



Home > Poems & Poets > Browse Poems > Ode to a Nightingale by John Keats

## Ode to a Nightingale

BY JOHN KEATS

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
     My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
     One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:  
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
     But being too happy in thine happiness,—  
     That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees  
         In some melodious plot  
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
     Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
     Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
 Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
     Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!  
 O for a beaker full of the warm South,  
     Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
     With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
     And purple-stained mouth;  
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
     And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
     What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
     Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;  
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,  
     Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;  
     Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
     And leaden-eyed despairs,  
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
     Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,  
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:  
Already with thee! tender is the night,  
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;  
But here there is no light,  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;  
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;  
And mid-May's eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy!  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
    To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
    As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.  
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades  
    Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
    Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep  
        In the next valley-glades:  
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
    Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

---

## RELATED CONTENT

Discover this poem's context and related poetry, articles, and media.

### POET

John Keats

### SUBJECTS

Living, Death, Disappointment & Failure, Sorrow & Grieving, Time & Brevity, Activities, Eating & Drinking, Nature, Animals, Landscapes & Pastorals, Trees & Flowers, Religion, Christianity, Arts & Sciences, Music

### POET'S REGION

England

### SCHOOL / PERIOD

Romantic

### POETIC TERMS

Ode

Allusion

Imagery

Rhymed Stanza

Report a problem with this poem.

# POETRY

The oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English language.



[September 2016 Table of Contents](#)

[Buy This Issue](#)

[Subscribe to \*Poetry\* Magazine](#)

[Browse All Issues Back to 1912](#)