

Hopkins

Pied Beauty

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What Might You Be Asked?

Themes

- Grandeur and magnificence of God's creation
- God's presence in nature
- The purpose of life - living as God intended
- Mental suffering, despair, separation from God
- Sin and redemption



What Might You Be Asked?

Style

- Unconventional language
- Imagery of nature
- Strict poetic forms



Pied Beauty

- One of Hopkins' curtailed or shortened sonnets. He invented the form and called it a 'curtal sonnet'. ('Curtal' is an archaic form of 'curtailed'.)
- It follows the basic pattern of a Petrarchan sonnet but the octave becomes a sestet and the sestet becomes a quatrain with an extra tail piece attached.
- 'Pied Beauty' is written in sprung rhythm, a type of rhythm Hopkins developed based on the patterns of British folk songs and poetry. It consists of a stressed syllable followed by varied groups of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Hopkins was writing in the Victorian era: a time in which man-made uniformity and order was valued far more highly than was variety and diversity, but he deliberately extols the virtues of 'All things counter, original, spare, strange', and all that is 'fickle'.

Hopkins himself was an unusual and often contrary character, so this poem may be seen as a protest against the age in which he lived and a defiant statement to the effect that God is in all things.



Glory be to God for dappled things -
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced -
fold, fallow, and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.
All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

* 'Glory be to God' is a variation of one of the Jesuit mottoes: 'to the greater glory of God' and the final line is a variation of 'praise be to God always', another Jesuit motto.

* Sestet opens with praise of God and there follows praise of the beauty of his creations.

* Final five lines of the poem are a reversal of this order: the wonder and strangeness of nature is listed first and then linked back to God.

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- Note Hopkins' astonishment and delight at the variety of God's creations. He does not know how God has created such an abundance of riches, but he is thrilled by the diversity of His creation.
- The alliteration in line ten links concepts which are otherwise opposites: 'swift, slow; sweet, sour', and even - at a slight stretch - 'adazzle, dim'. However varied and contrasting, all things are evidence of God's creation and Hopkins marvels at His work.

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* Prayerful offering: 'Glory be to God for dappled things'.

* Examples of all the 'dappled things' Hopkins admires so much.

* Blue sky dappled with white clouds, much like the 'brinded' or streaked pattern of a cow's hide.

* Sky and earth are brought together just as they are in 'Spring'

* Pattern of colour on a trout's scales is 'rose-moles all in a stipple'.

* Image of fallen, opened chestnuts being dark and dull on the outside but bright and shining inside can be seen as a moral reflection: perhaps as representing goodness or the purity of a shining soul underneath a hard or unprepossessing exterior.

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* Chestnuts - link between man and nature

* Lines five and six - man's connection with the land

* Fields reflect man's work: 'plotted and pieced', ploughed, left idle for a time or turned into enclosures for animals.

The language in the the final three lines reflects the impact of man's work on the land. The alliterative 'plotted', 'pierced', 'plough'; 'fold' and 'fallow' capture the determination and dedication of those who work the land.

Their jobs are orderly and repetitive, as is the language.

* All of man's 'trades' and the equipment that goes with each of them are – like the list of natural wonders – part of God's work and they glorify or 'Praise Him'.

This Colourtrend paint ad is wonderful, not least because it is read by Fiona Shaw. It would be hard to find a more beautiful video rendition of 'Pied Beauty'.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?
feature=youtu.be&v=x8gZSWuwxJO&app=desktop](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=x8gZSWuwxJO&app=desktop)

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