, pieces of unnecessary baggage people pick up and carry through life that then serve to distract them from the fullness of life, freedom, joy, and peace that God intends for them. Over and over throughout Hafiz's poems, he reminds his readers that they have no reason for sadness, staying stuck in the darkness or gravity of the sad elements of life, and that those sad elements are, in the reality of eternity, simply means of burning off the things that weigh people down and allow them to live more freely as eternal expressions of God.

Life as an Education

Hafiz was a life-long student, and it became his greatest joy, so it is no wonder that his poetry presents a view of life in which every single moment, occurrence and character is given to a person by God for the purpose of education. Hafiz encourages his readers to listen to every single speaking person around them as if they are speaking the words of God, so that people live with teachable spirits. At the same time, he encourages a study of one's own that allows for the ability to discern teachers who have no wisdom, or speak only a partial or flawed truth and so avoid looking for God where He cannot be found. Similarly, he encourages independent meditation, in the form of long periods alone in closets, with nature, and in prayer, that allow for a complete knowledge of the inner workings of one's own mind and heart, and so an understanding of what still needs to be refined. He describes the way appetites that turn destructive or distracting are refined into their proper roles as one comes to rightly prioritize truth and love as the highest of virtues, and the way love, as it is experienced in more and more intimate and concentrated ways, burns away the misconceptions and false ideas that cloud the mind from seeing God clearly. Complete understanding, clear vision and a humble and teachable spirit are the things that Hafiz points to as allowing the most joyful, free and virtuous life one can lead on earth.

The Folly of Organized Religion

Hafiz has no use at all for organized religion, and wishes out loud in his poetry that people would jump from those ships en masse. Instead, he values the purity of intention, the wholeness of truth and the independence of discovery that comes from poetry and meditation. In poetry, Hafiz sees a source of wisdom individuals can cease on themselves, and that will deliver crystallized, distilled truths to them in language that is meaningful and easy to remember and so internalize. He continuously says about his own poetry that he writes out of a compassionate response to the calls that come from the hearts of earnestly seeking people, and that his words are full of the most complete and liberating truths about God, people and eternity. Regarding meditation, Hafiz sees the practice as the most powerful teacher available to a seeking heart, since it is the time when the chatter, the worthless questions, errands, and noise of life can be stilled, and one is presented with his own heart and mind, clear and undecorated, undiluted and raw for examination. It is only when one sees oneself clearly that he can lay the broken parts, the unneeded ideas, the unanswered questions, before the truth and standard of God's love, mercy and acceptance and begin to be reshaped to reflect the image of God. In churches, by contrast, one is presented with a God Who has been divided into only the parts that group wants, as His other parts were claimed by another group, like a valuable stone dashed to pieces, and a divided God is simply not able to address the whole of the human condition in the way He intends to, and can when He is left whole, infinite, omnipresent and undefined.

Style

Point of View

Hafiz writes from the point of view of a man deeply passionate about the truth and beauty of God, and as deeply convicted by his own experience of deity to spread what He knows to all of humanity. His love for God is his life's work and passion, and so every bit of his energy and talent are directed at deepening his own understanding God and men, and making his understanding clearly understood and available. In some of his poems, he writes as simply that: a man inflamed and telling the world about his experiences. Still at other times, he writes from the perspective of God Himself, inviting His children into worship and out of the bondage of hopelessness, sadness and regret. At times, it is necessary for Hafiz to disguise his subject matter, and so his perspective must also be disguised, taking the voice of a man giving directions to a brothel, or just a citizen reporting on a particularly beautiful night. He takes on the voice of a teacher, a fool, a drunk, lover and a familiar friend throughout his poems, and it is through the use of many voices that he aims to be applicable and appealing to every strata and condition of humanity.

Setting

The poetry of Hafiz comes from fourteenth-century Persia, or modern-day Iran, a part of the world that at the time of Hafiz's life (estimated to have been from 1320-1389) had just experienced Mongol conquest, and had recently been converted to Islam. In Hafiz's hometown of Shiraz, poetry was a celebrated element of culture, and was discussed, memorized and added to all the time. Hafiz wrote, beginning with his pledging himself to the Sufi master Muhammad Attar, poetry devoted exclusively to the subject of God and devotion to Him, although not in the formal Islamic sense of the word. Since it was considered blasphemy by fundamental Islamic law to claim particular intimacy with God, which Hafiz did, believing himself to be God's intimate and particular conduit, the more fundamental the ruler at the time was, the more dangerous it became for Hafiz to distribute his work. Since he was employed by the royal court, and also as a university professor of poetry, if the rulers of the time thought him too radical, he would be exiled, and forced to disguise the Subject of his poetry if he wanted it to be available in his home town. His work was celebrated by those who knew it, however, and continued moving through the Persian world even to the present day, where it is owned as commonly as the Koran itself.

Language and Meaning

Hafiz wrote as familiarly about God as if he were God's intimate lover, and as intimately to his readers as if he were their trusted friend and teacher. Daniel Ladinsky strives to bring forward the same spirit of intimate familiarity in his translations of Hafiz's work. He

is faithful to the metaphors Hafiz employed in order to veil the subject of his poetry, and confesses in his introduction that he has striven to bring the mood of playfulness and celebratory abandon forward intact, not losing any of Hafiz's voice, and still allowing him to be understood by modern audiences. Much of the metaphorical language comes from nature, in which God is referred to as the Moon, the Sun, any element of nature, in fact, that is capitalized mid-line in Hafiz's poetry is referring to God. Similarly, he gives Him titles from every day life in order to communicate His roles in the lives of His followers, and allow for beautiful poetry even if it is not read as symbolically spiritual. For that reason, there are times in which Hafiz's poetry can simply be a quip about daily life, a love-poem, or a playfully told story, and left at that. It must be understood when approaching Hafiz, however, that communicating truth about God and humanity is always the intent of his writing.

Structure

The book begins with a preface written by Daniel Ladinsky, the poetry's translator, in which he explains how his affection for Hafiz was born, the sources for his translations and insights, and the reason he makes the literary decisions he does in his translating Hafiz's work. It serves to introduce both Hafiz and his relevance to literature and Sufism as they exist today. Following the preface comes the Introduction, which is an essay written on the life and work of Hafiz by Henry S. Mindlin. Mindlin establishes the cultural and political setting in which Hafiz wrote, and describes the family, education and work that defined his early life. He tells the story, transcribing the classically accepted legends, of Hafiz's spiritual training and evolutions, and talks about the response he got in the world of religion and philosophy in his own day, and in the centuries that have followed. Having introduced the reader to Hafiz and situated him in history, Landisky arranges the poems into 25 short chapters of two to 12 poems each, in order to present Hafiz's poems as meditations to be digested slowly and enjoyed, comparing his invitations to rest between chapters to newlyweds taking breaks for meals on their honeymoon, lest anything become sore. They are grouped in a such a way that the poems in each single chapter build on one another and complement each other, keeping one's focus in a particular area of thought, and so allowing Hafiz's voice on the subject to be completely expressed.

Quotes

"People from many religious traditions share the belief that there are always living persons who are one with God. These rare souls disseminate light upon this earth and entrust the Divine to others. Hafiz is regarded as one who came to live in that sacred union, and sometimes in his poems he speaks directly of that experience." Preface, page 3

"...Hafiz does not see God as separate from the world — wherever there is love, there is the Beloved. The Indian Sufi teacher Inayat Khan explained, 'The mission of Hafiz was to express to a fanatical religious world that the presence of God is not to be found only in heaven, but also here on earth.'" Introduction, page 18

"Why complain if you are looking/ To quench your spirit's longing/ And have followed a rat into a dessert[?]" Chapter 1, "Looking for a Good Fish," page 24

"My dear, is your caravan lost? / It is if you can no longer be kind to yourself / And loving to those who must live / With the sometimes difficult task of loving you." Chapter 4, "Someone Untied Your Camel," page 62

"Please forgive Hafiz and the Friend / For breaking into sweet laughter / When your heart complains of being thirsty / When ages ago / Every cell in your soul / Capsized forever / Into this infinite golden sea." Chapter 4, "So Many Gifts," page 67

"Dear ones, / Beware of the tiny gods frightened men / Create / To bring anesthetic relief / To their sad / Days." Chapter 10, "Tiny Gods," page 141

"The stars got poured into the sky / Out of a Magician's hat last night, / And all of them have fallen into my hair. / Some have even tangled my eyelashes / Into luminous, playful knots. / Wayfarer, You are welcome to cut a radiant tress / That lays upon my shoulders. / Wrap it around your trembling heart and body / That craves divine comfort and warmth.... Dear one, / Even if you have no net to catch Venus / My music will circle this earth for hundreds of years / And fall like resplendent debris, / Holy seed, onto a fertile woman. / For Hafiz / Wants to help you laugh at your every / Desire." Chapter 11, "Out of God's Hat," page 154

"Now is the time to know / That all that you do is sacred... / Now is the time to understand / That all your ideas of right and wrong / Were just a child's training wheels / To be laid aside / When you can finally live / With veracity / And love." Chapter 12, "Now is the Time," page 160

"Dear ones, / Enjoy the night as much as you can. / Why ever trouble your heart with flight, / When you have just arrived / And your body is so full of warm desires." Chapter 12, "Two Puddles Chatting," page 171

"Love sometimes gets tired of speaking sweetly / And wants to rip to shreds / All your erroneous notions of truth / That make you fight within yourself, dear one, / And with others / Causing the world to weep / On too many fine days." Chapter 14, "Tired of Speaking Sweetly," page 187

"What will / The burial of my body be? / The pouring of a sacred cup of wine / Into the tender mouth of / The earth/ And making / My dear sweet lover laugh / One more / Time." Chapter 19, "The Tender Mouth," page 246

"O, Eternal One / On this ever present holy day / Forget Your divine reserve - / Throw wide the tavern doors. / Give all Your thirsty royal rogues / A drink of Your sacred vintage, / Free us from ourselves a while / With the blessed consuming knowledge / Of Your omnipresent Being." Chapter 18, "When the Sun Conceived a Man," page 238

"Since we first met, Beloved, / I have become a foreigner / To every world / Except that one / In which there is only You / Or — me. / Now that the heart has held / That which can never be touched / My subsistence is a blessed / Desolation / And from that I cry for more loneliness." Chapter 18, "The Quintessence of Loneliness," page 241

"Don't / Surrender / Your loneliness so quickly. / Let it cut more / Deep. / Let it ferment and season you / As few human / Or even divine ingredients can." Chapter 21, "My Eyes So Soft," page 277

"Birds initially had no desire to fly, / What really happened was this: / God once sat close to them playing / Music. / When He left / They missed Him so much / Their great longing sprouted wings, / Needing to search the / Sky." Chapter 24, "Every City is a Dulcimer," page 315

"May I never know / Another feeling other than Your / Inconceivable / Immaculate / Touch. / Why not / Let Hafiz die / In this blessed / Ruin." Chapter 23, "Ruin," page 317

Topics for Discussion

What do you think Ladinsky means when he says in his preface that English is a spiritually young language? How do you think spiritual depth and experience might change it? Do you know of any demonstrative examples from another language?

Discuss the ways in which Hafiz invites his readers to learn from nature.

Hafiz frequently refers to religions as having divided God. What do you think he means? Is that consistent with what you observe?

Hafiz praises meditation as a means of learning superior to every other teacher. Why do you think he values it so highly? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

Why do you think Islamic rulers were so threatened by the idea of someone attaining personal intimacy with God?

Which poem elicited the strongest reaction from you? Did you agree with that poem? Explain.

Are there any points on which you just disagree with Hafiz's view of reality? Explain.

Is there any way in which your understanding of yourself or the world has been improved or changed as a result of having read Hafiz's poetry? Explain.

The idea of giving complete control of our actions and lives is counter-intuitive to many in modern culture. Do you agree with Hafiz's suggestion that it is the key to happiness? Explain.

Discuss the idea of the pain that comes from learning, love, growing, and so on throughout Hafiz's poetry. Is that something you identify with? Does it inspire you or scare you away from the thought of spiritual exploration?