

## ODE TO THE WEST WIND

### PREMISE:

the wind itself is a vessel, a half state amongst the co-existence of life and death, and the cycle of decay and rebirth.

## Language

## TRANSIENCE

ODE TO THE WEST WIND  
ODE TO AUTUMN

## ODE TO AUTUMN

### PREMISE:

the season is a transient, almost liminal state between the fresh spring and harsh winter - yet autumn still contains a life force of its own.

## Language

• semantic fields shift accordingly with the progression of the poem

### STANZA ONE:

semantic field of cultivation and fruitfulness, maturing  
- "fruitfulness" "maturing sun" (verb cluster) "fill," "swell" "plump," lulling "l" sound - soft consonant, "m" plosives are softer as a result of the accompanying clusters.

Half state between sprouting and decay.

### STANZA TWO:

- semantic field of human involvement and produce  
- "half-reaped" "granary floor" "fume of poppies" "oozing" "hours by hours" elongate, slowing time.

Approaching a full state, time is 'slowed', emphasizing the transitional period of harvesting.

### STANZA THREE:

- semantic field of 'end' and 'beginning' → beginning of a new cycle.  
- "soft dying day" "full grown lambs" "lives or dies" ANTITHESIS

Sense of closure, looking towards a new state.

## Context

written in September, beginning of a new period  
universal appreciation of nature

Keatsian idea = half states.

his deep understanding of MORTALITY → medical background.

# TRANSIENCE

## ODE TO THE WEST WIND

the speaker addresses the wind's natural power

Semantic field of death and decay throughout the poem

e.g. "a corpse within its grave" (stanza 1, line 8)

the movement between two states

↳ humans or natural world?

↳ between seasons or life and death?

"If winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" (final line)

nature changes in each season

ROMANTICS - inspiration in nature  
↳ sees human life reflected in nature

↳ pathetic fallacy → differing emotions represented in each season

BIOGRAPHY - death of his children

moving on from grief

imagery

## ODE TO AUTUMN

the speaker addresses the transience and splendour of the natural world in Autumn

a movement towards winter and evening at the end of the poem

e.g. "red-breast", "gathering swallows" and "soft-dying day"

# ODE TO THE WEST WIND

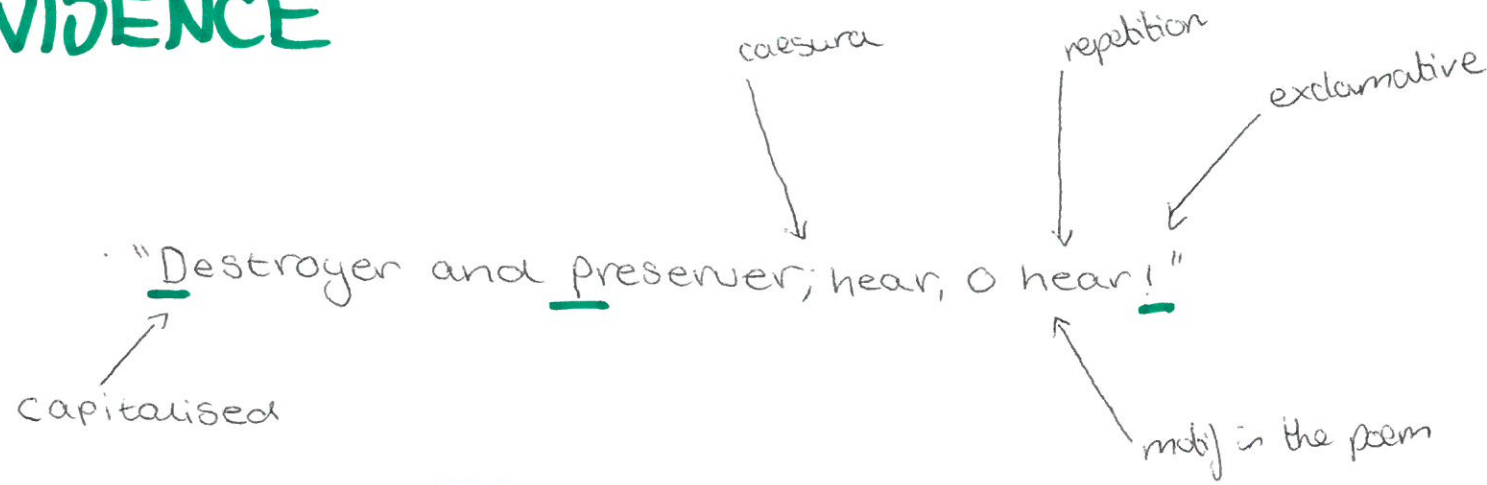
# TRANSCIENCE

# TO AUTUMN

## POINT

The wind represents the two sides of nature and the power to bring change

## EVIDENCE



## WRITER'S CRAFT

- The capitalisation followed by a plea signifies how he sees the wind as a deity
- It explores the opposing forces that the wind has, reflecting its transient nature
- Final line of canto one - It is a final appeal to the wind to be heard

## CONTEXT

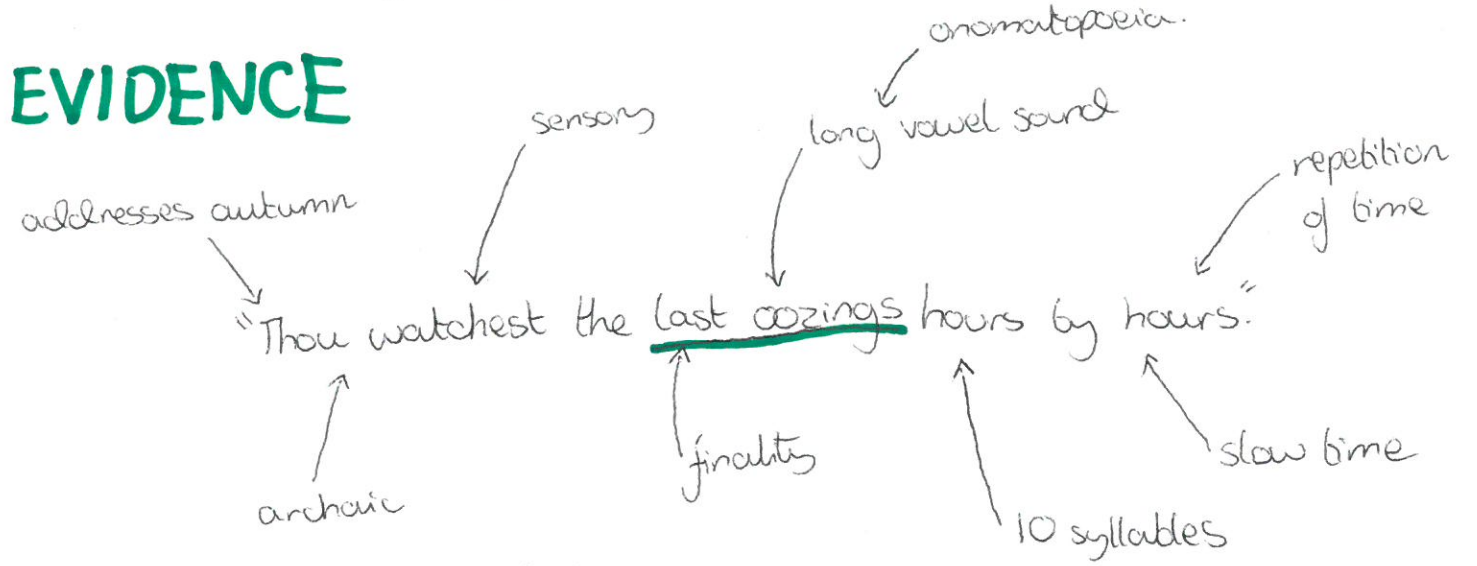
- Shelley was atheist - wrote The Necessity of Atheism
- Romantic interest in sublime nature
- The West Wind was a mythological figure

## EVALUATION

## POINT

Keats is imposing his fears of mortality onto an autumnal setting

## EVIDENCE



## WRITER'S CRAFT

- repetition (diacope) of "hours by hours" emphasises a preoccupation with time. It is monosyllabic like a ticking clock, which may link to his fear of impending death.
- Keats uses the archaic form, not only to suit the Ode, but to suggest this is in the past and the narrator is aware of their lack of use for contemporary readers.

## CONTEXT

- use of sensory language i.e. Sonnet on the Sea
- Romantics were interested in carpe diem.
- he understood his life would end (tuberculosis)

## EVALUATION

- Keats uses a strong metre and repetition to show awareness of slow time. His sensory language implies pleasure in small transient things like the harvest.

# OTWW Shelley

## Point:

- ▶ The wind is an extended metaphor for life. The cyclical & monotonous nature of human existence. Mortality is presented by the changing of winds.

## Evidence:

- ▶ 'leaves dead / Are driven, like ghosts' ~~present~~
  - ↳ 'dead' on last line = finality, inevitability
  - ↳ Experience continues after life. Eternal nature. To create a sense of irony

## Context:

- ▶ 1<sup>st</sup> wife died - may have committed suicide
- ▶ 2 of his children died before 2 years old in 1818 & 19
  - ↳ inevitable transience of humans. we will all die eventually - awareness of mortality

# OTA Keats

## Point:

- ▶ The autumn mirrors the decay & ~~words~~ <sup>inevitable</sup> death of humans. Seasons change and leaves ~~decay~~ <sup>decaying</sup> reflect human life & experience.

## Evidence:

- ▶ 'fully grown lambs'
  - ↳ reached their end before they have grown to adults
- ▶ 'clouds bloom the soft-dying day'
  - ↳ Contrast of the word 'bloom' implying new life contrasting with depictions of autumn
  - ↳ Stereotypical images of ~~autumn~~ <sup>autumn</sup> are represented by descriptions of traditional aspects of autumn ('clouds'). Used in sequence with 'soft-dying' highlights how autumn is a representation of transience in human life.
- ▶ 'Until they think warm days will never close'

## Context:

- ▶ When Keats was 14, his mother died of TB & his
- ▶ one of his siblings died in infancy
  - ↳ aware/hyperaware of mortality

# OTTWW TRANSIENCE

(STRUCTURE)

**P** → The regular canto structure reflects the inevitability of time's transience.  
The couplets that conclude every canto could represent the cyclical structure of life and time.

**E** (EVIDENCE) → Each canto has 5 stanzas and the poem has 5 cantos to further emphasize transience of time as a whole as well as the deeper context.

**C** → Typically Romantic to discuss the passing of time through the context of nature. (Wordsworth, Tintern Abbey).

**E** (EVALUATE) → The couplets at the end of ~~each~~ each canto could represent breaks in transience of time as they don't fit the prior form.

# OTA

(LANGUAGE)

**P** → Appearance of time being ever-lasting in a time of bliss is a state of illusion whereas time is still transient and fleeting despite this belief.

**E** (EVIDENCE) → "Until they think warm days will never cease".

**C** → Similar to Keat's idea of half states transience within permanence of time.

**E** (EVALUATE) → "where are the songs of spring?" suggests spring isn't coming / time isn't passing - the speaker is stuck in winter ~~and~~ rather than summer.

# To Autumn

Living in / Appreciating  
the literal / emotional  
Moment.

"Where are the songs of Spring?"

"Think not of them"

↳ picking up on peoples longing for spring, and recognizing that autumn (sadness) has its own merits.

Question implies the desires of the reader, through Keats' own experiences.

Poetic apostrophe

Also hypocritical, still moving suggesting living in moment is hard: "gathering swallows" "Wailful"

Enjoying it even though Context

① Nature ② Half States + Keatsian Depressive.

Fleeting seasons / OTTWW  
emotions / life

"If winter comes, can  
Spring be far behind?"

"each like a corpse withing  
its grave" shifting to "Spring"  
in next line.

① Love nature  
DEATH of wife +  
children.

Lack  
of  
Perminence  
↓  
Shelley  
Keats is  
saying  
transience  
isn't bad.

State  
Changes  
Half States  
Happiness in  
the Sad  
+ life in death.  
→ through  
extended  
metaphor  
of seasons.

IMPLIES WINTER (SADNESS) DEATH

# Ode to the West Wind

- "breath of autumn's" ... link with title & end of poem; cyclical structure as returns with "The trumpet of a prophecy! O, wind, / If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"
- "an enchanter fleeing" lack of permanence

Ⓡ 'prophecy' contrasts with orthodox views

# Ode to ~~the~~ Autumn

- "as the light wind lives or dies" unpredictable; fragility of 'light', Purity
- "White barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day" Transition; nature imagery; alliteration of 'dying day'; 'bloom' suggests growth which contrasts with transience; Juxtaposition of 'soft' and 'dying'.

Ⓡ nature

# Transience

OTTWW

capitalised in each poem

'If winter comes, can Spring be far behind?'

• Nature perpetual and human existence is ephemeral

↳ He can feel himself decaying like nature around him as it begins to reach the end of its cycle

- Extended metaphor of winter represents death
  - because time is fleeting and death is inevitable and unavoidable
  - life is short
- Use of question in both ending stanzas
  - It is transient in itself because it doesn't come to a solid conc. at the close

Context:

- Romantics and the subliminal power of nature
- Humans are fleeting existences in a huge balance

OTA

'Where are the songs of Spring?'

- Sense of waiting for change; for spring to come
- Autumn - Humans have no control over the change

Context:

- Keats depressive?
- Obsessive about the idea/concept of death/dying/things ending with no control



# TRANSIENCE

## ODE TO THE WEST WIND

- "Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth"
- temporary state of life - cycle of life and death - death feeling life - change of the seasons.

↳ goes on to say "ashes and sparks, my words to mankind!"

"If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" rhetorical question

idea of him being reborn in 3 parts after death.

Speaker may have an uncertainty in mortality and death.

↳ Transience of seasons, natural rhythm.

### Structure

- 4 tercets followed by a 2 line long stanza

↳ regular → poem it's cyclical like the rhythms of seasons.

↳ 4 tercets - 4 seasons?

### Context:

- everyone around him died / committed suicide - exposed to life's mortality / transience.

## ODE TO AUTUMN

→ Semantic field of temporary state

"maturing sun" "ripeness" "swell"

↳ uncomfortable, know that this sweetness and ripeness is not sustainable and will end.

→ Personified builds on this idea, human existence is short-lived, also ideas of nature "they think warm days will never cease" → rhetorical questions create a sense of ~~urgency~~ urgency or reassurance

### Context

- Autumn personified as female: perhaps reflective of Keats' and Fanny's short-lived, transient love affair.

### Structure

→ Regular stanzas, first two more optimistic and lively, whereas there is a shift to more morbid imagery in the third. poem is transient in itself.