

# Notes for the poem poison tree



**ASSIGN  
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A Poison Tree is taken from the collection of Blake's poem titled Songs of Experience which was published in the year 1793. His works focus on the theme of human nature. In his Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience he tries to bring a contrast between the innocence seen in a child and how this change as the child matures and learns the ways of the world which brings with it the harsh reality known as experience. It is a very simple poem that speaks volumes on human nature, the habit of keeping anger in one's mind and behaving in a good manner externally.

The poem consists of four sets of rhyming couplets. Blake can be called as a mystic poet. He reveals in his poetry his soul's relationship with God. He thinks deeply of man's purpose on this earth. He tries to answer the question of why and from where has man's soul originated. His mysticism was a realisation of the present. 'The kingdom of Heaven is with you' such a realization is the object of Blake's mysticism. This is the practical side of his mysticism. The poem highlights the need for letting loose suffocating emotions like anger which if kept inside your mind keeps growing everyday.

The poem starts with the poet telling us about how he expressed the anger to his friend and got rid of it. But when it came to his enemy he kept it within himself and it grew inside him to such an extent that he later had no control over it. Here he has used the metaphor of a tree to show how he watered his 'wrath' with 'fears' and 'sunned it with smiles' and 'soft deceitful wiles' letting it grow into a 'poison tree' as he calls it which bears a fruit as well. This shiny fruit when consumed by the greedy enemy leads to his death.

However we can see that there is irony in the poem because although he says not to nurture the wrath for your enemy in the mind he seems to be glad in the end to see the death of his enemy. Lines 1-8 The original title of the poem was " Christian Forbearance" . This title hints that the poem is against self-restraint. Blake believes that it is wrong to resist the natural impulses of man because restraint produces the apple of hate which destroys friendship and leads to a strained relationship. The speaker was able to end his hatred for his friend as he had given an outlet to his emotions.

But when he had a problem with his enemy he did not express it and as a result it accumulated. Here too it would not have such intensity if he had expressed it to his enemy. Instead the speaker caressed and nursed his emotions. He kept imagining that his enemy would do him harm and he lived in suffering. This increased his agony and watered his emotions of anger against this enemy. He then put on a mask of friendship towards his enemy. He pretended to be good to him and smiled at him whenever he saw him. He was a hypocrite and gave his enemy the impression that he was a friend.

But in real he was actually nurturing the feeling of hatred inside. Lines 9-16 Blake, through this poem tries to bring out his idea of free expression of emotions. Blake was against suppression of feelings and bringing about a control of one's behaviour which is necessary in our society. As part of the hypocrisy which is promoted in our society people refuse to freely express their feelings to a friend even when it is unpleasant. Hypocrisy teaches us to put up a smile on our face and to go on nurturing anger inside.

According to Blake this kind of falsehood, hypocrisy and selfishness replace sincerity, frankness and truthfulness in experience. The speaker's feeling of anger and enmity went on growing inwardly but outwardly he put up a pleasant face. His anger finally bore a fruit in the form of a bright apple. His enemy was greatly attracted to this apple and tried to steal this fruit from the speaker because he too had inwardly remained hostile to the speaker. The enemy slowly entered into the garden of the speaker and stole the apple.

He ate it without realizing the consequences. The apple being poisonous led to the death of the enemy. In the morning the speaker was happy to see the enemy lying dead under the tree. He had succeeded in his intention. The speaker's fake friendship had tricked the enemy into believing that he was true at heart and had cheated the enemy. Feeling safe the enemy had tried to cheat the speaker but he fell for the speaker's trap and met with a disastrous end. Robert Frost's 'The Road not Taken' is a beautiful poem about making choices in life.

It discusses the very common situation of coming to the crossroads and not knowing which way to choose. Like all Frost poems it begins in delight and ends in wisdom. One morning the poet came to a junction where two roads diverged in a yellow wood. He stood for a long time there, wondering which way to choose. He was sorry that he could not travel both roads. After considering the prospects of both roads, he took the second one because it was grassy and less travelled by. He kept the first road for another day. But he doubted if he should ever come back because one way leads to another way.

The poem ends quite dramatically when the poet hopes that later in his life he will be able to say with a sigh of relief that choosing the road less travelled by has made all the difference in his life. On the surface the poem is autobiographical, showing Frost's bold choice to become a poet. He had tried his hands at many things and it was later in his life that he achieved success as a poet. But it is also philosophical, showing the great human dilemma in making a choice, especially when it is the road less travelled by.