

'The Lamb' (c.1789)

(from *Songs of Innocence*)

Before you read

- 1 What connotations does a lamb usually have? How has it been used symbolically? Discuss with other students.



- 8 Little Lamb, who made thee? ¹
 Dost ² thou ³ know who made thee?
 Gave thee life and bid ⁴ thee feed, ⁵
 By the streams and o'er ⁶ the mead; ⁷
 5 Gave thee clothing of delight,
 Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
 Gave thee such a tender voice,
 Making all the vales ⁸ rejoice! ⁹
 Little Lamb, who made thee?
 10 Dost thou know who made thee?
- Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
 Little Lamb, I'll tell thee;
 He is callèd by thy ¹⁰ name,
 For he calls himself a Lamb,
 15 He is meek, ¹¹ and he is mild; ¹²
 He became a little child.
 I a child, and thou a lamb,
 We are callèd by his name.
 Little Lamb, God bless thee!
 20 Little Lamb, God bless thee!



- 1 thee : (you).
- 2 Dost : (do).
- 3 thou : (you).
- 4 bid : ordinò.
- 5 feed : mangiare.
- 6 o'er : (over).
- 7 mead : prato.
- 8 vales : valli.
- 9 rejoice : gioire.
- 10 thy : (your).
- 11 meek : mansueto.
- 12 mild : docile.

'The Lamb' from *Songs of Innocence*
 (1789) by William Blake.
 The British Museum, London.

Orientation

- 1 What are the questions the speaker asks the Lamb in the first stanza? Put the following in the right order:
 - a ☐ Who gave you your voice?
 - b ☐ Who told you to eat?
 - c ☐ Who made you?
 - d ☐ Who gave you your wool?
 - e ☐ Who gave you life?
- 2 Look at lines 11-12. What does the speaker say he will do?
- 3 Who do you think 'he' refers to?
- 4 Consider the reference 'For he calls himself a Lamb'. Who does the lamb refer to in biblical terms?

Exploration

- 1 How many stanzas does the poem consist of? What is its rhyme scheme?
- 2 Now focus on the image of the Lamb. Underline all the expressions associated with the Lamb. How is the Lamb described?
- 3 Now underline the expressions which refer to the creator of the Lamb. Do you find any similarities with those you underlined for the Lamb?
- 4 Look back at the section on Blake's symbolism. What do you think the Lamb represents? Choose from the following:

innocence	passivity	spontaneity
creative energy	weakness	powerlessness
stupidity	purity	godliness

- 5 Blake's poetry is often characterised by repetition. Underline all the repetitions in 'The Lamb'. What effect does this create?
- 6 Read the poem again and find some examples of alliteration. What do you think the effect is?

Discussion

- 1 Now read the poem aloud. Do you find it

musical? How is this effect of musicality achieved?

- 2 Can you think of another animal which could be used to represent childhood and innocence? Compare your choice with other students.
- 3 Can you think of an animal which can be used to express the contrary? Discuss with other students and give reasons for your choice.

'The Tyger' ¹ (c.1793) (from *Songs of Experience*)

Before you read

- 1 Think of three features you associate with a tiger. Compare them with other students.

9 Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame ² thy fearful symmetry?

- 5 In what distant deeps ³ or skies
Burnt the fire of thine ⁴ eyes?
On what wings dare he ⁵ aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?
And what shoulder, and what art,
10 Could twist the sinews ⁶ of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread ⁷ hand? and what dread feet?

- 15 What the hammer? ⁸ what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? ⁹ what dread grasp ¹⁰
Dare its deadly terrors clasp? ¹¹

- When the stars threw down their spears ¹²
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
20 Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?



- 1 Tyger : (tiger).
- 2 frame : forgere.
- 3 deeps : profundità.
- 4 thine : (your).
- 5 dare he : osa.
- 6 sinews : tendini.
- 7 dread [dred]: terribile.
- 8 hammer : martello.
- 9 anvil : incudine.
- 10 grasp : presa.
- 11 clasp : fermare, trattenere.
- 12 spears : lance.

'The Tyger' from *Songs of Experience*
(1793) by William Blake.
The British Museum, London.

Critics have noted how here the tiger's face resembles that of a lamb.

Blake: Framing Visions

William Blake (1757-1827)

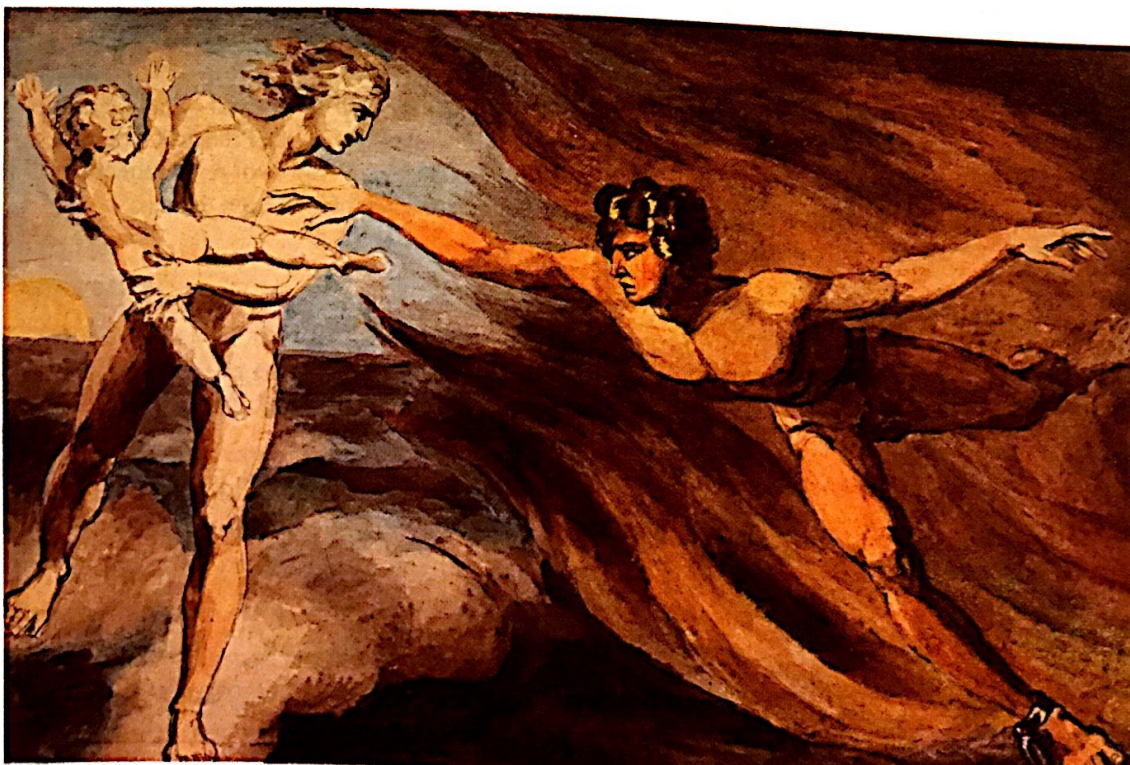
With the help of his wife, Catherine Boucher, Blake illustrated and published most of his major poetry himself. His idea of a book was very similar to decorated medieval manuscripts, in which the text and illustrations are closely connected.

Blake designed the pagination of his own poems, giving as much attention to the title and ornamentation of the page as he did to the text. His paintings and engravings also include the illustration of other writers' works, including that of Milton and Dante. In addition, he illustrated subjects from the Bible and Shakespeare.

Although realistic in their representation of human anatomy and other natural forms, his paintings are characterised by their radiant use of light and by a sense of violent energy which makes him different from previous artists. Everything in Blake's paintings is transformed by his prophetic vision.

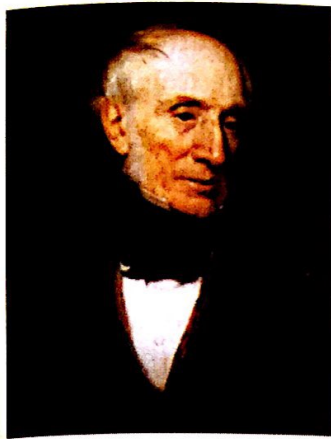
The Good and Evil Angels (c.1793-4)

Blake's art and poetry requires a double reading. In *The Good and Evil Angels*, what at first glance appears to be a simple illustration of Good triumphing over Evil for the possession of a child is complicated by the sense of anxiety the picture generates. We are disturbed by the unfairness of the combat. The Evil Angel, blind and tied by the foot, is more a figure of pathos than of fear while the gaze of the Good Angel, who seems more concerned with his enemy than with the child he has saved, seems decidedly malicious. Blake's heretical view is that the repression of bodily energy by reason has broken the unity of contraries that was present in unfallen man, who is now divided from himself.



The Good and Evil Angels
(c.1793-4).
Tate Gallery,
London.

William WORDSWORTH (1770-1850)



William Wordsworth
(c.1850) by Henry William
Pickersgill.
National Portrait Gallery,
London.

Life and works

William Wordsworth was born in 1770 in the Lake District. In 1791 he graduated from St John's College, Cambridge. In 1790 he went on a walking tour of France, the Alps and Italy, and returned to France at the end of 1791 to spend a year there. It was during this period that Wordsworth, enthusiastic about new ideas of democracy, became a supporter of the French Revolution.

After returning to England, Wordsworth published two long 'travel diaries', *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches* in 1793. A walking tour that year took the poet across Salisbury Plain and to Tintern Abbey (East Wales), both subjects of later poems. In 1795, in London, he met the philosopher William Godwin and the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, thus beginning one of the great friendships of literary history. The two poets had similar ideas on both love and poetry and enjoyed taking long walks together.

By this time Wordsworth had become intensely disillusioned with the Revolution, whose initial ideals had degenerated into the so-called 'Terror' (the years of Robespierre's dictatorship when people considered traitors to the new French Republic were executed by guillotine). He later compared it in *The Prelude* to a 'monstrous child' who refused to grow up. Politically, he turned very conservative.

In 1798 Wordsworth and Coleridge published anonymously *Lyrical Ballads*. The year after Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy settled at Dove Cottage in the Lake District. In 1800, the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* included Wordsworth's famous prose Preface.

1807 saw the publication of *Poems in Two Volumes* and 1814 *The Excursion*. Wordsworth was made Poet Laureate (the title given to British poets in recognition of their achievements) in 1843.

The Prelude, an autobiographical poem which absorbed Wordsworth intermittently for 40 years was eventually published in 1850, in the year of his death.

Lyrical Ballads

The first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was published jointly and anonymously by **Wordsworth** and **Coleridge** in 1798. Most of the poems were by Wordsworth but Coleridge contributed with a number of poems, including his famous *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. In 1800 the second edition came out with Wordsworth's name on the title-page and including his famous Preface, and in 1802 a further enlarged third edition was published. In his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) Coleridge describes the



*Morning amongst the Conistone Fells,
Cumberland* (1798) by J. M. W. Turner.
Tate Gallery, London.



- 10 I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats ¹ on high o'er ² vales ³ and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, ⁴ of golden daffodils; ⁵
5 Beside the lake, beneath ⁶ the trees,
Fluttering ⁷ and dancing in the breeze.
- Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle ⁸ on the milky way, ⁹
They stretched in never-ending line
10 Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing ¹⁰ their heads in sprightly ¹¹ dance.
- The waves beside them danced; but they
Outdid ¹² the sparkling waves in glee: ¹³
15 A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed ¹⁴ – and gazed – but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
- For oft, when on my couch ¹⁵ I lie
20 In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward ¹⁶ eye
Which is the bliss ¹⁷ of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

- 1 floats : fluttua.
2 o'er : (over).
3 vales : valli.
4 host : moltitudine, schiera.
5 daffodils : giunchiglie.
6 beneath : sotto.
7 fluttering : che ondeggiano.
8 twinkle : scintillano, occhieggiano.
9 milky way : Via Lattea.

- 10 tossing : che scuotevano.
11 sprightly : vivace, briosa.
12 outdid : superavano.
13 glee : gaiezza.
14 gazed : guardavo attentamente.
15 couch [kaʊtʃ] : divano.
16 inward : interiore.
17 bliss : beatitudine.



Orientation

- What does the poet compare himself to?
- What does he see?
- Now look at the second stanza. What does he compare the flowers to?
- How many of them does he see?
- In the third stanza the poet compares the daffodils to the waves of the lake. How?
- How does the poet look at the flowers?
- How does the poet feel while looking at the flowers? Underline all the expressions you can find to describe how he feels.
- What happens to him when he is in this setting?

- How does the poet feel now that he has managed to recreate the emotion he felt while he was walking? Choose from the following:

sad happy nostalgic relieved
depressed melancholic content
desperate serene

Exploration

- What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? Is it regular throughout the poem?
- Wordsworth makes use of a lot of poetic devices. Look for examples of:
 - Simile.
 - Metaphor.
 - Personification.