

Pablo Neruda: Selected Poems Study Guide

Pablo Neruda: Selected Poems by Pablo Neruda

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Body of a Woman

Body of a Woman Summary

In lines 1-4, the poet is describing the body of a woman as white-fleshed, lying helplessly in surrender, vulnerable to advance. He is using the body of a woman as a metaphor for the earth. He is saying that the woman is the earth - Mother Earth, giver of life. He describes his own body as rough, peasant and unworthy by comparison, digging into her, spoiling her. He is using himself as a metaphor for mankind, treading upon the earth. In the fourth line, he describes the son leaping from the depth of the earth, a metaphor for the birth that is inevitable when earth and mankind, or woman and man, intermingle. The son, the by product, is the impact that mankind has had on the earth.

In lines 5-8, the poet describes himself as empty as a tunnel, leaving nature scattered in his wake. The necessity of mankind to survive brings forth the need to conquer, dominate, destroy and control. Man is crushed by his own condition. In order to survive himself, mankind must use the earth in every possible way, twisting her from her original form and goodness, into something sinister, a machine of war.

In lines 9-10, the author has seen the error of his ways, and succumbs to the love he feels for his mother, his lover. Again he compares the earth to the body of a woman, skin and moss, firm breasts bursting forth with eager, life-giving milk.

Lines 11-12 are more of an ode, a worship to the woman or earth, but also a lament. The "goblets of the breasts" refers to life-giving mother's milk, and the "eyes of absence" refers to the earth again as vulnerable, unable to defend herself. The "roses of the pubis" refers again to the woman/earth as the giver of all life and all beauty. Her voice, "slow and sad" is in reference to the slow protests the earth presents as industry grinds into her.

In lines 13-16, the poet refers to the woman as "my woman," indicating that she is his, but all of ours also. He says he will "persist in her grace," meaning that he will fight the good fight to sustain her, no matter what it takes. He is also indicating here that if the fight is lost, we all will lose. The next two lines both contain the word "thirst," eternal thirst, referring to his desire and the quenching of it in the "dark river beds" of the woman/earth. The water is meant to represent rebirth and new life, as given by the earth as much as by the woman that lives because of her. The weariness that follows and the infinite ache could refer literally to childbirth, but at the same time mean the circle of life in nature.

Body of a Woman Analysis

Two of the most prominent themes of Neruda's poetry are love and nature. In this poem we see the two as not just intermingled, but as utterly inseparable. Earth is woman,



woman is earth. Neruda was known to see all things as poetry. Love is, for many poets, the main inspiration for their poetry. It was something deeper for Neruda. Love was also the human condition, the air we breathe, the reason we bother to live at all. The tone of many of his love poems borders on worshipful in their intensity; his women are lovers he praises as being almost Goddess like. This was Neruda's expression of the intense importance of love, as though it were something absolutely needed in order to survive the human condition. In this poem we see the depths of Neruda's intense need to love, as he compares this milky white lover of his as important as the earth upon which we all live and the preservation of her and of love are causes worth fighting for.



Ah Vastness of Pines

Ah Vastness of Pines Summary

In lines 1-2, the poet is setting the scene for the poem, describing the vast landscape of pine trees, and the ocean below. He describes the way the light from the ships plays on the water, and the sound of their bells.

In lines 3-4, the poet shows that it is the end of the day, twilight, which further paints the scene, but also this is a metaphor for the end of his relationship. He then introduces us to the object of his desire, describing her as a toy doll, which indicates his reverence towards her, showcasing her perfection. She is the "snail of the earth," a seemingly insignificant inhabitant of the earth, but the thing for which the earth continues spinning, or singing.

In lines 5-8, the rivers sing because of her and the poet has been swept away by the current. The object of his love is so powerful to him, that she controls even the rivers, and commands them where to flow. He is saying that he has aligned his "road," his fate, his future into her, her "bow of hope." The frenzy he describes in line 4 is a metaphor for their lovemaking, and the "freeing of his flock of arrows" indicates not only the physical consummation of their love, but also his absolute surrender to her.

In lines 9-12, no matter where he looks, he sees nothing but his loved one where even the fog rolling in from the ocean reminds him of her from her waist to her core or center, where he wants to always be. Her silence, her departure from him, is a torture, leaving him with no peace. He is saying that he belongs to her completely, his kisses, and his "moist desire" have anchored and nested in her and all of her goodness.

In lines 13-16: Her "mysterious voice" represents his bewilderment at the ferocity of his love for her. The use of light and dark in the fourth stanza is significant because it indicates the darkness he feels within himself due to her departure from him. The "dying evening" is the coming of the darkness. He stands, helpless, as the crushing weight of his love crashes over him like the "wheat tolling in the mouth of the wind."

Ah Vastness of Pines Analysis

This poem details the absolute power of love, according to the poet. Neruda is using the indisputable forces of nature as metaphors of this power his lover has over him. The power of love IS an unstoppable force of nature, part of being alive, he is saying. Without it, life would not conceivably be worth living.



Leaning into the Afternoons

Leaning into the Afternoons Summary

In lines 1-2, "Leaning into the afternoons" is a metaphor for succumbing to the end, or death of a relationship. The afternoon symbolizes the last gasp of a love affair, and then the darkness of evening will descend. The poet is casting his "sad nets" towards his lovers "oceanic eyes." This is his feeble attempt to retain her, to keep her from escaping, but alas she is as powerful as the ocean and he alone is not enough to harness her.

In lines 3-4, his lover has left him burning; his solitude is a long, fiery torture. He flails and drowns in it.

In lines 5-8, his signals, his attempts to make her aware of his love and suffering falls on deaf ears.

In lines 9-10, try and try as he might, casting his "sad nets" again and again, his is repeatedly rejected. The coming of the night is inevitable.

In lines 11-12, the first stars appear, and they twinkle like the poet does when he is allowed to love. The birds of night represent the vultures that appear once death has occurred.

In lines 13-14, night has arrived, the death of a love affair, casting its darkness everywhere.

Leaning into the Afternoons Analysis

Again we see Neruda's intense longing for love. He longs to have love, to be in love, to experience it and to have it reciprocated. This is one of Neruda's younger poems, and it shows his idealism of love, of how he feels that it should be. He is in love with idea of being in love. Also we see again his use of the forces of nature to describe the unstoppable force of love, how it is as strong as the sea. The intertwining of love and nature can be seen here in a literal sense as well; Neruda was said to have been bewitched by the ocean the first time he saw it during his late adolescent years. His love for the ocean, as with all things in nature, was to him as real and intense as the passionate love he felt later for the women in his life.



I Have Gone Marking

I Have Gone Marking Summary

In lines 1-4, the poet is comparing the body of his lover to an atlas, a map, as an exploration. He is marking her with crosses of fire, which symbolizes the heat of his passion. He refers to his tongue as a spider, indicating that he weaves a complicated web. He wishes to bury himself in her, to hide. He is driven by his lust, his thirst.

In lines 5-8, the poet refers to the lover as a sad and gentle doll, in many poems she is referenced as a doll, delicate and needing to be tended, cared for. He wishes to alleviate her sadness and intends to tell her stories of places far away, of swans and trees. The poet speaks of the season of grapes, ripe and fruitful, symbolizing her fruitfulness, her fertility. He wants to please her.

In lines 9-12, the imagery of this stanza indicates that he is trapped in the harbor, not moving. He is motionless between two gondoliers; the sea and his sadness. This seems to indicate that he feels trapped by the one-sidedness of their physical relationship, unable to move forward emotionally.

In lines 13-19, in the presence of his lover, the poet cannot say exactly what he feels. He wishes he could praise her correctly. He is a net so full of water from the sea, the words he wishes to say to her, but he is like the net when it is pulled up out of the water, all of his words spill out and only trembling drops are left, the only feeble words he can produce for her. This stanza marks a transformation in the poet; he is seeing beyond the physical relationship now, and wishes to truly celebrate her.

Lines 20-23 marks his release. The words flow out of him now. To burn something is to transform it from one form to another, to release its energy. When he talks of singing, burning, fleeing, these are the words and emotions flooding out of him into her. He is describing a sexual climax here, which his sad tenderness closes down to, as he has reached the summit, and now he closes over like a nocturnal flower.

I Have Gone Marking Analysis

This poem is clearly about sex primarily, but also very much about the connection between emotional love and the physical act of love making. It is about how physical love is an all-encompassing holistic experience when emotional love is also involved. The transformation we see in the 4th stanza is significant. When he says he has "reached the most awesome and the coldest summit, and his heart has closed over like a nocturnal flower," he means that his physical and emotional relationship with his lover has reached its apex. They are now perfectly aligned, and his heart is closed now to everyone else. It ties back into the title of the poem. She is now marked as his, as he is marked as hers.



Every Day you Play

Every Day you Play Summary

In lines 1-4, the poet is speaking of an omniscient creature who wields the power to play with the light of the universe, yet the imagery that he conjures here is decidedly feminine. He seems to be paralleling the power of woman to the power of God, thus stating that God and women are equal in power. The tone of this stanza is unconscious, dreamlike.

In lines 5-9, we see more worshipful imagery of women in these lines. "You are like nobody since I love you" - love makes the loved one unique, irreplaceable. The imagery of him spreading her out among yellow gardens is markedly sensuous. He is speaking in a worshipful tone of his lover, talking of writing her name in letters of smoke among the stars. He is further idealizing her by wishing to remember her as she was before she existed, meaning that he dreamed her up just as she is before she even came into his life.

Line 10-13 indicate his awakening. He was having a beautiful, sensuous, and colorful dream. But the wind howls and bangs his window, and he jerks awake with a start. He goes to look at the sky and it is a net crammed with shadowy fish. This is a simile describing this thoughts, his head crammed full of dreams. The storm, the water, the rain all symbolize rebirth, transformation.

In lines 14-19, the poet is saying that he cannot contend against the powers of nature, but he can stand and fight the powers of man. There are storms brewing not only in the heavens, but in the hearts of men, too.

In lines 20-23, these lines indicate that she is there with him, supporting him, even if only in dreams, but the language indicates that she is there with him physically as well. She clings to him as fiercely as he clings to her. She waits for him in his warm bed, to comfort him. The strange shadow that once ran over her eyes was distrust, and has passed.

In lines 24-27, his lover's smell is honeysuckle, as it always has been through their relations, and it comforts him. Outside, the sad wind slaughters butterflies, the storm destroys beautiful things outside, but they are safe indoors, making love. The image of his happiness biting at the plum of her mouth is very sensual, an image of their love making.

In lines 28-32, the tone shifts in these lines from idealistic and dreamlike, to pulling out of that dream state into something more realistic. The colors even begin transforming to gray, back to cold hard reality. She is more real now too, getting accustomed to him in the real world. Too many times he has seen the light of morning drive away the beauty of what happened in the night, coloring it gray, sapping its beauty.



In lines 33-40: He worships her until he believes she is the goddess creature he created in his dreams. The imagery of the sunned mother of pearl is a transformation from an idealistic white purity to the poet being able to really see her for what she really is, and still being able to love her. To the poet, this is the definition of real love, and love should always be real.

Every Day you Play Analysis

There are two feminine characters who weave in and out of Neruda's love poetry: They are called Marisol and Marisombra. These characters represent two real women in Neruda's life, one while he was a teenager in Temuco, Chile and one while he was a college student in Santiago, Chile. Marisol represents a sunny and happy time of his adolescent life while Marisombra represents a later more mature time in his life and is represented with a gray beret, darker ponderings, and sunset reflections. Each character is used to capture a different aspect of the beloved. Marisombra is often associated with the smell of honeysuckle, and this poem is most likely inspired by her. Neruda is beginning to really understand love. He idealizes it as always, but also sees it in the light of reality now, not just in a dreamlike way. He is literally there with a lover in this poem, not just imagining it. He is not just pondering what the juxtaposition of love and sex could mean, he is beginning to live it and chalk up his own personal experiences.



Thinking, Tangling Shadows

Thinking, Tangling Shadows Summary

In lines 1-4, these lines represent the poet's internal struggle. His love is far away from him. He is in a tangled, dreamlike state.

In lines 5-8, his anguish is a torture. Everywhere he looks he sees fog, shadow, and cannot see anything clearly.

In lines 9-15, he has been away from the object of his desire for some time now. He has done much and seen much before this love, and he is remembering his life as it was, before. His harsh life, running free and crazy, his life before he created this idealism of love.

In lines 16-19, there comes some light in the darkness. She burns away the shadow and fog. Burning symbolizes the transformation of one thing to another. Burning an object releases its energy.

In lines 20-26, the poet asks, "where is my love?" He searches for his love. She is out there somewhere, but he can't see her through all the shadows and fog. When he does find her it will be a passion so hot, it will burn down the forest. He can hear her calling to him but he doesn't know who she is.

Thinking, Tangling Shadows Analysis

The tone of this poem is dreamlike. The imagery is of the fog blurring and blocking the poet's vision, until the heat of his passion can burn through it like fire. The poet is lost in his thoughts, they are tangled shadows. This is Neruda pondering love, questioning it, trying to figure it out and tame it. He is idealizing love, wanting it to come to him so he can dissect and analyze it.



Tonight I can Write

Tonight I can Write Summary

In lines 1-6, the speaker of this poem is telling us that he could write sad lines. He can write that he is sad, and that his love did not love him back.

In lines 7-8, he is remembering the love they shared. She loved him and he loved her back. How could he not?

In lines 9-14, he can write sad lines if he chooses, and lament in the loss of love. He can wallow in the vastness of the night, he can feel alone if he chooses. It would be a simple, natural thing to write sad verses about the loss of love, as natural a progression as "dew falling to the pasture."

In lines 15-20, he is asking "why does it matter?" She is gone from his life; there is nothing he can do about it.

In lines 21-22, the poet is saying that heartbreak is a universal ailment, and that you can't go back to who you were before you knew what it felt like.

In lines 23-28, he no longer loves her, but he did once. He is over it, and he will move on, as will she.

In lines 29-34, the poet is saying that love comes and goes. He loved her but now he is confused. He is not satisfied that she is gone but he is coming to grips with the fact that it is over between them.

Tonight I can Write Analysis

This poem is about the end of a love affair and the internal struggle that it takes to let go of someone that you once loved. The poet is writing this poem in order to write the love out of his system. This is not a sad poem. This is closure, therapy, and moving on. He is remembering the love they shared, and allowing himself to let it go and forget. This poem is about overcoming the misery of obsession. It is about how we wrestle with ourselves as an exercise in moving on with our lives. The imagery of this poem, with lines like "the night wind revolves in the sky and sings," or "the verse falls to the soul like dew to the pasture," are typical Neruda in the pairing of emotions with natural events - but this poem is far more literal than it is dreamlike. It is clear that this poem was meant as a personal therapy for Neruda, and thus the tone of it comes across as far more realistic than some of his other pieces.



Alliance (Sonata)

Alliance (Sonata) Summary

In lines 1-6, the imagery of these lines is of late afternoon. The sun is setting, the night is coming on.

In lines 7-11, the imagery of these next lines is further images of the sun setting behind the church, the dying of the light, end of day into night. The colors are yellow, fading into darker colors.

In lines 12-15, the poet is saying that day is one thing, but night is something quite different. Nighttime is mistress of love. When night comes, the day is at rest. The poet drinks in everything that he sees in the day, registering it in his unconscious mind for later, where in his dreams these thoughts will colorfully unfurl.

In lines 16-21, the poet is carousing with the night and it is an intimate dance. The poet is personifying the night, dreaming, as his mistress.

Lines 22-25 are a statement about his personal relationship with night. This is a sensual description about his alliance with the night and how he feels. Drifting weightless on the water is his dreaming and how he feels in sleep. Also, water symbolizes rebirth and the dreams that he dreams refresh him in the night.

Alliance (Sonata) Analysis

The poet is speaking to the night and describing the alliance that he feels to "her." Neruda is using the vehicle of personification in this poem. Personification is the attribution of a personal nature to an inanimate object or abstract concept. In the second stanza, he even uses the word "embodiment," and later calls night the "lady of the house of love." The time he spends with his mistress is precious to him and clearly he prefers the relationship he has with night to the one he has with day. After a night of interacting with this mistress, he feels refreshed.



Dream Horses

Dream Horses Summary

In lines 1-4, the poet is a burden to himself, the way a rider is a burden to his horse. The poet is just surviving, getting through the weeks, making time pass.

In lines 5-8, the people he is interacting with are practical, straight forward types. They don't dream much, they don't have time nor inclinations towards illusions or poetry. The poet is drifting through these hours and days, possibly with a case of writer's block.

In lines 9-14, the poet feels out of place, and he is trying to clear his mind and reconnect with himself, his poetry. He is a stranger in a strange land.

In lines 15-25, he finds himself studying the people of the place, the natives. He loathes the "wasted honey of respect" that they clearly lavish on him. He is sarcastic in his displeasure. He is tired of their sweet words, tired of their regard for him. He is surrounded by "yes men." All around him are people trapped in their station, unable to break free from their role in society, bustling about their pointless lives, never stopping to smell the flower or appreciate the things that they so readily pass over.

Lines 26-34 contain description as well as imagery. Here he is riding his dream horse, who is "barebacked, unshod and radiant." His dreaming is his escape, and he flies on his dream horse through the night.

In lines 35-36: the poet is proclaiming that he needs those dreams to exist, needs them so much that he would prefer they were his waking reality instead.

Dream Horses Analysis

During the time that this poem was written, Neruda was travelling to places like Java and Singapore - places that were very exotic to a boy who had grown up in the rainy south of Chile. He is overwhelmed by what he sees, in total culture shock. In addition, he feels alone. He does not like this time of his life, the solitude. Neruda is playing with the literary device alliteration in this poem in line 22 where he says, "I ruin the whistling rose, the wracking worry." Alliteration is the use of several words in a row that use the same sound, in this case it is the 'r' sound.



Weak with the Dawn

Weak with the Dawn Summary

In lines 1-4, the imagery used here is dark and sad. It feels as though war has struck around him and he can see and smell the death and blood. A vicious attack came swiftly and without warning.

In lines 5-14, the poet is describing the shift in morals that he feels around himself. Everyone has gone into survival mode. He is pondering the other costs of the war. First and foremost, of course, to consider is the loss of lives, but second and just as importantly is the cost of morality; the loss of a belief system and a way of thinking.

In lines 15-27, the rebuilding of the destruction around him will take time. The fabric given to repair is a weak one; he describes it as a linen, a gauze. The imagery used is that of bandage cloth, white, as in surrender, a flag waving goodbye to the past, to the way things used to be. He's looking around and he is repulsed at what he sees. The rain is like him, a cleansing agent. It is washing clean the hurt and trying to undo the bad memories in the dead world. Just like him, the rain has no persistent form. It is as malleable as he. Nothing is certain.

Weak with the Dawn Analysis

This poem was written during the time that Neruda was in Spain, probably during the outbreak of the Spanish Civil war. The horrors that Neruda encountered during this time left permanent scars on him. There was a very marked shift in the mood of his poetry from odes of love and dreamlike ponderings about love to a tone of disillusionment and sorrow. He shifted his writing from socially conscious to politically charged during this era.



Unity

Unity Summary

In lines 1-5, as human beings, we are all uniquely different and at the same time uniquely the same. There are instincts, ideas, needs and dreams buried deep in our underlying unconsciousness that unite us all. The poet here is pondering the connection between all living things.

In lines 6-12, the poet is considering all things, how they are all connected. The poet is considering that the connection runs through not just human beings, but all things. We are one, but we are many. We are in everything.

In lines 13-19, he is saying that he is isolated, alone for long periods of time and far from home. He is trying to find his way, and he takes comfort in the idea that he is connected to everything and everyone in the world. How, throughout the ages, through time, we reach out and connect and are a thread in the tapestry of life, essential and insignificant all at the same time.

Unity Analysis

It is an amazing thing to be inside the head of a man as extraordinary as Pablo Neruda, and this simple but concisely potent poem is a great example. This was written during a time in Neruda's life where he was far from home, but also trying to come to grips with his place in the world, his voice, what he believed in and what kind of a person he wanted to be. We all feel insignificant at times, or lost, or scared and alone and it is our similarities that unite us all. In writing this poem, Neruda was finding comfort in that simple fact of our humanity.



Tang

Tang Summary

In lines 1-3, the poet is saying that he has a tendency to isolate himself from false legends, and the people who idealize such falseness and dismal rituals. He is showing distaste for the people he has met lately.

In lines 4-8, he is detailing his disgust with politics and politicians, and those who run the world. He despises the idea of having to submit to someone else's will, someone who he feels is incorrect. Such falseness, such subservience leaves a bad taste in his mouth.

In lines 9-14, he is not afraid to speak out against evil, and he can wait out the bad guys if he needs to. He could walk away but he chooses to stay. He feels he is equipped as any to take on the cause, and if not he, then who?

In lines 15-19, the imagery of these lines is the poet as a chalice, full to the brim with the common thinking of the people. He sleeps with this knowledge, "profoundly bedded," laid down in mournful concentrated sleep.

In lines 20-25, the metaphor used is that of a guitar, meaning empty but also full - full of something that cannot be seen; sound. The sentinel bird is a symbol of his tenacity towards his cause. The invariable angel is his unwavering spirit.

Tang Analysis

By definition, a "tang" means a distinctive flavor or quality, a sharp point or tongue, or a projection in an instrument or tool by which it is attached to its handle or stock. Neruda named this poem "Tang" because it was the perfect word to describe himself as these things in all of these regards. Politically, Neruda came to be the voice of the people, with a unique and much needed cultural perspective. He could voice these ideas and opinions in a way that no one else could, sharply, concisely and unwaveringly.



Absence of Joaquin

Absence of Joaquin Summary

In lines 1-4, the poet is reflecting on his friend's short life. He is saying that he will see his friend from now on this way; as someone who died young. His friend is ever defined by his death. "The days of time closing" means that this friend of his has no more chances to leave his mark on earth.

In lines 5-13, the poet is saying that the death of his friend was abrupt, tragic. It gets him to thinking about his own mortality. It makes him see that death is out there, waiting for all of us and that he, the poet, could die just as suddenly as his friend has.

In lines 14-18, the question arises, "What did this man have to take with him?" Was it his dreams or his excesses? What legacy has he left for himself? The poet begins to ponder that concept; what do we do with the little time we have in life, knowing now that it can end at any time? How does this knowledge affect us?

Absence of Joaquin Analysis

Joaquin Sepulveda died in 1929 at the young age of 29. He was a friend of Neruda's and a fellow Chilean poet. The similarity of Sepulveda to Neruda likely is what got him thinking along these lines of mortality. Neruda is saying that in his death, Sepulveda has disappeared. Neruda is memorializing him so that he can continue to exist. Neruda is pondering the idea of non-existence, and is toying with ideas of defying such status. He is doing his young, dead friend a favor by writing about him; he is immortalizing him. This is partially what Neruda strove to do for himself as well in his writing. He is trying to leave his stamp on the chaos of time and history.



Nocturnal Collection

Nocturnal Collection Summary

In lines 1-4, the poet is saying that he has conquered his dreams, has learned to take what they give and use that information not only to his advantage, but to shape his imagination.

Lines 5-10 are descriptive of his dreams. The poet is allowing us a window into what goes on inside his head while he sleeps.

In lines 11-20, the poet is employing personification here, speaking of the sandman as an actual person. He is describing some of the events of his dreaming, the plot of the stories he sees. The sandman is the master of ceremonies to this wild, tangled, imagery-brimming circus of dreaming.

In lines 21-28, the poet is saying that dreaming is the right of all people, no matter who they are or what they believe. Every person in the world can close their eyes and escape their waking reality in dreaming.

In lines 29-32, the poet is saying that he can see the dreams of others, or in his dreams he invents what his companions and old lovers might be dreaming.

In lines 33-50, the dreams of the poet are of riding a giant brown shadow horse, sailing over the heads of the everyman. Neruda sees himself as one with the sandman, riding together, bring peace and dreams to the people.

Lines 51-55 are descriptive imagery, detailing the color, sounds and appearance of sleeping people.

In lines 56-66, "the moisture of birth" means the nightly hatching of dreams in sleep. The poet is describing the qualities of the human body at rest. He is describing the room in one's head where these dreams are born or hatched.

In lines 67-76, he is saying his heart is wise and without boundaries. Daytime is fleeting to night, and every living being is interconnected, and contributing to the vast, ongoing dream. No man is immune to dreaming; all manner of man is welcome there. The poet admits that he has admired and studied and examined for a long time, the mysteries and wonders of night and dreaming.

Nocturnal Collection Analysis

Allegory is a representation of an abstract or spiritual meaning through concrete or material forms; figurative treatment of one subject under the guise of another. Neruda uses the word "allegory" in the first line of this poem, and this usage is significant. He is



not only personifying The Sandman as an actual character, capable of influence and direction, he is also using descriptive allegory to detail all of the imagery that this Sandman character is injecting into his dreaming. Also, he is displaying again his curious and reverent ponderings of the connectivity of all humanity. We all have the right to dream as well as the capability, and this is another element of humanity that connecting us all.



Serenade

Serenade Summary

In lines 1-5, color is significant. The color of the poppies is the dark purple color of the night. Night pities us, brings us solace. Night is when we can escape our sorrows in dreams. The "lean ploughman" is the worker who never ceases working, turning his back on the escape that night brings, dreaming only of the work he does during the day; this is a sadness, a thing to pity. From the footsteps of night the "toads," the hatchlings of our subconscious minds, sprout, trembling.

In lines 5-15, the "young man" is someone just starting to fall asleep or just waking up, leaving night behind, between dream world and reality. The moisture, the thirst, the trembling drop, these are representative of the cathartic rebirth that you go through in dreaming, having to wade through your subconscious mind and all the thoughts you collect during the day are like fish in a net.

In lines 16-19, the you in this poem is night. Night is the huge force which hushes the great trees, above the moon. Night spies on the day, chasing the day, and it will inevitably overtake it. The "fearful soul" of the poet is asking night for the "metal" it needs - for the closure that can be found in dreaming.

Serenade Analysis

This poem is about the attributes of night and dreaming, where we can shed the burdens of our daily lives and whatever traumas or sorrows we encounter there. Our dream lives are fueled by our waking lives, and what we see during the day is filtered through the light of our unconscious minds and transformed into our dreams.



Ars Poetica

Ars Poetica Summary

In lines 1-2, the poet is setting the stage for the reader, telling him where we are headed in this poem, this story. "Between shadow and space" means the in-between time of reality vs. dream world. The poet enters, and the dream he dreams is one of torture and despair.

In lines 3-7, the poet's forehead crumples. The only way he can accurately describe the rage he feels is to invoke the anger felt by the widow for the days she has to live now without her husband. It is a stupefying rage.

In lines 8-10, the rage and anguish well up inside of the poet; he shrieks as if in labor, as if ghosts or apparitions are flying at him. It is an all-encompassing event.

In lines 11-12, "the enveloping shell," the "humiliated scullion" refers to the defense mechanisms we employ in order to cope with anguish. The mirror is tarnished; when you adopt these defense mechanisms, you will not be able to see yourself clearly; you will not recognize yourself. Nor will you recognize yourself after you have endured this anguish. It changes a person.

In lines 12-16, the poet is describing the "fug" or funk of a "deserted house", drunken guests stumbling in, the stench of their clothes. The house itself has a yearning for flowers; for nice smells, for fresh things.

In lines 17-24, the poet is about to re-phrase his philosophy for us in gentler terms, but the hard, cold truth is that the "wind that whacks at his heart" - all of these vast, descriptive dreams, possibly the answers to all the universe's questions - dissolve in the in-between state. The poet is describing a feeling of forgetting what it was he was dreaming, what it was he was about to discover or realize. He wakes up before he can solve the mystery.

Ars Poetica Analysis

Every night, this poet, Neruda, receives an infinite amount of substance, knowledge and prophecy in his dreams. This poem is a description of that nightly event, and the detailing of how he can only capture a fraction of it with his writing. Of particular note in this work is the usage of the "shell" metaphor. The description of the humiliated scullion (food service servant or waiter, waitress) brings to mind an image of a servant wearing a trembling, faltering smile while being berated by a superior. The shell that he refers to is the false smile worn while enduring the abuse the world unleashes on you. The tarnished mirror is also significant because it is a metaphor for the defense mechanisms that we employ in traumatic situations; we do not see clearly in the tarnished mirror, as the world does not see us clearly when we erect our facades.



Bleak System

Bleak System Summary

In lines 1-4, the poet uses "black days" to refer to days of war, "prized open like fat, red oxen" - these days are bathed in blood, days of battle and war. The common people are kept "just about alive" on little more than air and dreams. And when they are killed, they are gone without recall - having left no mark on time, lost suddenly.

In lines 5-8, the poet is saying that he has seen some horrible things in his days. Inequality weighs heavily on his heart. The idea of communism was once a beautiful idea, where everyone has all they need; but it doesn't work in reality, only on paper. He has come to realize that the communist leaders in the end gobble it all up for themselves.

In lines 9-14, he thought he was doing the right thing, supporting communism. A simile is used here with "like a look-out gone dull and blind"- he is like a "look-out" who misses the ambush, and is ashamed to have dropped the ball and missed the attack. "Facing the wall" means having to live with that mistake every day of your life for the rest of your life. The "various faces" the poet speaks of are his different selves that torment him. Again we see the defense mechanism where the "pale and heavy exhibition blooms" symbolize his hiding behind his showy shell, his public exterior. Behind that he is a prisoner. "Replaced with stubbornness as soon as dead" means that if he didn't hide his true face, he would most likely be dead already. The poet has to press his true face deep inside and wear his shiny flower. As communism fails him and everyone else, he is trying to decide which face to wear.

Bleak System Analysis

Pablo Neruda did see some horrible things in his life and times. We are talking about a man who lived through the Soviet revolution, Nazi Germany, the reign of Stalin, the Spanish Civil war, imperialism, colonialism, the cold war, Vietnam, Castro's revolution, and the arrival of socialism in his native land, to name a few. In fact, Neruda was friends with Fidel Castro at one time, and was betrayed by him and the ideals of communism. His work is at once a chronicle of these tumultuous times at the same time that it is an intimate journal; the documentation of the living, breathing world around him and the way that he catalogued it all as poetry.



Sonata and Destructions

Sonata and Destructions Summary

In lines 1-12, this man, the speaker, the poet, has seen a lot in his life. He has accumulated so much, traveled so far and wide, so far from his home, that he is becoming confused about just where he really is. He has travelled these roads with idiots who do not share his vision. The thing that he cherishes about himself is that despite all that he has had to endure, he loves that he still has the tenacity in his eyes. He can still pursue his own dreams, his own destiny. He can stay true to himself. He listens in his heart for his "horseman's paces." This is the grim reaper, the oncoming of his own demise. The imagery in the last few lines is that of the angel of death, waiting in the shadows with "trembling wings."

In lines 13-22, the poet says that when you are crying, you can't see the shrine that is causing your tears. The poet is describing a graveyard when he says "deserted sleeping grounds invested by the moon." The "ruins he loves too much" is his own worldly vessel, his own body. His "blemished constitution" is his mortality, the same as "unreliable home," meaning our fragile human bodies and the inescapable shelf life that we all have. In death, your body is an abandoned house. The poet asks "who ever made a ritual of cinders," as if to ask, "whose idea was it for us to die in the first place?"

In lines 23-26, the poet is asking "who loved the lost?" He means, "who will mourn the loss of your life?" What did you leave as your legacy, and who loved you? The "father's bone" and the "dead wreck's timber" are referring again to the abandoned vessel of our earthly form. His "own goodbye" or "very own escape" is a question of the method of death, and the "sad strength" vs. the "miserable god" is a question of faith. Which will win and which is correct?

In lines 27-33, the poet lies in wait now for death to come. The "inanimate" is the form of oblivion that he prefers. Does this mean that he doesn't want to wait for God to come and get him? He would prefer the inanimate such as the dagger representing his own way out? He says that he is still hashing out for himself what his mark on the world or time will be, which we all must do for ourselves. He is saying that with his wintry eyes, meaning wise old eyes, he is going to go on living and learning and trying to figure it out.

Sonata and Destructions Analysis

In this piece, Neruda is thoroughly human. He is doing what we all do at some point in our lives; he is pondering his own demise. He is thinking about his own fragile, mortal human body and how once we die and the spark of life no longer remains in our earthly vessel. What happens then? We are no longer there, we have ceased to exist. Like most people, this is a frightening idea and one that we must all deal with in our own



way. Some deal with it through faith, in fact most do and this is another question that Neruda is saying that he needs answered. Whose idea was it that we all have to die in the end? Do I want to wait for that death to come and get me, or do I want to take matters into my own hands and control the situation myself? In the end of this poem, the poet is still pondering these questions, and it seems, inviting us to ponder them as well.



The Night of the Soldier

The Night of the Soldier Summary

In Paragraph 1, the poet sets the stage in the first line by saying he "makes up the night of the soldier." The narrator here is in the air, all around, omniscient. He is saying that "without melancholy or extinction" are these men, these soldiers. They are not contemplating their own death; they are living in the moment. He is saying the brave, young soldier, full of courage, not even considering the consequences of his actions is now in a strange land, not thinking about death really, just the glory of his own living. He and his "stupid happy companions," who spend their time drinking, partying, not really understanding. The poet asks the question "so, the soldier goes off and dies? What happens to those left behind?" He wonders if the females of the family - mother, or aunt, or anyone - had been there to care for him, watch over him, even stop him, would he be in the same predicament?

In Paragraph 2, the poet is saying that each day succumbs to night. He is the soldier walking through the marketplace, un-remarkable, ignored. The weather doesn't change much, sometimes it rains. He describes the rain coming down and connecting everybody and everything, Tying it all together.

In Paragraph 3, the poet is describing the need that the soldier has to find solace, comfort in someone or something. If you are lonely, and you can't find a friend, what do you do? You hire one. The poet is describing the oldest profession on the planet, prostitution.

Paragraph 4 is a descriptive love scene between the soldier and the prostitute. These prostitutes are exotic women, unlike anything the soldier has seen before. The poet uses descriptive language to describe this encounter not at dirty necessarily, more like the doling out of living medicine in sex.

Paragraph 5 - After the sex, he is left to ponder. He dreams of his impending death and doom, he the abandoned ember, his life slowly burning out. He has found comfort for now, but death is still there breathing down his neck.

The Night of the Soldier Analysis

This piece is different from Neruda's poetry; it is more of a poetic short narrative. Once again we see a political theme in that he is writing about soldiers and their mere presence suggests civil unrest. Also, he touches on the subject of death and dying again. Here he also visits his common theme of sensuality or sexuality, but this time it is of a soldier visiting a prostitute. The imagery, especially the description of the prostitute herself, and their lovemaking, is particularly rich and well presented. The most interesting part of this piece is the idea of the young soldier away from home, far from mother's care or the care of any maternal figure who seeks solace and comfort in



another type of female, the prostitute. She delivers motherly, feminine care as well, just that of a different sort. To see this work in this light is to see the soldier as just a child, in the body of a grown man, but emotionally immature and still in need of that type of nurturing. It is a statement about the young soldiers everywhere, from every culture who are just baby boys being sent off to fight battles with no idea what they are getting themselves into. It is a universal theme that has been written about in countless works over the ages.



Nocturnal Statutes

Nocturnal Statutes Summary

In Paragraph 1, the poet is howling with difficulty at reality from the dream state. He longs to exist in the dream world where he is in control, where he can make up the story as he goes (gild the lily) and he can celebrate his "naked muse." In the state of reality, "attack and resistance" dwell, in dream state there is no pain.

In Paragraph 2, the humans are snoring with the sound of the frogs, it is night time. Astral means "of the stars," and night time flings him far from reality in his dreams. The poet is saying that time is fleeting and this is what defines us. Our mortality is what defines us.

In Paragraph 3, the poet speaks of the nights elements. What he is saying is that there can't be light without dark; one cannot exist without the other. Stars are the brightest when they are the only light.

In Paragraph 4, the poet is saying that for so many, the night is when evil comes to play. Night = death of the day. Much harm can be done when reality is escaped in different ways such as alcoholism, for example. But to him night means a very different thing, he is a worshipper of the night. He finds solace in the dream world, and deals with the pains of his reality there.

Nocturnal Statutes Analysis

Nocturnal Statutes literally means "the rules of the night." What Neruda is saying here is that there are no rules for your dreams, your creativity. That's what makes it the yin to the yang of the waking world. There are so many laws and rules that must be obeyed during the day. In the night, you get to play God. You get to decide the rules. Your dreams are for you and you alone. You can choose to share them, or you can choose not to. Neruda believed that everything he saw during the day was filtered through his subconscious mind at night, and to some degree he thanked his dreams for his creativity.



Burial in the East

Burial in the East Summary

In Paragraph 1, the language of this first paragraph is descriptive of the city in which he was living at the time. He works at night, and this is when the funerals happen. The funeral ceremonies are elaborate affairs. Corpses are treated to lush, decadent burials and are paraded through the streets in the night adorned with fruits and spices and showy red cloth. These corpses are being treated so grandly that it is almost ridiculous - the copper flutes are "strident and thin and lugubrious" - huge, and elaborate to a ridiculous degree. The imagery he conjures in this poem is so tangible, you can smell the heavy scent of the flowers and saffron, hear the monotonous drumming of the toms-toms, and smell the smoke of different woods burning and giving off odors.

Paragraph 2 describes the actual burning of the body. There is a reference to the Viking ritual funerals, the ash falling over the water and an "extinct fire left by such mighty warriors."

Burial in the East Analysis

Clearly this poem was written as a description of a funeral Neruda witnessed while living in a foreign country, and the ritual and ceremony left an indelible mark on him. The imagery he uses, the descriptive language, transports us to the very time and place he describes, the perfumed air, the funeral music, the colors and the fire against the water. This is a beautiful example of Neruda's ability to be a straight forward poet while employing his arsenal of adjectives to create a rich, throbbing, live scene played out in front of the eyes of the reader.



Lone Gentleman

Lone Gentleman Summary

In Paragraph 1, all the people around the speaker, homosexual males, young girls, pregnant housewives, yowling cats in heat, surround his house and they are all falling in love, making love, being in love, and he despairs at his loneliness.

In Paragraph 2, there is sex going on all around him, no matter who they are, how old they are or what they look like. It is summer time, and he is in a tropic, palm-tree lined, beach paradise, perfect for lovers. He wants a piece of the action, literally.

Paragraph 3 is a little story about the local clerk who is sleeping with his neighbor, has finally seduced her, and the speaker sees him as despicable, taking her to the movies, he refers to them as flea-pits. He feels the disdain towards them, because they have - are doing - what he wants.

In Paragraph 4, all around there are acts of love taking place, in every possible form and by every possible character. Even the priests are masturbating; no one is immune. The professor "copes with his marital duties," meaning that he is just going through the motions in a passionless marriage, but he is still getting a piece of the action.

Lone Gentleman Analysis

In the last 3 lines of the 4th paragraph, the speaker describes a great forest surrounding him and the imagery is of mouths, teeth, hoofs, and shoes. The language conjures an image of bodies entangled in a huge, seething, breathing, continuously ongoing orgy all around him. It is summer time, and there probably are real-life romantic dramas going on in all directions, but the speaker's preoccupation with sex has exceeded normal limits. He sees everyone around him as coming from or going to their next sexual encounter like "a necklace of throbbing, sexual oysters" all around him. He is clearly lonely, and wishing he were a participant in this orgy, but he is also imagining things that he cannot see, that may or may not be happening, which indicates he is probably inventing most of it in his head.



Widower's Tango

Widower's Tango Summary

In Paragraph 1, the speaker is speaking to "Maligna" or "evil one." He is saying that the evil one has found the letter by now, and cried with rage, cursed his name. Maligna looks at his old shoes which are empty forever, unable to remember specifics about him, his illness, his meals, his ideas.

In Paragraph 2, the speaker is explaining the truth of things, that the night is huge, that the earth is lonely. He has gone back to single life, single bedrooms, meals eaten at restaurants, leaving laundry on the floor. His walls are bare. What he wouldn't give to have the one he calls Maligna back. The names of the months are threats, winter is a lugubrious dream, meaning the thought of having to go on existing is painful.

In Paragraph 3, the speaker is describing the knife buried beneath the coconut tree, and how despite the hard times that have been had, he would give anything to have the poem's recipient back again, knife in hand even. This person is under the dampness of the ground, and the earth does not know their name. Only the poor, in any language, will know their name.

In Paragraph 4, it hurts the speaker to remember the lost one, even the madness harbored in their heart. The dead are between them now and always will be. The air itself has taken on the quality of sadness, the air around him, a vast ocean of sorrow.

In Paragraph 5, the speaker would give anything to have the loved one back again, to hear them going on about their lives again. In death the loved one has become a precious thing. The battle rages inside of the speaker, the sorrow with him always, grieving for the thing that has vanished.

Widower's Tango Analysis

Neruda wrote this poem to explain the sorrow felt by a widower over the death of his beloved wife. It is written almost as a letter to the widower himself, or possibly to the dead loved one whom he also refers to as "evil one." It is possible that the dead one is considered evil by the speaker because now they are in the repose of heaven while the widower, who has survived her is condemned to a single, lonely life now, and there is hardly any crueler fate imaginable to him.



Signifying Shadows

Signifying Shadows Summary

In lines 1-4, the speaker is asking, "what hope can be kept alive?" In asking this question, he is saying that no matter how great you think you are in life, everyone dies. What hope is there to consider?

In lines 5-8, the speaker asks, "what idea can I dream up to help myself live forever?"

In lines 9-13, the speaker is saying that everyone wants to make their mark on the chaos of history. Wee all seek a sense of permanency and immortality.

In lines 14-17, the poet's idea is that we can go on existing beyond our own demise through the written word. He is saying: his idea is that we should write our way into the history books. He will go on living even once he has ceased to exist, and that is the "deep heartland" he reserves for himself.

In lines 18-21, the poet is saying that he is the "passionate witness" or that his pledge is not just to himself, but to humanity. He will observe and record the human condition and in immortalizing it, he in turn immortalizes himself.

Signifying Shadows Analysis

The moral of this story is that Neruda succeeded in what he was setting out to do with this poem. He was saying that his job was to be the passionate witness to the human condition, the human experience. He would use his talent and lay down his findings for posterity, for the ages. In doing so, he would in turn also be immortalizing himself. The concept takes us back to his earlier poem *The Absence of Joaquin* - how Neruda feared ceasing to exist all together once his body was no longer animated with the spark of his life, and he was just an empty vessel. The proof that he succeeded in the end is that his work is being reviewed, analyzed and studied in this modern day and age; thus Neruda continues to exist in us.



Death Alone

Death Alone Summary

Lines 1-7 are the images of bones and cemeteries, of the emptiness of dark, dark tunnels and of a ship collapsing, crushing in on itself. The tone is sad and dark but beautifully descriptive, painting a vivid picture.

Lines 8-14 are full of more dark imagery, corpses and death and bones. The poet speaks of a "pure sound, a bark without a dog" indicating a ghost-like image. There is much use of the color gray.

Lines 15-23 tell us of a wine-dark river, like the river Styx. The poet seems to make a very specific effort to let the reader know that this is a vertical river, meaning that it does not lay flat against the earth, it is at a 90 degree angle, straight up and down. It is like a waterfall, only flowing in the opposite direction. Thus, the imagery is that of wine-colored water, teeming with coffins full of bodies, flowing up a waterfall. The wind in the sails is the "silent" noise of death.

In lines 24-29, the imagery here is very ghostly, conjuring up an image of an invisible body filling out a suit, an invisible foot filling a slipper. This specter knocks at your door without a hand, speaks without a voice.

In lines 30-36, the speaker says that since he has never died, he does not really know what death is like, but he can speculate. He says that the face and gaze of death are green, meaning they are the natural end of life, the color green tying death back to nature, the cycle of life.

In lines 37-47, the poet describes death going about the world riding on a broom, or that death is in the broom. The broom is the personification of death. Death lies in wait for us all, like it or not. It is with us always, this mortality. It is the fate of us all, which unites us.

Death Alone Analysis

In some translations of this poem it is called "Only Death," which of course would give a whole different meaning. "Death Alone" would indicate a fearful thing, which is the idea of dying alone. On the other hand, the translation "Only Death," would indicate the tone of the speaker to be far more casual - it's only death, after all, he is saying; something that inevitably happens to us all. The natural end to life is death. This poem is a terrific example of Neruda's poetic connectivity to all things, living and inanimate. Neruda could take something like a broom and make it the personification of death, a fearful thing, circling the earth in search of souls to reap. He could insert death into the very places of rest where we lay our heads to dream at night, he could turn death into a war admiral, waiting for us in the harbor. The lines of descriptive imagery were blurred for him, and he took artistic liberties galore in his works. The description of the river Styx is



significant in this poem, as Neruda went out of his way to make sure the reader is picturing a burgundy wine-colored river flowing straight up and teeming with coffins and bodies. What a powerfully haunting image.



Barcarole

Barcarole Summary

In lines 1-18, the speaker wants every part of the reader's mouth on his heart; lips, teeth, tongue like a "red arrow." The mouth is very significant in this poem as it seems to be largely about noise, and making noise. The poet describes the creation of the sound of wind, the crackling of leaves, the sound of a fog horn in the distance, the sound of blood pumping through a heart. There is ghostly imagery, and the specter is decidedly feminine. Somehow the ghostly image is not scary, but beautiful.

In lines 19-24, there is a lot of cold colors in these lines, blue and silver. Night falls like clockwork, with lugubrious blue banners, the sea shares the heart sounds.

In lines 25-42, the noises described in these lines are big and super loud. The sea impeaches sound, and the heart is calling out to the sea. The sea replies.

In lines 43-47, suddenly the heart sounds; the blowing on his cold dead heart is the breath of life he is asking for. These images are of the coming to life, with a Gothic feel, invoking Frankenstein.

Lines 48-66 describe loneliness. He wants someone to come from the crown of the islands, but alas, he cannot even get a bird to listen to his song, and the sad truth is that no one is coming. He is utterly alone and homesick.

Barcarole Analysis

Neruda was clearly desperately lonely during this time of his life, when he wrote this poem. A "barcarole" is the song a Venetian gondolier sings, and it has a rhythm compatible with his rowing. This whole poem seems to be about all different kind of sound and noise. Perhaps Neruda was trying to say that in his loneliness and despair, there is nothing but horrible silence, and he needed to create some noise somehow. This poem is, in addition to a statement of his solitude, an ode to his awe of the sea.



Oceanic South

Oceanic South Summary

In lines 1-8, the poet is saying that there is nothing but loneliness for him right now.

In lines 9-16, he is saying that he has nothing in his life but his imagination.

In lines 17-27, his eyes are two needle holes of bitterness. He is standing on the sea shore, crying. He is comparing the vastness of his solitude to the vastness of the sea, endless, limitless, and infinite.

In lines 28-38, the imagery of these next lines is of shipwrecked ships coming up from the sea floor, the flesh of their captains and crews eaten away by the fish and the saltwater.

In lines 39-51, the poet is describing the moon pulling at the current, swirling around the dead people and dead ships at the ocean floor around in the current, stirring it all up. The speaker uses blue several times in a row, indicating that he, like the ocean, could not be more blue.

In lines 52-71, he is completely abandoned, the world is infinitely big and empty. This is how his heart feels, and it is a vast, crushing feeling of being alone.

Oceanic South Analysis

This poem is so similar to Barcarole, it could be called Part 2. Again, the vastness of his loneliness, solitude and despair can be compared to the vastness of the ocean. He, like the ocean, could not be bluer. He is blue upon the deepest blue, shot through with blue. There is much dark imagery about shipwrecks, swirling in the depths of the ocean, the currents stirring up like a whirlwind. Neruda is using this as a metaphor to himself, so alone and miserable, alone with nothing but his imagination stirring and pulling like a current inside him - conjuring these images of death and decay.



Walking Around

Walking Around Summary

In lines 1-4, the poet is saying that he is tired of his world-weary body.

In lines 5-11, he is tired of the human condition. He is tired of all the grooming. He wants no longer to be walking around in the town; he wants the home of stone and wool that comforts him.

In lines 12-17, he is pondering the doing of unkind things to the townsfolk, nuns and notaries. He is thinking how fun it would be to mess with their heads, to scare them to death. He is saying that he is going to go down with a bang and take a few people with him on the way.

In lines 18-21, he is describing himself as a root in the dark. He is saying that he is so tired of his routine he could die and he would be happier. The imagery here is dirt and darkness.

In lines 22-25, the tone of the poem turns even darker. The imagery is of death, tombs and corpses. He is saying he hates what he is inheriting, what is being passed down to him from his generation; he feels that humanity is headed in the wrong direction.

In lines 26-29, he says that "Monday burns like oil." He wears his prison face. He is jailed by his humanity, trapped in the doldrums of his routine.

In lines 30-39, the poet is saying that this routine, this rut, has pushed him into corners of his mind where he does not want to be. The character in the poem seems to be literally, physically going to different parts of the town as part of the daily routine, to places that are dark and make him unhappy. It gets him to thinking about hell and doom. There is very bad energy coming from the houses. Bad things happened there, bad people lived here. The imagery of these lines is hellish and dark. He speaks of bones coming out of windows, of intensities hanging on doors, dentures in the coffee pot, and the mirrors weeping from shame and fright over what they have seen. He feels tainted by the people and their icky energy, and their body parts just everywhere

Lines 40-45 offer a description of the poet just walking around in his town. He sees all the fodder of this humanity and internally his mental battle rages, but he is wearing his happy face and to look at him you would never know it.

Walking Around Analysis

This poem is a great example of how Neruda saw everything through the eyes of poetry. A poetic life-force ran through every object he saw, touched or interacted with until his whole world was alive and brimming with imagery. To him, these are the real things he



sees in town and this poem is what it brings out in him; he is really giving us a glimpse inside his head and his neurosis. This piece is essentially a statement of disgust for humanity and the icky, gooey going-ons of living day to day. Neruda went beyond what is commonly today known as a "germaphobe" to something even larger. He was a "bad energy-a-phobe." Houses, to him, retained all of the energy of the previous inhabitants, and these houses he encounters in this poem saw some raw living.



Ode with a Lament

Ode with a Lament Summary

Lines 1-4 starts off as an ode. The speaker is addressing a young woman; she is unspoiled, ripe and ready to be drank like a cup of wine. She is a full of life, waiting to taste life.

In lines 5-9, the tone shifts into a lament. The speaker can't give her what she deserves, because he has nothing solid to give - just eyelashes or fingernails. He has lived much more than she has; his dreams are covered with dust.

In lines 10-20, he can love her only in his fantasy. His eyes are full of her, adoring her from afar, but he can only love her that way. He is fighting his own mortality. The poet is using ambiguously descriptive statements of his life up till now, and what he has to deal with, what he has seen, and how he deals with his heart, the stirring up of his emotions and all he has seen in his life.

In lines 21-30, he looks at himself in the mirrors and window panes, and sees that he is too old for her. There is someone following him, calling to him, and this is his young self or who he used to be.

In lines 31-37, we come back to the ode or the worshipping of her. He is acknowledging her feminine power, paying homage to her. The blue-green shimmering, and rippling water imagery is practically goddess worship and in his fantasy, she loves the feel of his touch.

In lines 38-43, the top 3 lines of this stanza are still an ode, but the tone has changed. There are bleeding roses and goblets of ash. There is much use of the color red, which can mean burning passion or death and blood. In the last 3 lines of the stanza, his room is dark, his slight giving mechanism is broken. His memories are twisted and he is waiting for death. There is a dead dove bearing a number, as in his number and symbolizing his time being up.

Ode with a Lament Analysis

This piece seems to be written by an old man to a young girl. Clearly she is an unattainable object of lust. It is an ode, in that he is expressing his exaltation of her. He practically worships her but may only adore her with his eyes in secret and from afar. In this way, it is also a lament, because he is mourning the loss of himself as a young person, and he is lamenting the fact that she is utterly unattainable to him.



The Way into Wood

The Way into Wood Summary

In lines 1-6, the poet, in this first stanza has a tone of mournfulness; he seems to be needing forgiveness. He says he is falling to the empire, grandness of the forget-me-nots and the glory of nature.

In lines 7-12, he sees into the shadows of shattered things, and he sees ugliness in the pastures and groves of trees. He sees a forest mangled.

In lines 13-17, he says that as he drowns, he climbs the petals of the dry-winged rose. His feet burn and he thrashes his lips with an angel in her hard cathedral. He is saying that he feels remorse for what has occurred, and though he thrashes his lips, and this feeble apology can never be enough, he truly wishes for forgiveness. Mankind should ask for forgiveness.

In lines 18-21, he sees the world as full of masses of people, come to use Mother Earth up.

In lines 22-25, he is dying under the decomposing corpse of nature. He, representing the whole of humanity, is about to take a funeral journey. We are all about to watch the earth die.

In lines 26-29, apologies mean nothing now. You may as well keep them.

In lines 30-36, he sees what is happening and how mankind is destroying the environment.

In lines 37-50, he is describing the tenderness of a tree; how it has fallen, and shows it being fed into the shredder, its sweet pulp grinding into the thick mouth.

The Way into Wood Analysis

The point of this piece is that the more we destroy the earth, the more damage we ultimately do to ourselves. Neruda personifies nature and wood down to the pulp, by identifying with it. He writes as though he feels the pain of the wood itself, and the crying out of nature is equal to the outcry that should come from mankind, as the very ground we walk on is being destroyed.



Autumn Returns

Autumn Returns Summary

In lines 1-6, there are mournful bells chiming somewhere, signifying someone has died. The poet describes the sound of the bell is a fluttering widow veil; it is the figurative death of summer. As the summer season fades, the cherries have fallen off the tree and sunk into the earth. The poet uses color here, the deep wine-red of fermenting cherries, the color of the river Styx. The air of autumn arrives like a tail of smoke, changing the summer colors of everything into the colors of autumn.

In lines 7-12, the poet is trying to make sure you understand him; here comes the night, here comes the dark, the poet is alone at the window. He hears autumn's steed running towards him. He is describing the way he can feel a tangible change in the atmosphere, literally. He is, as ever, seeing a subtle thing like the onset of the fall season through the eyes of a poet. He is telling us to feel it, to sense the subtle change in the atmosphere. He is saying that a true poet and connoisseur of living would do such a thing.

In lines 13-21, the poet is saying that this is the natural cycle of nature, of life. Things change, but they always come back into place. The bloody liquid he describes symbolizes the giving of birth, the beginning of life. He is saying that while man lives only one life cycle, autumn will keep coming and going, long after we all are dead. No matter what we do, we are mortal, we are dust in the wind. He is saying that this is the reason it is important to somehow leave your mark on history, to weave yourself into the rope of oblivion and tears.

In lines 22-25, the seasons cycle, and winter follows autumn. That is just the way it is.

In lines 26-34, the poet is saying that it is important to somehow leave your mark on history, to weave yourself into the rope of oblivion and tears. There is a great deal of color imagery, for example, the color of the substance the doves doled out over the earth. It is a gray substance representing snow in winter, meant to symbolize the last season, the end of life. The rope which is woven by oblivion and tears is the rope that connects all mankind. It is the changing of the generations, the circle of life in man and in nature. The black poppies represent the idea that every man dies; death it is the natural end of life. When the poet is speaking of everything falling into the hands he raises into the midst of the rain, he is saying that he is the vessel, he drinks all of this in. We are all united in life as in death. It happens to us all.

Autumn Returns Analysis

Neruda thought of his life often in terms of the seasons. Again we see his acceptance of the fate of his death, something we all must endure in the end and Neruda was at peace with his own demise as long as he could be assured of his remembrance. He wanted to know for sure that his name was branded indelibly on the ledgers of time. In this poem,



he is discussing the idea of the autumn of his life. He is in a good place psychologically, because his autumn has meant an opportunity to reflect on his long life, his many accomplishments and the many things he has seen and places he has been. The end of this poem is particularly poignant, as we imagine Neruda standing, arms above his head with his hands cupped into the rain, gathering it all in, for all of humanity.



There's No Forgetting

There's No Forgetting Summary

In lines 1-9, the poet is reflecting on his time on earth. He has all these unanswered questions that his time on earth has not concluded for him. He is saying, "look at all these place I've been, and I still don't get it!" He wonders why your life starts to blur together, wonders how do you start to lose track of time?

In lines 10-21, he tells us that he is going to talk about the painful memories, the drama of his life. He is saying that the things we remember tend to be the things that stress us and test our ability to cope.

In lines 22-25, the poet is saying that we tend not to remember the good times, those go past us, slip by.

In lines 26-33, he is saying that we should dwell on the good things and let the bad things slip away instead. He is saying that he doesn't have all the answers. He is saying that he doesn't want to forget the dead or the things that time has destroyed.

There's No Forgetting Analysis

This poem can be summed up by the line "the river ruined in its own duration." He is saying that your prize for making it through your life is your own demise. Neruda's view of life day to day is much different than that of a normal person, he stares at inanimate objects and sees them as poetry. He gets so wrapped up in his head that he loses track of time. He is also saying that we tend to look back on our lives and remember the painful things, the sorrows, but we should dwell on the happy times of our lives instead.



Pact (Sonata)

Pact (Sonata) Summary

In lines 1-7, the poet is saying that nothing can capture the heart of his loved one in his hands. His heart is vulnerable to hers.

In lines 8-16, he gives himself over to her fully, and her kisses send him into exile. He waits for her, wearing out the things around him in his intensity.

In lines 17-20, his dreams at night are vivid and bright, satisfying. In them, he hears her voice and sees her naked body.

In lines 21-29, he is praising and worshipping her body. He wants nothing more than to be with her, alone with her, intimate.

In lines 30-38, he is saying that sometimes the only way you can win at the game of love is to let go, to fall completely.

In lines 39-44, between his lips and hers, there are days, months, years of life lived and experience.

In lines 45-48, he is saying she is endless, as love is endless. She is the embodiment of unending and undying love.

In lines 49-54, he is asking her to remain with him always.

Pact (Sonata) Analysis

At the beginning of his career, in his youth and younger days of living, Neruda was able to let himself get lost in love and the poetry of love. As his life progressed, his poetry turned darker and became more of a vehicle for voicing his social and political opinions and concerns. To see a love poem such as this during this time in Neruda's life is refreshing, as it shows that no matter what he endured, he was able to come back to love, to find faith in it and maybe even solace. If nothing else, it was a fine distraction from the horrors of reality.



Waltz

Waltz Summary

In lines 1-3, the speaker is existing in a day to day grind that is of no interest to him, he hates it, in fact. He is in a rut; living garment to garment, day in and day out.

In lines 4-6, he cannot draw upon his talents. He is a poet, but he is working in an unsatisfying career, most likely in politics during this time. He cannot call upon his arsenal of words; he does not feel comfortable here.

In lines 7-9, he knows the words he wants to speak; he wants to regard everything in a light of poetry but cannot.

In lines 10-12, where he lives, in his heart, is in nature. He is experiencing a feeling of drowning, as he is unable to say what he wishes to say in the way he wishes to say it.

In lines 13-15, there is no defense mechanism here behind which he can hide

In lines 16-18, this is a statement about the people his is interacting with during this time of his life. They are draining his life, his time.

In lines 19-21, he says, "Do not expect to find me as I used to be. Don't even try to find that person; he's not even here any more. Do not look for me here in this ugliness."

In lines 22-25, he also says, "Further: do not call me, I will call on you, that is my job. Don't ask about me, you won't like what you see. Leave me in my own little dream world where I am content. When I'm ready to come out, I will let you know."

Waltz Analysis

Clearly we see a very unhappy Pablo Neruda in this poem. He is working away from home, and the rumblings of the Spanish revolution are beginning to stir. There is civil unrest and Neruda is living in an unhealthy environment, especially for a poet who regards all things as poetic. He can grasp onto nothing and it is unsettling for him.



Brussels

Brussels Summary

In lines 1-3, the poet is saying, "allow me to enlighten you in regards to what I have learned in life."

In lines 4-6, he has seen some ugly things transpire in his life; the march of war, fire devouring the beautiful things.

In lines 7-10, he cannot use the comforts of food or faith to forget, nor can he meditate by the ocean and forget. He cannot find solace in any of the things that usually connect and ground him.

In lines 11-17, he imagines himself under the ground with the corpses like a worm. These lines are full of the imagery of dirt, death, corpses.

In lines 18-23, the poet speaks of the "velocity" of his life, how it is too quickly hurtling past him. He is wasting his time somewhere that he is not happy. He is in a city surrounded by concrete streets and pavement and there are no trees or nature. He feels very disconnected.

Brussels Analysis

According to the title, this poem was written about the time he spent in Brussels. He is clearly unhappy and feeling a loss of touch with his nature, with his reality, with the things that ground him and allow him to cope. With this poem, Neruda is making the statement that anytime you are not happy where you are, it is a waste of your life, and the time you have in your life is too valuable to waste.



Being Born in the Woods

Being Born in the Woods Summary

In Paragraph 1, the poet is describing a release, an escape. He is an airborne seed on the wind.

In Paragraph 2, he is not something made by man - he doesn't live in the city - he is not human, he is not a passenger carried on your shoe or blown by sea wind; that is not the kind of seed he is.

In Paragraph 3, August is the time of harvest - the seeds are all matured and ready to go their own way, start their own lives; to complete the cycle of nature.

Paragraph 4 is filled with imagery of the cracking open of a seed. It is saying that the cycle of nature never quits, never stops, there is nothing man can do to stop it. The seed was born to be born.

Paragraph 5 is the imagery of leaf on the wind.

In Paragraph 6, the poet is asking, "How long will nature endure? How long has it? How long can it?"

In Paragraph 7, the seed is being born again, nature is recycling herself.

In Paragraph 8, the poet is describing the cycle of nature or the cleaving of the ground to grow where everything is connected and the cycle starts again. The tear represents rain and nourishment to the seed.

Being Born in the Woods Analysis

The poet becomes a piece of foliage for this poem. He is using personification to bring the inanimate seed to life. To Neruda, everything lived and breathed because he saw everything with the eyes of a poet, but in this case it literally lives. The seed will grow into a plant. Like any other living thing, there is a beginning, a life, and an ending. This is the cycle of life for all living things.



Furies and Sufferings

Furies and Sufferings Summary

In Paragraph 1, the poet is describing the remembrance of a sexual encounter he once had. The "heart's plantation" conjures an image of sugar, sweetness. The poet and his lover are together in their hearts, connected by their encounter. They are tigers, animals; there is very vivid sexual imagery in this paragraph.

In Paragraph 2, the lady in his memory is the one who brings broken sleep. She is someone you "sleep" with at night instead of literally sleeping. He is describing a passionate encounter with this fertile, wide-hipped temptress.

In Paragraph 3, the poet is describing her profession. She lures men in, using her sexual power and strength.

In Paragraph 4, this paragraph is almost a sarcastically complimentary ode to her. He describes her as a hunter. She seeks out her prey, divining like a water-witch. She is very good at what she does. Clearly, she is a prostitute.

In Paragraph 5, the arrow is a phallic symbol and the channeled wound is a vaginal symbol.

In Paragraph 6, the "damp" is meant to represent the vagina. The deep midnight refers to the working hours of the prostitute.

In Paragraph 7, the poet describes the prostitute as a "rough tub of charred rose-bushes" to indicate that she has been used and used over and over again.

In Paragraph 8, the poet is describing the coming together of lovers. He describes the dirty hotel where the prostitute is arriving, the contents of a pocket being distributed onto a night stand, and clothes being shed. The poet describes his hatred towards the situation that he is imagining.

In Paragraph 9 - This paragraph vividly describes the actual having of sex. He describes the bodies of the lovers, her wide hips, the surfaces of her skin like pale stone. The flower imagery is meant to represent the vagina. The river between them is the interaction that flows between the lovers, the sex.

In Paragraph 10, the sex that she has with her men is the river that flows between her and the poet as well, dividing them. He feels truly exiled from her, meaning she is having sex with everyone else - and he is passionately jealous. He sits, pining for her. She is giving herself to other people, but the poet is the one who wants her. Her "statue" or the image of her devours "in the clover" of his heart. He is filled with hate, envy and jealousy.



Paragraph 11 defines the entire piece. It is an expression of sorrow and of fury together. The woman in his story is the one who "hatred leaves nameless" - meaning that she is used by these men, and worth nothing to them. It brings him sorrow, suffering, and fury.

In Paragraph 12, he is cursing her in this stanza, again there is great suffering and fury.

Paragraph 13 is for her, so she can never say that it was never said.

In Paragraph 14, he is imagining her with all of her different men.

In Paragraph 15, he is asking her to look at what she is doing, look at what she is missing. She does not see the beautiful things in life, nor in herself.

In Paragraph 16, he asks why? Why does she do this? Well why not? The naked days are an ebb and a flow - she is away from him and the days are slowly, slowly passing. He sitting at his window, an ox goes by, a funeral for a woman named Rosalia. He describes how none of Rosalia is left there in the corpse that passes by. It is a parallel for how empty he feels.

In Paragraph 17, she and he are one in his heart. He is in a state of torture remembering their love, he describes the hotel room he is living in, where he has imagined her over and over, and replayed their love and time together. He is imagining the hotel rooms where she meets up with her men.

In Paragraph 18, he is describing his own encounter with this woman now, the time they were together and had sex, but their encounter made a much deeper impression on him than her. He is deeply disturbed that she can go out and sell sex when it is something that is sacred to him.

In Paragraph 19, the sex he is describing here is almost sterile in its beige quality. It is just business. She is the port, the john climbs her hills and the sex comes to pass. It's just her profession. It's just what she does.

In Paragraph 20, it leaves him pondering if love still exists. He is in fear that sex is all there is, that love has consumed itself in its own fire. And if this is the case, then we are all doomed to hell.

In Paragraph 21 - He is describing the love that he wants for himself, and for everyone, the kind of love that love should be. He wants love emotionally and physically, he wants it all. He thinks that's how it should be for everyone. He wants a love that loves him back - he wants the sorrow and the fury.

In Paragraph 22, the poet is saying "that's the way it goes." You have to go out and live your life if you want to love; you have to throw yourself at life. You have to live it with all your heart, and love with all your heart. Otherwise, love and life are just an empty shell. You have to take risks, and not fear getting hurt. To love IS to hurt. That's just how it is.



In Paragraph 23 - The poet is saying there are good times and bad times, we have to separate the two and live for the good.

Furies and Sufferings Analysis

Neruda wrote the following in 1939: "This poem was written in 1934. How many things have come to pass since then! Spain, where I wrote it, is a girdle of ruin. Ah, if only with a drop of poetry or love we could placate the anger of the world, but that can be done only by striving and by a resolute heart. The world has changed and my poetry has changed. A drop of blood fallen on these lines will remain living upon them, indelible as love." He looked back on this poem 5 years after he wrote it and wished that life could be as simple again as just pining for a prostitute and wondering if love really exists. After this poem was written, Neruda's life began to change into one of political conscience because of the changes that were happening around him. What's interesting about this poem is that he is comparing the prostitute to a hotel room; used and used over and over. Neruda went beyond what is commonly today known as a "germaphobe" to something even larger. He was a "bad energy-a-phobe." Hotel rooms were a fright to him, because of all the people who had been in and out of there. He sensed their energy almost like they were spirits that still remained. So to him, a prostitute was a living version of a hotel room. When he, himself, had an encounter with a prostitute, it deeply affected him.



I'm Explaining a Few Things

I'm Explaining a Few Things Summary

In lines 1-6, Neruda is saying, "Oh, you want to know where my love poetry went? My lighthearted verse? my dripping garlands of nature? You asked, I'll tell you."

In lines 7-17, he is describing his house as it was: bursting with life. There were flowers, dogs, children running around and playing.

In lines 18-23, he is addressing his brothers, Federico and Raul, asking them to remember with him.

In lines 24-39, he is using descriptive language to recount just how great it was in those days; the smells, the colors, the thriving life of the public market.

In lines 40-55, the city is on fire. There has been an attack, most likely by the fascist regime of the time, as this is during the time of the Spanish Civil War. Those who have attacked are ruthless killers. He hates them. They are the worst of the worst, killers of children. They are the "jackals the jackals would despise, vipers that vipers would abominate."

In lines 56-63, Neruda describes the blood of Spain flowing like a tide, he describes treacherous generals, invites the reader to come see his dead house - to look at broken Spain.

In lines 64-71, from every house there are no longer flowers overflowing, they have been replaced with metal, guns overflowing from every house. For every dead child, Neruda says, bullets are born. Revenge will be exacted.

In lines 72-74, the poet returns back to your first question. Why doesn't my poetry any longer speak of trivial things?

In lines 75-79, the answer is simple. He says, "Come and see the blood in the streets."

I'm Explaining a Few Things Analysis

This poem is a marked turning point in Neruda's poetry from that of socially conscious poetry to that of politically charged poetry. The Spanish Civil war had an enormous impact on Neruda, not just in the horrors that he witnessed, as exacted in this piece, but also in his ways of thinking. He was, at one point in his life, convinced that communism was the answer, but once he witnessed the effects of Spain under the reign of fascism, he felt betrayed and bewildered. He was suddenly no longer able to care about the simple things in life, things that he has held so dear such as nature and love. He found that there were more important things to think about.



The Way Spain Was

The Way Spain Was Summary

In lines 1-4, Neruda, the speaker, feels great tenderness for Spain. He explains how it once felt. The false god is Fascism.

In lines 5-18, he describes how he loves Spain, no matter what, barren soil and all. Stricken people and all! He is saying that the fascists love it for another reason for its vineyards and silver mines.

In lines 19-22, he is saying that he understands the political undercurrent of the time; what is coming. He is mourning the loss of Spain as it will never be the same again.

The Way Spain Was Analysis

This poem is another example of Neruda's view of Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Clearly this was a time of great unrest. Neruda is pondering the sadness, the loss of life, the horrors he has witnessed.



Battle of the Jarama River

Battle of the Jarama River Summary

In Stanza 1, the river of Jarama stood sentinel during this battle,

In Stanza 2, these men from Spain came to fight.

In Stanza 3, the river is like a branch of fallen crystal, a broad line of medals for the victor with the prize to be won.

In Stanza 4, the river cannot be mastered. It is a force of nature and this fight could wound it but not kill it.

In Stanza 5, they drink the water of the river, they came to this river to die essentially. No one won this battle, all you did was come here to die.

In Stanza 6, for a minute, you got to taste that water and then you were dead.

In Stanza 7, the river's people are Spanish, they were formidable, a force to be reckoned with, like the land they defended.

In Stanza 8, he cannot adequately pay homage to this river, this is an ode to the river, and a part of an ode is to humbly say that you are not up to the task of describing what you are describing, that's how awesome it is. The river's dead would be the Spanish.

In Stanza 9, the Spanish remain there, watching over the river, like the sky which remains as fixedly, eternally.

Battle of the Jarama River Analysis

No one won this battle, it was a stalemate, the river stood witness and was the only one that came out a winner. The point Neruda was making was that nature can never be owned. The fight was over the land and what the land could offer.



Love, America (1400)

Love, America (1400) Summary

In lines 1-6, Neruda is describing America long before it was settled, long before the wig and the frockcoat. So long ago, that there was not even a word for thunder yet. There was just wild nature.

In lines 7-19, he describes a time when man was one with nature, with earth. Even his weapon was made of things from the earth. These people that he speaks of in these lines pre-date all history, pre-date even the common modern idea of the Native American. He speaks of Carib, Chibcha and Araucanian people. These cultures are so old that all of

their customs have been lost, even their language.

In lines 20-34, even though the culture was lost, and the language was lost - life itself was sustained. The "red drop" of life that has fallen is the ancient blood of our ancestors. It flows in Neruda's blood. Neruda says that he is here to tell us the story - he seeks the seed, father, his ancestors; but also knowledge, like the plant medicine that has been lost.

In lines 35-42, he looks and he is anxious to find who is waiting there in his ancestry. Neruda is figuratively wandering around the ruins of his ancient past, trying to find and feel the energy. In this energy he finds hope and comfort and belonging.

In lines 43-47, the land before America the speaker is seeing himself in this time. He is connecting himself with his ancestry. There is imagery in these lines of America when it was in bloom.

Love, America (1400) Analysis

Neruda often refers to rivers as veins, which makes the reader imagine the land to be alive. This poem is all about how back before the land was settled, man and the land were so much more connected than now. Man lived off the land, could not survive without what Mother Earth gave him. The people he speaks of in this poem are the Carib, who lived in northern South America and the lesser Antilles mountain range, the Chibcha, who were pre-Columbian, and the Araucanian from central Chile. When Neruda mentioned the Zapotec cultures, it is a significant reference, because it refers to a certain group of peoples in Central America, and the languages spoken in Mexico. The Zapotec people were an ancient culture whose language did survive, whereas the rest of the cultures mentioned had languages that were lost. The idea of a lost language must have disturbed Neruda, and in fact may have inspired him to begin the research of these lost cultures. When we consider Neruda's connection with his own language, and the importance it had to him, his life and his work, it makes sense that the idea of a

language being lost would have seemed to him a massive injustice and a cause that needed an undertaker.



Some Beasts

Some Beasts Summary

In line 1, Neruda is saying that the time of which he speaks is the beginning of the end for the natural dwellers of the world.

In lines 2-23, he describes a melodious and pulsating scene teeming with all different sorts of life and creatures, all living harmoniously in the wild, going about their business of living. He is saying that this is the original earth.

In lines 24-38, in these lines, comprised of 3 separate stanzas, Neruda describes a jaguar, a badger and an anaconda. These are all predatory animals, and they are looming in wait to devour their prey. These are very different kinds of beasts than the ones he described before.

Some Beasts Analysis

The inspiration for this poem comes from this specific time in Neruda's life, tying back into the poem, *Love, America* (1400) where he is referencing the jungles and the original earth. He describes the creatures of the jungle thriving harmoniously, with the predators waiting on the outskirts. This seems to be a reference to the unspoiled naïveté of the original South America, and Neruda's way of foreshadowing the things to come.



Entrance of the Rivers

Entrance of the Rivers Summary

In Paragraph 1, Neruda begins with an introductory paragraph, describing the river as a giver of life, of a goddess; the river is in the image of Mother Nature. The force of the river is mighty. The mother river mapped the topography of these lands, carving out the rock to make the river beds. These lines are filled with birth imagery; the river is the giver of life.

In Orinoco, Neruda describes the river of Orinoco, which is located in South America, in a very motherly way. When he speaks of the scarlet colored water, he is alluding to placenta. The imagery here is very much of birth, and the giving of life. This is written almost as an ode to this river. He says he wants to sink his hands in her and return to her "maternity." Even the name "Orinoco" with the round, plump "O" at the helm conjures the image of a ripe, round, pregnant pumpkin, or a plump round full moon. The reader is meant to relate the Orinoco as the great mother river.

In Amazon, as yin to the Orinoco's yang is the Amazon River. Neruda has inserted phallic symbols everywhere in this imagery. He even refers to the river as "father patriarch." Neruda is saying that the Amazon is the father of all rivers, and he means it literally, as the Amazon is the source of more rivers than any other river on earth.

Tequendama refers not to a river, but a famous, enormous waterfall. Neruda is asking the child, the waterfall, do you remember your birth when you first fell over the rocks?

Bio Bio second largest river in Chile. Neruda, a native son of Chile, says to the river "your words in my mouth are the ones that slide. You gave me the language." He is saying that Chile is what gave him the language he needed to speak of the earth and to the earth. He talks of watching the river empty itself into the ocean, and he ponders what the river has seen, "a story the colour of blood."

Entrance of the Rivers Analysis

The reference of the Orinoco River in South America is a clear reference back to Love, America (1400) in that it refers back to the ancient Carib people. Tequendama Falls is in Columbia, which means he is referring back to the Chibcha people, and Bio Bio is in Chile, which refers back to the Arucanians. Neruda often referred to rivers as being like a tree of veins, pumping life into the earth. In these pieces, he actually attributes specific rivers to mother, father and children and in doing so, he relates this all back to the ancient peoples of which he had begun to so fervently discover. Neruda is trying to tell us, really, the degree to which he believed that these ancient people were totally in tuned with Mother Earth and her cycles and rhythms, and how their way of life was symbiotic with the earth.



The Heights of Macchu Picchu

The Heights of Macchu Picchu Summary

In P. 178 Irresistible Death (IV), lines 1-5, the speaker talks of adventure calling to him, like "salt occulted in the waves," hidden there, an "invisible fragrance." Quite literally he has arrived at the base of the climb to Macchu Picchu.

In lines 6-12, he is telling the story of how he has come to the base of the mountain, and he is going to climb up into the air. He is saying that death does not come upon us slowly, like "wave upon wave," death comes upon us like "a gallop of twilight." Literal death swallows us up quickly, but to literally die is not the only way of dying.

In lines 13-16, death doesn't care who we are or who we were, it comes only with a "scarlet mantle," merciless. Sometimes death comes too early, shrouded in silence, leaving a wake of tears, like the tears he feels buried here.

In lines 17-31, Neruda is saying he has trouble connecting with modern man. He came to Macchu Picchu to "swim in the most ample lives, the wildest estuaries." He wants to know how the ancient people lived; their stories are far more interesting than the boring lives of today. Thus, he has travelled into the wilderness to find who he is, who he was, who we all were. He looked around and discovered that the people he saw died a little in living their pointless lives every day. He realized that he was not immune to this dying, and decided to do something about it.

In P. 180 Then up the Ladder (VI), in lines 1-3, the poet writes in very straightforward prose, describing how he is literally climbing the ladder into Macchu Picchu and arriving.

In lines 4-9, he sees the "tall city of stepped stone" and he feels "home at long last." He is saying that although he was raised away from this place, the second lineage he feels, and he knows is right, is that of this culture he can sense, standing amongst the ruins.

In lines 10 -12, these lines are all images of birth, the dawn of mankind, and primordial beginnings.

In lines 13-15, this is where it all began.

In lines 16-18, he speaks of the culture here, the ceremonies.

In lines 19-24, these people worked and rested up here. The imagery is of them in the morning, in the mist of clouds. They knew how to take care of the earth.

In lines 25-32, the poet is saying that he feels these people here; he can see how they lived and died.



In lines 33-40, the earth was kind to them, as they were kind to her. These lines are an ode to these people, in praise of them and their way of life.

In P. 184 Come Up with Me (VIII), in lines 1-11, the poet asks the reader to join him in his journey to Macchu Picchu. Neruda wants to kiss the secret stones, revel in the glory of the river, Urubamba. He describes this place like a horn of plenty, bursting forth with life. He speaks of himself as though he were one of the clouds above Macchu Picchu, giving water, thrusting with the air, crystal and cold.

In lines 12-15, he loves this place, is happy here, he wants to lose no time here in sleep.

In lines 16-22, Neruda speaks of another river here, the Wilkamayu, and the sounds the river makes below; it is a rushing river, the sounds are like thunder. The "Andean spume" describes the snow of the mountains, melted into rushing river water. What language does the river speak? And did the ancient peoples hear it the same way the modern ear does?

In lines 23-29, Neruda is asking, "what did this mountain bear witness to? What life and manner of living did the wilderness see, the living of these ancient people."

In lines 30-45, he is describing lightning in these lines, and imagines the lightning catching flashes of the carryings-on of the Macchu Picchu peoples. He wonders about their languages, how they described the things he describes. What did these people give to the wind, what did the wind take from them? The wind allusions taken further can also mean that this civilization was essentially scattered to the winds.

In lines 46-60, he is saying; let's not imagine the demise of these folks. Let's revel instead in their living days.

In lines 61-62, he is saying that he finds himself here, in this place that is foreign to him, yet familiar somehow.

In line 63, this "fallen kingdom" is proof that cultures that die do in fact live on. Those ruins will still be there long after the poet and the reader are dead.

In lines 64-65, the condor flying by, leaving a shadow on the stone is a meaningful image. Nature lives on, and time marches on, and we as humans are here just long enough to watch the shadow fall and fade.

In P. 188 Stone Within Stone (X), in lines 1-18, the poet is asking the reader to contemplate the people who made this city. Who was he and what happened to him? Neruda wants to know these people, to remember the proletariat who sacrificed their lives, and lived out their lives probably as slaves, to build this great place that is now a ruin. His tone is angry, almost like once he got over the glory of Macchu Picchu, he started to think about it and when the truth hit him, it made him angry.

In lines 19-28, these lines tell the story of the work the slaves did. Macchu Picchu did not build itself, he is saying, but instead "stone upon stone" was laid on "a groundwork



of rags" - the slaves whose labor made it possible. He tells a story of misery, where many lives must have been lost in the process.

In lines 29-39, Neruda is saying, let's get those people back. He is saying he alone can resurrect them, by questioning who they were, by caring who they were, by wondering about them.

In lines 40-50, he is referring to young South America as a virgin bride, fresh and new and ready to live. This was the South America where these people thrived. He is saying that a way of life was carved out here, and it wasn't always pretty. It was brutal and bloody at times.

In P. 192 Through a Confusion (XI), in lines 1-12: In part (V) of this poem, which is not published in this collection, Neruda describes plunging his hands into the ground to find his hands empty. This symbolized the souls of the people as being empty. In the first few lines of this section of the poem, he is plunging his hands into Macchu Picchu and coming back with his hands full, the souls of the people rich.

In lines 13-25, Neruda is saying that time may have washed these people and their culture away, but he still sees them. He imagines them living, a confusion of splendor as they carried out their lives up here in the sky of Peru, in Macchu Picchu. He envisions them so clearly; he can even name them and almost live alongside them.

The Heights of Macchu Picchu Analysis

Macchu Picchu is a famous ancient ruin in Peru. The Heights of Macchu Picchu is a complex poem that is written in 12 parts. The parts highlighted here are IV, VI, VII, X and XI. In essence, the poem begins with (I) Neruda as an empty net, unable to gather up anything worthwhile. (II) He then recognizes that it's not just him, the rest of the world is in the same predicament. (III) He describes the observation of people all around him dying a little every day in their effort to live. (IV) Neruda arrives at Macchu Picchu, contemplating his own living/dying a little each day. (V) He realizes that he has plunged his hands into the nothingness; the nothingness of his own soul and the people around him. (VI) So, he climbs the ladder of the earth - Macchu Picchu - and as he climbs he learns the history of the place. (VII) In climbing this ladder, and learning about the people, the place, their living, he is resurrecting them. These people live in the stones of Macchu Picchu. (VIII) He turns his attention to the mountain above the site, and also contemplates the rivers below. He ponders these natural wonders and wonders what business of living they were witness to. (IX) These verses are odes and epitaphs to Macchu Picchu. (X) He considers who built Macchu Picchu and what their lives were like; were they slaves? Did they die for the cause? (XI) He plunges his hands into the earth a second time and this time, he senses the rich history of these ancient people, and identifies with them to such a degree that he loses his sense of connection with his past. (XII) Neruda feels his own spiritual rebirth, as well as the rebirth of these ancient people, in him. A few things to note: Macchu Picchu is actually spelled Machu Picchu; Neruda spelled it with two 'c's. Neruda is, with this poem, associating himself as "I" as

the common man, every man. He is saying that his personal hope is actually a global one and that we can all find spiritual enlightenment if we can connect with our ancient past.



They Come For the Islands (1493)

They Come For the Islands (1493) Summary

In lines 1-13, the "soldiers" have come to Guanahani to lay waste. It was the first island to be ravaged. The children of the land, gentle as deer, saw their lives smashed, and died a death they did not understand. The islands, and the people, were tortured and burned.

In lines 14-17, the bones of these people are rigidly fastened into the form of a cross. Neruda is saying they died at the hands of progress, of the so-called "greater good."

In lines 18-26, all of this death and destruction is being done in the name of god, which in and of itself is blasphemous to Neruda.

They Come For the Islands (1493) Analysis

Guanahani is the name the natives gave to the island Columbus called San Salvador when he arrived in the Americas. Sotavento is a chain of islands, and Narvaez refers to the Explorer Panfilo de Narvaez, who helped to conquer Cuba. Neruda uses the imagery of bones being fastened into a cross, which has significant meaning. Consider these natives that he is speaking of; they would have no idea what a cross was, what it signified, or who these rosary and cross-bearing people were or why they were there. All they knew was that these evil people were destroying everything they were, and everything they stood for. To them, the cross was a symbol of evil and destruction, no different than, say, the symbol of the swastika and what it stood for.



A Soldier Sleeps

A Soldier Sleeps Summary

In lines 1-14, a soldier from a foreign land has come to the lands of which Neruda speaks. He falls, exhausted, into sleep at the foot of the "Great Plumed God." The Great Plumed God is looking down upon the sleeping soldier, a "stranger born out of the sea." He looks at his sword, his beard, and these strange and foreign things. Yet he sleeps like a child, blissful and peaceful.

In lines 15-41, the Plumed God has seen so much. Neruda refers to him with the imagery of a snake, coil and bulk. He has seen the "anarchy of crazy waters," "savage nights," "raging ferment of lives, destruction." Juxtaposed alongside is the order of the plants, the elevation of "cut stone," the building of civilizations, ritual, and the "establishment of tribes."

In lines 42-43, "He," meaning The Great Plumed God, felt the stones being cut, and he summoned all his force but could not move this soldier nor the cause. The Great Plumed God remains there, immovable, but so does Beltran de Cordoba, sleeping in the jungle.

A Soldier Sleeps Analysis

Beltran de Cordoba refers possibly to Spanish nobleman Beltran de la Cueva, or the name could be made up. The reference of Beltran de la Cueva would accurately date the setting of the poem to around the time that Columbus discovered America, and this would be in keeping with the other poems Neruda wrote in this era. Again we see the juxtaposition of the natural world against the European cultures that were intent upon conquering various lands at that time. Neruda refers to the "Great Plumed God," in this poem, and by that he may be referring to the religious culture of the islanders, but more likely he means the jungle itself. The image that we conjure when we think of a Great Plumed God is a giant palm tree, and indeed this may have been Neruda's intent. The reader imagines the great palm tree swaying in the wind, gazing down upon this strange soldier-creature that the sea has washed up, who is sleeping on the jungle floor. His gaze is not friendly. Neruda closes the poem with this Great Plumed God summoning all the forces at his disposal, and though he stands strong and mighty still, this soldier remains also.



Discoverers of Chile

Discoverers of Chile Summary

In lines 1-18, Almagro, the invader, brought fire and explosives to conquer this land. The Spaniards who met him, fell to his strategy, they were no match. "Night, snow and sand" make up the "form" of this country. Neruda describes the coastline of Chile as foam flowing from its "marine beard." This land is full of coal, gold, and silver, which illuminates like a "green moon," meaning that it makes Chile a target. The Spaniards did not imagine this "choleric" place, being born from the dung of the sea eagle.

Discoverers of Chile Analysis

This piece refers to Diego de Almagro, the Spanish Conquistador who is credited in conquering Peru and Chile. This poem is pretty straight forward, as far as Neruda's works go. It was only a matter of time, given the works Neruda was doing at the time this piece was written, before he wrote a poem about the European conquering of his home land. We see Neruda being even more literal than usual when he calls Chile his "thin country," which Chile literally is - long a thin strip on the coast of South America. Neruda refers to Chile's silver illuminating like a "green moon." This imagery is interesting because it can mean two things: that a green moon is an oddity, and something that would stick out like a sore thumb. Or, Neruda could be using the color green as a metaphor of envy. Either interpretation indicates that Chile is ripe for the picking at the time of its conquer.



The Magellan Heart

The Magellan Heart Summary

In lines 1-9, the speaker of these lines is lost and he can't remember who he is, what day it is, where he is from. He is saying that in the middle of a dream, a tree, a night and a wave all rise. A day is born from this wave, and it is a "lightning bolt with a tiger's snout."

In I SUDDENLY AWAKE IN THE NIGHT THINKING OF THE FAR SOUTH, the day comes to the speaker asking if they hear the water over Patagonia, for there lies adventure and wild mysteries to tame.

In I RECALL THE SOLITUDE OF THE STRAIT, the poet is saying that the long night takes him away. His fatigue and the "acid" of whatever happens in his waking life is overturned in sleep. A snowdrop is a white, drooping flower. The poet sees one at his door and it is a tiny comet that seeks him out, sobbing. The wind takes him away to the south, and he sees "the island scraped by water and sky," he "meets the storm and its voice of rupture." The storm tells him something that the wind devours every day.

In THE DISCOVERERS APPEAR AND OF THEM NOTHING REMAINS, Neruda describes the water remembering the ships that once sailed on her, and how the earth conceals the skulls of the explorers that once wreaked havoc on the lands. Nothing survives - even the ships are wrecked. "All that remains is the burnt-out corpse-less domain."

In DESOLATION REIGNS ALONE, Neruda is saying here that his country, Chile, was never the same after the conquistadors came. The "battered rose" of Chile still keens in its agony.

In I RECALL THE ANCIENT DISCOVERER: Neruda describes the time when the discoverers of Chile sailed. He says "they," the "the corn-bread of combat, the Glacial Fall, the transitory casualty" or meaning the mobile terrorists, sail with "the Old Man" - meaning Diego de Almagro, who was referred to as El Viejo or The Elder, The Old Man. Neruda calls Almagro a dead man here, to indicate that despite all the destruction he inflicted, he too came to his demise. When Neruda says that his "eyes wandered out of his head," this could be a literal reference to the fact that Almagro lost his left eye while battling the natives in South America. Again here we see the imagery of nature juxtaposed with the battle of the natives for their land and their freedom.

In MAGELLAN, Neruda asks "what god is that going by?" He describes a corpse, with a maggoty beard, bitten by "thick air like a shipwrecked dog." The subheading of this section refers specifically to Ferdinand Magellan, who was one of the most famous explorers of the time in which this poem is set, and of course, the title of the poem being The Magellan Heart; but Neruda seems to be vilifying all explorers in these lines.



In HE REACHES THE PACIFIC, Neruda is saying that explorers like Magellan, in the end, dug their own graves. He is saying that the "sinister sea" ended, the "nocturnal hand" cut off all its own fingers until it was no longer a hand. One day, the "man" was born, the Captain "discovered steel within himself" - meaning the brutal ways of old ended, and that way of thinking was swallowed up. The "dawn is born from the foam."

In THEY ALL HAVE DIED, Neruda is saying that the day of the explorers has finally come its conclusion and that no matter who you are in life, no matter how grand or how powerful, nature will win in the end.

The Magellan Heart Analysis

In the beginning of this poem, Neruda refers to Patagonia, which is the southernmost area of South America, comprising Argentina and Chile. These places are what he considers his homeland, and thus this piece retains a certain layer of personal influence for him. This piece was written during a time when Neruda was obsessed with the explorers; who they were, what kind of men they were, and what sort of atrocities they inflicted upon the native peoples of the lands they conquered. His statement with this piece is that men like them come and go; they may be powerful during their reign on earth, but they are mortal and will die and fade away. The earth, the ocean, the trees and stones and especially the land where the blood was shed, remembers and remains.



In Spite of Wrath

In Spite of Wrath Summary

In lines 1-7, Neruda is recalling the tragedies and horrors that have occurred in the conquering of the land. He is saying that in spite of this, a light has fallen over the earth. The "holocaust" is over, and now there is structure and sanity coming to light.

In lines 8-14, in these lines, Neruda is describing the ability of peoples and politics to deliver policy, and some of it is in the best interest of the people and the land.

In lines 15-18, statues are being erected, machinery grinding to life.

In lines 19-21, dominion is being established through the "technique" of man, time becomes a "speed and a flash" - industry is making it easier to do things, produce things.

In lines 22-33, man is unlocking all of the mysteries that the earth has to offer - "intelligence, with a frozen thread, followed behind blood, spinning out the day." Now that the lands have been conquered, the brutality is over, what follows naturally is the cultivation of a civilization.

In lines 34-35, men are now discussing progress instead of battle.

In lines 36-39: "the sanguinary titan of stone" means that the brutality that the lands and the people were forced to suffer was in the bloody name of progress. Out of this came not just blood, but "wheat" or progress or something to give back.

In Line 40, the poet says, "Light came despite the daggers." Neruda is saying that the blood that was spilled was a terrible thing. Perhaps something good came out of it after all.

In Spite of Wrath Analysis

Neruda says it all with the last line of this poem or "light came despite the daggers." This poem is all about the good things that came from progress, and Neruda is saying that even he can recognize that. He does not like the way things went down but still he can appreciate the fact that progress has its merits, too.



Education of the Chieftain

Education of the Chieftain Summary

In lines 1-19, Lautaro is a member of the Arucanian tribe. He stands out among the crowd. He is referred to as "our father," which would indicate that this poem is being written in remembrance of him. This is the story of his rise from regular tribe member to the chieftain. His first years are described as "all silence," during his "adolescence authority," indicating that he was extraordinary and a legend. These lines describe the trials he endured in order to condition himself.

In lines 20, the poet says, "He made himself velocity," meaning that he had a singular vision and he made it happen.

In lines 21-37, these lines describe Lautaro as not just a hero, but a superhero, defying the puny acts of mere mortal men.

In lines 38, the poet says, "Only then was he worthy of his people."

Education of the Chieftain Analysis

Lautaro is an Arucanian chieftain, and this is an ode to him written by his heirs. This is a story much like the stories of legend that children of all cultures hear growing up. In the case of American children, it would be equivalent to Paul Bunion and babe the blue ox, or Davey Crockett, king of the wild frontier, or George Washington and the cherry tree. Lautaro was the people's hero. Neruda clearly did not know the accurate story of Lautaro; he took poetic license in this poem, shaping the legend, building the story. Neruda was obviously not satisfied with the sparse information he was able to dig up on the Arucanian people, as their heritage, language and culture was practically obliterated by time, and thus he felt that he needed to make up the legend as he saw fit. Neruda probably felt that it was not only his right but also his duty to "flesh-out" or reconstitute this people and culture that had been so long forgotten.



Gold

Gold Summary

In lines 1-7, gold's day of purity was when it was in the earth. The "dirty issue" awaiting it that is recently arrived are the explorers. They will take the gold and use it as a currency. It is loosed from the earth, and "purified" by fire, "enveloped in the sweat and hands of man." It will be forged into something else, fashioned into coins or jewelry.

In lines 8-17, gold becomes something dirty, something to be exchanged for blood.

In lines 18-26, man will go on doing what he does, gold will remain; wars will be fought over gold and gold will rule. Men are mortal, and this will perish. Gold, on the other hand, will outlast these men who fight and die for it.

Gold Analysis

With this poem, Neruda is saying that while gold was in the ground, it was pure. It was something that nature gave to us. Once the hand of man touched it, once we began digging it out of the ground and putting fire on it to change it into coins or jewelry, or whatever else, it becomes something dirty and impure. Gold is no longer a precious earthly commodity. Man's interference has tainted it, and twisted it into something else. Man's interest in gold came from its shiny color, its malleable texture, and because it was something that everyone wanted, the concept of supply and demand deemed it valuable.



The Poet

The Poet Summary

In lines 1-8, Neruda speaks of who he used to be in "the old days." He wrote of tragic love, he wrote of what he saw with his eyes; he lived according to his senses.

In lines 9-11, the "sudden flower," the "Madonna lily" is a beautiful face that could devour him and definitely distract him.

In lines 12-13, Neruda is saying that viewing life in this superficial and artificial way is like stepping into a trap.

In lines 14-20, he says that this is "the way his poetry was born." He learned to craft his words in this way. He is saying that this is all well and good, but no matter how good his poetry was, nor what it meant to him then, that was then and this is now.

In lines 21-28, he sought solitude in his interactions with men, but soon came to realize that people live everyday to die, propelling themselves forward through pointless lives towards death. Everywhere you look, no matter what you do in your life; death is what awaits us all.

The Poet Analysis

This poem is a statement made by Neruda regarding his shift in idealisms from the value and fortitudes of love, to his more culturally and politically motivated writings that he clearly is acknowledging as having far more importance. He is speaking of the ability that infatuation, the pursuit of a pretty face, has as an effective trap. It leads us away from what is really important in life. He has found, now that he has gone out and done some living, that there is much more of the world to discover, much deeper to dig. Before, he was living his life only on the surface, seeing things only with his eyes and not with his heart and mind. It is possible that this is around the time that he wrote the post script for *Furies and Sufferings*, which denounced his attachment to love and his writings thereof.



The Great Ocean

The Great Ocean Summary

In lines 1-7, the poet is speaking to the ocean (notice that Ocean is capitalized) as a singular being, personifying it. He is asking for "fruit or ferment" to be granted out of the depths. He means that he is asking that the bounty of the sea come to him. The "white dialect" is the cresting of the waves, and they are "downing and shattering its columns in its own demolished purity." The waves are dancing and breaking in upon themselves.

In lines 8-17, in these lines, Neruda is making a statement about potency of the ocean. It is "all-consuming" in its oneness. Neruda is referring to the fact that 70% of the earth is covered by ocean, and even though we have named the oceans different names, and they "belong" to different regions, they are really all one body of water.

In lines 18-23, in these lines Neruda is saying, basically, that the ocean is so great that we can't hurt it, that it will heal itself no matter what we humans do to it.

In lines 24-27, the waves are never lost; they are pulled back out to sea and recycled.

In lines 28-39, these lines are saying that the ocean is a living, breathing ecosystem that will take down the offerings of man that are too insubstantial to withstand.

In lines 40-54, these lines are describing the ocean. The cup trembles with "salt and honey" - it is the earth that holds the water in the form of the oceans. Neruda describes the oceans as "womb of waters." Nothing is wanting in Mother Earth, Mother Ocean. These next lines, "desolate summits, scars, adhesions, protecting the mutilated air," could be describing the moon; the moon pulls the currents of the sea. There is nothing wanting in this relationship; both parties get what they want. The last stanza describes the algae thriving, the schools of fish. It is saying that the only things we get out of the ocean are the things she chooses to give us.

The Great Ocean Analysis

The statement that Neruda is making with this piece is obviously pro-nature; he is saying that no matter what we humans do, the earth will win out in the end. The time in which this summary and analysis was written was during the massive Gulf Coast oil spill off the coast of Louisiana (May 2010), and thus Neruda's statement becomes an ironic one. While the ocean is, indeed, powerful and possibly capable of surviving a minor mishap at the clumsy hand of man, a major mishap like the one we are currently experiencing is another thing altogether. Indeed, we are seeing a situation where more damage than we thought was possible, may come to pass.



The Fish and the Drowned Man

The Fish and the Drowned Man Summary

In lines 1-11, the poet is describing a huge, colorful, and pulsating school of fish. Normally a school of fish is just one kind of fish, but this one has all different kinds of fish in it. The imagery is of Neruda looking into the ocean and seeing all of the life thriving.

In lines 12-18, the "fishery denizens" are the residents of the fishery. The water he describes is full of life, teeming with it; there are so many fish that the stars above are reflected in their scales.

In lines 19-29, the imagery of the final lines is of a man falling down deeper into the water, becoming one with the sea. It is described as "a wounded inheritance," leading the reader to suspect that this descent from above the water to the sea bed is either a suicide, or possibly the speaker from the first stanzas is placing a body into the water.

The Fish and the Drowned Man Analysis

Neruda had a clear fixation with mouths. He liked to describe the mouths of all manner of creatures; from the women he loved to the animal species whose everyday mannerisms he was able to describe in a poetic way. In his poems, Neruda used the mouth in all possible ways as well. Perhaps this fixation is his way of expressing the idea that the mouth is the origin of the language that was the life blood of his art. In this piece, mouths are described in "o" formations throughout, which conjure an image of fish for the reader. In the final stanza of this poem, the perspective shifts from first person to third. Neruda seems to be describing someone giving themselves to the ocean, or possibly someone depositing someone into the ocean. The imagery is beautiful in the final stanza. It is very peaceful with all the fish mouths around as he descends down into the amethyst depths.



Rapa Nui

Rapa Nui Summary

In lines 1-8, Rapa Nui is also known as Easter Island, and commonly referred to as the omphalos, or "navel of the sea," because of its location. By the Polynesian natives, it is also called Tepito-Te-Henua. A "diadem" is a tiara or crown. Some of the statues of Easter Island are lined up in a tiara-like bow, in a row, and this is the shape to which Neruda refers. Neruda is asking; who are these people who made these statues? Where did they come from and why?

In lines 9-14, in these lines, Neruda is describing the big footless statues, with their big heads and faces and eyes, watching the world go by. Neruda describes their feet as buried in the sand, conjuring the image of things going on further deep into the sand as opposed to just on the surface.

In lines 15-23, Neruda describes these heads and faces standing sentinel on the island. No one else was there, just sea and air and wildlife.

In lines 24-31, these faces may stand now, but the people who made them are gone. They arrived in boats to cut the statues from the stone, and then they got right back into their boats and left. There are no clues as to who these people could have been or why they carved these heads out of the stone. There is no evidence that a human culture ever lived on Easter Island.

In lines 32-37, Neruda is saying that only nature watched it happen; only the sand knows the "sealed light," the truth.

Rapa Nui Analysis

Neruda had a fascination with ancient cultures, which can be referenced back to his poem *The Heights of Macchu Picchu*. Easter Island, of course is much more of a mystery than the ruin found at Macchu Picchu. Millions of people have wondered who built the giant stone heads of Easter Island, but this mystery must have especially intrigued Neruda. He was always one to question deeper than the average person, and thus this particular mystery presented a unique puzzle. Neruda of course would want to understand the culture of these people, their language, their religion, and since no clues were left behind for him to study and thus form theories about, he had to make up his own conclusions. Neruda excelled at inventing poetic interpretations of historic goings-on, and the group of poems written about Rapa Nui are great examples of this.



The Builders of Statues

The Builders of Statues Summary

In lines 1-5, the speaker of this poem is the builder of the statues on Easter Island.

In lines 6-8, the speaker is telling us what meaning the statues have, and he is saying that there is nothing. There is no meaning, because no clues were left behind for us to study.

In lines 9-12, the speaker is saying that surely, we as the reader have questions about these statues, and surely he, the builder, must have left a few clues behind.

In lines 13-16, "Not so," the builder says. The statues are all that "they" are. There is nothing else left behind.

In lines 17-20, Neruda is speculating in these lines, inventing. The fish and birds saw what happened on the island when the statues were built, but they are long gone too.

In lines 21-29, Neruda is imagining that these statues were built to appease the gods of the people that built them. They were asking for fertility and a plentiful harvest.

In lines 30-46, the flesh of the reader, the one who asks the questions, will be consumed by time just as the flesh of the builders of the statues was consumed. The statues will remain, and no questions will have been answered.

In lines 47, "The statue which grew upon our stature," these statues were clearly made in the image of man.

In lines 48-53, Neruda is saying: if only these stone lips could speak and tell us their secrets. Easter Island has withstood through time and survived existing out in the middle of the sea.

Lines 54-59, Neruda is wondering if maybe the statues made themselves? Who knows? He assures himself that he never will, because the statues can keep their secrets, and they will. They did yesterday, they do today, and they will tomorrow.

The Builders of Statues Analysis

Throughout all of mankind, through all the ages, all cultures and religions have decided who or what to worship, and then fashioned an idol or a tangible object of some kind to which they could pray. Some commonly known examples would be statues of Zeus, temples to Aphrodite, the Egyptian pyramids, the Basilica in Rome, Stonehenge...the list goes on and on throughout history. The Easter Island statues may be the same sort of thing, but the truth is that we will never know the truth. We can really only speculate.

This was unacceptable to Neruda. He had to know the truth, or some part of it and it must have driven him crazy not to have anything at all to go on. Therefore, he used his poetic license and language to answer the questions for himself to a degree that he could live with.



Rain

Rain Summary

In lines 1-10, the speaker of the poem is saying that it is better that the "Queen" not recognize the face of his love. He remembers the weight of her hair in his hands, His hands are not white like hers; they are like roots. He is not one of her people. The "naked" rain falls over them, cleansing and re-birthing them. They are just like nature now, like the eggs of the native birds.

In lines 11-18, Ranu Raraku is a volcanic crater on Rapa Nui. The water is washing the characters of this poem towards "obscurity down below the hole". Again, the speaker of the poem asks his love to not allow herself to be seen. They are sneaking out, away from the Queen, the palace (she is the princess?) so that they can be alone together in the rain. Neruda asks the recipient of his sentiment to let her hair be a "small night" for him, an escape, the "darkness of wet perfume" enveloping him.

In lines 19-25, he dreams that the two of them are plants intertwining, in life and living even and even in death, together. She is the earth and his mouth is the rain.

In lines 26-32, he is asking his lover to love him the way the shore loves the island. It is a confused, astonished love, hidden in the cavity of dreams, as dreamlike as the movement of the sea around them.

In lines 33-37, with her, in the rain, he can feel peace.

Rain Analysis

This poem is a fantasy piece. The imagery is of two people, a couple in love, making love on Easter Island. No matter how wrapped up Neruda got in poetry about politics, war, or conquistadors, at the end of the day he was a romantic at heart, and what mattered to him really were matters of the heart. Neruda knew in his heart that a culture was hardly worth knowing unless there were young people in love, and that the dramas of every culture were happening in this one as well. This is what connects us all, no matter how different we all are. He created this poem not only as an erotic fantasy, but also a historic piece, fleshing out who these Rapa Nui peoples possibly were. He has gone so far in this piece as to imagine that he is a peasant who is running away with the princess in secret. He asks her not to be seen by the Queen, or the fisherman or the wine-pitcher, but to meet him in their secret spot so that they can go make love in the rain.



Antarctic

Antarctic Summary

In lines 1-23, this poem is about Antarctica the continent or the land mass. Neruda describes it as the "austral" crown, meaning Southern Crown. He is describing a big block broken off of the main land. He says it is the cinerarium, like all of the ice of the earth has broken off, gravitated here and collected here, the dead skin of the planet sloughed off. He describes Antarctica as a basilica, or cathedral of whiteness. It is solitude personified. He is saying that it looks like a big, fluffy white cloud but it is a dangerous place to be. There are lots of ship wrecks because of the ice. Essentially these lines are an ode to Antarctica and are a description of it through Neruda's poet's eyes.

In lines 24-31, Neruda is saying that all oceans touch Antarctica. He is saying that it is not a land mass really just a floating piece of ice. He imagines the ocean giving birth to this dangerous place, this amalgamation of glacial ice.

In lines 32-37, these lines describe conflict, things that are contrary or oxymorons. He describes a vineyard living beneath the sea, he describes things burning without being consumed by the flame, he describes the snow's springtime. He is saying that Antarctica is itself an oxymoron, an impossibility. That it lives in its own special way, despite the impossibility of it, devoid of life as it is.

Antarctic Analysis

This poem is an ode to Antarctica. Neruda must have been fascinated by this giant floating mass of ice, because it was a living contradiction. In the last few lines especially, we see the fire and ice imagery used, which is meant to symbolize this idea of conflict; the idea of living impossibility. The imagery he uses is very powerful, talking of shattered glass and a pure rectangle of quartz. He makes it easy to imagine a fortress of ice, a beautiful, powerful, dangerous castle that seems inviting and fascinating, but is extremely treacherous.



The Wave

The Wave Summary

In lines 1-10:, these lines are describing the elasticity and potency of a wave, how it rises from the bottom with "roots", and at the top of the water is loosed "its snow-topped might," Neruda is describing the birth and life of a wave. He speaks of the "submerged firmament", with conjures the imagery of the vastness of the sky, inverted beneath the sea.

In lines 11-17, Neruda describes the wave as a flower, using flower imagery. The wave is a flower "from the earth," bringing along all the "light ever abolished."

In lines 18-24, these lines describe wave after wave being made is the unity of the sea being built - all its births, and all the ships deaths.

In lines 25-36, Neruda states that the flower "grew until it consumed the stone" and "the rose overflowed the steel." The "sea fell away without spilling its tower of crystal chill."

The Wave Analysis

This is an interesting poem that upon first reading seems rather straightforward, written of course with the imagery, metaphor, and simile always found in Neruda's work. Upon further analysis, however, it is interesting to see how he went so far out of his way to compare the wave to a flower. This is an odd comparison, and leads the reader to wonder if there is a double meaning. An argument could be made that this poem is actually about sex, and possibly even sexual climax. Neruda was known for making odd comparisons, and hiding double meanings in his work. This piece may be an example of that.



The Ships

The Ships Summary

In lines 1-12, these first lines are describing the ships that bring the goods across the sea such as the silk, gilt boxes, and the many wares that they must carry. Neruda speaks of "the cold greed whispered in the ports," "the tempest of scrubbed hands waiting to receive the wares," and "the green welcome suavities of jade" as he imagines the merchants awaiting their goods. The imagery of a dance of disappearing anemones is meant to symbolize the ships coming and going, disappearing on the horizon.

In lines 13-21, the "delicate velocities" are the ships, which are finely made and fine-tuned machines. Destined by their "Cinderella" cargoes or meaning items going from one place to another, they are refined from one form into riches.

In lines 22-29, these lines are describing the ships that are carrying slaves, describing them as deer, their heads "fallen from the diamonds of summer to the depths of infamous manure."

In lines 30-56, some of the ships bring wheat, some ships carry whalers "barbed with hearts hard as harpoons." He is describing the horrors of the whaling ship, using hell-fire imagery. He also describes careening, un-masted ships; ships sinking and the men dying in agony. Also nitrate ships, as navigators of the sea that pry at "the metals" of the poet's land.

The Ships Analysis

Neruda was fascinated by the sea from the first time he laid eyes on it. He was intrigued by its vastness, and the innumerable possibilities of what occurs beneath the surface of the water. This poem is about what goes on above the waves, specifically the merchant ships that sail from one place to another carrying an endless number of possible cargos. The reader can imagine Neruda seated on a beach somewhere, watching the ships sail past him and then out of his view beyond the horizon. Neruda was unsatisfied with just watching them come and go, his ever attentive curiosity would have demanded to know more. What were these ships carrying and why? Where were they going? Where were they coming from? This poem is an indulgence of that curiosity and imagination.



To a Ship's Figurehead

To a Ship's Figurehead Summary

In lines 1-4, these lines open the story that Neruda is about to unfold; the speaker of the poem and his companions have found a ship's figurehead in the form of a woman, on a beach.

In lines 5-8, they take her aboard, but this time she is in the ship, rather than out front of it.

In lines 9-12, the speaker of the poem is saying that this figurehead has seen the sea, the albatross, the rain - but she has come to him and she belongs to him now.

In lines 13-27, these lines are an ode to her: she started as a humble oak, but she was special, destined for great adventures. The rest of her tree, which could have been carved into angels and queens, instead was covered with moss and remained ordinary wood, whereas she, the angel and queen of the wave, was destined for much more exciting things.

In lines 28-35, she has seen the sea and the sea has seen her. She has been out there, in front, guiding the ship and leading the way. She has interacted with the wind, the rain, and the light of dawn.

In lines 36-48, the sea splashed on her, and she retains the memory of the sea, and all of the things she has seen in her days of adventure.

In lines 49-56, the setting goes back to the day she comes to the speaker, and he is saying that in the end she was destined to come to him. He is telling her that she is now going to leave the sea behind her, as time has not been kind to her.

In lines 57-62, for the speaker, in this ship's figurehead the life on the seas lives. Her beauty lies in the stories that she could tell. She will be with him now, until the end of her days. After that, a new adventure begins.

To a Ship's Figurehead Analysis

This piece is written in prose that is fairly straightforward, especially for Neruda. It is the story of a carving that was once on the bow of a ship. She is in the shape of a woman, and she has washed up on the shore. Here we see again the way that Neruda personifies inanimate objects - but with an object like this, it is not surprising that he would want to let his imagination run wild, picturing all the adventures "she" has seen. Typical for Neruda, he also touches on the idea that it was fate that he should run across this object, that he is her next adventure, and when he is dead. Who knows where she will go from there?



The Brutalized Birds

The Brutalized Birds Summary

In lines 1-20, Tocopilla is a city in Chile, and these first lines describe some of the vegetation of the area, and the environment, the desert. The birds of long ago laid their eggs in the sand. The birds lived there in the desert, incubated their eggs there, thrived there.

In lines 21-32, then comes man. He comes to this land for whatever reason - and ruins the homes of the birds, killing them.

In lines 33-41, these lines describe a brutal attack on these birds, an attack without mercy. The birds fly into the air, furious, but the attack does not stop.

In lines 42-48, man settles where the birds had once lived, and make baskets out of the trees where their nests were built, and sell their eggs.

The Brutalized Birds Analysis

Neruda always had a problem with one group invading the land of another group, even if the second group was just a bunch of birds. He was the kind of man who would go so far as to do something about it such as write a poem or a letter to a political leader, especially if the invasion was a brutal one. In this poem he is describing the destruction of the homes of these birds, the massive bird holocaust that took place, and he is writing this poem to say that he is not okay with that. Neruda wanted people to stop and think about the consequences of their actions, rather than just rushing headlong into life assuming that the world is there for the taking. It was this kind of thinking that disgusted him; this is how the explorers saw the world. They saw it as not belonging to anyone until they came along to stake their claim.



Leviathan

Leviathan Summary

In lines 1-10, these first lines lay the setting for the poem; there are bad people coming to Antarctica from faraway lands to hunt the whales. The "sargassos" or alga is being churned up in the wake of this terrible, fire-spitting ship sailing south.

In lines 11-14, these lines are the description of a massive whale swimming by.

In lines 15-25, these lines describe the whaling ship in better detail, and the imagery is of hell. The ship is said to be born of mother medusa. Neruda uses the imagery of the night stars reflected in the waters being churned up as the whaling ship sails through.

In lines 26-41, these lines describe the whaling vessel in more detail, the massiveness of it, its forest of masts. It is night and evil personified.

In lines 42-53, Neruda is describing the actual harpooning, bleeding out and brutal, ugly death of the whale. The killing of the whale leaves a giant, terrible blanket of blood on the ocean.

Leviathan Analysis

This is a poem about the atrocities of whaling. Here again we see another example of how it was not ok with Neruda to see man going out and conquering nature. This conquer is a dirty, bloody, brutal business. The whaling industry is of particular note in this way, because anyone who has ever observed a whale in the wild can't help but be fascinated; transfixed by the sheer, massive elegance and grace of the creature. To see, or even imagine, which is what Neruda is most likely doing, the horrific image of one of these gentle giants being savagely harpooned and then hooked and left to bleed out would leave an indelible mark on a person; especially on a person like Pablo Neruda. The massive amount of blood alone would be enough to convince an onlooker that the event was of biblical proportion. This poem is like *The Brutalized Birds* in that it is another example of men thinking like the explorers and going out into nature, and just taking whatever they deem valuable.

Not Alone the Albatross

Not Alone the Albatross Summary

In lines 1-10, Neruda opens the poem by talking about where certain birds are expected to be found.

In lines 11-22, he is describing these birds all together. He is saying that the albatross is not the only sacred one. He is saying that it is not okay to kill any of these birds.

In lines 23-40, Neruda is saying that his heart is with all these other birds and not just the albatross. The other birds take the burden from the albatross.

Not Alone the Albatross Analysis

This poem references the famous piece written in 1798 by Samuel Taylor Coleridge called Rime of the Ancient Mariner written in 1798. The main theme of Coleridge's poem is that of an old superstition held by sailors that the albatross is meant to symbolize good luck. In Mariner, there is an albatross leading a ship out of the treacherous waters of Antarctica, which is then shot down by one of the sailors. The killing of the albatross marks a turning point in the fate of the crewmen, as horrible luck beings to plague the journey. It is a commonly held belief, in consequence, that to kill an albatross is a terrible act of evil and will bring bad luck to the killer. What Neruda is saying with this poem is that the albatross is not the only bird that will bring bad luck if you kill it. All birds are sacred, as are all animals, all people, and all life. Neruda is saying that if the life does not belong to you, you have no right to take it.



The Marine Night

The Marine Night Summary

In lines 1-6, the poet is speaking to the "marine night," saying that he loves it. He has been disintegrating and dying, and is ready to rest in the earth.

In lines 7-15, night falls so that the reader may not see "his" (death's) wretched repose. Death desires to be close, and with him you will fall into a dream of silence, a funeral land. Oceanic night, marine night, reaches the reader, and the star Aldebaran watches over "the wet mouth of your song," or the reader's sleeping form.

In lines 16-21, these lines could be Aldebaran, or some other omniscient being watching over "night" being born.

In lines 22-27, these lines are essentially saying: love me with abandon and to throw caution to the wind.

In lines 28-32: The poet is saying that the night is beautiful to him. Night is powerful.

In lines 33-39, the poet is personifying night, making it his eternal love, saying that he is chained to night's throat, and to "the lips you wreak on the sand."

In lines 40-48, the poet is asking who is the night? Who is out there in the night, in the world tonight? He is imagining the vast possibilities.

In lines 49-77, the poet wants to see it all, to know all of the dreams and dramas that are playing out in the night. He wants to get inside the heads of all the dreamers, and love alongside all the lovers, burn with all the bonfires and sail with all the ships. Only then, can he behold the world with as many eyes as the night has, only then can he really know all there is to know of the night.

The Marine Night Analysis

Neruda's preference has always been to night over day, and this poem is a classic example of that. Neruda is personifying night, making it his lover and the bringer of love with abandon. This poem goes beyond that though. He is wondering about all of the other people out there in the night. He wants to know about the dreams they are dreaming, the drama they are living, the love they are making. He wants to see inside their heads, and crackle along with their bonfires. Neruda, ever the spirit of imagination and curiosity, decides that this is the only way in which he will be able to really understand the night when he has as many eyes as the night.



Wine

Wine Summary

In lines 1-6, the speaker of this poem is beckoning to his comrades, the spring and autumn wine, saying, "Let's sing, let's interact - I am a good companion."

In lines 7-11, he is saying that when a comrade comes into his house, it is not to just give of what he has; it is to take what his host is giving as well.

In lines 12-16, he wants to drink and sing with his friend until they start to spill the wine. The wine is honey that comes from the earth.

In lines 17-21, he is remembering his other friends and the ones that are not with him.

In lines 22-24, he is saying, "Just be with me, don't look any deeper into it that the need and want of companionship."

In lines 25-33, the poet is saying that he just wants to be a common man tonight. He does not want to deliver political speeches or formulate beautiful prose. He just wants to sing along with the "sharp wine," to raise a few glasses, have a good time and speak words that make no sense at all.

Wine Analysis

Sometimes we all, even Neruda, need some companionship to share a good bottle of wine, a good meal, and some meaningful conversation. Neruda is saying he needs a comrade and that he needs to drink and laugh. He assures the reader that he is a good companion. He says that this is what living is all about, taking another person's perspective into consideration, and giving to them your perspective to consider at the same time.



Ode to a Fallen Chestnut

Ode to a Fallen Chestnut Summary

In lines 1-32, Neruda is describing the chestnut as polished, like a violin, a treasure, a gem. Up in the tree, the chestnut left its post where it witnessed the world, where the birds sang next to it and the children and grass played beneath it.

In lines 33-67, Neruda is personifying the chestnut, saying that it made up its mind to jump from the tree. It fell to the ground and nothing changed. The "steady hours kept busy at their work throughout the earth." Neruda is saying: the earth is keeping up with its own business because you are just a seed, and seeds fall to the earth from trees, where they nest into the earth and continue the cycle of life.

Ode to a Fallen Chestnut Analysis

It was only a matter of time before Neruda just flat out started calling his poems "odes," meaning an enthusiastic expression of emotion. Most of Neruda's poems could be classified as odes, when you consider the enthusiasm and imagination he infused them with. This poem, however, marks the beginning of Neruda's actual odes, which he wrote into a volume called *Odas Elementales*, or *Elemental Odes*. What is interesting about this piece is, of course, the ever present use of literary vehicles and the immaculate word-smithing, but also the recurring theme of the cycle of nature. The chestnut is personified as having chosen his own time to jump off the tree, where he finds himself now on the ground, and nothing really has changed. The world keeps spinning. But it is a significant action that has taken place. The seed has fallen from the mother, and the result will be a new tree.



Ode to the Book

Ode to the Book Summary

In lines 1-19, Neruda is saying that he does not necessarily want to live his life in his imagination when the world has so much adventure to offer.

In lines 20-40, the world is calling as his friends and lovers beckon to him. He has to get out there and do some living.

In lines 41-68, no book has ever been able to give him what he gets from getting out there and living. He prefers to set aside the imaginary, and experience his life for real. He is saying that he loves a great book to escape into, but he hates books that trap you into a certain way of thinking. He is asking the book to let him go, because he cannot be invented in its pages. His poetry can only be created from extracting beauty from the chaos of the world, and the only way to do that is to go out and live as much as possible. Life isn't always easy, but a difficult life can result in amazing art. Neruda is saying: there is no need to weigh me down with mythology; you do not need to tell me how to think. Thus, books belong on shelves, and he belongs down in the streets.

In lines 69-76, he is saying that in living our lives, we learn about life. We make our mistakes and want to impart our knowledge onto others. We cannot do this however. Everyone has to learn their lessons for themselves.

Ode to the Book Analysis

Here we have another straight forward ode from Neruda. At this time of his life, it is possible that his style of writing changed to something more realistic because he was reflecting on the life he had lived and decided that it needed to be told as honestly and simply as possible. In this piece, he is telling us that in order to understand life, we have to get out there and live it. He is saying, no matter what you do, form your own opinions, your own ideas. Be your own person. Don't let anyone ever tell you how to think. Also, he is saying that the mistakes we make in life are critical. We must make mistakes, because if we did not, we would not be living. The only way to learn anything in this life is to live.



Birdwatching Ode

Birdwatching Ode Summary

In lines 1-30, Neruda is saying that he is going looking for birds, and describes the lush, dew dripping forest where he is looking. Each drop of dew is a tiny planet among the leaves. It is a fresh new day. The air smells of rosemary, space and roots. There is a crazy song above of a bird singing. How can such a small creature make so much noise?

In lines 31-104, it is a holy conversation, a wealthy bursting forth of sound. He journeys deeper into the forest and loses the sound of birds. He wonders where they went. He calls them "invisible little cretins," because he knows they are all around, just keeping silent. The beautiful glossy feathers of the birds call to him, tease him. He wishes he could stroke them, but never would he wish to see them locked in a cage. He wishes he were a statue, so they would land on him and talk to him. He knows it is impossible. He settles for sitting back and listening to their conversation, the language that they use.

In lines 105-143, he says, " Okay, all you birds, go on speaking in your secret language. But before I go - know this: make sure you stay away from guns and cages. Keep being stunt riders of the air. You are supposed to be free."

In lines 144-160, he tells the birds that he loves them, and that he is happy to have been able to spend a moment with them.

Birdwatching Ode Analysis

Pablo Neruda was, at heart, a simple man who delighted in the simple pleasures of life. This poem is simply a story of him going out into the woods, and listening to the birds sing. He could make poetry out of even a simple event like that. He delighted in natural things - like the drop of dew on the leaves and how it looks like a tiny planet. He was amazed by these birds that he saw in the forest, the conversation that they carried on and the precise, specific language that they used. He wanted to then give back to them by telling them to stay free, and to avoid guns and cages. Neruda had simple and beautiful ideas about his own connections to nature.



Ode to the Yellow Bird

Ode to the Yellow Bird Summary

In lines 1-32, Neruda is burying a bird in a tiny grave in the garden. He describes the dirt covering up the bird's pretty yellow feathers. The bird came from an island, he was sent in a cage. The bird died in the cage, because it could not stand to be locked away like that. Now its life is gone, and it is just a bunch of feathers, far from home.

In lines 33-60, Neruda is saying that he knew the bird when it was alive. It was independent, untamed, and would walk over his arms and shoulders. In his eyes was the spark of defiance. Despite its arrogance, it was just a frail little bird.

In lines 61-110, Neruda explains that the bird died because it was put into a cage and flown on an airplane, and the trip is what killed it. He got it home, and with one final look of reproach at its owner, it died. And then, the bird was free to go to the home it once knew in the wild.

Ode to the Yellow Bird Analysis

Neruda did not just personify objects; he also had a way of infusing the animals he encountered with human characteristics. Surely this bird he describes was not really arrogant or reproachful, but the way Neruda describes him reminds us of the animals we have met in our lives and the personalities that they had. When we know an animal well, we can even understand their unspoken languages, as he could with this little bird that he clearly cherished. Neruda had a problem with caged birds, but it seems that this bird was his pet. From what he describes in this poem, the bird had free reign of his house, and died only when caged and transported. The trip was too much for it, and ultimately caused its demise.



Ode to Laziness

Ode to Laziness Summary

In lines 1-18, Neruda is saying that yesterday, he could not find his writing groove. He tried to make "her" get up and dance, he told her not to be afraid. He tried to woo her, with promises of crowns and talk of bicycle rides on the sea shore but to no avail.

In lines 19-61, laziness appeared. Neruda started searching the sand for treasures, yellow agate, shells.

In lines 62-69, he found himself alone on the sand, watching the birds. He sets a bee free from a spider's web. He picked up stones and watched the clouds. He thought again of his "fugitive ode" that evening, by the fire, removing his shoes, right before he fell fast asleep.

Ode to Laziness Analysis

Neruda is writing an ode to laziness. Does it get any simpler or more absurd than that? Basically, this is a story about writer's block. He writes a story of a day where he is trying to coax a certain ode into life, but "laziness" takes him away from his task, and he winds up wandering on the beach all day, and falling asleep by the fire. The irony of this poem is that he wrote a poem about how he was too lazy to write a poem.



Ode to a Watch at Night

Ode to a Watch at Night Summary

In lines 1-29, the speaker's watch shines like a firefly at night, beating out a rhythm like a heart.

In lines 30-67, the watch cuts away at time like a chainsaw at a tree. The imagery here is literally of a tree being hacked limb by limb. Nothing really changes as the time ticks away, minutes falling "like leaves." The watch counts down little plops of falling water; it is a mill, milling the night.

In lines 68-88, it is the speaker's bed companion that holds the watch, making these little noises in the night. The remainder of the ode is imagery of night; the rest and repose that all beings share.

Ode to a Watch at Night Analysis

This is an ode to a wrist watch, literally, but also an ode to time, specifically night time. Neruda's bed companion holds his wristwatch in his hand as he and she sleep, and he listens as time ticks on. It makes him think of time, how it is a rhythm, how it is unstoppable. He also muses over the idea that night falls for all creatures, after every day, and in that way we are all united in night and sleep.



Ode to the Tomato

Ode to the Tomato Summary

In lines 1-34, the opening lines of the poem describe summer time, how the tomatoes have just been harvested and they are plentiful. Then the setting switches to winter time, when the canned tomatoes come off the shelf. Neruda says that the tomato has its own "radiance, a goodly majesty." Therefore, it's too bad we must assassinate it. The red flesh of the tomato looks gruesome to cut into.

In lines 35-84: The tomato beds with the blond onion in the salads of Chile, along with olive oil, pimento, salt, and parsley. The potatoes and the roasts are beating down the door saying: c'mon salad, it's showtime! Tomatoes are the star of the earth, without bones, without husks, scales or thorns.

Ode to the Tomato Analysis

This is an interesting poem because it gives us a glimpse of Neruda as a human being who eats and loves food. Usually when we think of him we imagine his mouth as used for only language and poetry, but this ode shows us a different side. This poem tells us exactly how he likes his salad, and shows his playful enthusiasm for dinnertime.



Ode to the Storm

Ode to the Storm Summary

In lines 1-65, Neruda refers to the storm as "she," coming in the night. The storm is personified as a woman with hair of water and eyes of cold fire. He describes her as coming to the earth suddenly, wanting to sleep with it. She "made her bed," sweeping the jungles, highways and mountains and washing the oceans. She shakes lightning from her quiver of fire and drops thunderclaps in barrels. Suddenly there is silence.

In lines 66-83, a single leaf floats on the air, and then the winds start, making the great trees groan in misery. The earth moans like a woman giving birth, the regular world is blotted out with the sound of her fury and fire. The lightning flashes, and then there is just rain, rain, and more rain.

In lines 84-145, with her musical fingers, the storm and her hell-roar night volcanoes, teaches men to be men and the weak to fear. And just when the storm seemed like it couldn't get any more violent, it turned out that she did no harm. She returned to her "star," and left behind only gentle, life giving rain. Neruda beckons her to return, so that the stormy voice of man may join and sing her song with her.

Ode to the Storm Analysis

At one time or other in our lives, we have all witnessed an awesome event in nature. The common thunderstorm serves nicely, as it can be stunningly violent, come on without warning and bring with it strident thunder and lightning that makes night into day. Neruda is describing one such storm, which inspired him enough to write this ode to it. Interesting how he personifies the storm as a moody woman, but it makes sense. She is emotional, she is demanding, she will be heard and noticed and will not be ignored.



Ode to Clothes

Ode to Clothes Summary

In lines 1-32, Neruda is personifying his clothes as waiting out the night for morning, to serve its purpose and be filled by our bodies, hopes, vanities and love. Neruda describes his morning routine in literal terms - waking, getting out of bed, and dressing. His clothing gives him tireless fidelity. In it, he goes out to face the world. He makes the clothes what they are, pushing out their sleeves and seams, and so the life of his clothes are made in his image.

In lines 33-70, our clothes live with us, and if we are struck down by a bullet, our blood stains them and they die with us. Or maybe the clothes will sicken gradually with us as we die slowly, and together we enter the earth with our clothes. With this in mind, everyday he greets his clothes with reverence. They embrace him, and then he forgets about them because they are one.

Ode to Clothes Analysis

Again we see Neruda's amazing ability to take something as mundane and everyday as clothes and put a new spin on the idea. We dress every day to face the world, and our clothes are our armor. Our clothes are our shell, the "book cover" that we wear. They say who we are, they go with us on every journey, they guard us from the elements, and they are with us even as we grow old and die.



Ode to Cesar Vallejo

Ode to Cesar Vallejo Summary

In lines 1-53, Neruda is remembering Cesar Vallejo, describing his face as wrinkled like the face of a mountain, his eyes like black twilight. Vallejo was host to many emotions, a new one each hour. Neruda is talking about his life and times, knowing this man. Neruda describes Vallejo's "sand falling," meaning he watches the grains fall through this man's hourglass. It measures him, empties him.

In lines 54-73, he tells a story of their time together in Paris and Spain. Neruda says that when Vallejo died, his memory of those times together is what remained.

In lines 74-124, Neruda is saying that Vallejo was twice exiled: once from his homeland of Peru, and then again from the earth, in death. Neruda says he never missed Vallejo in life, but he misses him in death. He searches for him in the earth, in the faces of rock cliffs. He is a spirit now, on a new journey, a new adventure, and will be remembered in his homeland as a rebel; this is what will keep him alive always.

Ode to Cesar Vallejo Analysis

Cesar Vallejo was a Peruvian poet who lived from 1892-1938. He is considered to be one of the great poetic innovators of the 20th century. Clearly Neruda felt a great deal of respect for Vallejo, and having much in common, they shared some time. Just as Neruda was exiled from Chile, Vallejo was exiled from Peru. This ode tells a story of two similar men, both living the lives of prolific, influential 20th century poets from South American countries. Surely Neruda saw much of himself in Vallejo and his death must have had a peculiar effect on him.



Ode to a Beautiful Nude

Ode to a Beautiful Nude Summary

In lines 1-11, Neruda is trying to observe the beautiful nude in a chaste, clinical way, without unleashing his blood, his natural instincts.

In lines 12-27, he describes the beauty and perfection of her feet, her ears, her breasts, her eyelids that enclose the "deep countries of her eyes."

In lines 28-43, he describes her shoulders as halves of an apple, separating her beauty into two columns of fine alabaster. She is a "flowering fire," an "open chandelier," a "swelling fruit."

In lines 44-54, he wonders from what materials her body could have been made; agate, quartz, wheat? He imagines her as baking bread, as a petal, as sweet fruit. He describes her as astonishing, fine, firm and feminine.

In lines 55-63, there is a light shining from inside her, like the moon lives in the lining of her skin.

Ode to a Beautiful Nude Analysis

Even in the Spanish version, the "firm, feminine form" alliteration comes through. Neruda, through his whole life, never lost his fascination with the female form. He was masculine, through and through, and like most men, he was visually stimulated most of all. The difference between Neruda and "most men," however, was his ability to astonish his readers with his descriptive talents. This ode is to a beautiful, naked woman, to Neruda surely the loveliest thing imaginable. He says that he is trying to view her in a chaste, clinical sort of way, but his in order to do so, his instincts must be kept on a leash.

And How Long?

And How Long? Summary

In lines 1-5, Neruda contemplates just how long a man is supposed to live. How long will he spend dying? What does it mean to say forever?

In lines 6-14, he is lost in this preoccupation. He sets himself up to figure it out. He seeks out the knowledge of priests and their rituals, and questions their relationships with their deities. They know nothing. They are nothing more than administration.

In lines 15-36, he asks questions of the medical men, and as far as he can tell from their talk, he has a problem which he does not understand. He is so startled by their proclamations, that he seeks out funeral services. He goes to the rivers, where the bodies of certain religions are burned.

In lines 37-52, he asks these people if they knew what to do. They offered to burn him once he dies. Back home, between drinks he hears the same advice: get a woman and stop thinking about it. He perceives the people around him as happy, and it astonishes him. He finds them to be fornicators. After this experience he feels much older. He asks no more questions and knows less every day.

And How Long? Analysis

Pablo Neruda was dying of terminal prostate cancer when he had the heart attack that did him in. This poem must have been written after he discovered he had prostate cancer. It is interesting to watch his perception of life and death change once he makes this discovery. Now, rather than exalting nature and beauty the way he did in his odes, he seems to be focused on illness - the whys and hows of this condition he does not understand. He seeks out the advice of doctors who tell him things that make no sense, so instead he decides to seek out advice from practitioners of other kinds of medicine, other ways to live and die. They do not help him. In the end, he is left alone with his questions and his thoughts, with a very bleak outlook.



Fable of the Mermaid and the Drunks

Fable of the Mermaid and the Drunks Summary

In lines 1-7, a mermaid walks into a bar, naked. She has lost her way. The men in the bar are drunk. They spit at her, they spit obscenities at her.

In lines 8-14, she does not cry as she does not understand tears. She does not dress as clothes are foreign to her. The men gleefully harm her. She is beautiful in everyday, seeking nothing but love.

In lines 15-20, her lips move, but she makes no sound. She leaves the same way she came in. She enters the river, and it re-births her, cleanses her of her interaction with the men. She swims on, not looking back, towards her own oblivion, towards her death.

Fable of the Mermaid and the Drunks Analysis

This poem is most likely not really about a mermaid that loses her way and wanders into a bar full of drunk men to be tortured. More likely is the idea that she is a metaphor for Neruda himself. He, like the mermaid, is a tender soul, in the end really seeking nothing but love, comfort and acceptance - just like everyone else. His interactions with the people of earth have been confrontational, and he imagines the comforting idea of going through a rebirth, like the mermaid. He can slip into oblivion, never looking back, and be free from the ugliness he has encountered in life.



Fear

Fear Summary

In lines 1-4, everyone is after him to be active and to "whoop it up," and play sports.

In lines 5-8, in contrast, everyone is also after him to take it easy. They make doctor's appointments for him and eye him quizzically.

In lines 9-12, he is saying that everyone is meddling in his life - he should do this, or that, or die, or not die. He says it does not matter.

In lines 13-16, he is having "radio-awful" diagrams done, odd things are being found, and it is shocking. But he does not agree.

In lines 17-20, his poetry is being picked at like an unwanted meal. Everyone is trying to find a fly in his pudding. He says that he is afraid.

In lines 21-24, he is a mortal and all mortals are impatient. He says that he is afraid of the whole world.

In lines 25-29, his solution since the days are brief and passing and he will not take them into account is to "open up" and closet himself with "his most treacherous enemy," himself.

Fear Analysis

This poem is about being your own worst enemy. He wrote this, clearly, at the time in his life when his health had started to become a concern. He is saying in this poem that it scares him that the people of his life are watching him warily, because it gives him cause for fear. The last stanza is interesting because we see Neruda using a contradiction; how does one "open up" and "closet" themselves at the same time? What he might be saying is that he will be true to himself alone, because he knows it is himself he can count on, but also that he is his own worst enemy because it is his body in the long run that will betray him.



We Are Many

We Are Many Summary

In lines 1-4, Neruda is saying that of all the people that he is inside his head and heart, he can't decide who he really is.

In lines 5-8, when he attempts to come across as a man of intelligence, the "fool that he keeps concealed" comes to the surface to do the talking.

In lines 9-14, when he means to come across as courageous, it is the coward that appears.

In lines 15-20, when he means to summon the fireman, he summons the arsonist instead. He asks: "how can I put myself together again?"

In lines 21-27, he is saying that he wishes he could be the hero - the cowboy in the movies, the dazzler. He envies them; he even envies their horses.

In lines 28-35, when he calls upon his dashing self, it is his lazy self that appears. He says he never knows who he is, not how many of himself there are. He wishes he could summon up his true self, because one day he will really need his "proper" self, and he cannot allow that person to disappear.

In lines 36-45, he goes far away, deep into his head, while he is writing. When he comes back from that place, the person who was his true self is gone. He wonders if others have this same problem, if they have so many selves, too. He is going to solve this problem, he vows, and when he does he will dissect it into a scientific equation, and thus the solution will be academic.

We Are Many Analysis

Essentially, in this poem, Neruda is struggling with the many different faces of Pablo Neruda. He has so many selves that he has lost himself and doesn't know who he is any longer. He claims that when he writes, he goes into a place far away and then when he comes back to himself, his old self is gone. Quite simply, he cannot be the same man he was before he began writing because who he is when he is finished is a new man, with new perspectives and new ideas. We all struggle with identity crises in our lives, but as with everything else, it is possible that Neruda felt these emotions more strongly than the average person, and pondered them far more intensely. What distinguishes this piece is the way that he uses contradiction - in nearly every line there is an opposite self that steps up to the plate or a doppelganger. When he wants to be the intellectual, the fool shows up instead, when he wants to be courageous, the coward takes the wheel.



Too many Names

Too many Names Summary

In lines 1-6, Neruda is saying that the days are blurring together. Time is just a wash, bleeding daily into the night.

In lines 7-15: He is saying that, ultimately we do not have names. Names are made-up things. None of us really are from any country. Countries are made-up things, too. He knows only of his skin and of the earth, both of which, he asserts, are nameless as well.

In lines 16-27: Roots please him more than flowers, stones ring like bells. Time drags on forever. He is un-named while in his dream world, why should it be any different in his waking life?

In lines 28-36: He says that as soon as we are born, we receive our names, and soon after we start naming things, classifying them. He says: let's stop assigning names, let's stop with the pomp and circumstance and polite society.

In lines 37-43: His idea is to blur those lines, mix things up, until the world has the "oneness" of the ocean. He seeks the same "generous, vast wholeness" for mankind.

Too many Names Analysis

Crepitant means to have a crackling sound, so to have a "crepitant fragrance" would mean to have the crisp fragrance of fire. This would make sense; as the fire consumes it also cleanses. Neruda is saying that it would be a refreshing concept to strip everything and everyone of the names to which they have been assigned. He is questioning where names come from and who assigns them. Who gets to decide? He asserts in this poem that the vast oneness of the ocean is a better way to categorize; let us all be one instead.



Furious Struggle Between Seamen and an Octopus of Colossal Size

Furious Struggle Between Seamen and an Octopus of Colossal Size Summary

In *THE ARRIVAL IN VALPARAISO*, the sailors who battled the octopus are shell-shocked. They have not quite allowed the incident to fully sink in. Everything scares them now; they are spooked. Neruda meets these men in Valparaiso, where he hears their story. These men are offended by the on-goings of the town's environs; how can they go on living their normal and mundane lives while such impossibility exists?

THE FIGHT describes a bloody fight between the octopus and the crew. They had just harpooned a whale, which was bleeding out, and all the men were sleeping. Suddenly, a giant sea creature with eight horrible, hose-like tentacles gripped the ship from below like a giant hand. Masts were snapped off, and axes were hacked into sucker-laden tentacles. When one "arm" of the monster is severed, another grows back. Finally, the giant octopus is mortally wounded, and dawn creeps in through the silence.

THE CREW gives the names of each crew member that experienced this encounter, and exactly what happened to each after the meeting in Valparaiso.

Furious Struggle Between Seamen and an Octopus of Colossal Size Analysis

Neruda presents this story as though it were a real encounter. He makes us believe that he met these men in a bar in Valparaiso, that they were indeed fresh from the ocean and from this unbelievable encounter. He goes so far as to list their names and their future fates in the final stanza. Supposedly these were all Chilean sailors. If the encounter is, indeed, a myth or a fictitious story written by the ever-imaginative Neruda, who thought everything down to the minutest detail, then it is a fine example of his talent for suspension of reality. If it is a true story and it certainly would not be the tallest tale to be born at sea, then it is a harrowing tale indeed.



Lazybones

Lazybones Summary

In lines 1-5, Neruda is speaking of the race for the moon between America and Russia that was occurring during the cold war in the 1950's. Space exploration was "it." Neruda is referring in these lines to this new earthly fascination. He scorns the men who go up to brutalize the moon. He imagines that these men will build pharmacies up there.

In lines 6-13, he begins talking about his earth, his home planet. He is talking about how in Chile, it is summer, and the wine is coming to life, the mysterious dark girls are dancing, and the "sun is touching every door and making wonder of wheat."

In lines 14-19, he is discussing the spring wine, the summer wine and the autumn wine, and what the differences are.

In lines 20-27, he is saying that he lives in a great house, his woman has great hazelnut eyes, and he gets to watch the sea as night comes on, and it is lovely. He has no wish to change his planet.

Lazybones Analysis

This poem was written probably 20 years before Neruda's death, in the 1950's. It is fascinating to think about Neruda's life at this point and all of the things he had seen. Indeed, for anyone living in the 1950's, the race to the moon was one of the most exciting things that had happened in modern history. The idea that a man could walk on the moon was mind boggling. The moon, the mirror in the sky, the inspiration for romance throughout all of mankind, the mysterious, unfathomable moon, was about to be tread upon by a mere mortal. Neruda can't have been naïve to these happenings, especially when we consider the time in which this was written, and the ponderings Neruda is entertaining here. He is saying that he loves this planet, and has no desire to depart it. He doubtfully would have been thinking along these lines during any other frame of time.



Bestiary

Bestiary Summary

In lines 1-9, he is saying that he wishes he could speak with the animals. The "Selva Oscura" means the dark forest.

In lines 10-19, he does not want to talk to wasps or racehorses, or the "genteel" animals. He wants to talk to the bitch who has just birthed her puppies and have conversations with the serpents.

In lines 20-32, he used to follow the alley dogs, but they hurried away from him, not trusting him. They lost their opportunity to tell him their troubles.

In lines 33-43, he says that he has always been curious about the rabbit, with their phallic ears. They never stop procreating, so they have no time for anything else. They are inexhaustible in this right, and he admires their "randy" habits.

In lines 44-57, spiders have gotten a bad reputation because people are so quick to see things from the fly's point of view. He disagrees, and calls the spider an engineer, a divine watchmaker. He wants to talk to the spider and have her wave him a star.

In lines 58-72, fleas are "ancient as Sanscrit," and they interest him enough that he lets them bite him for hours. They are the acrobats of the animal world. He says: let them drink my blood, just introduce me to them so I know what to expect.

In lines 73-83, he says he can't seem to form a close friendship with the cows, which makes no sense because he is a cow himself. He is saying he is a beast just like any other. He wants to know their secrets, the internal things.

In lines 84-94, he wants to talk to the pigs and find out what they think of the dawn.

In lines 95-111: He wants to talk to the frogs. He hears them "singing" while he sleeps and dreams and they illuminate his dreams. Yet, he does not know their language.

In lines 112-114: And if this is so, if he does not know the language, then how is he a poet? What does he know of the "intimate geography" of the night?

In lines 115-118: He needs more to work with, other languages, and other ways to communicate. He wants to know the world inside and out.

In lines 119-129: Everyone is satisfied with the "sinister pronouncements" of the capitalists, and the systematic women. He wants to "speak with many things." He says he will not leave this planet without solving this mystery; he must dig deeper than what people can tell him.



Lines 130-136: So, excuse me, but I have to go now and talk to the animals. Hold my calls.

Bestiary Analysis

Neruda is showing his fun side with this piece. He is saying that he needs to learn the language of the animals if he is to have a true grasp of language. From what we know about the poet Neruda, language was his life blood, and thus it makes sense that it would be something he thought about such as the "languages" that animals speak. He talks of listening to the frogs at night when he is laying in his bed or dreaming, and it must have occurred to him that a frog knows what the other frogs are saying to each other, so he should know too. He probably felt like he was missing out on their inside jokes. This idea of Neruda wanting to know the meaning behind the rhythmic language of animals is seen also in his poem Birdwatching Ode, when he is out in the forest listening to the birds chatter at each other and regrets that he can't understand.



Autumn Testament

Autumn Testament Summary

In THE POET BEGINS TO ACCOUNT FOR HIS CONDITION AND PREFERENCES, Neruda starts this piece by saying: to die or not to die? He goes on to say that he cares about precious little. He says no one can work out all the mysteries of this life. We all turn out to be "rich have-beens now ranked with the new poor," meaning that we may have been "rich" in life, but we can't take it with us.

In HE DISCUSSES HIS ENEMIES AND SHARES OUT HIS INHERITANCE, he is saying that the world is full of back-stabbing sharks. To the, he leaves his "hiker's eyelashes, his preference for salt, and the address of his smile."

In HE TURNS TO OTHER SECTORS, he speaks of his Party of Communism and how he leaves his "landed goods." He speaks of the grape's two powerful sons - red wine and white wine. The "clear is also the obscure," and "shadows and dreams" are his inheritance.

In HE ANSWERS SOME WELL-INTENTIONED PEOPLE, he addresses the people who wonder why he is so obscure. In reply, they get an obscure answer: "let the running water answer and I was off, running and singing."

In HE SHARES OUT HIS SUFFERINGS, he addresses the joy brimming in his veins - to whom does he bequeath this? He mentions his "not being fertile," meaning that he did not pass this joy along to a child (he did have one child who died at a young age). He says there is so much to leave, but so little left.

In AND DISPOSES OF HIS JOYS, he says he intended his sadness for those who made him suffer, but he has misplaced them.

In HE STAGES HIS CASE AGAINST HATRED, he says he almost gave in to hatred, because it would have been so easy, so natural. But in the end, the only one you hurt with hatred is yourself.

In BUT BEARS IT IN MIND IN HIS WILL, to hatred, he leaves "all and every know-how that helped him to suffer." Those who live to hate, "can't accept we live at all."

FINALLY HE ADDRESSES HIMSELF ECSTATICALLY TO HIS BELOVED are his parting words for his wife, Matilde Urruita. He says that his love for her is a "child crying afraid to leave" her arms. He poetically expounds on his feelings for her, and talks of how he bathes in her "golden shadow." He mentions the Bio Bio river, and calls her his Araucanian girl. He mentions her "deciphering his green batons" and calls her heart earthly, but her hands celestial. He says that they will be together in the end - literally, she is to be buried next to him, but he asks: what is the use of "graveyard unity?" He says, "let life not part us and to hell with death!"



In FINAL INSTRUCTIONS, he says that now he must take leave. He says the most inclement, insane, intense thing he owned - his earthly vessel - must sink back into the earth. He speaks of the friends he has had, and the kindness and goodness he has found in this life. He mentions his parents as the people who gave him his identity, which he carried in the palm of his hand through the world.

In THE POET ENDS HIS BOOK BY TALKING ABOUT HIS VARIED METAMORPHOSES AND BY CONFIRMING HIS FAITH IN POETRY, he says that every time he has been born, he has had good experiences. Now as he goes, he has no way of knowing where he will end up. He calls himself a man "clear and confused, a man of rain and happiness, energetic and autumn-bound." He speaks of dying, but not disappearing, and singing then in silence.

Autumn Testament Analysis

This is, literally, Pablo Neruda's last will and testament. No one could write a will and testament like Pablo Neruda. Who else would leave his horse shoes and "tramping" sandals to hatred? Obviously, this is a beautiful piece of poetry, but what stands out are the lines written to Matilde Urrueta, his wife at the time of his death. He talks of her "deciphering his green batons," and that while her heart is earthly, her hands are celestial. This could be a reference to the fact that she used to re-write for him all of his poetic scribbles, and he always wrote in green ink or the color of "esperanza," or hope. Also of note is the way he closes the poem saying that though he is going to die, it is of greatest importance to him that he not disappear. We have seen this theme in his poetry before, so it is not a surprise that it would re-surface in such a critical place.



House

House Summary

In lines 1-19, Neruda is questioning his earthly shell. He wonders if "this" is the house he lived in then neither he nor the earth existed. Back then, everything was moon and stone, and the light was still unborn. The stone could have been his house, the windows could have been his eyes. It lived in him, or he in it. His own flaws existed in the very stone. Stone he is and stone he shall be. He is what all man shall always be; he is the struggle that stretches beyond time, and it brings him tranquility to feel this connection.

House Analysis

Neruda is pondering his own mortal body in this poem, wondering about the possibilities of reincarnation. He is idealizing becoming one again with the stone and the earth. He is accepting the fact that he is a cog in the wheel of the cycle of nature, and he is anxious to again shed his earthly form and see what kinds of adventure await.



The Lion

The Lion Summary

In lines 1-6, the lion is a great, posturing predator; terrifying, out for blood.

In lines 7-13, the lion finds only solitude, only air and foam upon which to chew or unacceptable nourishment.

In lines 14-20, the lion's mouth is nothing but empty, his claws are idle, and his tail is as fierce as a feather duster.

In lines 21-28, the lion becomes aware of its foolishness in time. He realizes that his ferocious appearance is absurd and unnecessary. Since the lion is timid underneath, he displays even worse and more embarrassing shows of arrogance.

In lines 29-35, finally, the lion turns into a garden ornament, hiding his head, keeping still and waiting for the "grey justice of stone, its geological hour."

The Lion Analysis

The lion is a metaphor for the arrogance and fierceness we feel in our youth. We tend to regret such hotheaded behavior in the long run, once we grow up a little. Neruda is the lion in this poem, and he is reflecting on the actions that he has taken in his life. He is realizing that in some situations, it was not necessary to appear so fierce, especially when in reality, the fierce lion is timid underneath.

I will Come Back

I will Come Back Summary

In lines 1-7, the speaker of the poem is saying that at some time, whether we are man or woman, if we are a traveler of this world, we will one day not be alive. When that time comes for the speaker, the poet, Neruda, we should look for him between the stones, in the oceans and the foam.

In lines 8-14, this is where he will be. He will have no mouth, he will say nothing. He will again be the movement of the water, beating with its wild heart. He will be both lost and found, he will be both stone and silence.

I will Come Back Analysis

In this time of his life, Neruda was clearly thinking a lot about death and the end of his living days. In this poem, he is clinging desperately to the idea that once he no longer exists, he will go on living because of the memory of him that will be retained in the stones and the ocean. He is saying that we can come and look for him here in the rocks, in the water and we will find him. Neruda had a strong connection, a fixation, even, with rocks and stones - he wanted to be reincarnated as one. In light of this, parts of this poem take on a new and different meaning.



The Portrait in the Rock

The Portrait in the Rock Summary

In lines 1-26, Neruda is describing a man he once knew. He says he had a stony substance. He left his family in Paraguay, when the police called him to the door and beat him up so much that he spat blood through France, Denmark, Spain, and Italy until he died, and Neruda stopped seeing his face. One night, the speaker of the poem, Neruda, looks far off and sees his friend. His face is formed in stone, his profile defiled by the wild weather. He was an exile, but now he lives in his own country.

The Portrait in the Rock Analysis

This may be another poem about Cesar Vallejo. The character in the poem seems to fit the profile. Neruda described Vallejo as having a face that was carved out of stone, and like the man in the poem, Vallejo was an exile. This may be another ode to him, his life, his struggles. Neruda had a great deal of affection for Vallejo personally, as well as a great deal of respect for him professionally.



Fiesta's End

Fiesta's End Summary

In lines 1-8, Neruda describes white foam, March in "Isla Negra" or his home in Chile. He sees wave upon wave, the ocean overflowing, the birds crisscrossing the sky. The months change color and the autumn settles in.

In lines 9-27, he says that he is called "Pablo," and he is the same as he always was. He has doubts, debts, and he has the view from his home of the vast sea. But he is restless, and he dreams up imaginary places, he fabricates the language of the fishbone, the blood of the coral, the night of the whale. He goes exploring from land to land, but he always returns home. What are we without our roots, after all?

In lines 28-46, he asks what would he do if he did not have nature to commune with? He was never able to find himself anywhere else. He follows his whims with equal parts rage and equilibrium, and he comes home after it all and declares "I am here." He strips down to his vulnerabilities, lets his hands fall into the sea and is at peace.

Fiesta's End Analysis

Isla Negra was one of Neruda's homes in Chile and the one where he and wife Matilde Urrutia spent most of their time. It was his favorite house, and it is where he and she are both buried. It is now a museum. This poem seems to be declaring that this is the house where Neruda will live out his final days, and it will be his final resting place as well. In this poem, he offers a condensed version of his life and times, and proclaims that he is now at peace, knowing where his fiesta will end.



Poet's Obligation

Poet's Obligation Summary

In lines 1-12, Neruda is speaking to whoever is not listening to the sea, whoever is copped up at work or in a factory or in a jail cell. He, the poet, comes to him or her, and opens the door of their prison. A great tremor starts up and there is a fragment of thunder.

In lines 13-30, Neruda is saying that poetry is his destiny, and it is his job, his obligation, to keep such ideas in his awareness. He must gather the poetry all around us in a cup so that no matter where a person locked away from poetry may be found, he will be there. He will bring to the person who lifts their eyes and laments, "How can I reach the sea," the "starry echoes of the wave." Through him, he says, "freedom and the sea will make their answer to the shuttered heart."

Poet's Obligation Analysis

Neruda is saying that the poet's obligation is to free the hearts and minds of all the common people who are deaf to the music of poetry. He says that his duty is to make sure that when someone laments their life, and wonders how to find truth and beauty in their mundane station, he will show them that there is truth and beauty to be extracted from everything, everywhere. He calls this obligation his destiny, and that he must "ceaselessly" listen to the poetic rhythms that course through the world swirling in chaos, and translate to us, those who cannot hear it the same way, the song that he extracts.



The Word

The Word Summary

In lines 1-4, "the word," is something that is born in us, instinctively.

In lines 5-13, words are refined by cultures, and cultures sometimes die and sometimes migrate. Then, new settlements are made, and words, languages, are further refined.

In lines 14-17, Neruda is saying that language is the inheritance that we are all entitled to. It is what connects us all, past, present and future.

In lines 18-30, Neruda is imagining the first word ever spoken. It was just a noise, something that could not be understood. Neruda is saying that it was a drop that fell that started a ripple effect.

In lines 31-38, words had to be refined from there, to be infused with meaning. Verbs, the action words, took over the power.

In lines 39-48, Neruda is saying: to not have language is to die. It is impossible, in fact, to not communicate - even the eyes are words when need be.

In lines 49-54, Neruda is in awe of the written word, its very form, all of its countless variations and conjugations.

In lines 55-68, Neruda is toasting the word, and he drinks "the pure wine of language," and its "inexhaustible water." Words give rise to his song. The verb is the source, and life is the blood. Words give everything the essence of what they are. Words are what make life worth living.

The Word Analysis

This poem is about the birth of the most important thing in Pablo Neruda's life: the written word. Without language, not only was Neruda nothing, everything would be nothing. Humans would not be able to communicate - to themselves or to one another, and without communication, Neruda asserts that one cannot live. Neruda was fascinated with all types of communication, all varieties of language, even the languages animals speak. He mentions in this poem that there is even a language that can communicate without words; body language. But he asserts that the messages we send with our eyes are words nonetheless, they are just not formed with our mouths.

Ocean

Ocean Summary

In lines 1-4, the poet is saying that the body of what is being described is more immaculate than a wave, the salt washes itself away, and the brilliant bird is flying without ground roots.

Ocean Analysis

This may be one of the shortest poems written by Neruda, consisting of only four lines and as such it is difficult to interpret. It reads like an errant thought jotted down on a piece of bedside paper, after awaking from a disjointed dream. The clues are few and far between. He may be describing the immaculate body of his lover; he may be describing the purity of one's soul. With Neruda's poems, more is not necessarily better but it certainly gives us more to work with.



The Sea

The Sea Summary

In lines 1-6, Neruda speaks of a single blood-less being, as well as a single caressing, death or a rose. The sea joins our lives, attacks, breaks up and sings. It does these things in nights, days, men, and creatures. The essence of the sea is fire and cold. It is movement.

The Sea Analysis

Much like the poem Ocean, Neruda leaves us very little to work with in this poem. Again, it is much like a cluster of disjointed, errant thoughts that have been unconsciously scribbled. Neruda seems to be telling the reader that he believes the sea to be a living, breathing organism, whose essence is an ongoing, caressing movement, and that all seas, like all human lives, are joined in a certain, unbreakable way. In fact, The Sea may be part 2 of the poem Ocean. Again, the clues are too sparse to really understand why Neruda grouped these particular words together in this particular way, or what he was trying to say or accomplish with this poem. It is well-known, however, that Neruda was fascinated by and connected with the sea and the ocean. He thought of the ocean as a vast, inverted sky whose mysteries were boundless, and it was always a great source of inspiration to him.



The Builder

The Builder Summary

In lines 1-4, Neruda is saying that he will chose his own chimera, which is a mythological and fire-breathing monster, commonly represented with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail, but could also be interpreted as meaning "illusion." He will make his likeness from frozen salt. He says he has based his time on the "great rain," and he is still living, regardless.

In lines 5-8, he speaks of his "broad dominion," meaning his tendency to wander and the vast amount of space he has covered in his life. Each new place he goes divides up his dreams. There are distinct differences in the tone of each new place. It was at this time that he went to the "coast."

In lines 9-21, he describes seeing the ship from its beginning, the smooth and honey-scented woodwork. The ship launches but does not come back and everyone drowns in their tears. The speaker of the poem returns to the wood with his axe. His faith lays in those ships and he has no choice but to go on living.

The Builder Analysis

Neruda is speaking of his own life and times in this piece. He entitled it "The Builder" to reference himself; he is the builder of his own life, the navigator of his own destiny. He speaks of creating his "chimera," which can either mean a mythological creature, or an illusion. He will still going on living, because he chose his life, his path, and his image. He began his life in southern Chile, birthplace of the "great rains," and then he traveled to the "coast," meaning he found more of himself when he found the sea. In many of his poems, Neruda expresses a deep connection with the sea. Part of that connection, and what he is referencing here in this poem, is the archetypal idea of water representing rebirth. He was born where the great rains were born and he was born again when he found his connection with his Mother Ocean.



Past

Past Summary

In lines 1-32, Neruda is saying that we have to get rid of the past. Knock it down floor by floor. Each new day is a blank slate and it has to be filled with new ideas. Even so, if we accomplish this, our yesterdays fall as naturally into our consciousness as rain. It is difficult to forget the past.

In lines 33-65, there was a time when we lived the days we remember from our past, but those days are gone. We are the same, yet not the same, because of the things we have lived through.

Past Analysis

The essence of this poem is a solid lesson. Let go of the past because what's done is done and cannot be undone. Neruda is telling us that living in the past is an empty occupation with no reward. Live in the now and the promise of tomorrow. Only then can we look back at the tomorrows that have become yesterdays without regrets.



The Pueblo

The Pueblo Summary

In lines 1-17, Neruda is describing the people of the proletariat in these lines. These are the people who carry not swords or weapons, but nets, axes, hammers or spades to harvest the wheat, fell the trees, build the walls, or fish the seas. Neruda says he knew this man, and this man is in him.

In lines 18-25, there was a time when everything seemed durable except for the working man, but now war has destroyed the walls and the carriages. The city is dust, but the worker persists.

In lines 26-58, he could be anyone of us. He is everyman. He is the little man, and no one knows his name. He is there, invisible and nameless, doing his job, and once he is gone, his replacement will be slipped into his place seamlessly.

In lines 59-72, the laborer does not stand out from the crowd. He is the crowd. He is invisible.

In lines 73-88, the working man or worker bee is the one who makes things grow, cuts the stones to make the buildings that form the cities.

In lines 89-108: These people are not the ones who are remembered through history, because they don't do anything extraordinary. They work all their lives until they die.

In lines 109-120: Neruda is saying that this man deserves to go to heaven, and there he will be properly crowned. Those who labor, should have the things for which they are laboring.

Lines 121-134: Neruda is saying that he recognizes the proletariat, and speaks on behalf of all the little people.

The Pueblo Analysis

This poem speaks of Neruda's communist connection. Communism was his plight, his passion. Communism paints such a pretty picture, and it is such a lovely theoretic idealism, but as Neruda learned, it was unrealistic, and everything Communism stood for would betray the proletariat in the long run. The lines that speak most strongly to the cause of Communism are lines 113-120. These lines are filled with the ideals that if someone makes the bread, they should eat; if someone works in the mine, they should not go without light. Every man will be equal, everyone will share in the fruits of the sun. It is evident in reading this poem that Neruda was not only passionate about this idea and this cause, he believed wholeheartedly that it was right, and that it would work. In

reality, he would come to discover that it was a flawed idea, and that he would find himself as betrayed by Communism as the proletariat he passionately championed.



Poetry

Poetry Summary

In lines 1-13, Neruda speaks of when poetry arrived in search of him. He knows not from where it came, or how or when. He did not hear voices speaking to him, rather, he was summoned away by an invisible force, and "it" touched him.

In lines 14-37, something started in his soul, like a fever, and he made his own way, deciphering the "fire." He wrote his first feeble, faint, substance-free line, and suddenly, the heavens opened up and he could see everything from the planets to the shadows, fire, arrows and flowers, making up the universe.

In lines 38-46, he just a nothing nobody, was suddenly an elite member of the supernatural, holding the keys to the abyss, set free to wheel in the stars. He describes it as his "heart breaking loose on the wind."

Poetry Analysis

Neruda is describing his own fascinating poetic awakening. In simply describing this celestial, earth shattering event, Neruda is distinguishing himself beyond the ordinary person. He is telling us that this talent came to him, struck him like lightning. It was not something he asked for nor sought out, it was a divine awakening to his true meaning in life, and his true calling. In the movie Good Will Hunting, the main character, Will Hunting, compares his mathematic ability to Mozart's musical ability. He says that Mozart looked at a piano and he could "just play." It was as natural to him as breathing, just as the concepts of mathematics were effortless to Will. This is an apt description for the way Neruda produced his poetry. It was just like breathing to him, a completely natural and effortless way of describing things. It was simply the way his brain worked.



The Pension on the Calle Maruri

The Pension on the Calle Maruri Summary

In lines 1-7, Neruda is describing a street called Maruri. There is no feeling of community in this neighborhood. The windows are blank and do not speak to each other.

In lines 8-12, the imagery in these lines is of an unfriendly, desolate street, dark, gray, and grimy.

In lines 13-2, in this desolate, lonely place that he lives. He feels that there is nobody; not in his house, not on his street, not in the "bitter" city. He is utterly alone. He is lost, forgotten. All he has is the warmth of his "alphabet soup," into which he will climb, and escape reality in his writing.

The Pension on the Calle Maruri Analysis

"Pension" can also be translated to mean "rooming house." Neruda rented a room at #513 Maruri when he was very young, and it was here where he wrote and published his first book. Clearly, this was not a happy time in his life. This poem is written years later and so it is a reflection and a remembrance of this time of his life. It was, perhaps, an unhappy enough time that it took it the better part of his life to be able to talk about it. When he does, the picture he paints is dark, washed in grays and blacks.



Religion in the East

Religion in the East Summary

In lines 1-22, Neruda is speaking of time he spent in Rangoon. Here he sees certain things that cause him to be pondering religion. He sees all different kinds of gods. Alabaster, like white whales appear gilded and serpent-like. He deems all of these "gods" capable of anything. They can impose their heavens upon us, torture us, burn our blood. Neruda says that these are "fierce gods made by men to conceal their cowardice." He says they make the whole world reek of heavenly merchandise.

Religion in the East Analysis

Rangoon is a city in Southeast Asia, and Neruda is speaking in this poem of time he spent there, a region which is predominantly Buddhist. Neruda must have bristled against the altars, shrines and temples that he must have seen everywhere, dripping with gold offerings to what would have looked to him like a greedy, capitalist deity. His chidings in this piece are more politically motivated, as opposed to religiously.



The Night in Isla Negra

The Night in Isla Negra Summary

In lines 1-15, the scene is set: the night and the salt beat against the walls of the house. The sky and the shadow struggle against one another. The dawn is born on the coast out of the turbulent shadow, bloodstained in its "marine crater."

The Night in Isla Negra Analysis

Isla Negra is the name of the house where Pablo and his wife Matilde lived until his death. It was his favorite of all houses, and he wrote much poetry about it. In this piece, it is night, and as we know, night is Neruda's ally. He is merely watching the night, watching the shadows play with the sky until the dawn comes to bring a new day. This is another example of how Neruda saw everything, even the most minute, simple, and mundane thing, as extraordinarily beautiful and fascinating enough to compose verse in its effigy.

The Unknown One

The Unknown One Summary

In lines 1-13, Neruda paints a scene where he arrives at a common house, and he is welcomed into an average domicile. He says that these people do not know him. He leaves, but does not know which streets to walk. He does not know how many common people the street will devour.

The Unknown One Analysis

Neruda is not saying that the common people do not know his work. Neruda was the mouthpiece of the common man; his work was loved by the working class. In fact, Neruda went so far as to see to it that his poems were published in highly circulated newspapers so that his poetry would be accessible to people who could not afford to go and purchase his published works. So he is not saying that the people were unfamiliar with his poetry. What he is saying is that while they know his work, they do not know him. They do not know who he really is, or what is in his heart.



Tides

Tides Summary

In lines 1-15, Neruda describes growing, immersed in the phosphorescent waves, the crusty salt forming his skeleton, the salt and spray forming him. He goes on to describe the scorn and desire of a wave, and the green rhythm. He is in a tower of transparency and the secret stays with him. He beats with it and his voice grows with the water.

Tides Analysis

Neruda was known for pulling much of his inspiration from the sea. This poem is about the poet that he is, being born from the sea. He imagines himself as being formed from the salt and spray. He beats with the rhythms of the waves. Neruda always imagined himself as being one with nature, particularly the sea, and in this piece we see him being born of, and literally living and breathing as one with the ocean.



The Fisherman

The Fisherman Summary

In lines 1-19, Neruda is telling a story of a naked fisherman, attacking the fish that are trapped in the rock pool. There is a moment of silence and then the waves rise like a fury, smashing the fisherman and his spear into the rock. The sea is uncaring, like a butterfly of bloodstain and salt.

The Fisherman Analysis

Neruda is saying with this poem that no matter how fierce the hand of man, no matter what weapons we may fashion, the power of nature cannot be questioned, and is absolute. This poem almost lines out the food chain: helpless fish are being mercilessly harpooned by the fierce fisherman, and the merciless wave fiercely wipes out helpless fisherman.



Oh Earth, Wait for Me

Oh Earth, Wait for Me Summary

In lines 1-11: The speaker of this poem is asking to be returned by the sun to his wild destiny. He wishes to go back to the aroma of the wood, where the swords fall from the sky. He longs for the pasture and its peace, the damp smell of earth, and the beating wind.

In lines 12-20: He is asking the earth to give him back its pure gifts - silence, solemnity. He wants to go back to being what he has not been in this earthly vessel. He wants to become earth again, to be one with the stone that the river bears away.

Oh Earth, Wait for Me Analysis

Neruda is contemplating not only his own demise, but the activities that take place thereafter, namely being buried in the ground. In this poem he is welcoming his own burial. He embraces fully the idea of becoming one with the earth again. So much so that he is virtually idealizing death and decomposing. He is asking the earth to wait for him, because, like all of us, his demise is inevitable. Since that is the case, he is musing, why not revel in the idea of giving back to Mother Earth?



Loneliness

Loneliness Summary

In lines 1-7, Neruda is saying that the "not-happening" came on suddenly, and now it is as if he were lost in the night, or under a chair.

In lines 8-13, he asks the people that he sees thriving, living confidently, how they do it. They do not answer him, but continue living and dancing.

In lines 14-20, he doesn't know exactly how it happened or what it was that actually did happen exactly. All he knows is that he had a moment of clarity, and now he is not and never will be the same.

Loneliness Analysis

Neruda is admitting that he feels like an outsider. Further, he has always felt like an outsider. He sees other people carrying on with their lives and he doesn't understand how they do it. He is confused as to how they can be so blissfully oblivious to all the things he sees and feels so intensely. In truth, that is his answer - he cannot carry on a normal, functional, everyday mundane life because he is not a normal average, everyday man. He is a poetic genius. He sees things in ways that other people do not, he feels things more intensely than do most other people. Therefore he is, and always will be an outsider, because he is such a unique and extraordinary specimen.



Memory

Memory Summary

In lines 1-6: The speaker of the poem is saying that he must keep track of everything, inch by inch, down to the blades of grass. He must record the long lines at the railway, the "textured face of pain."

In lines 7-15: If he gets one minute detail wrong, he will have to recreate the whole scene.

In line 16: Neruda asks that we take pity on the poet.

In lines 17-22: He says he has always been one quick to forget. His hands grasped at only the intangible and unrelated things.

In lines 23-28: He remembers the smoke; it was an aroma, and a sleeping body which was awakened to his kisses. Do not ask him the date of these events, or ask him to recall what he dreamed.

In lines 29-34: He explains that his memory is akin to a firefly wandering in the dark.

Memory Analysis

Neruda is describing a little bit about the sometimes torturous process of writing. He tells us to pity the poet, because he is charged with remembering all of the minute details of days and events and interactions, and sometimes he cannot. And when he cannot, he has to recreate them out of thin air. He is telling us that this is an exhausting thing to do, and he is at a disadvantage because his memory is like the dim light of a firefly trying to find his way in the dark.



The Long Day Called Thursday

The Long Day Called Thursday Summary

In lines 1-13, the speaker of the poem is waking up to a day that he recognizes; it is yesterday with another name. It is Thursday. He plans to dress and face this day, ride it out until it disappears into the night. Thursday will die, and he will go on to the next day. But things don't work out like that, as he will tell in minute detail.

In lines 14-31, he describes in great detail, the soaping up of his face for shaving, cutting himself shaving, and bleeding all over the towels.

In lines 32-44, the water of the bath, and the ability to hide indefinitely in the fetal position, persuade him to languish for hours in the delicious underwater warmth.

In lines 45-56, he takes his time toweling off, and dressing, and then realizes that it is much too late to go out: the sun has set, it is night time. He then undresses himself garment by garment, slides into bed and falls fast asleep.

In lines 57-69, a new day arrives, and he greets it with skepticism, doubting that it could possibly be a new day. Nevertheless, he goes through his meticulous routine of bathing and dressing, from "lathered soap to the hat," but just as he is about to go out, it is night again and he meticulously undresses.

In lines 70-79, as all this time is being wasted, there is life happening, waiting out there for him that he cannot reach, cannot access because he is stuck, unable to escape his house and his routine.

In lines 80-87, the situation was pointless, but the poem's character ignores his own feeding. He robotically follows this same routine, over and over and again.

In lines 88-91, after a while, he dies from malnutrition, because he is stuck "between that day that returned and the night expected like a widow."

In line 92, when he finally dies, the spell is broken and everything changes.

In lines 93-98, now he is well dressed, with a pearl in his tie, exquisitely shaved, and he wants to go out, but there is no longer a street. Thursday will last all year long.

The Long Day Called Thursday Analysis

This tone of this poem speaks to Neruda's disdain for the mundane routines in which we can so easily be trapped. He describes in specific, minute detail, the everyday activities of shaving, bathing and dressing. He takes so much time in doing these things, that by the time he is ready to leave the house, it is night. This happens over and over day after



day, until his nutrition has been so severely neglected that he dies. Now he is laid out with a pearl in his tie, exquisitely shaved; but there is no longer a street. Now, the long day called Thursday will last all year long, meaning that he is trapped in a repeating loop, forced to live this day over and over and over. This poem is like a combination of the movies *Groundhog Day* and *What Dreams May Come*. Neruda's version of hell is having to repeatedly endure the minutiae of a sickeningly beige-colored bourgeois rut; to be stuck there in an inescapable loop. That's what this poem is about: the afterlife being just a boring day recurring and repeating.



The Names

The Names Summary

In lines 1-17, in this poem, Neruda lists the names of Rojas Gimenez, Joaquin Cifuentes, Federico, Paul Eluard, Miguel Hernandez, and Nazim. He lists individual epitaphs for them, stating the reasons why they were loved, and why they are missed. Why did they have to go so soon? He says that each one of these people was a "victory," and he vows that he will keep their memories alive.

The Names Analysis

This is a simple, sorrowful poem, written by an aging Neruda who was looking back at his life and his relationships with mournful eyes. He lists all of the things about these men that made them special, unique, loveable. He vows that he will not let their memories fade, but at the same time, he seems to be acknowledging that he will not be able to hold vigil for long, as the grim reaper stalks him, too. Soon enough, he will join his friends on the list of those lost and mourned.

The Flag

The Flag Summary

In lines 1-12: Neruda describes a flag that is blue, and upon it is a fish, encircled in two rings. He likes to hear his flag crack in the wind in winter, like a whip, with "the fish swimming in the sky as if it were alive." He is asked about this fish - if there is some secret meaning to it. No, Neruda tells the askers. It is just a fish and nothing else.

The Flag Analysis

This is a poem about the flag that Neruda used to fly at Isla Negra to tell people, his neighbors, that he had returned home. He would travel all around the world, but Isla Negra was his favorite home. It was the home that he lived in with his wife Matilde, where he died, and where both he and she are buried. It is now a museum. His flag must have symbolized for him a banner of homecoming, and the sound of it cracking in the wind must have been a comfort to Neruda.



The Watersong Ends

The Watersong Ends Summary

In lines 1-24: Neruda is telling a story in these lines. He tells of himself as a frightened 20-year old boy, being taken into the jungles of Vietnam in 1928. He trembles with fear, certain that all the omens and signs are pointing to his death; the strange foreign people terrify him. They are different, they must be savages. Then, suddenly, a drum starts up and the foreigners are dancing for him - to entertain him, a traveler far from home, to make him feel welcome. It was then that he awakened to the idea of all men as brothers, and he learned a lesson about himself and about the correct way to approach the world.

In lines 25-49: The story shifts to Vietnam 40 years later. A "brutish invader" has broken the peace and gathered the "tiny country into a knot of resistance." He speaks of these far away troubles and asserts that "these faraway agonies are our agonies." He says that the "struggle for the oppressed is a hard vein in his nature."

In lines 50-73: In these lines, Neruda speaks of capitalism, of "business deals" made with "stains of blood in the mud of the rice fields." And of people arriving on the moon, dropping "tools of gold" there.

In lines 74-92: Here Neruda is calling out to the people, asking them to tell the truth. He is saying "wake with those who awoke, or go on in the dream" - in other words, there is nothing in that dream; there is no other shore.

The Watersong Ends Analysis

Simply put, this poem is a statement against capitalism. Neruda's political affiliations were, for a long while, Communist, and he wrote many pieces of poetry in support of this cause. Of particular interest in this poem are of course, the description of arriving in pre-war Vietnam, where the locals danced to make him feel welcome - a gesture that stuck with him for the rest of his life, and changed his views on the concept of human brotherhood. Also, his description of the moon landing is of particular note. As a lifelong devotee of poetry, it must have been blasphemous to think of someone walking on the moon, but this idea is really only incidental to Neruda. He, the constant voice of the people who championed the working class, surely found it absurd to waste such gigantic amounts of money on something like the race for the moon landing, when there were people around the world starving to death. He references the "tools of gold" that were dropped on the moon, and he was most likely referring to the money dropped on such an expensive program.



Characters

Pablo Neruda

Pablo Neruda is the poet who wrote all the poems in this collection. His role as the poet makes his voice in these poems mainly omniscient, but he switches into different characters throughout, and also writes objects to life through personification. The poems in this collection are the very life blood of Neruda's time on earth, guiding the reader through the different phases and locations of his life. Neruda was a rare kind of poet in that everything he saw in his life was not only a reason to write poetry, but poetry itself. Even the most mundane things, objects that an average person would disregard such as stones, chairs, and brooms that Neruda considered worthy of a voice, and this belief shone through in his poetry. Neruda was also the voice of the people in his poetry, speaking for not only living cultures, but also for ones long extinct. In his poem Love, America (1400), Neruda lists the Chibcha, Araucanian, and Carib peoples of South America that are cultures that were wiped out long ago. What bothered Neruda the most was that the language of these societies was forgotten and to him that was an unforgivable travesty. Neruda took it upon himself to help educate modern man to these peoples and to give them a voice again. He also contemplated the people of Macchu Picchu and pondered who could have carved the stone statues of Rapa Nui, or Easter Island. His later poetry was heavily steeped in political idealism, and some of his poems were written in a pro-communist tone as the voice of the proletariat. In the second half of his life and career, Neruda decided that he needed to make his poetry more accessible to the common man, and began writing his "odes." He wrote odes to his clothes, a tomato, and a fallen chestnut to name a few. He wanted not only to be the voice of the people but also to be able to speak to the people as well. His poems are some of the best known in Latin America and in many cases, something people commonly commit to memory.

Matilde Urrutia appears in 100 Love Sonnets, Autumn Testament

Matilde Urrutia was the third wife of Pablo Neruda, and to whom he was married at the time of his death. She was the inspiration behind his publication 100 Love Sonnets, which was published anonymously in order to spare the feelings of his previous wife from whom he was separating. In his poem Autumn Testament, which reads like Neruda's last will and testament, there is a long section dedicated to her entitled, finally he addresses himself ecstatically to his beloved. Neruda says that his love for her is a "child crying" afraid to leave her arms. The poem is a beautiful statement and remembrance of the passion the two shared, and it also gives us an interesting insight into their relationship. If we read carefully, we notice that he refers to her hands as "celestial," and he speaks of her "deciphering green batons, the spider webs, the insects of my mortal calligraphy," he is referring to the fact that Matilde used to re-copy all of his scribbles for him and arranged his poetry into legible script. Also, Neruda



always wrote in green ink, the color of "esperanza," or hope. After Pablo died, Matilde edited his memoir, *Confieso que he Vivido* or "I confess to have lived" which brought her into conflict with Augusto Pinochet, a Chilean army general who was brought into power as president of Chile right at the time of Neruda's death. Pinochet tried to repress the memory of Neruda from the general consciousness because he was an outspoken Communist. Matilde's own memoir was published in 1986, a year after her death.

Marisol appears in Body of a Woman

Marisol is one of the two female "characters" that weave in and out of Neruda's poetry - particularly the works found in *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*. Marisol literally means 'Mary Sun' or 'Mary Sea.' Marisol is who Neruda described as being "love in the enchanted countryside, with stars in bold relief at night and dark eyes like the wet sky of Temuco. She appears with all her joyfulness and her lively beauty on every page, surrounded by the waters of the port, and by a half moon over the mountains." In other words, when we read a piece of poetry written by Neruda which has a tone of fresh, passionate, starry-eyed love, he is speaking of Marisol. She appears most often in his earliest works. A good example of her is found in *Body of a Woman* (p.17), where his ecstasy towards her is evident in phrases such as, "Oh the goblets of the breast! Oh the eyes of absence! Oh the roses of the pubis!" Clearly Neruda is in worshipful wonderment over this divine creature over whom he is lavishing such passion.

Marisombra appears in Every Day You Play

Marisombra is 'Mary Shadow.' She is in the image of a student in the city. She wears a gray beret, has very gentle eyes, and has an ever-present honeysuckle fragrance. She represents Neruda's student days and his passionate city life. The tone that Neruda uses in correspondence with this character is slightly darker and slightly less naïve. When he is coloring her into his poems, it indicates that he is slightly older, slightly more aged and hashing through more experienced events of his young life. A good example of this is found in the poem *Every Day You Play* (pg. 25), where he speaks of a woman who is a "savage, solitary soul," and he says of her, "Now, now too, little one, you bring me honeysuckle, and even your breasts smell of it."

Cesar Vallejo appears in In this Ode to Cesar Vallejo

Cesar Vallejo was a Peruvian poet who lived from 1892-1938, and was considered one of the most innovative poets of the 20th century. Neruda looked up to Vallejo, and even wrote an ode about him, *In this Ode to Cesar Vallejo*, Neruda describes him as having a stony face, an enormous forehead, and a fragile body. Neruda laments the time running out for Vallejo and likens it to sand falling through an hourglass. In the ode, he talks about Vallejo's time in Spain and Paris, and about his exile first from Peru and then from



the earth itself. Neruda admits that he never missed his friend in life but in death, he does.

Joaquin appears in The Absence of Joaquin

Neruda wrote a poem entitled "The Absence of Joaquin," referring to Joaquin Sepulveda, who died in 1929 at the age of 29. He was a friend of Neruda's, and a fellow Chilean poet. In the poem that he wrote for Sepulveda, Neruda is memorializing him so that he can continue to exist. Neruda is pondering the idea of non-existence, and is toying with ideas of defying such status. He is doing his young, dead friend a favor by writing about him; he is immortalizing him. This is partially what Neruda strove to do for himself as well in his writing. He is trying to leave his stamp on the chaos of time and history.

The lovers of Rapa Nui appears in Rain (Rapa Nui)

One of Neruda's poetic passions was bringing life to people of long dead civilizations. He felt in a way that it was his duty, his poetic obligation, to give a voice to these people who could no longer speak for themselves. During one phase of his life, Neruda became fixated upon Rapa Nui, or Easter Island. He longed to understand why the giant stone faces of Easter Island were erected. He wanted to know the people who did this; but the builders of Rapa Nui, it is well known, left no clues as to who they were. Thus, Neruda had to invent a culture that would satisfy his curiosity. In the poem Rain (Rapa Nui), Neruda invents a princess character, who is hiding from the Queen in order to meet her peasant lover in the rain and make love. Neruda takes on the voice of the lover, and a passionate human encounter is described. Neruda's mission is accomplished in this piece, as we are living, breathing and thriving alongside the lovers in the rain. They take on fully-fleshed out human forms, and an ancient imaginary culture is brought to life.

Lautaro appears in Education of the Chieftain

Lautaro is an Araucanian Chieftain, according to the translator's note that accompanies this poem. Neruda is, as he did for the lover's of Rapa Nui, bringing to life another ancient culture. This time it is a civilization almost as non-existent as the Easter Island builders. The difference is that this culture lived and thrived and was recognized once. It has just been long forgotten. So far long forgotten, in fact, that even the language was lost. There are at least some clues about these people, and that's where Neruda stepped in. He fleshes out this civilization by inventing Lautaro - the Chieftain. He is equivalent to America's Davy Crockett, Paul Bunion or George Washington, who, of course was a real person, but who is very much steeped in lore. Lautaro's story is one of fantasy and super-human feats, accomplished in the hopes of becoming worthy of leading his people. In the end, he is successful.



Objects/Places

Macchu Picchu appears in The Heights of Macchu Picchu

In the 1940's, Neruda undertook a pilgrimage to Macchu Picchu, and the trip had an indelible effect on him. In Canto General, the 12-part poem entitled The Heights of Macchu Picchu was published. It is a journey of one man's spiritual ascension from the base of the mountain to the top, and the events that occur within him along the way. In this work, Neruda was portraying not just himself, but also the common man and the everyman, as his personal hopes transcend into a global hope, saying that we can find peace if we can connect somehow with our ancient past.

Chile appears in Poetry

Neruda was born in Chile and so of course his heart belonged to his homeland all of his life. Neruda was raised in the rainy south of Chile and led a lonely life as a child. He was surrounded by vast forests, the smell of wet wood, and the sounds of the great rains of southern Chile. Neruda discovered poetry as a child in Chile and his initial encounter is recounted in the poem Poetry, when he describes his poetic talent as coming to him like the heavens unfastening and opening, and rendering him drunk by the vast universe, offering the possibility of poetry.

Rapa Nui appears in Rain (Rapa Nui), The Builders of Statues (Rapa Nui)

Also known as Easter Island, Rapa Nui is called the 'navel of the sea' because of its isolated location in the middle of the ocean. Neruda was fascinated by this place, as are many people, but Neruda was not satisfied with the utter lack of information that has been found regarding who may have carved the statues and why. He became fixated and decided he must take poetic license and create these people in order to satisfy his burning curiosity. The result was a series of poems, including Rain (Rapa Nui), where he brings to life two lovers. They are the princess and the peasant, who are trying to escape the palace walls to meet up and make love in the rain. Also, he assumes the voice of the builders of the Easter Island stone statues in The Builders of Statues (Rapa Nui.)



Isla Negra appears in *Fiesta's End*, *The Night in Isla Negra*, *The Flag*

Of all the houses Neruda lived in during his life, the house as Isla Negra was rumored to be his favorite. This is the house he shared with wife Matilde Urruita, and the last home he lived in before he died in 1973. Neruda was fascinated with the sea, and was a collector of many sea-related items that were displayed at Isla Negra, including sea glass, ships figureheads and fisherman's nets. Pablo and Matilde are buried at the house at Isla Negra, and it is now a museum open to the public.

Spain appears in *I'm Explaining a Few Things*, *The Way Spain Was*, *Battle of th*

Neruda was stationed as Chilean consul in Barcelona in 1934 and was subsequently transferred to the consulate in Madrid. In Spain, he took up with the Spanish poets Rafael Alberti and Miguel Hernandez. Both were involved in radical politics, in particular, the Communist Party, and Neruda was exposed to Communism. He was emphatically in agreement with the Party's idealisms. Neruda was in Spain when the Spanish Civil War erupted. The horrors that he witnessed during this time of his life scarred him forever.

Calle Maruri appears in *The Pension on the Calle Maruri*

Neruda once rented a room at #513 Maruri Street when he was very young, very soon after first leaving home. This was a lonely and unhappy time in his life, and he wrote about it in his poem called *The Pension on the Calle Maruri*. Neruda describes a gray and desolate street with no feeling of community. He describes the city as being a bitter place, in which he is utterly alone. It is during this time that Neruda published his first book at the age of 17.

The Moon appears in *Lazybones*, *The Watersong Ends*

During the 1950's, the whole world was watching the race for the moon between Russia and America. The idea that a man would walk on the moon, which had been the inspiration for so much romantic inspiration and imagery since the dawn of time was absurd and downright blasphemous, to those poetically inclined. Neruda's take on this could be found in his poem *Lazybones*, where he speaks of loving this planet, with no plans towards departing it. He speaks of the brutalization of the "placid moon" (pg. 378), and revels in the thought of seeing the moon reflected in the ocean foam and dreaming. Also, in the poem *The Watersong Ends*, when he speaks of man arriving on the moon and dropping "tools of gold" there (pg. 499), he is speaking literally of the moon landing and disdainfully referencing the amount of money spent on such a venture.



Inanimate Objects appears in Walking Around

Pablo Neruda was different than most people. He saw the world through different kinds of eyes. What most people would dismiss as ordinary and everyday objects, Neruda pictured as having a life blood flowing through. Neruda especially had a kind of fixation with the houses and the rooms that he inhabited, of which there were many because he traveled often in his younger years. He had an uncanny ability to sense the energy left behind in the places that he stayed, so much so that it came through in his poetry quite often. In the poem *Walking Around*, (pg. 105) for example, he talks of the houses that he hates, where "there are mirrors which should have wept with shame and horror, there are umbrellas all over the place, and poisons, and navels" (pg. 107.) He saw the lives of these past people pulsing through, for example, the mirror that he speaks of, and imagines it as a silent witness to the atrocities sometimes inherent in human existence.

The Ocean appears in The Great Ocean

Neruda first saw the ocean when he left for college in Santiago at the age of 16. He was in utter awe of it then and this reverence lasted all through his life. When he died, the house that he lived in was on an island called Isla Negra. It could be argued that Neruda had a special bond and even an alliance with the ocean. He wrote poetry to the ocean and extracted from it inspiration all through his life. A good example of this can be found in the poem entitled "The Great Ocean" (pg. 225.) Neruda writes, "The cup trembles with your salt and honey, the universal womb of waters, and nothing is wanting in you."

Animals appears in Bestiary, Birdwatching Ode

Animals appear in many of Neruda's poems, but probably the most animal-packed poem is *Bestiary* (pg. 380.) In this poem, Neruda talks of all sorts of animal life such as spiders, fleas, rabbits, cows, dogs, and oysters, just to name a few. Neruda asserts in this poem that in order to be a true poet, he needs to be able to understand all kinds of language, including that of the animals. He says, "In this world, rushing, subsiding, I need more communication, other languages, other signs: I want to know this world." (pg. 387.) Neruda also wrote an ode called *Birdwatching Ode* (pg. 291), where he is simply taking a walk in the woods, and is fascinated by the repetitive rhythms of the bird's chirpings. He asserts in this poem as well that this "holy conversation" (pg. 293) among the birds is like a secret language that he frustratingly cannot comprehend.



Themes

Political Affiliation

Neruda started to become politically aware at a fairly young age. After the publication of *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*, he was appointed to the honorary post of Chilean consul. He was just 20 years old and was travelling to places like Rangoon, Sri Lanka, Batavia, and Indonesia. In the 1930's, he was appointed as consul in Barcelona, Spain, where he met people who were involved in radical politics and the Communist Party. It was during this time that a noted shift in the tone of his poetry could be felt. He was moving away from his more personal writing and began communicating instead his social and political idealism. When the Spanish Civil War erupted in 1936, his focus turned towards mobilizing support for the Spanish Republicans. Neruda returned to Chile in 1937 and immersed himself completely in politics, giving speeches and poetry readings to support Chile's Leftist government. Neruda was elected as a Chilean senator in 1945 and was a proud and public member of the Communist Party. He openly supported leftist candidate Gabriel Gonzalez Videla who was elected only to swing to the right a few years later. Outraged, Neruda wrote a letter denouncing the president and was exiled. Neruda's Communist idealisms are what colored many of the poems that he wrote, and he felt that it was his responsibility, his "poet's obligation," (pg. 428) to give a voice to the silent and oppressed. An excellent example is the poem *The Pueblo*, (pg. 445) where he champions the proletariat and speaks in terms of a Communist society, saying, "And those who make bread ought to eat! And those in the mine should have light!" (pg. 451.) For a poet as gifted as Neruda, whose writing thrust him into the public eye as a beloved personality, it is only natural that he would seize such an opportunity to voice his ideals so that he could reach as many of the masses as possible with his message.

Connectivity

Neruda felt a real connection with so many different things in his life. He wrote odes about common and everyday objects such as chestnuts, clothes and tomatoes. It was said that he began writing his odes, of which he published two volumes, *Odas Elementales* (1954) and *Nuevas Odas Elementales* (1956), not only because he felt a real connection with these objects, but also because he felt a great need to make his poetry more accessible to the common man. In addition to his odes, through the rest of his poetry he sprinkled imagery of inanimate objects personified including items such as mirrors, stones, and brooms. He also felt a real camaraderie with the night, as seen in poems like *The Marine Night* (pg. 269) and *Alliance* (pg. 39.) In the night came his dreams, and in his dreams came much of his poetry. Also, night time is when the acts of sexual love take place, and Neruda was a fiercely passionate man. He also felt a deep connection with water, specifically, the ocean and rain. Growing up in the rainy south of Chile, rain was a constant companion to him in his early years and it was a friendship he carried with him for the rest of his life. In *The Night of the Soldier* (pg. 69), he says,



"From the heat of the sky falls a hushed impregnation like sweat and over the great plants, over the loins of the wild beasts, along a certain silence, those damp feathers weave together and spread" (pg. 69.) In *The Wave* (pg. 245), he says, "The wave comes up from the bottom, with roots that are the daughters of the submerged firmament, its elastic invasion was mounted by the pure potency of the Ocean" (pg. 245.)

Love

The book that made Pablo Neruda a household name in Latin America was called *Twenty Love Poems and Song of Despair*, published in 1924 when he was just twenty years old. Some of Neruda's most famous poems were published in this collection, and are still today some of the best known and well loved poems in history. What sets Neruda's love poetry apart is his use of startlingly direct language and his poignant, original and subtle imagery. At a very young age, Neruda was able to capture the gut-wrenching angst and passion of young love so brilliantly that it instantly propelled him into fame. A great example of the talent that Neruda had to make himself so vulnerable and exposed, while capturing the emotions of love that anyone who has ever been in love can relate to, is in the poem entitled *Every Day You Play* (pg. 25). Neruda writes, "You are like nobody since I love you. Let me spread you out among yellow garlands. Who writes your name in letters of smoke among the stars of the south? Oh let me remember you as you were before you existed." (pg. 25.) Later in his life, when married to his third wife, Matilde Urrueta, and after having been diagnosed with prostate cancer, Neruda wrote a piece called *Autumn Testament* (pg. 388), which reads like his last will and testament. In this poem, he dedicates a section to Matilde and writes, "You are the one most beautiful, the wind has most tattooed like a little southern tree, like a hazel tree in August, you are succulent for me as a baker's full of bread, your heart is made of earth but your hands are celestial" (pg. 397.)



Style

Point of View

These poems are primarily written from Neruda's point of view, but sometimes he takes on the perspective of others in order to emphasize his meaning. For example, he takes the voice of the "Oceanic Night" in his poem *The Marine Night* (pg. 269.) He writes, "I, Oceanic night, arrived with the love that makes me, and reached your open form, the vastness that Aldebaran watches over, the wet mouth of your song" (pg. 269.) Other examples include *Night of the Soldier* (pg. 69), when he says he is the night of the soldier, meaning he personifies the night and all of its on-goings in order to observe what the soldiers do once the sun goes down. He discovers that they drink until they fall down, sick, and often visit the local prostitutes. In *The Magellan Heart* (1519) on pg. 203, he becomes an explorer ready to take on the high seas and conquer all the unconquered lands. In *The Builders of Statues* (pg. 233), he becomes the stone carver who created the mysterious, giant heads on Easter Island, and in *Rain* (pg. 237), he becomes the peasant lover of the princess, trying to persuade her to escape the palace walls so they can make love in the rain. For the most part however, Neruda is speaking as the omniscient seer in the majority of his poems.

Setting

Since Neruda wrote poetry all through his life and times, the settings for this collection of poems varies widely. He began writing when he was 10 years old, just a boy living in Temuco, Chile. Once he was "discovered," by Gabriela Mistral, headmistress of the Temuco Girl's School, he traveled to Santiago, Chile, to pursue a degree in French Literature. From there, he was appointed as Chilean counsel and traveled to far flung places such as Rangoon, Sri Lanka, and Batavia. During the course of his life, he traveled to Macchu Picchu and Easter Island, writing poetry about both places. When exiled from Chile, he traveled through the Andes Mountains and visited the Soviet Union, Hungary, Mexico, and Poland. When he was able to return to Chile, he built a house on Isla Negra and also had residences in Santiago and Valparaiso. He also traveled to Europe, Cuba, France, and China during his life and to Stockholm to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for Literature. Much of Neruda's poetry focuses on the ocean and the sea as large bodies of water fascinated him from a time when he was very young. Also, the great rains of Southern Chile colored much of his work as well.

Language and Meaning

The language Neruda used was poetically descriptive and packed full of imagery. He was a master of literary vehicles such as metaphor, simile, alliteration, allusion, and personification. All of the poems written by Neruda are in Spanish, his native language, and translated to English in this collection. English is not the only language that his



poems were translated into many cultures, including Russian and Chinese, were eager to access his poetry and thus his work has been translated into those languages as well. Much can be lost in translation and in some cases, the translation of his poetry has been open to interpretation. There are often more than one translated version of each poem. For the most part, the meaning of his poems seems to come through however, no matter which translation is read. Of course, even changing one word can sometimes change the meaning entirely. There are many advanced vocabulary words, such as lugubrious, sanguinary, and interminable that add a great deal of meaning to his poems and it is important to look these words up in a dictionary if they are unfamiliar as they can change the meaning altogether if improperly understood.

Structure

Neruda uses several different structural forms through this collection, which possibly reflects the times in which the poems were written. Most likely, he was structuring the poem according to what was best for the individual piece. For example, in his earlier pieces, he often used stanzas of 4 lines each, or four lines, 8 lines and back to 4. In *The Heights of Macchu Picchu*, a 12-part poem, he wrote his stanzas eclectically in every shape and size imaginable. When he wrote *Entrance of the Rivers* (pg. 173), *The Magellan Heart* (1519) (pg. 202), *Autumn Testament* (pg. 388) and *Furious Struggle Between Seamen and an Octopus of Colossal Size* (pg. 370), he used subtitles in the margins to tell the reader that the poem's "chapter" was changing. In *Estravagario*, published in 1958, he utilized the Hispanic traditional eleven-syllable line form known as *endecasilablo*. Apart from that instance however, Neruda seemed to allow the verse to flow onto the page in whichever form it chose. This collection is comprised of 115 poems all together and each piece is displayed in its original Spanish form as well as the translated English version.



Quotes

"You were guardian to the light's stelae, fragmented beings the late and tardy sun flung at the churches. Glance-tinted, with the aim of bees, your embodiment of unlooked-for flame in flight precedes and follows day, his golden kin" (Alliance, pg.39.)

"I heard its red horse neighing, bare-backed, unshod and radiant. I ride him over churches, gallop through garrisons empty of soldiers pursued by a raffish army. His eucalyptus eyes plunder the darkness, his bell-like body gallops as it strikes" (Dream Horses, pg. 43.)

"...by the dead buried with saffron and fruits, wrapped in red muslin: under my balcony these terrible corpses go past playing chains and copper flutes, strident and thin and lugubrious they whistle amidst the color of the heavy poisoned flowers" (Burial in the East, pg.75.)

"I see, when alone at times, coffins under sail setting out with the pale dead, women in their dead braids, bakers as white as angels, thoughtful girls married to notaries, coffins ascending the vertical river of the dead, the wine-dark river to its source, with their sails swollen with the sound of death, filled with the silent noise of death" (Death Alone, pg. 89.)

"...with a noise of damp flames burning the sky, dreaming like dreams, or branches, or winds, or the horns of some sad port, if you would blow on my heart near the sea like a white ghost would blow, on the lace of the spume, in the cut of the wind, like an unchained ghost crying at the sea's edge." (Barcarole, pg. 93.)

"I carry in my hand the dove that sleeps recumbent in the seed and in its dense ferment of lime and blood August lives, raised out of its deep goblet the month lives: with my hand I encircle the new shadow of the wing that is growing: the root and feather that will form the thicket of tomorrow" (Being Born in the Woods, pg. 135.)

"The cup trembles with your salt and honey, the universal womb of waters, and nothing is wanting in you, as the flayed crater, the unpolished pit: desolate summits, scars, adhesions, protecting the mutilated air. Your petals throb against the world" (The Great Ocean, pg. 225.)

"He saw the silver stones that bit him burn, banners of a tremulous treasure, and he submitted his blood as he descended to the devouring depths, suspended from mouths that circle his torso with sanguinary rings" (The Fish and the Drowned Man, pg. 227.)

"...it's sweeter this way, my love, far from the effigies, the weight of your hair in my hands. Do you remember the Mangareva tree whose flowers fell in your hair? These fingers are not like the white petals: look at them, they're like roots, they're like stone shoots over which the lizard slides. Don't be afraid, we'll wait for the rain to fall, naked, the rain, the same as falls over Manu Tara" (Rain, pg. 237.)



"...behind all the corollas of an ermine, behind all the klaxons of the shipwreck and the white scuttling of the worlds, or your breast of peace polished by the wind like a pure rectangle of quartz...concentrated in you their transparency, and salt settled you with castles, the ice raised high cities over a crystal spire" (Antarctic, pg. 241.)



Topics for Discussion

Pablo Neruda is known as the most-read poet in human history. Why do you suppose that is? What about his poetry appeals or does not appeal to you as a reader?

Neruda wrote poetry all his life about every possible subject. Poetry was said to be like breathing to him. It has been said that as such a prolific poet, some of his work was fairly straightforward and everyday and other parts of his work is considered poetic genius. Give examples of each as found in this collection.

Neruda sometimes wrote poems that could be classified as pieces of short fiction. Give examples of pieces like this and explain if you feel like there are hidden meanings in these works.

Define imagery and explain how Neruda uses it in his poetry.

Define metaphor and simile and explain how Neruda uses them in his poetry.

Discuss personification and explain how and why Neruda uses it.

Discuss Communism and explain how and why it influenced Neruda's poetry. Cite examples.

Discuss Neruda's thoughts on death. How and why was he trying to triumph over death in his poetry? Cite examples.

What is it about Neruda's love poems that make them so universal? How and why are they erotic yet poignantly touching simultaneously?

Neruda's odes are distinctly different than the bulk of his life's work. Are the odes better or less appealing than the rest of his poems in this collection? Why or why not?