

Romantic period argumentative essay

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

1.

In William Blake's "Songs of Innocence and of Experience," Blake attempts to dig into the very nature of existence and perception; part of the primary message of the works is that childhood is an innocent time that should be protected, but it is capable of being corrupted by the structures and rules of the adult world. As we get older and move through life, getting more experiences, we lose our innocence and start to become adults because of what the government, the church and the rich do to us.

In "The Lamb," we learn about how we came about, or we at least start asking: "Little Lamb who made thee" is a question, not an identification (Blake). It is definitely a clearly Christian message, since it states that he who "calls himself a Lamb," which is a typically Christian identification, made children. The poem itself is an incredibly optimistic and potentially naive view of life, which is the perfect perspective to view as a child. Here, we see what is good about Christianity; Jesus loves us, He made us and he is able to explain our questions about the world, but we do not learn much about what makes the world bad.

In "Holy Thursday," a large group of diverse children go to church (St. Paul's Cathedral), where they gladly sing and pray to God. Meanwhile, the older men, "wise guardians of the poor," stand nearby and watch. The poem tells us to cherish "pity," which means the children - they are our future, and children of God. Here, Blake warns us that if we do not do this, you will "drive an angel from your door," and no longer have the protection of God (Blake). By noting just how equally all these different boys and girls move

together, the poem shows the potential for unity, and the supreme goodness of children - the older people sit "beneath" the children.

In "The Divine Image," the figures of Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love are all described as "virtues of delight," and are seen as the things people pray for when they are in trouble. Since they represent God - "our father dear" - we are also reflected in them, as we carry all of those attributes within us as well (Blake). To that end, while we are worshipping God we must also worship "the human form divine," which is supreme to the point where everyone, no matter their differences, must agree that it is great. By noting these various virtues, we also recognize what is good about ourselves, and what we must keep in mind as we go through life.

In "The Human Abstract," we get a much closer look at these virtues, and see the evil that can possibly exist within them. Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love are also supplemented by Cruelty, Humility, Mystery and Deceit, which all seek to undermine people's happiness and take them away from what is good. The "fruit" of Deceit is "ruddy and sweet to eat," Mystery is a "dismal shade," Humility takes root "underneath his foot," and so on; these four concepts are personified as a great tree that plants Cruelty in the heart and grows within it (Blake). The poem, then, warns us to avoid the "selfish loves" that undermine our own goodness.

In "The Sick Rose," the speaker tells a Rose that it is "sick" by means of an "invisible worm," which is turning its "bed of crimson joy" into an engine of destruction (Blake). In this poem, we learn about how good things can turn bad, or become rotten from the inside out; this is also representative of the

dangers of lust. The rose, representing love, is ruined by the invisible worm of a relationship, which makes it wither and die through the aura of secrecy it has about its relationship. The rose is so ashamed of its love that it withers away.

I do not think that I would necessarily change what I say about the Blake poems dependent on the gender of my child. These lessons are both important for boys and girls; perhaps the lesson in "The Sick Rose" is somewhat more tailored as written for young girls and warnings about poor attitudes toward sex, but the lesson about shame and secrecy remains the same for both. I think, overall, I would like to have children read more of these poems, as it teaches them important and practical lessons about faith and virtue, as well as their corruptible nature.

2.

One day in 1802, Dorothy and William Wordsworth came upon a field of daffodils, and wrote separately about their experiences. In Dorothy Wordsworth's journal, she described in prose form the experience of walking along the endless field of daffodils, becoming more and more astonished at the size and beauty of the sight. William Wordsworth later drew from this to write his poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," in which William describes much the same experience, then elaborating on it to describe its status as a lasting and happy memory. Both works take much different approaches to the experience, while I much prefer William's sense of lyricism and sparseness of description over Dorothy's slightly more mundane description of the event.

In Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journal*, she describes the first entrance of the Wordsworths to the field of daffodils in a rather mundane, conversational way: "When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow park we saw a few daffodils close to the water side" (1802). Here, Dorothy goes on to describe the actual logistics and layout of the daffodil field, still maintaining a sense of wonder, as they "fancied" theories about what caused the daffodil field to grow so rapidly. For the first part of her entry, she is simply describing the field with very little detail, just noting how long the field itself is. However, as she goes on, she starts to imagine its effect on her, and the attributes of the flowers themselves: "some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness," using run-on sentences to convey the rambling, flowing nature of the beauty of the field (1802). Her primary concern is of the field of daffodils as an event happening alongside the rest of nature; she describes the field in the same terms as she rest of the environment. She notes the wind and the lake, as well as the highway, in the same breath as the field of daffodils, noting the whole experience as sublime. The flowers, to her, looked "so gay ever dancing ever changing," which is something William echoes in his poem later on (1802). Overall, her descriptions are still beautiful, but fairly mundane as they do not necessarily describe how they affect her beyond her recognition of their beauty and splendor.

However, William manages to use this experience to craft a magnificent poem that not only describes the sublime beauty of the daffodil field, but manages to reflect on the effect it has on his own experiences and perception of the world. Instead of merely describing the circumstances of

finding the daffodil field, he "wandered lonely as a Cloud" as he did so; in this way, he could be described as being left alone to his thoughts, while Dorothy's visit of the field with William was inexorably part of the experience; she was sharing it with him while he is lost in his own thoughts. However, as soon as he sees the field, it is "a host of dancing Daffodils," the word 'dancing' being used almost exclusively to show what they are doing (1807). Dorothy explains the wind as what is blowing them around, but William chooses to see them as dancing on their own, perhaps for him. William even uses some of Dorothy's phrasing in wholly new ways, reinterpreting the experience as much more personal: while Dorothy sees the flowers as "gay" for their dancing, William's gaiety is found in himself in reaction to the flowers - "A poet could not but be gay in such a laughing company" (1807).

William's largest departure from Dorothy's account is how he describes its effect on him. The last stanza of the poem tells the reader how it helps William find peace in "pensive mood(s)"; linking the happy memory of the field with a way to comfort himself in solitude, William reminds us just how wonderful images and memories stick with us long after. This is what turns them from fleeting pleasures into lifelong bliss. Once he remembers the field in these low moods, "then my heart with pleasure fills, and dances with the Daffodils" (1807). It is for this reason primarily that I prefer William's poetry to Dorothy's prose; while the stream of consciousness writing is interesting, it more or less gives a mundane rundown of the field of daffodils and its vague beauty. By seeing William's awestruck reaction to it, we then learn exactly how important these kinds of images can be to our own lives.

1.

William Blake's illustrations provide an interesting look into the visual imagination of the poet that created the text works themselves; instead of seeing other artist's interpretations of a poet's work, we see another way of seeing what is in the poet's mind. In the case of "Songs of Innocence and Experience," the corresponding poems are somewhat more intricately informed and elaborated upon once the artwork is inserted into their contexts.

In "The Lamb," a very pastoral scene is depicted; against a bright sky and rolling hills, a peaceful farm is shown in happy and productive use. A straw hut overflowing with hay lays on the right, with a young shepherd boy standing in front of it tending to a flock of happy, content lambs, some sitting and some standing and feeding. The hut, the lambs and the shepherd are all painted with the same or similar tan colors, noting their symbiotic relationship, and the earth tones of the rest of the painting shows everything at peace. This helps to illustrate the positivity and warmth noted by the poem, which promises that we are all taken care of by the ultimate Lamb of God.

In "Holy Thursday," a very linear but crammed and busy painting is shown, with two groups of people framing the text; on the top, the diverse group of children attending school, clergy in the lead, walking to the right (presumably toward St. Paul's). Below the text, just as the poem implies, are the adults, the older and wiser men and women, standing "beneath" the children as they are meant to. This painting further enhances the text itself,

as it shows people walking the path of God toward their church, and placing the two groups visually where they are meant to be metaphorically, thus hammering the point home for the audience.

In "The Divine Image," the virtues of Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love are depicted as four heavenly and happy figures at various positions along a winding and bright green plant, weaving its way around the text. The whole image conveys playfulness and joy, as the four figures are holding hands, in standing or playful positions (one is in repose, the other attempting to fly), wearing brightly colored robes. This is meant to be the actual 'divine image' in question, as the lively and invigorated plant that represents these four virtues as well asks you to play along with them, your eye following along its path as you read the poem. The bright colors and sprightly nature of the painting allow it to further convey the positivity of these four virtues.

In "The Human Abstract," the metaphor for Cruelty as a large tree, full of Humility, Mystery and Deceit, is made manifest in Blake's painting. The painting itself depicts a large, brown, leafless tree snaking its way up the right side of the plate, with a skeleton of some kind on the bottom of the tree. This is an intensely sickening and depressing image (possibly representative of Humility standing at the root and allowing Cruelty to overtake him). The tree as a life-sucking force is then established, as everything about the painting seems dead and/or dying. This shows perfectly how the varying aspects of previously-friendly virtues Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love can also be draining and evil.

The painting for "The Sick Rose" elaborates on the poems' message of wilting beauty and the danger inherent in love, by depicting a dying rose at the bottom of the painting, dark red and disgusting. The stems frame the actual body of the poem, growing around it and then curling down around to capture it. Spiky thorns line the stems, not in random patterns like roses are more likely to do but instead in rows, almost looking like shark's teeth. To that end, love is shown as extremely dangerous, as well as intensely alluring; the jagged lines of the thorns combined with the sensuous curling of the stems and leaves making the rose a deadly yet sensual presence. The rose itself is a large, red bulb upon which everything else rests; this shows just how important and deeply-felt love can be, for good or ill.

Works Cited

Norton Anthology of English Literature (8th ed.) Vol. 2.