

Ode on a grecian urn by john keats. poem interpretation

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Keats “ Ode on a Grecian Urn”

John Keats was a poet who was passionate about the world of imagination. He strongly believed in the arts and beauty as being everlasting. We can view his love for immortality in his poem, Ode on a Grecian Urn, where the author romanticizes and meditates on the visions that he sees on an urn. In the end, Keats reflects on his own imperfect writing to the masterpiece that is painted on the urn. The poem is a reflection between the arts: The art that the author sees in the Urn, in contrast to, the art that the author is writing on paper.

In the poem, Keats reflects upon the images painted on the urn and how it is better at telling its story compared to how the Keats is writing it in rhyme.

Within the first stanza, Keats states:

“ Thou still unravish’d bride of quietness,

Thou foster-child and slow time,

Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:” (1-4)

Keats seems to be reflecting upon the oral traditions and saying that the unheard is better because it is unravished. It also seems to be implying that the art painted on the urn is better at describing the story, instead of the poetry that the author is writing because words can’t describe fluently the visions imprinted on the urn. The urn reflects perfection while the author portrays imperfection. This just shows how art is much more powerful than

writing when it comes to portrayal of a story. The author tries to convey a kind of agony towards its reader making it feel like in order for the audience to understand what the author is trying to make us envision, we must see it for ourselves to understand the beauty that the poet is trying to create.

As the poem flows, Keats focuses on the imagery of the urn. In the third stanza, he focuses on different portions of the urn: " Who are these coming to the sacrifice? / To what green altar, O mysterious priest, / Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies, / And all her silken flanks with garlands dress?" (31-34). Keats seems to be trying his best to bridge the gap between the art on the urn and the art that he is writing on paper by being as descriptive as possible. However, it seems as if he can't. He seems envious that his poetic creativity can't keep up with the enticement of the urn due to its perfection. We can also see that Keats is envious of the immortality that the urn holds. Keats states,

" When old age shall this generation waste, / Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe / Than ours, a friend to man, to who thou say'st, / " Beauty is truth, truth beauty," - that is all /Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." (46-50) This statement seems to be directed towards the urn by implying that it will remain forever, even after Keats has passed to the afterlife, and that Keats poetry will not remain for the years to come unlike the beauty of the urn.

In conclusion, Keats seems to be distraught by the idea that the urn holds much more powerful influence over the arts than he does with his creative imagination. However, through the poetry we can see the imagination and

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influence that inspired the vision of an urn into a glorified piece of poetry that holds much more internal impact on the author on what is necessarily perfect and everlasting.