

# Rising five by norman nicholson: a commentary essay sample

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



The poem "Rising Five" is written by Norman Nicholson. It is about the human tendency to look forward to the future, wondering what will happen, hoping for the best and anticipating anything positive (at the expense of living for the present), and how people keep wanting to rush through certain stages of life, finally rushing to death itself.

The poem begins with the description of a little boy soon turning five, and his excitement about his impending birthday. The poet, Norman Nicholson, stresses that in the beginning we all look forward to the future.

Nicholson uses the seasons and the times of the day to show different stages of life. E. g.: Stanza 2, here, spring symbolizes youth and freshness - "It was the season after blossoming, before the forming of the fruit. .." (lines 14 and 15) Different times of the day are shown in stanza 3, lines 20 and 21 - "Not day, but rising night." The evening symbolizes old age. Norman Nicholson also uses the metaphor of developing fruit to compare with the different stages of a developing person - lines 26-28 - "We never see the flower, but only the fruit in the flower; never the fruit, but only the rot in the fruit". The 'flower' is a young child, looking for the 'fruit', which is adulthood. When in the stage of 'fruit', we only see the 'rot', which is old age. Another metaphor is present in line 12 - "And stem shook out the creases from their frills", ". This is as though nature puts on a dress for each season, and takes it off and dons another one instead for the next season.

This poem has four stanzas. The first, second and fourth stanzas follow the same patterns, and have the same number of lines, and the sizes are the same as well. But stanza 3 has only six lines, and each line has only about

three or four words in it. “ The dust dissected tangential light. ..” – this speaks of old age, where the ‘ dust’ is oldness, dissecting through youth which is the ‘ tangential light’. This stanza is probably small and has no particular pattern, because the stage that it describes (i. e.: fifties, sixties), is pretty quick and seems to whiz by. It also has an air of unpredictability and instability, as life usually is.

The poem has no fixed rhyming patterns which mirrors the unpredictability of life itself. Some parts of the poem have a stronger rhythm than others. For example, stanza 2 is vigorous and jumpy. It describes youth in the form of spring. Youth is playful and quickly paced. Words like ‘ bubbled’ and ‘ doubled’ (line 11) give the impression of a boiling potion in a cauldron, ready to jump out and gives the feeling of expecting something. Stanza 3 is a bit slow compared to the rest of the poem, because it describes ageing – “ Not day, but rising night” – evening depicts old age. Certain words used in the poem give different messages. Line 7: “ Fifty six months or perhaps a week more ...”. Nicholson probably chose to use “ fifty six weeks” rather than “ four years” to emphasize how much the boy wanted to be older, and how precise he wanted to be about that. Using a bigger number (i. e. 56 instead of 4) is in keeping with the proud tone of the stanza.

Alliteration occurs twice in line 11 – “ bubbled and doubled” / “ buds unbuttoned” adding to the jumpy nature of youth which this stanza (Le. Stanza 2 ) describes. The word “ dissect” in line 19 gives an air of an almost evil nature. We use the word dissect when cutting up something, especially

something that had life, like an animal. Nicholson probably used this word to show 'death' dissecting 'life and youth'.

I think the poem deals with the theme of forgetting to 'live', and not appreciating life, and how humans never are happy with what they have, and only want more. The poem is a gentle criticism of humanity and its faults. The poem is very moving and causes one to reflect on the passing of time, calling to mind John Lennon's famous quote, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans."

#### Bibliography

IGCSE English Literature teaching notes from Cambridge International Examinations'Reading Poetry' – Myszor, F. Hodder and Stoughton:  
2001'Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy)' by John Lennon Released 1982