

JOHN KEATS

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Died: February 23, 1821

Who Was John Keats?

Ans: John Keats devoted his short life to the perfection of poetry marked by vivid imagery, great sensuous appeal and an attempt to express a philosophy through classical legend. In 1818 he went on a walking tour in the Lake District. His exposure and overexertion on that trip brought on the first symptoms of the tuberculosis, which ended his life.

Early Years

A revered English poet whose short life spanned just 25 years, John Keats was born October 31, 1795, in London, England. He was the oldest of Thomas and Frances Keats' four children. Keats lost his parents at an early age. He was eight years old when his father, a livery stable-keeper, was killed after being trampled by a horse.

His father's death had a profound effect on the young boy's life. In a more abstract sense, it shaped Keats' understanding for the human condition, both its suffering and its loss. This tragedy and others helped ground Keats' later poetry—one that found its beauty and grandeur from the human experience.

In a more mundane sense, Keats' father's death greatly disrupted the family's financial security. His mother, Frances, seemed to have launched a series of missteps and mistakes after her husband's death; she quickly remarried and just as quickly lost a good portion of the family's wealth. After her second marriage fell apart, Frances left the family, leaving her children in the care of her mother.

She eventually returned to her children's life, but her life was in tatters. In early 1810, she died of tuberculosis.

During this period, Keats found solace and comfort in art and literature. At Enfield Academy, where he started shortly before his father's passing, Keats proved to be a voracious reader. He also became close to the school's headmaster, John Clarke, who served as a sort of a father figure to the orphaned student and encouraged Keats' interest in literature.

Back home, Keats' maternal grandmother turned over control of the family's finances, which was considerable at the time, to a London merchant named Richard Abbey. Overzealous in protecting the family's money, Abbey showed himself to be reluctant to let the Keats children spend much of it. He refused to be forthcoming about how much money the family actually had and in some cases was downright deceitful.

There is some debate as to whose decision it was to pull Keats out of Enfield, but in the fall of 1810, Keats left the school for studies to become a surgeon. He eventually studied medicine at a London hospital and became a licensed apothecary in 1816.

Early Poetry

But Keats' career in medicine never truly took off. Even as he studied medicine, Keats' devotion to literature and the arts never ceased. Through his friend, Cowden Clarke, whose father was the headmaster at Enfield, Keats met publisher, Leigh Hunt of *The Examiner*.

Hunt's radicalism and biting pen had landed him in prison in 1813 for libeling Prince Regent. Hunt, though, had an eye for talent and was an early supporter of Keats poetry and became his first publisher. Through Hunt, Keats was introduced to a world of politics that was new to him and had greatly influenced what he put on the page. In honor of Hunt, Keats wrote the sonnet, "Written on the Day that Mr. Leigh Hunt Left Prison."

In addition to affirming Keats' standing as a poet, Hunt also introduced the young poet to a group of other English poets, including Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Wordsworth.

In 1817 Keats leveraged his new friendships to publish his first volume of poetry, *Poems by John Keats*. The following year, Keats published "Endymion," a mammoth four-thousand line poem based on the Greek myth of the same name.

Keats had written the poem in the summer and fall of 1817, committing himself to at least 40 lines a day. He completed the work in November of that year and it was published in April 1818.

Keats' daring and bold style earned him nothing but criticism from two of England's more revered publications, *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review*. The attacks were an extension of heavy criticism lobbed at Hunt and his cadre of young poets. The most damning of those pieces had come from *Blackwood's*, whose piece, "On the Cockney School of Poetry," shook Keats and made him nervous to publish "Endymion."

Keats' hesitation was warranted. Upon its publication the lengthy poem received a lashing from the more conventional poetry community. One critic called the work, the "imperturbable drivelling idiocy of Endymion." Others found the four-book structure and its general flow hard to follow and confusing.

Recovering Poet

How much of an effect this criticism had on Keats is uncertain, but it is clear that he did take notice of it. But Shelley's later accounts of how the criticism destroyed the young poet and led to his declining health, however, have been refuted.

Keats in fact, had already moved beyond "Endymion" even before it was published. By the end of 1817, he was re-examining poetry's role in society. In lengthy letters to friends, Keats outlined his vision of a kind of poetry that drew its beauty from real world human experience rather than some mythical grandeur.

Keats was also formulating the thinking behind his most famous doctrine, Negative Capability, which is the idea that humans are capable of transcending intellectual or social constraints and far exceed, creatively or intellectually, what human nature is thought to allow.

In effect Keats was responding to his critics, and conventional thinking in general, which sought to squeeze the human experience into a closed system with tidy labels and rational relationships. Keats saw a world more chaotic, more creative than what others he felt, would permit.

The Mature Poet

In the summer of 1818, Keats took a walking tour in Northern England and Scotland. He returned home later that year to care for his brother, Tom, who'd fallen deeply ill with tuberculosis.

Keats, who around this time fell in love with a woman named Fanny Brawne, continued to write. He'd proven prolific for much of the past year. His work included his first Shakespearean sonnet, "When I have fears that I may cease to be," which was published in January 1818.

Two months later, Keats published "Isabella," a poem that tells the story of a woman who falls in love with a man beneath her social standing, instead of the man her family has chosen her to marry. The work was based on a story from Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio, and it's one Keats himself would grow to dislike.

His work also included the beautiful "To Autumn," a sensuous work published in 1820 that describes ripening fruit, sleepy workers, and a maturing sun. The poem, and others, demonstrated a style Keats himself had crafted all his own, one that was filled with more sensualities than any contemporary Romantic poetry.

Keats' writing also revolved around a poem he called "Hyperion," an ambitious Romantic piece inspired by Greek myth that told the story of the Titans' despondency after their losses to the Olympians.

But the death of Keats' brother halted his writing. He finally returned to the work in late 1819, rewriting his unfinished poem with a new title, "The Fall of Hyperion," which would go unpublished until more than three decades after Keats' death.

This, of course, speaks to the small audience for Keats' poetry during his lifetime. In all, the poet published three volumes of poetry during his life but managed to sell just a combined 200 copies of his work by the time of his death in 1821. His third and final volume of poetry, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*, was published in July 1820.

Only with the help of his friends, who pushed hard to secure Keats' legacy, and the work and style of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom during the latter half of the 19th century, did Keats' stock rise considerably.

Final Years and Death

In 1819 Keats contracted tuberculosis. His health deteriorated quickly. Soon after his last volume of poetry was published, he ventured off to Italy with his close friend, the painter Joseph Severn, on the advice of his doctor, who had told him he needed to be in a warmer climate for the winter.

The trip marked the end of his romance with Brawne. His health issues and his own dreams of becoming a successful writer had stifled their chances of ever getting married.

Keats arrived in Rome in November of that year and for a brief time started to feel better. But within a month, he was back in bed, suffering from a high temperature. The last few months of his life proved particularly painful for the poet.

His doctor in Rome placed Keats on a strict diet that consisted of a single anchovy and a piece of bread per day in order to limit the flow of blood to the stomach. He also induced heavy bleeding, resulting in Keats suffering from both a lack of oxygen and a lack of food.

Keats' agony was so severe that at one point he pressed his doctor and asked him, "How long is this posthumous existence of mine to go on?"

Keats' death came on February 23, 1821. It's believed he was clutching the hand of his friend, Severn, at the time of his passing

POEM: ODE TO AUTUMN BY JOHN KEATS

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness

Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun: Conspiring with him how to load and bless

With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;

To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees, And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ;

To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more, And still more, later flowers for the bees,

Until they think warm days will never cease; For summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ? Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor, Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;

Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep, Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook

Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers : And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep

Steady thy laden head across a brook ;

Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,

Thou watches the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue; Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn

Among the river-sallows, borne aloft or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn; Hedge crickets sing; and now with treble soft

The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft; And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Introductory Note: The poem was composed in September, 1819. The poem was inspired by Keats' enjoyment of the beauty of Autumn in course of his Sunday's walk through the stubble fields of Winchester. In a letter to Sir Joshua Reynolds (the celebrated painter), the poet wrote: "How beautiful the season is now ! How fine the air a temperate sharpness about it.

Really, without joking, chaste weather-Dian skies. I never liked stubble fields so much as now age, better than the chilly green of the Spring. Somehow a stubble field looks warm, in the same way that some pictures look warm. This struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, etc."

ANNOTATIONS

St. I. Season of mists-Autumn is full of mists. Mellow-ripe. Close bosom-friend-intimate friend. Maturing sun-sun that causes fruits to mature. There is the fertility image here. The sun and Autumn join together to ripen the fruits etc. Conspiring with him-combining for some purpose with the sun. Here is the suggestion of fertilisation through the contact between the sun and Autumn.

Thatch-eves-edges of the thatched roofs of cottages. Bend with apples-branches are bowed to the ground with the weight of the apples which have grown plentifully. Plump-fat. Kernel core. Warm days-days of summer.

O'er-brimmed-filled to over-flowing. Clammystickily moist.

[The first stanza contains a graphic description of Autumn with all its ripe fruits and profuse budding. The description is sensuous.]

St. II. Thee-Autumn. Abroad - outside. Granary floor-floor of barn. Winnowing--the wind that separates the grains from the chaff. Here it means moving gently. Furrow-corn-field. Drowsed-sleepy. Fume-scent. Hook-scythe. Swath-sheaf of corn. Here is a fine picture of the harvester holding the sheaf of corn and about to cut another while he falls asleep. Gleaner-one who gleanes or picks up the corn. Laden head-head burdened with the load of com. Cyder press-pressing machine used for crushing wine from apples.

The last oozings-the last drops of wine falling from the coder-press.

(The spirit of Autumn is presented as a farmet harvester, gleaner and cyder press The personification are rich and sensuous and warm with life]

St. L. We spin -A dramatic force is conveyed in the interrogation Served allowscallouts which often gather at sunset in Ang lines in the western sky Setting dayday which is slowly coming to an end. S e estelds which have been reaped and left only with stubbles Ain sad Ch-band of singers Sallons low trees or shrubs of the willow kind. Alot-high up. Borne at the bea is that the mournful note of the gnats in the willows in the river alternately rises and falls in union with the rise and fall of passing wind As the wind is strong, it lifts the reeds and the gnats on the reed, so the music is loud and distinct. Blat-shout. Holy pure-boundary made by hills. The three-fold, high pitched, and Cendent i field. Gathering swallows-swallows which have assembled to migrate to some other place before winter. Thomake a chirping noise

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. 1. Give the substance of the poem.

Ans Autumn in the season of mists and ripe fruits. In the bright sunshine, various fruits-grapes, apples, gourds and hazelnuts grow in abundance and ripen. Later flowers bloom in the season and bees gather honey thinking that the Summer is not yet over. The spirit of Autumn is embodied in the various harvesting operations of the season. The harvest is seen sitting on the granary floor and winnowing the com with a mind free from cares, because of the rich harvest. The reaper is found falling asleep in the midst of his work, because of the strong smell of the poppies. In the evening the gleaner is found resuming home with a load of pickings on the head and crossing the brook The cider-maker is busy at this work of manufacturing wine from apples

Autumn has a music of its own, though it cannot compare with that of the Spring. In the evening when the sun sets and the sky and holds are tinged with rosy hue, the music of Autumn can be heard. The plaintive humming of the little gnats in the reeds in the river the bleating of young lambs from the hills, the chirping of the crickets, the whistling of the Robin red-breast in the garden and the twitter of swallows in the sky all these make up the music of Autumn.

Q. 2. Give the various pictures of Autumn as given by Keats in the poem.

Ans. Autumn, according to Keats, is the season of mists and ripe fruits. Its three stanzas show a gradual rise of thought. In the first, Autumn is viewed as the season itself, doing the season's work, bringing all the fruits of the earth to maturity in readiness for harvesting. Autumn in cooperation with the sun makes the grapes and the apples, the gourds and the nuts ripen. Autumn also causes honey-flowers to blossom late in the season so that the bees may be supplied with honey in the months of Winter.

In the second, Autumn, personified in woman's shape is present at the various activities of the harvest and wine-pressing. First, Autumn is the harvest sitting carelessly on the granary floor. Secondly, she is a reaper tired with her work and asleep. She is lulled to sleep by the sweet smell of poppy. Thirdly, she is a gleaner carrying home the corn she has picked up during the day. She carries corn on her head balancing herself gracefully as she crosses a brook. Fourthly, she is a cider presser sitting by the press and watching the oozing of the apple juice. She is the very personification of Autumn.

the last stanza, the close the year is associated with sunset; the songs of spring are over, and night is falling, but the sense of sadness is merged in the feeling of the continuous life of Nature, which eternally renews itself in insect and animal and bird. The close of the ode, though solemn breathes the spirit of hope. In the twilight of evening, one can hear the mournful sounds of gnats by the riverside, the loud bleating of lambs on the hills, the shrill chirping of the crickets in the hedges, the whistling of the Robin red-breast and the twittering of the swallows.

Q. 3. In this poem, Autumn is personified. What personality is indicated? What does descriptive detail in each of the three stanzas contribute to the definition of that personality? How is this personality related to the mood of the poem-and the theme?

Ans. The poem embodies the fruitfulness and fulfilment of Autumn. Autumn is personified as a full-grown entity lingering and dying. It is the season of dying as well as of fulfilling. The ripeness of Autumn is the prelude to death. There is a suggestion of fertility and ripeness on the edge of dissolution. These paradoxical qualities make up the personality of Autumn as indicated by Keats.

The first stanza heavily weighted with natural richness. The fertility images suggest maturity products readiness harvesting. The grapes, the apples, the gourds and nuts ripe the core suggesting thereby their impending destruction. Late flowers supply honey for the months winter. Things thus lingering death and

The second stanza with the picture harvester, gleaner and cider presser complete the images lingering and passing. provides human embodiment autumn last stage. There tragic pathos the picture the gleaner with hook sparing next swath and the cider presser squeezing every drop fertility. With patient look, she watches "the last oozings hours hours." symbol the passing time.

Thought death unobtrusively present the bare stubble and sunset of last stanza. But the sense sadness merged the feeling the continuous life Nature which eternally renews itself insect and animal and bird; and the close the ode, though solemn breathes the spirit hope. The last four lines swell with new promise 'full-grown lambs' bleating loud, crickets singing the robin and when the music thins again the masterly reserve the final line, we may feel the swallows preparing for their departure distant reference tragic destiny.

The personality depicted the three stanzas related the mood sadness and theme ripeness. Keats gives here very ordered concept of the season. Ripeness which the theme the poem has joys and sorrows, has dimensions and complex savour. full and soft well acrid, rough and vigorous. has clammy cells, the fume poppies well as the stubble plains, the gnats and the river shallows. represents rich fund experience which has been examined and weighed by delicately balanced mind.

Q. 5. "In his ode, Keats not only describes the sound and sights but also embodies spirit of with reference text of the poem. Ans. the 'Ode Autumn', the poet describes the various sights and sounds of Autumn with accuracy vividness, the picture of Autumn revealed through the sights and sounds are concrete and realistic. In the poem, subjective note is absent and the poet has made his imaginative surrender to Autumn

Some of the familiar sights of Autumn are:

(1) A harvester, who sits on the floor of his granary, watching the winnowing operation. His hair is softly lifted by the moving wind.

(2) A reaper in the field has fallen asleep in his work because of the heavy perfume of poppies. His scythe is still in hand, while the golden corn stands waiting to be reaped. (3) A gleaner who is crossing the brook in the evening with a load of corn on his head, held steady (4) A cider-maker who is sitting patiently by his cider-press and watching for hours together the oozings of apple juice from the machine.

In the last stanza, the poet describes the music of Autumn. Its music is a composite one made of soft and loud sounds; the mellow sound from the willows in the river; lambs bleat from the hills; the crickets sing the acrid. In the evening the gnats give out a mourning sound sung from the hedges; the robin red-breast whistles from the garden; and the swallows twitter in their flight across the sky.

The poem is, however, not a mere catalogue of the sights and sounds of Autumn. It is something more. The poem embodies the very spirit of Autumn. The fruitfulness and ripeness of Autumn are presented through various concrete and sensuous images. Fruits and vegetables are ripe to the core; the corn is ripe for harvesting there is plenty and fertility everywhere. The season is "big with rich increase." Ripeness is a prelude to death, and there is the suggestion of tragic destiny for the season in its fruitfulness and ripeness. Softness and fullness co-exist with the acrid, the rough and the vigorous. Not only does it offer mellow fruitfulness and clammy cells, but also the stubble plains, the small gnats and the river swallows. There is a note of sadness in the last stanza with the pictures of sunset and stubble-plains and

swallows twittering in the skies.

Q. 6. Write a critical appreciation of the poem.

Ans. Ode to Autumn is the maturest product of Keats's genius. In this poem, we see genius having at its disposal a perfected sensibility. The poem exhibits a radically original, first-hand response to experience, and exhibits it, moreover, with the Keatsian virtues of density and definition, weight and pressure. Autumn is neither a stale convention, nor a misty abstraction. It is an individual entity with dimensions and complex savour. It gives us not only the fullness and softness of Autumn, but also its more masculine qualities--the acrid, the rough, and the vigorous. Not only does it offer mellow fruitfulness and clammy cells, the fume of poppies and the last oozyings, but also the mossed cottage-trees, the granary floor, the stubble plains, the small gnats and the river swallows. It is clear that ripeness has come to be for Keats a varied and ordered concept. It represents a rich fund of experience examined and weighed by a delicately balanced mind.

Ripeness is the theme of the poem, and with ripeness is associated death and dissolution. The tragic destiny of the season is suggested in the last stanza through the bare stubble and sunset. But the 'soft dying day' has its own beauty. The gnats 'mourn' in 'wailful choir'; the full-grown lambs bleat loud; crickets sing, the robin whistles. We feel in the swallows preparing for their departure a distant reference to tragic destiny. The close of the year is associated with sunset; the songs of spring are over and night is falling; but the sense of sadness is merged in the feeling of continuous life of nature, which eternally renews itself in insect and animal bird. The close of the ode, though solemn breathes the spirit of hope. There is new promise in 'full-grown lambs' bleating loud, crickets singing and the robin whistling.

The poem shows Keats as an artist. He can show natural phenomena in concrete human forms and images. This is such as a Greek poet might have longed to do. The second stanza is remarkable, because here Keats presents Autumn to us in a few characteristic poses familiar

in the season. In the poem, subjective note is totally absent, and the poet has made his imaginative surrender to Autumn. Nature's beauty exists for the moment for its own sake. It is as Swinburne has said, perhaps the nearest to abstract perfection. The three stanzas show a gradual rise in thought. The first stanza describes the colour, the second stanza the movement and the third the music of Autumn. As a critic has said, "The artist shapes the first and the last, and in the midst the man, the thinker gives us its human significance."

The pictures are objective, sensuous and concrete. The images are like Greek statues, concrete and vivid. Keats's word-painting is at its best here. 'Clammy cells', "the last ooziings, hour by hour", "barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day" testify to the fine felicity of expressions. The poem is itself 'soft-voiced'. It offers a breathless placidity. The clustering-sounds increase the sense of an almost drowsy fertility reaching its climax in :

Thou watches the last ooziings, hour by hour.

Slumberous feeling is induced by the usual vowel play: "drows'd with the fume of poppies." There is the use of short syllables in the last stanza-'wailful choir', 'light wind', 'twitter'. The rhythmic quality of the verse and the skilful arrangement of rhymes contribute to the exquisite melody of the ode. Commenting on the beauty of the ode. Aurther Compton-Rickett observes: "The first stanza is a symphony of sound." The poem is a supreme triumph of Keats as a lyric poet. It is marked by the objectivity, the expansiveness and the equable temper that characterise the successful ode.

Q. 7. Briefly discuss Keats's treatment of Nature with reference to 'Ode to Autumn' and 'Ode to the Nightingale' and compare him with Wordsworth and Shelley.

Ans. Love of Nature and emotional responses of the beauty and bounty of Nature are the distinguishing marks of romantic poets. All romantic poets see the minute beauties of nature and describe them with delicacy and vividness. They are as much attracted by the forms

and colours of Nature as by the spirit that animates Natures. Keats was a lover of beauty. He sought beauty in all things. He loved nature for her own sake. Nature is the storehouse of beauty. His eyes flashed, his cheek glowed and his mouth quivered at the humming of a bee, at the sight of a flower and the glitter of the sun. He had grown up neither like Wordsworth under the spell of lake and mountain, nor in the glow of millennial dreams like Shelley. Wordsworth interpreted Nature by the operations of his own strenuous soul; Shelley saw in Nature a visible symbol or sometimes a mysterious veil of the universe; Keats seeks to know Nature perfectly and to enjoy her fully, with no ulterior end or other thought to give her complete expression. The song of the Nightingale overwhelms him with joy which he feels

with all his senses wide awake. The romantic grove of the Nightingale is felt through imagination, but imagination awakes his senses and he enjoys the invisible grove with his eyes, ears and touch. The poet's sensuous love of Nature is manifest in his poem, Ode to Autumn. He draws one after another the lovely and colourful sights of Nature and captures its various sounds. The pictures are concrete and sensuous. To him Nature is a source of delightful sensations. His love of Nature is human rather than spiritual like Wordsworth's or idealistic like Shelley's.

For Shelley, natural phenomena are symbols of some philosophical ideas. His philosophy saw the veil of the unseen in the visible glories of the world his philanthropy found in them types and auguries of better life o.. warth. The west wind for him is the symbol of revolution the skylark in the symbol of perfect joy. Like Wordsworth, Shelley also feels that Nature is penetrated and vitalised by a spirit which he calls the spirit of Nature. But while Wordsworth views this spirit as thought, Shelley conceives of it as love. There is another difference between Shelley and Wordsworth. Shelley makes Nature the image of his own feelings and mood. He is absorbed in Nature. The west wind and the skylark symbolise his idealistic moods, But Wordsworth always distinguishes between himself and Nature he perceived.

Shelley and Keats are poles asunder in the perception and description of Nature. Keats perceives and describes the beauty of both stasis and process in Nature. To Autumn is a fine example of the stillness as well as the movement in Nature. In Autumn Nature is ripe and therefore there is a pause in Nature

Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,

Drowned with the fume of poppies, while thy hook Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers.

But in its very ripeness and fruitfulness, there is a suggestion of movement to winter. "Gathering swallows twitter in the skies" suggests the coming of winter. Shelley is attracted by the dynamic movements in Nature. He describes the rush and movement of the west wind on land, sky and the seas. Shelley's love of that which is indefinite and changeful makes him enjoy and describe better than any other English poet that scenery of the clouds and sky which is indefinite owing to finite change of appearance. He delights in describing the dawn, the sunset and the storms. Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats loved nature passionately and sincerely. Wordsworth describes the whole of nature: but Shelley is attracted by the wind and uncontrollable aspects of nature. To Wordsworth, nature is a healing power. To Shelley, it has a message for mankind. Keats, however, perceives beauty in Nature without attaching any spiritual or moral significance to it. Life has no peace for him; Nature's beauty which is eternal

gives him peace and joy. And he enjoys this beauty with his senses. His pictures of Nature are sensuous and concrete, while Shelley's pictures are abstract, intangible and changeful.

Q. 8. It has been said that Autumn is a moment of poise when one movement culminates and the succeeding movement has scarcely begun. Do you agree with this view? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans. There are two opinions about the poem. The older critics like Bridges, Colvin, Selincourt, Herford and Middleton Murry were struck by the impersonal and objective treatment of natural phenomena, the self-effacement of the poet's personality, and the serene, unimpassioned quality of the poem. They point out that the beauty of the season is perceived by the poet with joy and disinterestedness. These older critics found in the poem a calm and joyous contemplation of beauty. But the new critics of whom Arnold Davenport is one maintains that the serenity is achieved through a resolution of opposites and that a sense of loss persists. Davenport (John Keats, a Reassessment) holds that the season is a boundary, a moment of poise when one movement culminates and the succeeding movement has scarcely begun. Conceived in stasis, Autumn appears as a season of mellow fruitfulness, of serene ripened beauty. But seen as part of the revolving cycle of seasons, Autumn acquires a different character: it is preceded by summer and spring and followed by winter. Death is implicit in fulfilment and so the ripeness and fruitfulness suggest a tragic destiny for nature. What is impressive about the poem is its inclusive vision. It incorporates in its compass both the rich abundance of the season and the inescapable fact of change that causes decay and destruction. Thus the poem celebrates both the fulfilment and the process of change. Autumn not only loads and blesses', but also it 'saves', prolongs and 'sets budding more'. What is attractive in the poem is a union of process and stasis (or what Keats had called 'stationing'). Each of the three stanzas concentrate on a dominant, even archetypal, aspect of Autumn but, while doing so, admits and absorbs its opposite. The theme of the first stanza is ripeness. Autumn bends the apple trees and loads the vines. The growth goes on as Autumn and the sun conspires "to set budding more and still more, later flowers". We find process continuing within a context of stillness and attained fulfilment. In the second stanza, Autumn is conceived as a reaper or harvester who is still and motionless, "sitting careless on a granary floor" or asleep on a "half-reaped furrow", while its "hook saves the next swath and all its twined flowers". Movement is suggested in the momentary glimpses of the figure of the gleaner keeping "steady" its 'laden head as crosses brook. Autumn again stops watch the last oozings hours by hours'. The last oozing's is, however, hint that change coming. In the last stanza, the pervading thought the withdrawal of Autumn, coming death of the year, and course of the familiar archetypal relevance of the association our feelings sequence our lives. Thought death present the bare stubble' and 'sunset of the stanza. The gnats, the hedge cricket and the red-breast are unafflicted by any thought of death. The full-grown lambs (an image of fulfilment) bleating loudly from the hilly boundary, the grasshopper singing and the robin whistling from the garden-croft are images of life that stand out sharply against melancholy austerity of late Autumn. The twittering of the swallows gathering the sky for migration is sharp reminder of the advent of winter. The sense of sadness is, however, merged feeling the

continuous life Nature, which eternally renews itself in insect, animal and bird. This ideal of energy caught in repose pervades the imagery of the poem. There is thus the resolution of the opposite in the poem. The Shakespearean vision contained in the magic words 'ripeness is all' is enshrined in the poem (Middleton Murry).

Q. 9. Discuss the view that while in the 'Ode to Nightingale' Keats is restless, he is serene in the 'Ode to Autumn'.

Ans. In Ode to Nightingale, the poet seeks to identify himself with the bird-song that will lift him from the world of flux. He starts desire for disengagement from the world of process, his temporary withdrawal from this world and his return to that world. The poem interacts between the real and the ideal. Keats portrays state of intense aesthetic and imaginative feeling, too poignant for long duration, which arises with the song of bird and vanishes when the song is done. The impossibility of maintaining this mood of exaltation is the condition of its existence. Keats describes his moods in variety of ways. At first he describes his painful sensations born of intense pleasure. He wants 'draught of vintage' for intoxication of senses which will help his absorption into the bird. His mind calls up the terrifying picture of drab and cruel reality. The last five lines of stanza III are drawn from Keats own suffering and that suffering is sublimated. Keats flies to the nightingale through imagination and the poem reaches its intensity in stanza IV. The soft and heavy texture of the imagery in stanzas IV and V reflects a spontaneous luxuriance of feeling and perception, a self-abandonment which is merely another aspect of his previous depression. Death offers the fullest sense of life:

Now more than ever steams it rich to die.

The poet wishes painless death as the richest fulfilment of the imaginative perception of the ideal life of nightingale's joy. The spell is deepest in stanza VII. The notions of temporality and timelessness do not conflict, but are brought together in harmonious relationship, The final stanza shows the slow withdrawal symbolised by the retreat of the bird so that objective description and subjective emotion are fused. Thus the Ode to a Nightingale is a little discursive in depicting the imaginative excursions of the poet. The poem shows the poet's movement from the world of flux to the world of stasis. The poem is characterised by voluptuousness of sensations and emotions.

Q. 10. "I have loved the principle of beauty in all things".

How do you find the feeling of Keats reflected in the 'Ode to a Nightingale' and in 'Ode to Autumn' ?

Ans. Keats is pre-eminently the poet of beauty, as Wordsworth is the poet of Nature and Shelley is the poet of love. More than any other English poet Keats has defined the religion of Beauty which is the foundation of all his work, and he has done it in clear and emphatic words. In a letter he has said, the "with a great poet the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration or rather obliterates all considerations." He has "loved the mighty abstract idea of Beauty in all things": "the yearning passion for the beautiful", as Matthew Arnold has pointed out, "was the master-passion with him."

In all his odes, Keats shows his extreme sensitiveness to the beauty of things. In Ode to a Nightingale he is enchanted by the beauty of the bird-song and in his ecstasy finds himself transported to the romantic land of beauty and joy created by the song of the Nightingale. For him Nature gives him peace and beauty which are denied to him in human life which is full of 'weariness, fret and fever'. Its tone is that of a high melancholy one inspired by the sense of transience of youth and beauty. But presently the sorrow disappears by the very power of imagination that works upon the bird's note. The individual Nightingale to which the poet is listening is fancied as immortal by 'a divine defiance of logic', as Elton has finely said, suggesting that "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever". The bird-song takes him away from the world of flux to the world of eternal present and he celebrates the ecstasy of the momentary enjoyment of the eternal present which is full of unmixed beauty and joy for him.

Keats's love of beauty is manifest in the sensitive and sensuous evocation of beautiful pictures of Autumn in his famous poem To Autumn. He draws one after another the lovely and colourful sights of Nature and captures its various sounds. He shows natural phenomena in concrete human forms and images. This is such as a Greek poet might have longed to do. The second stanza is remarkable, because here Keats presents Autumn to us in a few characteristics poses familiar in the season. Nature's beauty exists for the moment for its own sake. It is, as Swinburne has said perhaps the nearest to abstract perfection. The first stanza describes the colour, the second stanza the movement and the third the music of Autumn. Keats loves Nature for her own sake. Nature is the storehouse of beauty. Autumn appears as a season of mellow fruitfulness, of serene ripened beauty. He finds beauty even in the songs of gnats, robin red-breast and swallows. The 'soft dying day' has its beauty in the mournful songs of gnats, lambs and red-breast. The sense of sadness is merged in the feeling of continuous life of Nature, which eternally renews itself in insect and animal and bird. There is new promise in 'full-grown' lambs crying loud, crickets singing and the robin whistling.

In Ode on a Grecian Urn, Keats gives his philosophy of beauty. Keats's odes do not show mere sensuous enjoyment of beauty: the poet rises to high philosophical thought in suggesting the contrast between mortal destiny and immortal power of art and Nature. In Ode to a Nightingale and Ode to Autumn, the poet shows the immortality of beauty in Nature. He brings out the beauty of the nightingale song which transports him to the realm of eternal joy and beauty. The Nightingale, for him, is the symbol of permanent joy and beauty. In Ode to Autumn, he creates vivid beautiful pictures of Autumn in some particular moods and postures. In Ode on a Grecian Urn, he rises to the height of his conception of the principle of

beauty, Beauty will remain for ever, and in the ultimate analysis beauty is one with truth In Hyperion, Keats writes: "It is eternal law. That first in beauty should be first in might." He says in one of his letters: "What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth-whether it existed or not." In Ode on Ode on a Grecian Urn, this perception of the identity of truth and beauty comes in a moment of disinterestedness. The beauty of the nightingale song and of the legend of the urn will remain for ever amidst the flux of life. In a world of transition, unrest, impermanence and illusion, beauty alone is calm, unchanging, vibrant, dynamic and therefore real.

Q. 11. Write a note on the magical felicity' of Keats's style.

Ans. Keats has often been praised for the fine felicity of expressions which is almost Shakespearean. Middleton Murry has bracketed Keats with Shakespeare for his power of felicitous expressions and for his boldness and originality in inventing new words and vivid expressions. The most dominant characteristic of Keats's style is its pictorial quality giving perfect expression to his sensitiveness to sensuous beauty. Keats is a master painter in words. He chose with a fine instinct the words having a colourful import and with these he drew pictures, which in their vividness rival actual paintings. Expressions like "beaded bubbles", 'purple-stained mouth', verdurous gloom', "leaf-fringed legends have a delicate colour effect and rich suggestiveness. His diction has 'a rounded felicity of expression', which, according to Matthew Arnold is almost Shakespearean in its beauty. Such expressions as 'beaded bubble winking at the brim'. 'murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves', 'embalmed darkness', 'bechen green', full-throated case' testify to Keats' power of bold coinages which serve to bring home to the readers a vivid picture of natural scenery or of any beautiful object. The phrases capture the colour, the sounds and smell of the objects. Unlike Shelley, Keats is always objective and concrete. He makes magical use of compound expressions for concretising an abstract idea-sunburnt mirth', 'leaden-eyed' despair. Such lines as charmed magic casement opening on the foam of perilous seas in lands forlorn' are rich with evocative power. This line is the highest

expression of romantic aspiration. Ode to Autumn testifies to Keats' genius for objective pictures. The images here are like Greek statues, concrete and vivid. Clammy cells, the last oozying hour by hour, barred clouds bloom the soft dying day are a testimony to Keats' power of expressions. The poem is itself soft-voiced. It offers a breathless placidity. The clustering-'s' sounds increase the sense of an almost drowsy fertility reaching its climax in:

Thou watches the last oozyings, hour by hour. Slumberous feeling is induced by the usual vowel play : "drowsed with the fume of poppies". Short syllables in the last stanza-waifful choir, light wind, twitter enhance the effect of sadness merged in the hopefulness. The rhythmic quality of the verse and the skilful arrangement of rhymes contribute to the exquisite melody of the ode. Commenting on the beauty of the ode, Arthur Compton Rickett observes : "The first stanza is a symphony of movement, the third a symphony of sound."

In the Ode on a Grecian Urn, 'joy irradiated with beauty' is made available to us not only through these glowing pictures but also by the richness of style in which the written word is the perfect image of the thought. "Heard melodies are sweet, those unheard are sweeter", "for ever piping strains for ever new", are expressions that unlock our sense to the infinite possibility of an awakened imagination and impress the mind with thought of loftier kind.

The emotional characteristics of Keats' poetry are exactly those of the Greeks and Elizabethans. Happy epithets, concrete imagery, suggestive similes are his great gifts. But the style of the poet in common with that of other poets of the Romantic school surprises by 'fine excess'. He once wrote to Shelley : "You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore." Keats followed his own advice and his poetry shows his conscious and fastidious use of words and expressions that aptly illustrate and objectify his feelings and thoughts. Indeed, Keats is a conscious stylist and chooses his words and phrases with meticulous care to create the maximum effect. There is a fine blend of classical poise and romantic excess in his style, sapphire-regioned, verdurous glooms, murmurous haunts, leaden-eyed despair, sunburnt mirth show his power of objective pictures statuesque like Greek sculpture. But such lines as

Magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

carry us to the enchanted land of romance and magic.

Q. 12. Consider the view that Keats's 'To Autumn' conveys serene acceptance of life.