

To the virgins, to
make much of time
essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Robert Herrick's "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" there is a recurring theme of *Carpe diem* throughout the piece. *Carpe diem* means to "seize the day" or live life to the fullest. Herrick's clever use of metaphors and personification sets the tone of the story. Life is cruel in that it gives a person so little time to be young, however, "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" encourages its reader to live the best life one can. Robert Herrick's "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" is a relatively simple poem. It consists of the narrator talking to a general group of people.

It is basically a lyric poem. Lyric poetry is composed of poetry that portrays the true emotions of the poet. Robert Herrick was born in 1591 and this poem was not published until 1641. Herrick was well into his fifties at the time with an obviously strong opinion about how a person should go about living his or her life. In the first stanza Herrick says "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may" (line 1) which can mean many different things. This statement is probably referring to the rosebuds as opportunities; however they can also refer to other things like a woman's virginity or just a youth group in general.

Herrick is trying to get a message across that today we are young but tomorrow we will wilt like a rose. This keeps the overall concept of *Carpe diem* holding strong throughout the poem. The author is a firm believer in taking advantage of the present. His tone is demanding which allows the reader to theorize about the true meaning behind the author's purpose for writing this piece. Throughout the poem the author is telling the "virgins" to go and live their lives by convincing them they will eventually get old and die.

In the last stanza Herrick writes “ Then be not coy, but use your time, /And, while ye may, go marry; /For, having lost but once your prime, / you may forever tarry” (lines 13-16). Some readers get the strong sense the author is only focusing on a certain gender. It seems the poem focuses on telling women to have children and marry while they are still young. Being that Herrick is of an older age when he wrote this poem the reader can tell he is old fashioned. “ Herrick believes this gift of virginity to be a great waste if not given while it is still desirable.

Virginity is a gift for the simple reason that it can only be given once to one person, which he believes should be the husband. ” The author not only uses a number of metaphors throughout the poem, but also uses some personification and alliteration. In the second stanza he refers to the sun as a human being when he says, “ The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun, /The higher he’s a-getting, /The sooner will his race be run, /And nearer he’s to setting” (lines 8-11). He refers to the sun as a “ he” as if it is a real person. Along with personifying the sun, Herrick also writes of smiling flowers.

The creative use of words makes the poem fun and interesting. This poem suggests a didactic, yet informative kind of tone. Herrick writes as if he is telling the reader what to do, yet in a more sympathetic way. In conclusion, “ To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” is a deeply informative poem that focuses on living life to the very fullest. Although Herrick does have a slight didactic tone it seems he truly means well. The author seems to be speaking from personal memories since he well into age as he writes this piece of work.

The reader can be sympathetic towards the author because Herrick writes as if he has a big regret in life that he wishes he could take back. Life is very cruel by giving us so little time to enjoy our youthful days. Carpe diem is a wonderful expression to live by that encourages the reader throughout this poem to “ seize the day. ” One should not lie around and waste all of his or her opportunity. The focus of Herrick’s poem is that life only happens once and it is very important that to advantage of any and all things offered in this life.