

LONDON BY WILLIAM BLAKE

What is the poem about?

- Written during the Industrial Revolution.
- London was the most powerful city in the world at the time.
- Far from being a city of dreams, Blake portrays London as a dirty, corrupt place.
- It is written in the first person; describing what William Blake sees as he walks about the city he used to love so much.
- Everywhere he looks he sees how power is being abused; he sees a clear contrast between those with power and those without.

- Abuse of power: Shows how the city became dirty and corrupt with the abuse of power.
- Individual experience: written as a personal account to create immediate empathy.
- Loss / Anger: Those without power are miserable and trapped and feel unable to

Written in the first person—describes what William Blake sees as he walks around the city of London.

Rhythm is broken—only 7 syllables in this line which means it is important. Strong, repetitive, negative words show the extent of the suffering he sees.

I wonder thro' each charter'd street, Near where the charter'd Thames does flow. And mark in every face I meet

Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

Repetition of the word 'mark' emphasises its importance. Gives the impression that people are branded with misery and sadness.

In every cry of every Man, which Blake sees. In every Infants cry of fear, In every voice: [in every ban, The mind-forg'd manacles, I hear

Lots of negative emotive language shows the hopelessness Blake feels.

Repetition of the

word 'every'

gives it intensity.

Shows the scale

of suffering

How the Chimney-sweepersicry! Every blackning Church appalls, And the napless Soldiers (sigh); Runs in blood down Palace walls ,

Alliteration emphasises the line. People feel trapped and are unable to do anything about it. Not trapped physically, but mentally. Links to the theme of Lack of Power.

ing but they are not.

Reflects how Blake feels about the

Church. 'Blackning' and 'appalls' reflects corruption: they should be help-

Chartered means structured;

controlled. Shows how those in

power have taken ownership

of everything in London, even

the river.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear

How the youthful Harlots (curse)

Blasts the new-born Infants tear

And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

Words associated with disease represents cor-

ruption.

Rhythm broken again—only 7 syllables in these lines. They are important. Shows the true extent of the misery he sees—young prostitutes shouting at their babies who are crying. They represent the least powerful people in society and they are angry and miserable with nothing to look forward to.

Oxymoron: contradicting terms used to show that what was beautiful (marriage) has become tainted.

only 7 syllables in these lines rather than 8. This means they are important as Blake wants them to stand out. They reflect the abuse of power he sees and the effect it has on those without power (the chimney sweepers cry, and the soldier that feels

Rhuthm is broken—there are

Structure & Form

♦The poem is written in four stanzas (verses); each with four lines (this makes it a quatrain).

Each verse has an alternative rhyme scheme (first line rhymes with third line and second rhymes with fourth).

◊Largely written in iambic tetrameter which echoes the walking pace of Blake walking around London.

◊Iambic tetrameter is broken in lines 4, 9-12 and 14-15. This is to emphasise these lines.

♦ The last line in each stanza is a powerful one.

language (hoices:

- Written in the first person—from the perspective of Blake as he walks around London. This creates immediate empathy for the reader, who feels they are walking around with him.
- Repetition: Blake uses repetition regularly throughout the poem to emphasise particular issues.
- Emotive language: uses lots of negative emotive language which paints a picture for the reader about exactly how much suffering he sees and the impact it is having.

What other poems does it compare well to?

ABUSE OF INDIVIDUAL EX-LOSS / AN-**POWER PERIENCES** GER Ozymandias The Prelude **Poppies** My Last Duchess Remains The Emigree Tissue War Photographer Kamikaze Checking out me **Poppies** Exposure History

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