

# Year 8 Poetry- 'Songs of Innocence and Experience by William Blake.

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**William Blake** – William Blake (1757-1827) was an English poet and painter. He is known as being one of the leading figures of the Romantic Movement, as well as for his personal eccentricities.



Blake rejected established religious and political orders for their failures, particularly in how children were made to work – this was one of many things that he viewed as being a part of the 'fallen human nature.' He lived in London for his whole life, barring three years in which he resided in Felpham.

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**London in 1792** – London was already a large city with nearly a million people. The Industrial Revolution had brought new machinery that saved time, making some very rich, however it put many out of jobs. Machinery was often hazardous to operate, and those working with it were paid poorly. There was no government support for these people, so many lived in total poverty. For every 1,000 children born, almost 500 died before they were 2. Most children couldn't go to school, and had to work.



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## **Songs of Innocence and Experience**

Published in 1794, these two sets of poems were created by Blake with the aim of showing the 'Two Contrary States of the Human Soul.' The Songs of Innocence collection contains poems that are uplifting, celebrating childhood, nature, and love in a positive tone. The Songs of Experience section (of which London was one of the poems) offered a contrasting tone towards these ideas. Some of the topics covered in these poems were the dangerous working conditions, child labour, and poverty.



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**Romanticism** – Romanticism was an artistic, literary, musical, cultural and intellectual movement that originated in Europe in the latter half of the 18th Century, peaking in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. Romanticism is characterised by its emphasis on emotions - glorifying nature and past events – memories and settings are often imaginatively described using vivid imagery. Although Blake struggled to make a living during his lifetime, his ideas and influence were later considered amongst the most important of all the Romantic Poets.



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Blake's quotes:

*'Tiger, tiger, burning bright In the forests of the night, What immortal hand or eye, Could frame thy fearful symmetry?'*

*'To see the world in a grain of sand, and to see heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hands, and eternity in an hour'.*

*'If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite'.*

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## POETRY DEVICES – LANGUAGE

<b>Abstract</b>	An idea rather than a real thing	<b>Internal rhyme</b>	Rhyme that is on the same line
<b>Alliteration</b>	Repeated first letter	<b>Irony</b>	Sarcasm
<b>Antagonist</b>	Evil main character	<b>Metaphor</b>	Something is described as being something else
<b>Assonance</b>	Repeated vowel sound	<b>Mood</b>	Atmosphere
<b>Authentic</b>	Seems genuine/truthful	<b>Onomatopoeia</b>	A verb sounds like what it does
<b>Cliché</b>	Over-used phrase	<b>Personification</b>	A non-human thing is given human qualities
<b>Consonance</b>	Repeated consonant sound	<b>Plosive</b>	Letters p/t/k/b/d/g
<b>Concrete</b>	A solid/real example	<b>Protagonist</b>	Good main character
<b>Colloquial language</b>	Local/casual language	<b>Question</b>	Asks something
<b>Emotive</b>	Makes you feel emotional	<b>Rhyme</b>	Words that sound the same
<b>Euphemism</b>	Alternative words to make something nasty sound okay	<b>Semantic field</b>	Words that are about the same thing
<b>Extended metaphor</b>	A series of metaphors all relating to each other	<b>Sibilance</b>	A repeated s sound
<b>Half rhyme</b>	Nearly rhymes	<b>Simile</b>	Something is described as being like/as something else to describe it
<b>Hyperbole</b>	Exaggeration	<b>Symbol/ symbolism</b>	Something that represents something else
<b>Imagery</b>	Something used to describe something else	<b>Tone/Voice</b>	Emotion

## POETRY DEVICES – FORM

<b>Auto-biographical</b>	About the poet
<b>Ballad</b>	Story poems– often 4 lines stanzas
<b>Blank verse</b>	Verses with no rhyme – usually 10 syllables
<b>Dramatic monologue</b>	A character speaks to the reader
<b>Epic</b>	Tragic/heroic story poems
<b>First person</b>	'I'
<b>Free verse</b>	No regular rhyme/rhythm
<b>Haiku</b>	3 lines, syllables 5/7/5. Often about nature
<b>Lyrical</b>	Emotional and beautiful
<b>Narrative</b>	A story
<b>Ode</b>	Lyrical poem often addressed to one person
<b>Phonetic spelling</b>	Written like it sounds
<b>Rhetoric</b>	Persuasive
<b>Sonnet</b>	14 lines, ababcdcdefefgg, Often love poem
<b>Shape poem</b>	Poem is in shape of the main subject
<b>Third person</b>	He/she/they

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## Key Themes



### Authority:

Questioning of authority (church, state, education or commercial) and the need to raise awareness of unacceptable conditions and challenge/rebel against the status quo in the interests of greater freedom and fairness.



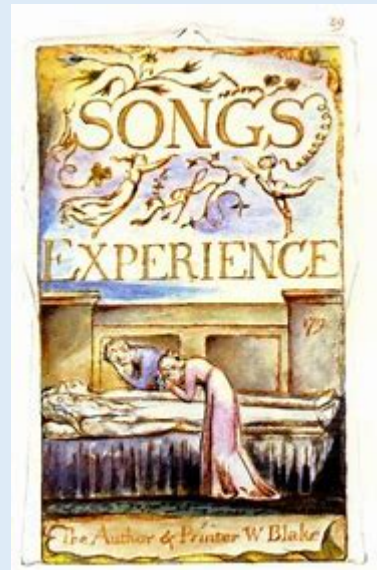
**Childhood:** the purity and sweetness of children in an unspoiled state, and their vulnerability to the harsher experiences of life; the ways in which parents, custodians and society can protect or fail to protect their innocence; the idea of drawing attention to the unheard voices of children, who were one of the most disenfranchised groups in society, as a way of offering new perspectives for the reader as well as exposing the difficulties faced by the young



**Corruption of innocence:** Blake does not favour innocence nor experience: they are "two contrary states". The corruption of innocence when used for the ends of others, was unacceptable to Blake.



**Traps and constrictions:** Blake is deeply concerned with the idea of enslavement and the constrictions placed on ordinary people, particularly the vulnerable and disenfranchised. It could be a condemnation of the Enlightenment's emphasis on the rational and scientific mind at the expense of attention paid to spiritual concerns, or even humanitarian ones like the tackling of social injustice.



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## First impressions

### William Blake: The Lamb

1. Who is the **speaker** of the poem?

Little Lamb who made thee  
Dost thou know who made thee  
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.  
By the stream & o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight,  
Softest clothing wooly bright;  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice!

2. What do you think he is **asking** the lamb?

Little Lamb who made thee  
Dost thou know who made thee

3. What do you think the **meaning** of the poem is?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,  
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!  
He is called by thy name,  
For he calls himself a Lamb:  
He is meek & he is mild,  
He became a little child:  
I a child & thou a Lamb,  
We are called by his name.

Why did Blake write it?

Little Lamb God bless thee.  
Little Lamb God bless thee.