

An acre of grass



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An Acre of Grass Story. The poet is " at the end of [his] life. " " Picture and book remain,/An acre of green grass/For air and exercise". He is losing his " strength of body". He finds that " imagination" and reason - " the mill of the mind" cannot find the truth. All he can hope for is " an old man's frenzy", a madness of loneliness and age. Only this will bring the truth to him.

Structure. 4 stanzas of 6 lines each. The last two lines of each stanza rhyme. Each line is short. A certain pattern to the syllables, but the rhythm is broken and uneven, hardly melodious. Lines 2 and 4 of stanzas 3 and 4 rhyme.

Language. Simple language in the first stanza, perhaps to echo simple desires. The language moves to the abstract in the second stanza: " temptation", " imagination", " the mill of the mind". There are literary references in the third stanza. Throughout the poem, the language is relatively simple and common. Diction. Impersonal first stanza, entirely third person. Second and third stanza are first person and the fourth stanza returns to the impersonal. The imperative - " must I" echoes the " beat upon the wall" in the third stanza - this is an overall 'violent upheaval' stanza, the climax of the poem. Tone.

The tone is gentle and assenting in the first stanza. In the second stanza it becomes confessional, sharing the poet's inadequacies. In the third stanza the tone is angry, pleading, desirous, and in the fourth stanza transcendental, calm. The pinnacle of experience. Mood. The mood seems resigned in the first stanza, resigned to death, to a quiet fading. The pace quickens in the second stanza. The mood is suddenly frenetic in the third stanza, desperate, questing, hankering. The fourth stanza has an exultant, transcendental mood. Poetic Devices. Alliteration - " green grass", " life...

loose", " mill... mind", " Myself must... emake". Figures of Speech. " Midnight", " life's end" - euphemisms for death. " Nothing stirs but a mouse" - cliché. Imagery. " Picture and book remain/An acre of green grass/For air and exercise" symbolic of the simple outward things of life, that are left to the poet and leave him unsatisfied. His body is " an old house". " Nothing stirs but a mouse" - he feels he is nothing but a mouse, that the outward pleasures are but a little bit of him and the rest is empty. The first stanza has concrete imagery. In the second stanza, the poet cuts to the heart of what he speaks of. The mind and its servants, imagination and reason, a " mill... onsuming rag and bone" cannot find truth. The work, the thoughts are all misleading. In the third stanza, Yeats concludes that frenzy and madness will guide him to truth. He alludes to various literary figures. Timon (of Athens, a Shakespearian hero) began as a wealthy noble, and ruined himself with generosity. He is deserted and curses his old friends and leaves the city. He finds gold but cannot use it. When the Athenians come to beg for his help, he shows them where to hang themselves. His grave is on the seashore, and its epitaph expresses hatred for all mankind. King Lear of Britain had three daughters.

Each is to get a share of the kingdom based on their affection for him. Cordelia says she loves him according to her duty, nothing more or less. She is banished, disinherited. She marries the king of France without a dowry. The other two sisters, possessed of half the kingdom each, eventually turn their father out of doors in a storm. The French land in England. Lear's rage and exposure have driven him to madness. The French are defeated, Cordelia hanged and Lear dies of grief. The poet William Blake was an

engraver. He was a revolutionist, bitterly disillusioned by the outcome of the French Revolution.

In his later years, he relinquished hope of his poetry being understood even by his circle. Most of his admirers considered him mad, if a genius. Again, in the fourth stanza, the imagery refers to the abstract - "frenzy... mind" but the image is powerful. The eagle pierces the clouds, disturbs the dead. Theme. The elderly poet refuses to fade with age, relaxing into simple pleasures as his body deteriorates. Reason and imagination have failed him in his quest for truth. He wants a frenzy, a madness that will reveal the truth to him, leaving him with a mind that reaches to heaven and to the dead, an "eagle mind".

In this poem transcendental truth is placed above the simple pleasures, and even above the mind. Reason and imagination, even sanity, are nothing in comparison to the quest for truth. Inspired by re-reading Nietzsche especially his *The Dawn of the Day*, this poem bears a positive message for old age and annihilates any consideration that an aged man is useless. The poem begins with a resignation over the acceptance of the poet's vulnerability towards approaching old age, but with the inception of the third stanza, particularly through images of beating against the wall, shaking the dead in their shrouds and mind like an eagle he poet asserts an optimistic note of trying to realise his forgotten worth. He seeks inspiration from such illustrious old men such as Timon, Lear, Blake and Angelo whose mental strength was never undermined even with diminishing physical verve. Yeats' Last Poems concerned old age and in most of them he had a demeaning view of this phenomenon. But with the undeniable occurrence of the same in his own life,

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he wished to over-rule all claims of physical decrepitude which would conspire to nullify his intellectual accomplishments.

In spite of the inevitable degeneration of bodily capabilities he wishes to possess a mind as strong, steady and agile as the eagle. Such a mind will continue to thrive even in the midst of being neglected and forgotten by others. In a state of creative frenzy, this mind would produce such awesome results which could make the dead move as though alive, and pierce through clouds of anonymity. Thus with a remaking of his mind and soul, he wishes to conceive the conceivable, indifferent to the fact of whether burdened with old age or not.