

# The second coming analysis



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Between the symbolism and allusions, the poem covers the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelations. In the first stanza, “mere anarchy” refers to the flood in Genesis. The last stanza refers to the anti-christ and the time of the apocalypse. In the final lines Yeats describes the sinners as “rough beasts” dragging themselves to Bethlehem for the second coming of Christ. The body of the poem describes the decay of society. It refers to the non-believers, or atheists and the real problem, the sinners. However, he does point out that even Christ was tempted in the desert, hell on earth.

He uses a metaphor to allude to the Great Sphinx (The body of a lion and the head of a man), which symbolizes the devil’s home. Furthermore, this is also a reference to the Book of Exodus, which describes the morphing of locusts and scorpion’s tails. These layers of meaning make it difficult for high school students to interpret the poem. I suggest that a teacher start with eight vocabulary words: gyre, vexed, anarchy, revelation, falconer, Spiritus Mundi, reel, indignant. Denote the text. Then discover all the metaphors and symbols. It takes quite a bit of research to connote “gyre”.

The dictionary definition is simple, but Yeats uses gyre in many of his writings. He uses a double-helix to symbolize the spiraling decay of society through “blood-dimmed tides” or wars. Then he uses the upward spiral to symbolize the times of peace. For Yeats society was a never-ending cycle of war and peace. From there he takes us to medieval times, to a violent, but orderly sport of hunting, until the falcon cannot hear the falconer and it turns into chaotic, unreasonable violence. If you use the Bible to interpret the rest of the poem, it will be clear: Yeats is a pessimist who saw the underbelly of society.