

# Chipper jones



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Chipper Jones ENGL 1102 Final Essay Cierra Winkler December 3, 2010 The Masterpiece From William Blake The Romantic era of literature involved very subjective, personal, emotional, and imaginative writing. In William Blake's poem "The Chimney Sweeper", part of his collection from Songs of Innocence, a young boy gives readers some insight into what life was like for people in his line of work. During the late 1700's and into the early 1800's, a person's well-being was determined by the social class into which they were born. The children could not choose what social class they were born into. Therefore, they adjusted accordingly in their life. For the young boy, he is faced with numerous struggles, however, he remains convinced that his life after death will be much better. Blake wrote about injustices throughout the world, yet in "The Chimney Sweeper", the injustice of child labor had not been touched. For an orphan, like the child, life was all about survival. Although industry was becoming a more important part of the nation's economy and in the setting of the story, England was still largely dependent on the feudal system in which powerful feudal lords ruled everyone and everything. No matter what, the young boy was never going to surpass the limits of his social class. Even worse for him, he had start working at a young age once his parents died. Blake places further meaning on to this fact by using metaphors, repetition, alliteration, and other literary devices throughout the poem. Nevertheless, Blake sufficiently cracks into the pathos of the audience, especially in the romantic era, in his epic poem "The Chimney Sweeper. " In the first two lines, Blake gives us an image of an anguished child in a state of agony or even in a state of corruption. The color black seems to be very important because it is used to represent sin against innocence, the color of the white snow. Accordingly, this is the social state in <https://assignbuster.com/chipper-jones/>

which the country was facing. The government was corrupt, and as result, much of society was in agony. The Romantic era in which Blake wrote, involved nearly all of the French Revolution. Basically, the revolution was a war of the social classes. The middle class believed that in order to gain equality they had to get rid of the privileges that were stopping the progress of their rise in society. To do this they had to gain power within the government and make changes, such as, improving the tax system, creating a fair system of production where profits went to the producer, improving the whole economic system of the government, and plus many more. The revolution was a fight for equality; it was not a rebellion against poverty. Many of the French people had learned to deal with poverty for they had been living in scarceness for centuries. Blake's story about the boy creates a sense of compassion for a young child who is caught up in all the mess. Nevertheless, the audience is swept into the heart of the boy because although his life is dim, his soul continues to shine. Also in the first stanza, third line, Blake shows the same child weeping, when he really means to say sweeping, because in reality the child is grieving. The use of this metonymy begins the initiation into the true meaning behind the poem, which is a comparison to the society of France during the French Revolution. Although the people were torn and battered inside, they continued to work because they had no other choice. For example, during the Reign of Terror, if anyone were to speak out against the dictatorship of Maximilien Robespierre, they would have been immediately eliminated. Blake, who was a closet genius, chose to speak out in a different light, by using multiple meanings in his poems to describe the conditions that he and the rest of France faced during the Romantic era. Regardless of the literary technique, Blake truly created a

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masterpiece in his story of the chimney boy. In the second stanza, the child is pictured in a more positive mood. The young boy in the beginning of the poem seems not to understand the gravity of his own condition and seems not to have even been allowed to grieve over his own mother's death. Along with his own hardships, he also narrates the one of his friend Tom Dacre, who is sad about having to shave his hair due to his job. By comparing Tom's head to a lamb's back, Blake brings up the image of an innocent piece of a young boy, his hair, being brought to the floor and exposing a cold bare head. Something the children had to endure as act of humiliation. Once again, the audience is further forced to sympathize with the young children. The main character is beyond his age in maturity and knowledge. He encourages others to look beyond the struggles they face currently, and see into the light that God promises. Likewise, this writing style by Blake was common for English Romantics. Feelings of intuition, simple language, and freedom were common amongst writers of the era. (Winkler Notes).

Nevertheless, Blake's metaphor of the lamb and Tom's head allows the reader to picture the awkwardness and embarrassment that chimney sweepers faced. The serious and dark tone the poem starts with is changed by the unexpected contrast of lighthearted images such as an " Angel with a bright key" (13) and " down a green plain leaping laughing they run" (15) present in the third and fourth stanzas corresponding to Tom's dream. In his dream, Tom first pictured his friends and himself locked inside black coffins, which represent the dark narrow passages of the chimneys. In comparison to society, this represents the lifestyle that much of England had to live in due to restrictions placed on them by their hierarchy. William Blake lived in this poverty and experienced the social injustices, by comparing the passage of

the chimney and the state of society, it is clear that the overall social well-being was dark and gloomy. Later, the boys were all released from the coffins by an Angel and afterwards washed themselves up and played, and no longer had to carry their sweeping bags. This dream represents the lost childhood and the wants of these young boys which were most of the times dirty with soot, badly fed, badly treated, and exposed to many dangers such as being burned and killed inside the chimneys — the black coffins. This contrast of the colorful, warm, and happy dream only intensifies the cold, dark atmosphere of the boys' reality. Even though unreal, the dream achieves a magnitude big enough to soothe the boy on its way to work on the next day. Amid the child's helplessness and naivety all the reader can do is to feel sorry and sympathize with these kids' eminent, dark fates. Similar to the story, at the top of every dark narrow chimney lye's the light of nature. In the same way, at the end of the revolution the hope of a turning point for society was present. Blake's purpose for writing the poem most closely resembles the social order and social welfare experienced during the French Revolution. Even though all seemed dark, the light was near and people could see it. Each stanza throughout the poem represents a part of the struggle that society will face during the revolution. In the fifth stanza it states, " Then naked and white, all their bags left behind, They rise upon clouds and sport in the wind; And the angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy, He'd have God for his father, and never want joy. "(Blake). The author utilizes strong adjectives through the course of this stanza, thus emphasizing the rising from the soot and rubble of the chimneys to the heaven that the boy longs for. Likewise, France must rise from the ashes that the government has oppressed them into and flourish into a stable nation.

Although such a short poem, it goes very in depth into multiple connotations. In establishing the pathos, the young boy is a powerful character as he is a face for the audience to sympathize with. At a time when the child is young and innocent, he is forced to take part in the same cruel labor that low-class adults faced. This often times lead to an early death because of the toll that the ash had on a chimney sweepers lungs. The child locates the cause of his difficulty in his own happiness. He is left with an enduring awareness of his innocence and with the capacity to access the world of innocence to a degree. This ability by the child makes it impossible for the reader to ignore the sympathetic feelings one would have for a child facing torture of this magnitude. Nevertheless, even as cultures have changed, sympathy for young children remains, and by using the child to create pathos, the audience is captivated into the story. As stated previously, the poem is a representation of the overall society in England, therefore, by reading the poem the audience in turn becomes a character. The poem " The Chimney Sweeper, " in Songs of Innocence, protests the living conditions, working conditions, and the overall treatment of young chimney sweepers in the cities of England. Martin Nurmi discusses the predicament of the chimney sweeper extensively in his essay " Fact and Symbol in ' The Chimney Sweeper.'" In 1788, there was an attempt to pass an act to improve the treatment and working conditions of these young children. This would have made many people, including Blake, aware of the lives that these chimney sweeps would live. For instance, they slept in cellars on bags of the soot that they had swept (Nurmi 17), and they were poorly fed and clothed. They would sweep the chimneys naked so their masters would not have to replace clothing that would have been ruined in the chimneys, and they were rarely

bathed. Those who were not killed by fires in chimneys usually died early anyway of either respiratory problems or cancer of the scrotum. Sweeping chimneys also left children with ankles and spines deformed and twisted kneecaps from climbing up chimneys that were about nine inches in diameter (Nurmi 16). Many people viewed them as subhuman creatures and not a part of human society. The harsh conditions the children faced were horrendous in their own since, but, other social classes were receiving the same treatment from the government, hence, the audience becoming a character. Nevertheless, Blake wrote this poem as a way for others to see the treatment all of England was receiving. I believe that Blake made "The Chimney Sweeper" clear enough that the common man could understand the ideas being expressed. For instance, in Songs of Innocence, the chimney sweepers are offered hope by the outcome of Tom Dacre's dream. The narrator offers comfort that no harm or punishment will come to those who obey. Also, Tom is used to illustrate another point. He is originally frightened but later feels "happy and warm", showing that one can experience a certain degree of happiness in the even in the worst of circumstances. Likewise, the state of turmoil that England was in placed many citizens in agony. However, at the end of every dark tunnel is a light, and that is one of the prime messages expressed through the poem. The imagery Blake uses also adds to the overall appeal of the story. Throughout the story, the colors black and white are used to represent hope and despair. For example, in describing the child's hair he uses the color white, while in describing the color of the sweeper's body's, Blake uses the color black. The most powerful use of the imagery comes in lines eighteen and nineteen, "Then naked and white, all their bags left behind, They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind"

In using the words naked and white, the image of an infant is shown. Infants are born into the world innocent and pure with hope for their life. By using this image the reader is shown the hopefulness of the speaker as they expect to be taken from the world they are living in to heaven, where they can live in innocence. Overall, William Blake's poem "The Chimney Sweeper", part of his collection from Songs of Innocence, has proven to be an absolute masterpiece. From the time it was written, people from the era could relate to the events that the young boy was facing. They knew exactly what it felt like to be put down from a higher level that they could not control, however, by having the courage to look beyond the misery, one could find peace through the darkness of their life. By using metaphors, repetition, alliteration, and other literary devices throughout the poem, Blake is able to place more intense meanings into his words and themes. In the end, this poem sufficiently captures the pathos of the audience and brings them into the life of the innocent little boy.

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