

To night by percy bysshe shelley. poem analysis

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In "To Night" by Percy Bysshe Shelley, the poem, in my interpretation, is the result of Shelley's introspection and his depression. Through the poem, Shelley can express his true inner feelings. When writing about "Night," and wishing, "Swift be thy flight," (1. 7) Shelley's desire for darkness strikes the reader with confusion. Most of the population bask in the sunlight and enjoy its presence which gives both warmth and life; however, the deep-seated desire for Night to come reveals Shelley's internal sadness or depression. In a later stanza, Shelley denies Sleep, "No, not me!" (4. 7) but does not deny Death. When a person experiences depression, they often have no desire to keep living. His ambiguous response to death is what leads to my interpretation that the poet is experiencing a time of depression. His refusal of sleep, however, is curious in nature. My interpretation of this refusal of Sleep is that due to the common occurrence of nightmares when depression sets in, Shelley refuses Sleep. Depression can cause varying symptoms such as either too much sleep or lack of sleep. If nightmares were not what Shelley was afraid of, Shelley might have wanted to stop the cycle of sleeping too much in order to slowly better himself. Shelley, in the final stanza, begs Night "Swift be thine approaching flight." (5. 6) In the night, there is often found quietness which can be equated with calmness. Night might be the only sanctuary Shelley has in this anxious time. Depression is a terrible affliction that affects each individual differently, and so through this poem Shelley can express how it has affected him.

In Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry," Shelley breaks away from his figurative language and possible expression of his depression to talk about poetry as a whole. Shelley wrote, "Yet it is by no means essential that a poet should

accommodate his language to this traditional form.” (8. 2-3) Shelley comments that poetry is not bound to any specific form. It takes the shape of whatever form the poet gives it. Shelley succinctly summed up his message “ A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth.” (9. 1) When looking at this quote with Shelley’s poem in mind, one can see that even though it is not particularly an optimistic “ image of life” being created, it is an image nonetheless. Shelley goes on to state, “[Poetry] awakens and enlarges the mind itself.” (13. 6) Shelley suggests that poetry is one of the many things that helps builds upon the foundation of the human conscious and our collective intelligence. “ Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar.” Poetry is not only what augments human’s’ minds, but also provides the lens through which we can see the true beauty of the world. Shelley also writes, “ Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man.” (13. 22) Poetry is the instrument through which authors can express themselves, expand understanding and reasoning, see the often unseen great qualities of the world, and it can improve one’s morality. This is why poetry is so important to Shelley.