Easter, 1916

POEM TEXT

I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth-century houses.
I have passed with a nod of the head
Or polite meaningless words,
Or have lingered awhile and said
Polite meaningless words,
And thought before I had done
Of a mocking tale or a gibe
To please a companion
Around the fire at the club,
Being certain that they and I
But lived where motley is worn:
All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent
In ignorant good-will,
Her nights in argument
Until her voice grew shrill.
What voice more sweet than hers
When, young and beautiful,
She rode to harriers?
This man had kept a school
And rode our wingèd horse;
This other his helper and friend
Was coming into his force;
He might have won fame in the end,
So sensitive his nature seemed,
So daring and sweet his thought.
This other man I had dreamed
A drunken, vainglorious lout.
He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet I number him in the song;
He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road,
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minute by minute;
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse plashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minute by minute they live:
The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice?
That is Heaven's part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last has come
On limbs that had run wild.
What is it but nightfall?
No, no, not night but death;
Was it needless death after all?
For England may keep faith
For all that is done and said.
We know their dream; enough
To know they dreamed and are dead;
And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died?
I write it out in a verse—
MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

SUMMARY

The speaker begins by describing how he used to encounter "them," the men and women he will later identify as the Irish rebels who died during the Easter Rising, at the end of the day. Their faces might reveal some internal agitation or strong emotion, but the speaker first saw them only in the context of ordinary, everyday life, coming home in the evenings from jobs in shops or offices, meeting the speaker on the streets of Dublin outside the grey stone eighteenth-century buildings. The speaker would briefly acknowledge them with a nod and meaningless small talk just to be polite, or stop a short while and make meaningless small talk just to be polite. Even while he was talking to them, he would already be thinking of some way to make fun of them while talking to one of his own friends later at their posh club. The speaker had nothing more serious on his mind than a joke because he thought that they all were just living regular, unimportant lives. Now, though, everything is completely, totally different. Some event has occurred that was highly destructive but also helped bring about profound change.

The speaker then describes individual men and women who participated in the Rising. One woman tried earnestly but misguidedly to accomplish positive change. Her devotion to extreme political positions was reflected in her endless, strident arguing for her side. She used to show a more moderate, engaging personality when she was a young, beautiful woman who spent her time in leisurely pursuits like hunting. One man was a schoolteacher and poet, metaphorically riding the "winged horse" (a symbol of poetic inspiration in Greek mythology); another man was a poet and critic who was helping the first man develop his talent and cultivating his own. This poet might have become famous for his art, given his perceptiveness and his attractive, innovative style. There was another man whom the speaker perceived as an arrogant, good-for-nothing drunkard. This man was abusive towards people the speaker cared for very deeply. But the speaker admits that he must respect and acknowledge even this man. This man left also behind the unimportant activities of everyday life. This man also was completely, totally transformed by his participation in the Rising. This event was highly destructive but also helped bring about profound change.

The speaker suggests that people who, like the rebels, dedicate all their love, energy, and activity to one goal can sometimes start to seem inhuman in their single-minded dedication. Like an unmoving stone in a moving stream, such people can disrupt the flow of ordinary life around them. Almost all things in nature, whether animals, humans, or the weather, are in a state of constant change. Small events, like a cloud passing by above a stream or a horse's hoof slipping into the water, can have major consequences. The natural events of life, like wild birds mating, show that each living thing must adapt every minute for its own survival. But stones simply exist in the same state.

The speaker suggests that people who give up too much of their lives to pursue unchanging goals may lose their ordinary human feelings. He first wonders when all these sacrifices will be enough to achieve the goal, but then decides that it is Heaven, or God's, job to answer that question. The job for him and the rest of the community is simply to remember the dead with seriousness, respect, and love, just as a mother would watch over her sleeping child with gravity and love when the child has finally fallen asleep after running around in a frenzy. The speaker wonders if death may be something temporary and relatively painless, like sleeping through the night before waking up in the morning. He rejects that idea, however, to remind himself and the reader that the rebels are truly dead and will not come back. He next wonders if their deaths may have been unnecessary. Britain might have kept its promise to grant Ireland Home Rule, in spite of the nationalists' mistrust of the British. But again, the speaker decides it is not his or the public's job to answer that question. They don't need to know whether the rebels accomplished their goal; just knowing that they died for the sake of this goal is enough to earn them honor and respect. Still, the speaker cannot help wondering again if their extreme devotion to their goal may have clouded their judgment. But once again, he turns away from that speculation to remember the dead rebels. He lists by name some of the Rising's most important leaders—MacDonagh, MacBride, Connolly, Pearse. He affirms that for the rest of Ireland's existence, whenever the Irish gather to celebrate their country, these rebels will be honored, their identities having been completely transformed from that of ordinary people. The event was highly destructive but also helped bring about profound change.

THEMES

HEROISM AND BRAVERY

In “Easter, 1916,” the speaker is moved to admire the heroism and bravery displayed by the Irish rebels in trying to throw off British rule—even though he didn’t wholly admire or agree with the rebels beforehand. The poem chronicles the rebels’ flaws and the speaker’s earlier, dismissive attitude towards them (and it's worth noting that the poet himself, historically, was also critical of extreme nationalism and didn’t initially support the violence of the Easter Rising). But these conflicted, critical feelings only makes the speaker’s respect for the rebels all the more meaningful. The bravery and commitment the rebels displayed in dying for their ideals is so great that it compels even the skeptical speaker to admire it. The poem shows that true heroism can transcend personal flaws and, as the refrain says, transform a person utterly.

In the poem's first stanza, the speaker explains how he used to see the rebels as foolish or hardly worth noticing. The speaker did not take the rebels seriously in the past. He only exchanged "polite meaningless" small talk with them or mocked them to his friends with a "gibe" (a joke). The reference to "motley," the clothes of a jester, shows that he saw them as comic figures.

In the second stanza, the speaker then details the individual flaws of certain rebels, revealing how they irritated or angered him. The speaker criticizes a certain woman for lack of judgment, possibly brought on by her devotion to political "argument." He also calls one rebel a "drunken, vainglorious" man, and informs the reader that this man had wronged people that he, the speaker, cares for.

But ultimately, the speaker's admiration for the rebels overcomes his criticisms. He affirms that their bravery in being willing to die for their cause has transformed them into heroic figures, figures that his poem must honor. The first two stanzas end by saying that the rebels have been changed or transformed, that "a terrible beauty is born." The terror is the high price the rebels had to pay for seeking Ireland's freedom; it refers to their deaths, and the deaths of many others in the violence. But at the same time, this beauty refers to the heroism the rebels revealed in being willing to die for this cause.

In the fourth stanza, the speaker asks whether this high cost was truly necessary: "was it needless death after all?" It is possible that England would have granted Ireland freedom without this rebellion. The rebels may have been misguided in instigating a violent uprising. But the speaker again puts aside this criticism to honor them for their bravery: "We know their dream; enough / To know they dreamed and are dead." In other words, regardless of their flaws of judgment or character, it is enough to make them heroic that they were willing to die for their cause. The speaker honors the rebels as heroes by listing out their names in the final lines of the poem and affirming again how they have been "changed utterly." This act of bravery means they are no longer defined by the flaws the speaker noted earlier. They have been transformed from people the speaker criticized to people the speaker must admire forever, "[n]ow and in time to be."

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 5-10
- Lines 13-14
- Lines 15-16
- Lines 17-20
- Lines 32-34
- Lines 35-40
- Lines 60-61
- Line 67
- Lines 70-71
- Lines 74-80

PERSONAL FULFILLMENT VS. PUBLIC SACRIFICE

In "Easter, 1916," the speaker is conflicted about the value of sacrificing everything for the sake of a public cause. He regrets the personal gifts and opportunities the rebels abandoned when they devoted themselves to political action. He also suggests that total devotion to a cause can make a person lose their sense of human feeling and judgment. Thus even as he registers the rebels' heroism and bravery, the speaker firmly acknowledges the costs of their commitment. While becoming heroes, they may have lost some of their humanity as well as their lives—and the speaker cannot ultimately say whether the sacrifice was worth the cost.

The speaker contrasts the rebels' private lives with what politics made them become, noting that many of them gave up personal benefits for their cause. The speaker remembers one rebel's elegant life as a young, attractive woman engaged in aristocratic pursuits like riding "to harriers" (hunting) before she became involved in politics and started spending her "nights in argument." He wonders whether another man, a talented poet with "daring and sweet" thought, might have "won fame" if he had never become a political activist. By describing how politics changed the rebels, as well as the talents and opportunities they gave up, the speaker lays out the individual cost of commitment to political goals and ideals.

The speaker also suggests that total commitment to a cause, while honorable, can exclude a person from normal human life and cloud their judgment. Initially, the speaker seems to applaud the rebels' dedication by noting they have "[h]earts with one purpose alone." But he then says that such single-minded dedication can "make a stone of the heart," making them unable to care about ordinary human life.

The speaker depicts this ordinary life metaphorically with a scene from nature. When the "moor-hens dive / And hens to moor-cocks call," they represent human life's most basic emotions and events: hunger, love, sex, birth. The stone doesn't share in any of these things but simply exists "in the midst of all." The stone also does not change. Everything else—horse, birds, the "living" stream—changes constantly. In not changing, the stone is more dead than alive. This image suggests that the rebels, too, even before losing their lives, died in a sense by losing their human feeling. They may have also lost their judgment. Their "excess of love" for their single purpose may have "bewildered them," blinding them about how best to act.

Of course, the speaker acknowledges the goal of all this sacrifice. The rebels also gave up their "part[s] / In the casual comedy." That is, by giving up personal happiness, they entered into a greater, more profound story, one that will always be

remembered. At the same time, the speaker still cannot say if such sacrifice is worth the cost. The speaker ends by writing out the rebels' names and affirming that they will be remembered "[n]ow and in time to be, / Wherever green is worn." In other words, Ireland will never forget their deaths or the "dream" they died for. But after noting how costly "[t]oo long a sacrifice" can be, the speaker also asks, "O when may it suffice?" Even if someone gives all they have for a political goal, it may still not be enough to achieve that goal.

Ultimately, the poem does not decide whether, for the rebels, the political gain outweighs the personal loss. The refrain "A terrible beauty is born" registers both the rebels' noble devotion to their cause and the devastating price they paid for it—as well as the speaker's uncertainty about how to make sense of all this.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 15-16
- Lines 17-30
- Lines 36-37
- Lines 38-40
- Lines 41-44
- Lines 45-48
- Lines 53-56
- Lines 57-59
- Lines 74-80

DEATH AND MOURNING

In "Easter, 1916," the speaker is conflicted about how to commemorate those who have died for a cause. Should commemoration comfort those who are mourning, or force them to face the harsh reality of death? Should the dead be honored only if people know what their sacrifice achieved? Though the speaker initially asks whether the rebels' sacrifice was necessary to reach their goal, he ultimately rejects that question. He concludes that the appropriate way to commemorate the dead is to honor and remember them without deciding whether they made the right choice or knowing what that choice achieved.

In the final stanza, the speaker considers representing death with the comforting image of sleep. He says the mourners should remember the dead by naming them "[a]s a mother names her child / When sleep at last has come." This is a comforting, consoling image of death, suggesting that the mourners can still protect the dead and also that they are not really dead, just asleep, and so will wake again. The image of death as sleep is a Christian one tied to a belief in the resurrection of the dead, which is also invoked by the word "Easter" in the poem's title.

But the speaker then *rejects* this image, saying: "No, no, not night but death." The rebels aren't asleep for a night but dead forever, and the mourners must accept this difficult truth. In this way, the speaker refuses to romanticize or soften the reality of the rebels' actions: they have nobly died for a cause, but they are still dead.

The speaker also asks whether and how the rebels' actions were helpful and necessary for reaching the goal of Irish independence. With "O when may it suffice?" the speaker asks, on the one hand, whether any amount of sacrifice can be enough to achieve idealistic political goals. On the other hand, the speaker also asks if the rebels' sacrifice was needed to obtain this particular goal: "Was it needless death after all?" England may have "ke[pt] faith" and granted Irish independence without the Easter Rising. Asking if "excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?" the speaker wonders if the rebels may have made a misjudgment in starting the Rising.

Ultimately, however, the speaker refuses to answer the question of what the rebels achieved. Instead, he honors them while leaving open the possibilities that their sacrifice may have produced something great or something tragic. Even while raising questions about the Rising, the speaker says it is not the mourners' job to answer those questions. Their "part [is] / To murmur name upon name." That is, their job is to honor the dead and their dream without knowing whether their deaths helped to accomplish that dream. It is "enough / To know they dreamed and are dead."

The speaker performs this job of mourning and honoring the dead in the poem's final lines when he names the rebels and notes how their deaths brought about a "terrible beauty." The rebels may have helped accomplish their political goal, and they have certainly achieved immortality as heroes for their country and their cause. But they became immortal in memory at the cost of their mortal lives, so their deaths may have accomplished something great or merely have been a great loss. But either way, the speaker concludes, the right way to commemorate them is by honoring their names and remembering why they died.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 15-16
- Lines 35-40
- Line 59
- Lines 60-66
- Lines 67-68
- Lines 69-80

LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-6

I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces

From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth-century houses.
I have passed with a nod of the head
Or polite meaningless words,

The opening lines introduce the speaker and the people, "them," who will be the subject of his poem. He does not specify right away exactly who these people are—their identity will be developed over the course of the poem. Right away, however, the reader does know that there is a contrast between their dull "grey" surroundings and the "vivid faces" of the people the speaker encounters. They may be coming from their ordinary, everyday jobs at shops or offices, but on the inside, they have some unusually high degree of emotion or passion.

There is also a contrast drawn between these people and the speaker. The speaker does not seem to take their passion seriously. Rather than engaging with these people in a meaningful way, he simply "pass[es]" them with a mere nod or, if he must speak with them, only says "polite meaningless words." Whatever it is that animates these people, he does not wish to get involved with it. These contrasts—between the speaker and these people, between these people and their surroundings—prepare the reader for some conflict to arise later in the poem. The opening line foreshadows the result of this conflict by setting the poem at "close of day." At first, this phrase refers simply to evening, to night falling. But later in the poem, the speaker will use "nightfall" as an image of death. The speaker didn't know it at the time, but he was encountering these people near the close of their lives, shortly before their deaths.

The opening lines also introduce the poem's meter. The poem is written in a mix of trimeter and tetrameter, generally having three or four stressed syllables (beats) per line, but with an irregular number and varying placement of unstressed syllables. The first four lines, for example, scan this way:

I have **met** them at **close** of **day** (8 syllables)
Coming with **viv**id **fa**ces (7)
From **coun**ter or **desk** among **grey** (8)
Eighteenth-**cen**tury **hous**es. (7)

Lines 1 and 3 start with an unstressed syllable and end with a stressed syllable; lines 2 and 4 do the opposite. Line 1 begins with an anapest; line 3 begins with an iambic foot. Iambic feet are common in the poem, and the poem is fairly consistent with its three stressed syllables per line, but the unstressed syllables introduce considerable variety in the poem's overall rhythm and meter. This variation, besides adding interest to the pure sound of the poem, helps reflect the speaker's inner conflict about the people and events he is describing. He has difficulty deciding how to judge them, just as the poem seems to have difficulty deciding what exact rhythm to follow.

LINES 7-12

Or have lingered awhile and said
Polite meaningless words,
And thought before I had done
Of a mocking tale or a gibe
To please a companion
Around the fire at the club,

The next lines reinforce a sense of contrast and distance between the speaker and the people he encounters on the street. Even when he doesn't immediately pass them but instead "linger[s]," he still does not engage in serious conversation but only offers more "[p]olite meaningless words." The repetition of this phrase in lines 6 and 8 captures the nature of his small talk, which likely repeats the same trite phrases (things like "I'm fine, thanks", or "Have a nice day.").

But beyond not taking these people seriously, the speaker now reveals that he even makes fun of them. While talking with them, he isn't paying attention to what they are saying but already thinking of what "mocking tale[s]" or jokes he can make about them when he sees his *real* friends later "at the club." It was generally wealthier people who belonged to clubs, or gentlemen who didn't work. The people on the street, on the other hand, labor all day behind a "counter or desk." So the mention of the club draws another possible contrast—this time of class and economic status—between the speaker and the people he meets.

These first twelve lines establish that, initially, the people on the street may be slightly ridiculous, or that the speaker himself *thinks* they are ridiculous—or both. It's important for the reader to understand this initial state of affairs because the way it changes is one of the most important themes of the poem: the people are soon transformed, and so is the way the speaker views them.

The poem's first few lines establish the rhyme scheme as well as the meter. The poem generally rhymes *abab*, but many of the rhymes are imperfect rhymes or slant rhymes:

And thought before I had **done** (a)
Of a mocking tale or a *gibe* (b)
To please a compan**ion** (a)
Around the fire at the *club*, (b)

"Gibe" and "club" share the same final consonant sound, /b/, but do not have the same vowel sound. These slant rhymes help disguise the regularity of the poem's rhyme scheme and create a slightly more natural, conversational sound to the poem. They also make the perfectly regular rhymes more noticeable and prominent when they do appear.

LINES 13-16

Being certain that they and I

But lived where motley is worn:
All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

These final lines of the first stanza introduce a sudden, abrupt shift in the speaker's thoughts. He explains why he didn't take these people seriously and why he only thought of how he could use them to make a good joke. The reason was that he didn't believe that their lives—these people's *or* his own—were going to be very significant. "Motley" refers to the clothing that would be worn by a jester or a clown. So in other words, the speaker thought their lives were more like a comedy, in which making jokes and finding entertainment was the main goal. The speaker didn't see anything gravely important happening around him.

Line 15, however, insists that the speaker was wrong. When the line says "All changed, changed utterly," the word "all" can refer to the people, "they," that the speaker used to dismiss. It can also refer to his "certain[ty]" that their lives were insignificant like a comic story. The speaker's view of their life circumstances has changed. He sees now that something serious has been happening around them and that it demands a serious response. They have been living at an important moment in history when individual people's actions could profoundly change the course of history. The people in the street have been "changed utterly" because, as the reader will learn, they took drastic action to try and change Ireland's future. These actions changed them from being merely ridiculous figures on the street, caught up in their own emotions, to being people who command respect—including new respect from the speaker.

The speaker sums up his reaction to all these events in the poem's refrain, given here for the first time: "A terrible beauty is born." This line is oxymoronic or paradoxical in two ways. The phrase "terrible beauty" seems self-contradictory because beauty is ordinarily thought of as something attractive rather than frightening, something desirable rather than something horrible. But in this case, what the speaker finds beautiful is the new character he sees in the people on the street, the Irish rebels. They have shown great bravery and dedication. Unfortunately, what ultimately showed their bravery was their dying for the cause. Their deaths were a horrible event, even though they revealed an inspiring degree of heroism.

The line is also paradoxical in that this poem about death features a refrain about birth. But by saying "A terrible beauty is born," rather than, say, "A terrible beauty is gone," the speaker refocuses attention from what has been lost to what has been gained. The rebels lost their lives, and the Irish cause lost brave fighters. But these deaths may have also created an important change in Irish sentiment and may prove to have been the decisive moment in helping Ireland gain its freedom. This terrible event may be the beginning of an important new chapter in Ireland's history. That new chapter, a new direction for the country, is what has been born. The poem's refrain reminds the reader of what the rebels accomplished, as well as the high price they paid for it.

The meter of lines 15-16 helps reinforce the significance of their message. The lines scan as follows:

All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

"Changed, changed" is a spondee. The two accented syllables in a row, along with the repetition of "changed," give strong emphasis to this key idea in the poem, that a profound transformation has occurred. Line 15 ends with a feminine ending and an unstressed syllable rather than a stressed one, so that it ends with a sense of anticipation rather than finality. The reader waits to hear what the speaker will say about the *meaning* of this change. Line 16 then gives the speaker's judgment of what it means, ending with a stressed syllable that makes this judgment sound decisive and final.

LINES 17-23

That woman's days were spent
In ignorant good-will,
Her nights in argument
Until her voice grew shrill.
What voice more sweet than hers
When, young and beautiful,
She rode to harriers?

In the second stanza, the speaker begins to describe individual rebels whom he knew more intimately. (The woman described here has been identified as Countess Constance Markievicz: see "Vocab and References" for more detail.) He draws a contrast between what their lives were like before, or what they could have become, and what their lives became once they devoted themselves to the political cause of Irish independence.

He begins by describing a woman who spent her time acting in "ignorant good-will." She had admirable intentions, but the speaker seems to think that she was misguided or had bad judgment, and so may have accomplished as much harm as good by her actions. Her judgment may have been clouded by her extreme devotion to her political positions, which she argued for so fiercely that it made her voice "shrill." She was unable to moderate her opinions or engage with people in any other way than "argument."

The speaker contrasts this intense, seemingly unbalanced woman with her gentler younger self. As a young woman, she was beautiful and enjoyed aristocratic leisure activities like hunting ("riding to harriers"). When she wasn't so intensely devoted to politics, she could socialize "sweet[ly]" with people, not just argue with them. The speaker seems to regret the loss of this gracious, elegant way of life.

The "shrill" voice and the "sweet" voice function as synecdoches that sum up the whole way that this woman has changed. That is, her voice isn't the only thing that has changed from shrill to sweet; her entire personality seems to have made that same shift. The speaker creates a harsher sound in the first four lines with the repetition (consonance) of harder consonant sounds like /g/, /w/, and /t/, including the /t/ sound that ends lines 17 and 19:

> That woman's days were spent
> In ignorant good-will,
> Her nights in argument
> Until her voice grew shrill.

Lines 21 and 23, by contrast, end with a softer /rs/ sound, reinforcing the sense of the younger woman's gentler bearing.

LINES 24-30

> *This man had kept a school*
> *And rode our wingèd horse;*
> *This other his helper and friend*
> *Was coming into his force;*
> *He might have won fame in the end,*
> *So sensitive his nature seemed,*
> *So daring and sweet his thought.*

The speaker goes on to describe two more of the Irish rebels. One was a school teacher and a poet (who has been identified as Patrick Pearse: see "Vocab & References"). The other was a fellow poet and a literary critic who assisted this man in his career (this second man has been identified as Thomas MacDonagh). The phrase "kept a school" places the first man very firmly in ordinary life, the world of "counter[s] and desk[s]" and everyday work. There wasn't anything necessarily heroic about this man before, or about most of the rebels. It was the Rising that "changed [them] utterly," as the refrain said.

The next phrase about the "wingèd horse" is an allusion to Pegasus, the winged horse of Greek mythology, who is a symbol for poetry and poetic inspiration. When the speaker refers to "*our* wingèd horse," he is putting himself in company with this first man as a fellow poet. On the one hand, this shared artistic pursuit might give the speaker more sympathy for this man. On the other hand, as a fellow poet the speaker might feel even more frustration that this man gave up the craft of poetry to pursue political ends.

The speaker also shows frustration and regret over the second man and the loss of his gifts. While he contrasted the first woman's past with her present, he contrasts this man's present with his possible future. He "might have won fame in the end" as a poet if he had not devoted himself to politics. Like the younger woman's voice, this man's thought was "sweet" and pleasing, as well as "daring" and innovative. His nature was "sensitive" and open to perception rather than "shrill" and closed off. The theme of being sensitive rather than hardened will be continued in the third stanza, when the rebels are compared to stones.

This list of individual rebels and their histories, with the contrast drawn between their violent deaths and the happy futures they might have had, helps make even clearer the rebels' strong commitment, as well as the costs of their political action. The reader might admire the rebels more in learning more about them, while also feeling more unsure how to know when political activism is worth its high cost.

The repeated use of demonstrative adjectives—"*That* woman," "*This* man"—helps create a sense that this list could go on and on. The reader gets the sense that the speaker could keep listing examples: "And that man, and that man, and that woman," and so on. Every individual rebel, even those not described here, could have a similar story about the sacrifices they made to participate in the Rising. Again, this sense of how many promising lives were cut off helps demonstrate the high cost of their action.

LINES 31-35

> *This other man I had dreamed*
> *A drunken, vainglorious lout.*
> *He had done most bitter wrong*
> *To some who are near my heart,*
> *Yet I number him in the song;*

Going on to describe the next rebel, the speaker draws a contrast between the man's character in his private life and how he acted while serving a public cause. The speaker had once thought that this man was a "drunken, vainglorious lout"—drunk, arrogant, and badly behaved. This man (who has been identified as John MacBride: see "Vocab and References") also abused people the speaker loved, whom he held "near [his] heart."

With this man in particular, the speaker makes clear that the rebels were *not* all perfect or extraordinary people before their political action. Not only did they work ordinary jobs, they had ordinary human vices and failings. It wasn't that they were secretly heroes all along. They were regular, flawed human beings who were faced with a unique moment in history and decided to do all they could to shape the outcome of this moment. They *became* heroes through the Rising. That is why the speaker puts so much emphasis on change and transformation throughout the poem, and presumably why he includes this description of a person he found objectionable.

Of course, it is not only the rebels who have been changed but also the speaker's perception of them. When the speaker says that he "dreamed" this man to be a vain drunkard, he suggests that he mistakenly believed the man to be this and *nothing more*. He didn't see any *potential* for greatness in this man, or in many of the others that he used to mock. Now, the speaker has a

different understanding. He sees that even apparently ordinary people can show extraordinary new qualities when they're put in unusual circumstances. That is why the speaker must "number [this man] in the song."

What's more, saying "I number him in the song" has a slightly different implication than saying, for example, "I mention him in my poem." Songs are sung aloud, often by multiple people at the same time. A key theme of the poem is how to commemorate the dead. The speaker suggests the rebels should be remembered by the whole community, who will sing songs and tell stories together about the Rising. The speaker, by writing a commemorative "song," is helping this process to happen. Just as the rebels put aside their private goals to serve a public cause, the speaker is putting aside his private critiques of the rebels—especially of this one abusive man—to perform a public duty by keeping their memory alive.

LINES 36-40

He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

In the final section of stanza two, the speaker returns to themes from the end of stanza one. In lines 10 and 14, the speaker noted how he used to make jokes about the rebels and saw their lives, and his, only as a place where "motley is worn"—as if they were all part of a comic story. Now, the speaker says explicitly that he no longer sees the rebels as part of a "comedy." He doesn't see them as foolish figures who are only good for a joke. They have all (even the third man whom the speaker particularly disliked) been "changed in [their] turn" into figures with more dignity and honor. The speaker, then, can no longer regard them so "casual[ly]" as he did when he made meaningless small talk with them in the street. He is forced to take them and their new story seriously.

The stage is a common metaphor for human life. "Resign[ing] his part" in the comedy could, then, be a metaphor for dying. It could also refer to the new story the rebels are now part of. In literature, the opposite of a comedy is a tragedy. When they "resigned [their] part[s]" in the "casual comedy," the new story the rebels entered was a tragedy. Traditionally, tragic literature ends with death. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, in his famous discussion of tragedy in the *Poetics*, wrote that the endings of tragedies cause the audience to feel pity and terror—terror at the spectacle of death and pity for a noble hero who may not have deserved to die. But the audience also feels some sense of wonder and enlightenment from watching the story unfold. The poet, with the word "terrible" in the refrain, may have been alluding to Aristotle's discussion. For the speaker, the Easter Rising has turned what was once a comedy into a tragic play, one that causes pity and terror, but also wonder. Alongside what is "terrible," there is also "beauty," something that the survivors marvel at.

The refrain, with its theme of change, is also repeated here but slightly altered. Line 15 reads "All changed, changed utterly," but line 39 reads "Transformed utterly." "Transformed" conveys even more strongly that the rebels have not just been altered but have become entirely new beings. In this way, they have a connection with Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead on Easter Sunday according to Christian belief (see "Vocab and References").

LINES 41-44

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.

Stanza three moves from descriptions of real individual rebels to a scene from nature that captures metaphorically how the speaker sees the rebels as a group. The speaker begins with a line that seems like it could be complimentary: "Hearts with one purpose alone." He could be about to comment on the rebels' dedication and commitment in devoting themselves to "one purpose" and the love they must have in their "[h]earts" for their goal. These are qualities the speaker could admire. But then, the speaker moves to an image that does not seem very positive. These hearts seem "[e]nchanted to a stone." A "heart of stone" is a common negative expression used to criticize someone for being uncaring or cruel, as if they have no more feeling than a stone.

The rebels certainly care about their political goals, but the speaker critiques them in this stanza because they cannot care or think about anything else. The stone "trouble[s] the living stream" because it sits in the water and interrupts its course. It will not move or change or adapt to its surroundings; it forces everything else to move around it. The stream could represent the whole flow of ordinary human life and activity that must always continue, regardless of politics. The rebels, with their sole focus on their political goal, "trouble" or disrupt that ordinary life, perhaps in the way that the rebels once annoyed the speaker when they encountered each other in the street.

It is significant that the stream is called "living"—presumably because it constantly moves and changes like living creatures do. By implication, the stone, which never moves or changes, must not be alive. The speaker suggests with this metaphor that the rebels, too, were always dead in a certain sense because they excluded themselves from normal human life and concerns. The Rising did, in fact, cause injury and death to hundreds of civilians. The rebels must have known that this was a danger, but they were so dedicated to their goal of Irish independence that they were willing to risk this harm to their community.

With this image of the stone, the speaker expresses his

conflicted feelings about the rebels. He clearly admires their bravery and unchanging commitment to their ideals. But he is also concerned about the loss of normal human feeling and judgment that can come with such zealous commitment.

The *abab* rhyme scheme links certain key ideas that appear at the ends of the lines, by expressing them through words that sound alike. Here, "alone" is rhymed with "stone." The reader infers that the rebels have become like stones *because* of their being "alone." "Alone" refers in part to their purpose: they have one single goal and, like a stone, it never changes. But "alone" also refers to their isolation, the way their dedication excludes them from normal human social life, making them like stones among living creatures.

It is significant that the speaker says not just that the rebels' hearts are "like stones" but that they are "[e]nchanted to a stone." "Enchanted" is a passive verb describing something that *has happened* to the rebels' hearts. The verbs "changed" and "[t]ransformed" in the poem's refrain are also passive verbs, describing something that has been done to the rebels, rather than something they have done themselves. These verbs subtly suggest that the rebels didn't simply decide one day to do something heroic. It was more complicated than that. They lived at a unique moment in history, and that moment helped determine their actions. They almost couldn't help responding the way they did. If this is the case, then it becomes even more difficult to know how to judge their choices and decisions. The speaker wrestles with that difficulty throughout the poem.

LINES 45-50

The horse that comes from the road,
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minute by minute;

As the stanza goes on, the speaker develops a scene in nature, describing its scenery, weather, animals, and humans. What unites all these different beings and elements is the fact that they are constantly changing. The horse and its rider, the birds, the clouds that "tumbl[e]," the stream that reflects their shadows--all "[c]hange[] minute by minute." Change, the speaker makes clear in these lines, is above all what characterizes living things. To be alive is to be born, to develop, to seek food to replenish a body that is constantly wearing down, to grow old, and to die, to be replaced by new creatures. (This vision of the life cycle will appear in the last six lines of the stanza as well.) The environment around living things, like the stream and the clouds, also changes. The weather is constantly in flux; storms can cause streams to overflow and change their courses. To survive, living creatures must also change and adapt to this unpredictable environment.

This scene could have two different meanings for the poem. First, taken as a straightforward description of nature, it could serve as a contrast to human life. Animals live a simple life whose only need is for survival. Humans, by contrast, can have other purposes and goals. They can be driven by ideals like liberty, patriotism, and love. Rather than constantly changing, they can be committed steadfastly to those goals for a long time. For this reason, human life might be seen as more admirable than mere animal life. The unchanging stone from line 43 could be a symbol for a kind of life that is more admirable, more committed, than the fluctuating natural life described in these lines.

But the scene could also be taken as a metaphor for human life itself. Humans *are* animals, and like animals, they have needs for survival. To meet those needs, to stay alive, they must change and adapt as animals do. Following this interpretation, change is part of what it means to live a human life. The unchanging stone, therefore, is a symbol for something that does *not* fully participate in human life. If the stream is "living" because it moves and changes, then the stone represents a kind of death.

Once again, then, the speaker registers conflicted feelings about the rebels and their single-minded dedication to their cause. With the ambiguous symbol of the stone set against this vivid natural scene, the rebels could be seen as representing a higher, nobler kind of life—or a kind of death. The next six lines will further develop the reader's sense of what the rebels have excluded from their lives and how the speaker interprets those exclusions as a kind of possible death.

The poem's meter helps reproduce what the lines are describing. The emphasis in this stanza is on rapid change that occurs "minute by minute." The poem is written in trimeter, which, with its three feet per line, gives one of the shortest lines in standard English poetic meter (for contrast, the commonly used iambic pentameter has five feet per line). These short lines create a feeling of rapidity that enhances the reader's impression of rapid change.

The speaker also emphasizes this theme of rapid change by the way he repeats the phrase "minute by minute." The phrase itself is repeated exactly, stressing the idea of rapidity. But around the phrase there is variation: line 48 reads "Minute by minute *they change*," while line 50 reads "*Changes* minute by minute." The very line describing change is, itself, changed. Everything—even the poem—is in constant flux.

LINES 51-56

A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse plashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minute by minute they live:
The stone's in the midst of all.

The last six lines of the stanza continue the theme of the natural life cycle and of change, including unforeseen change.

Lines 51-52 describe a horse's hoof sliding on the "brim" of the stream and the horse slipping, stumbling, and "plash[ing]" within the stream. These lines make clear that in addition to the predictable changes of the life cycle—birth, growth, death—life is also full of unpredictable changes and accidents. The horse slips and goes in a direction that neither the horse nor its rider meant for it to go. Riders often carry important messages and horses are also used to carry humans on important journeys, so the slipping horse is a fitting image for how information can go astray and how journeys and plans can be interrupted—like the Rising itself, which didn't all go according to plan.

Lines 53-54 provide an image for other important moments of the natural life cycle. The moor-hens (a kind of wild bird) "dive" in water to look for food, which suggests survival and growth. The female hens also "call" to the male moor-cocks to look for mates and begin the process of reproduction. The birds' actions could symbolize all the ordinary activities of human life devoted to survival—eating, laboring for food—as well as the important events that mark many human lives: love, marriage, birth. The moor-hens, and all living creatures, live "[m]inute by minute," not only because they are constantly changing, but because they are focused on surviving from one minute to the next.

The stone from line 43 reappears in line 56, and the speaker emphasizes that it does not participate in any of these activities or changes in the life cycle. It simply exists "in the midst of all." This final image of the stone offers further commentary on the rebels symbolized by the stone. The rebels' dedication to a single purpose may be admirable, but it excludes them from ordinary human life and emotions. In stanza one, ordinary life was represented by dull "grey" houses and monotonous work performed behind "counter or desk." The rebels' political fervor, showing in their "vivid" faces, might have seemed an attractive contrast to that mundane, repetitive life. But here, ordinary life is represented by an attractive scene from nature characterized by movement and beauty—the vision of "tumbling cloud[s]" casting shadows on the stream and the diving water birds—and it is the stone-like rebels who seem dull and deadened by contrast. The rebels have no concern for these basic activities of life, for the beauty that can be found in work, romantic love, family life— they only care about their political goal. In their extreme pursuit of that goal, the speaker suggests, they have lost some of their humanity.

The placement of the word "live" at the end of line 55 is particularly significant. Placed at the end of the line, this word receives extra emphasis—the birds *live*, they *are alive* and strive to keep living. These living birds are contrasted with the stone in the next line. This contrast foreshadows the emphasis on death that will come in the next stanza, where "death" and "dead" will appear at the end of lines 66 and 71. The rebels didn't just refuse to participate in the ordinary activities that sustain life; they actually lost their lives. With the symbol of the stone, stanza three subtly critiques the rebels for excluding themselves from ordinary human life. But stanza four will show sympathy for the way they were driven to their deaths. The stone image, like the whole poem, registers the speaker's conflicted feelings about the rebels and their cause.

LINES 57-62

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice?
That is Heaven's part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child

The opening lines of stanza four return to the image of the stone. In stanza three, it was being dedicated to "one purpose alone" that made the rebels' hearts like stones. Now, the speaker declares that it is "[t]oo long a sacrifice" that can "make a stone of the heart." The sacrifice is all that the rebels gave up in order to achieve their "one purpose."

There is still a negative connotation to this image, a suggestion that the speaker is criticizing the rebels. The speaker is about to mention "Heaven," and the image of the stone heart is a biblical one too: "I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). In the Bible verse that the speaker seems to allude to here, God wants his people to have tender hearts that love, rather than hard, stony hearts that refuse to feel. The rebels, in choosing violence as a way of achieving their goal, were criticized for not caring enough about the cost that violence would have—and did have—for their fellow citizens.

But there is also a suggestion here that the speaker feels sympathy for the rebels. It is not that they *chose* to become hard-hearted. It was their sacrifice that "ma[d]e" their hearts like stones. The passive verbs "changed" and "transformed" earlier in the poem emphasized how the rebels were affected by their circumstances. Here, too, circumstances and necessity, not choice, are what transform the rebels' hearts. The speaker shows pity for the rebels when he asks immediately after the image of the stone heart, "O when may it suffice?" He sees how much the rebels have given up and wants to know when they can stop sacrificing and suffering.

However, he also sees, or decides, that this question cannot be answered. Ireland's fate will be determined not by any one individual, but by larger historical forces—or even providential forces—that individuals cannot control. It is "Heaven's part" (in essence, God's job) to determine what happens to Ireland. It isn't the job of the survivors to judge what historical impact the rebels ultimately had: "our part," says the speaker, is to "murmur name upon name." In other words, the job of the larger community is simply to remember the dead.

Significantly, the speaker now sees himself as part of that larger community. In lines 31-32, he wrote, "I had dreamed [this rebel] / A drunken vainglorious lout," and then in line 35, "I number him in the song." The personal pronoun in those lines

emphasizes that the speaker was focused on *his* personal feelings about the rebels. Now, he sees it as his duty to speak for and with the community. He has to put his private conflicts aside to help the public commemorate the dead and this stanza will register his struggle to do so.

Line 59 is one of four rhetorical questions in stanza four. The use of questions is significant. Even as the speaker attempts to come to some conclusion about the Rising, the questions reveal how difficult that conclusion is to reach. That difficulty is made even more apparent when, as here, the speaker cannot or will not answer his question.

Another significant device in these lines is enjambment. Enjambed lines begin a thought but do not complete it, leaving the reader wondering until the next line what the speaker's conclusion will be. Lines 57 and 60 are enjambed. At the end of line 57, the reader wonders, "*What* does 'too long a sacrifice' do?" At the end of line 60, the reader wonders, "What *is* our part? If we are not supposed to judge how much sacrifice is enough, what are we supposed to do?" These are the very questions the speaker has been asking himself and struggling to answer. So the enjambment creates, briefly, that same experience of uncertainty and struggle for the reader.

LINES 63-69

When sleep at last has come
On limbs that had run wild.
What is it but nightfall?
No, no, not night but death;
Was it needless death after all?
For England may keep faith
For all that is done and said.

While the image of the stone to represent the living rebels was largely harsh and critical, the speaker turns to a kinder, gentler image to represent them now that they are dead: a sleeping child whose mother tenderly murmurs their name. This simile has several meanings. First, it suggests less blame placed on the rebels. The child "had run wild." The rebels, too, were overtaken with a kind of frenzy before they "fell asleep," but the child image suggests a kind of innocence in their wildness, as if they could not know or help what they were doing.

Second, the image of the child uses sleep to represent death. The Christian Bible uses the same idea. According to Christian belief, Jesus Christ, who was God in the form of man, died and then rose from the dead on Easter Sunday. His death made it possible for humans, too, to be resurrected to eternal life. The rebels staged the uprising on Easter Monday because they hoped that if they died, their deaths would provide a kind of rebirth or resurrection for Ireland. Christ's death and resurrection is the reason why Christian biblical writers refer to the dead as "asleep": they believe the dead will ultimately wake. St. Paul, for example, writes: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

By using the sleeping child to represent the dead rebels, the speaker presents the hopeful message that they, too, might awake to eternal life with God. This is a comforting way to think about death and would provide solace to the mourning community. The consonance in lines 61-64 of soft, euphonious consonants, especially /r/, /l/, /m/, and /n/ sounds, creates a gentle sound similar to the mother's voice and reinforces the sense of peace and comfort in the image:

To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last has come
On limbs that had run wild.

After introducing this comforting image, however, the speaker rejects it. "What is it but nightfall?" he asks, in another rhetorical question. The question seems to invite the answer that the dead are just sleeping and will soon wake up. But then he offers a starkly different answer: "No, no, not night but death." Death *is* final. The dead will never return to this human community, the speaker decides, and the community has to acknowledge that difficult reality.

The speaker then asks a challenging question: "Was it needless death after all?" Worse, perhaps, even than the rebels' deaths being final, is the idea that their deaths might be a waste. The speaker wonders if the rebels' deaths were really necessary to bring about Irish independence. It's possible that England may have "ke[pt] faith" with their agreement to give Ireland a limited form of independence after World War I was over. But the rebels may have just rushed blindly ahead into their violent uprising, like the child running wild, without giving enough thought to that possibility. In addition to losing some of their human feeling, then, the rebels may also have lost some of their judgment in their extreme zeal for their cause.

The back-and-forth in these lines between question, answer, and question—between giving and rejecting an image—shows how much the speaker is conflicted in his response to the rebels and to their deaths. He is uncertain what their deaths meant: did they act as wise, brave leaders, or wild, thoughtless children? He is also uncertain how the mourners ought to think about their deaths: should they console themselves with comforting beliefs or confront the harsh reality that these deaths are final and maybe even wasteful? The end of the poem will try to provide some resolution to these conflicts. But by including them in the poem, the speaker ensures that the conflicts will be reenacted by each new reader. The resolution, when it comes, always comes with a struggle.

LINES 70-74

We know their dream; enough
To know they dreamed and are dead;

And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died?
I write it out in a verse—

In lines 59-60, the speaker posed a question and then declared that it wasn't his question to answer. In these lines, he does something similar. In line 67, he had wondered whether the rebels' deaths were actually "needless." Would England have granted Ireland independence without the Rising? And if it grants independence now, will it be due to the Rising or to some other factor? These historical questions are impossible to answer with certainty. But more significantly, the speaker decides that he and the rest of the community don't *need* to answer them.

To commemorate the dead properly, the community doesn't need to know exactly what the rebels' deaths accomplished, or what would have been accomplished if they hadn't died. All the mourners need to know is the rebels' "dream." To know whether the dead deserve remembrance and respect, it is "enough / To know they dreamed and are dead." That is, the very fact that they had a noble goal and were so committed to that goal that they were willing to die for it is enough to earn them honor—regardless of how their deaths did or didn't advance that goal.

The speaker has been struggling throughout the poem to arrive at the proper response to the rebels and to the Rising. Does the rebels' bravery erase their personal flaws? Does their single-minded dedication deserve more admiration or more criticism? How should the political impact of the Rising affect our judgment of the rebels? In these lines, the speaker comes closest to a conclusion. The proper response is, he ultimately seems to decide, to put aside questions of flaws, criticism, and politics, and honor the rebels for "their dream." Maybe if they were still alive and agitating for their political goals, more criticism would be needed. But because they are dead, what is needed is commemoration.

Lines 72-74 reenact in miniature this whole process of conflict and conclusion. The speaker can't help asking one final question: "And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?" The "excess of love" ties back to the earlier description of the rebels as "[h]earts with one purpose alone." Meanwhile, the term "bewildered" echoes the image of the rebels as children "that had run wild." Essentially, lines 72-73 indicate that the speaker still wonders if the rebels' dedication clouded their judgment, causing them to adopt frenzied violence rather than more prudent political strategies. But yet again, he does not answer this question. His next line is, "I write it out in a verse." He is abiding by his decision in lines 70-71. Ultimately, it is more important to honor the rebels than to judge them. And so, instead of passing a judgment, the speaker moves into the process of honoring them with his verse.

Once again, rhetorical question and enjambment are significant devices in these lines. The rhetorical question registers both the speaker's unresolved doubts and his decision to put those doubts aside. Enjambment puts the reader in a position of uncertainty similar to the speaker's own. At line 70, the reader wonders *what* is "enough." At line 72, the reader asks a question along with the speaker: what *was* the consequence of their "excess of love"?

LINES 75-80

MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

The speaker concludes the poem by building on his promise to commemorate the rebels who died in the Rising. When the speaker first introduced the rebels in stanza one, they were a crowd of nameless faces in the city streets. In stanza two, he referred to them as "[t]hat woman" and "[t]his man," in an anonymous list. But now, he gives the names of actual historical leaders of the Rising, who really were executed afterwards. Once again, as in the previous five lines, he is following his own directions. In lines 60-61, he said it was "our part" to "murmur name upon name." But now, he goes further—he actually inscribes those names into his poetry. Whenever anyone reads the poem, they will be doing their part, continuing to remember these names. The reason why the rebels will be remembered "[n]ow and in time to be" is because of commemorative acts like this poem, which will always preserve their memory.

It was traditional in Irish ceremonies of remembrance to speak the names of the dead. There was even a belief that saying their names could somehow call the dead into the presence of the living. Inscribing the rebels' actual names into the poem calls upon those traditions and beliefs. It also testifies that the rebels have undergone their own kind of Easter resurrection. Thanks to their deaths, the rebels have been reborn as heroic, almost mythical figures who will live forever in Irish memory and story.

The speaker notes the rebels' place in Irish memory with the line, "Wherever green is worn." Green is a color that represents Ireland, so this line indicates that whenever people gather to celebrate Ireland, they will be partly honoring the rebels for their deaths. They are now permanently part of Ireland's story. And that is another reason why they are "changed, changed utterly." The meanings of their lives and even their names have changed. Once they were simply private citizens, but now their stories have become part of a national mythology and their names are symbols of Irish patriotism. Their deaths essentially transformed their lives.

This transformation is why the refrain, which returns in the poem's last line, is so appropriate: "A terrible beauty is born." The rebels' terrible fate is what produced such a moving story; their story will continue to affect their countrymen forever,

inspiring them to shape Ireland's future as well. The rebels staged the Rising at Easter because they hoped to give their country a rebirth, similar to Christ's death and resurrection at Easter. So by ending the poem with what has "been born," the speaker suggests that the rebels, in some sense, succeeded. They may not have immediately secured independence. But their deaths *did* help create something new, with ongoing life and power.

The speaker slows the poem down in these last lines. He uses polysyndeton when he lists the rebels. The repeated "and" slows down the succession of names, more than if he had just separated them with commas. The last four lines are also end-stopped, so that the reader pauses at the end of each one. This slowness creates a greater sense of climax and finality at the poem's conclusion, and it also gives these lines the feel of a solemn recitation at a funeral.

The refrain itself also creates a sense of conclusion. The speaker has shown many conflicted feelings about the rebels; he continued to question the Rising even after saying such questions shouldn't be asked. But he repeats the refrain three times, suggesting that this is one judgment he feels sure of. Whatever other doubts he has, he has no doubt that this is true: "A terrible beauty is born." Of course, the oxymoron of "terrible beauty" suggests an ongoing conflict: how much is terror and how much is beauty? But the speaker *is* certain that both are present, and that he is only just starting to witness the effect they will have on Ireland in all the years ahead.

SYMBOLS

STONE

The image of the stone in the third and fourth stanzas is one of the poem's most important symbols for the Irish rebels. The symbol is an important poetic tool for the speaker because it provides a single image with multiple possible meanings, effectively capturing the speaker's conflicted feelings about the rebels and their actions.

Most obviously, the stone symbolizes the rebels' hearts, especially the way their hearts are devoted to a single cause. This symbol can have positive implications of steadfastness and dedication. Many Irish readers would be familiar, for example, with the Christian biblical passage in which Jesus Christ tells his follower Peter, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). As a rock is a strong foundation for a building, a heart as firm as a stone is a strong foundation for a social cause like that of the rebels.

But the symbol can also have negative implications. A heart of stone may not have the kind of love or tenderness that a person ought to have. In another well-known Bible verse, God tells his people, "I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). Thus, the stone can symbolize the rebels' loss of appropriate human feeling as well as their dedication. When the stone "trouble[s] the living stream," this could mean that the rebels provide an example of purpose and dedication to all the people around them, who might otherwise only bother with ordinary, insignificant activities. Or it could mean that the rebels bring destruction upon the innocent people around them through their fixation on one, potentially violent, goal.

This ambiguity allows the symbol of the stone to capture the speaker's conflicted response to the rebels—especially because, at line 57, he acknowledges that it is the rebels' "long [...] sacrifice" that has made their hearts stone-like. That is, it was their fine qualities of dedication and sacrifice that made them lose other fine qualities like compassion. The close relationship between the rebels' virtues and their flaws is what makes it so difficult to know how to judge them, and the symbol of the stone helps convey that difficulty.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 41-44:** "Hearts with one purpose alone / Through summer and winter seem / Enchanted to a stone / To trouble the living stream."
- **Line 56:** "The stone's in the midst of all."
- **Lines 57-58:** "Too long a sacrifice / Can make a stone of the heart."

SLEEPING CHILD

The speaker uses the image of the sleeping child to symbolize the rebels after they have died. He declares that the public should commemorate them by murmuring their names:

> As a mother names her child
> When sleep at last has come
> On limbs that had run wild.

This image has several connections to the deceased rebels. Sleep is a common metaphor for death, used numerous times in the Christian Bible (see this guide's Literary Device entry for "Allusions"). The sleeping child represents the rebels in a way that softens the horror of their deaths, suggesting that they are at peace and even that they may wake.

Children also traditionally represent innocence. With this image, the speaker softens his previous critique of the rebels, suggesting that they shouldn't be condemned as guilty of a crime—even if, as the child misbehaved while awake, they had "run wild" in the violent, destructive tactics they adopted. Children may cause destruction without knowing it or intending it, and so with this symbol the speaker acknowledges that the rebels, too, did not intend for people to be harmed

when they began the Rising. They only wanted to fight for their country's independence. The speaker makes a similar point in lines 72-73—even repeating the word "wild"—when he asks, "And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?" Their extreme love for their country and their cause may have led them to extreme action without fully understanding or intending all the consequences.

Additionally, the mother who tends the child may be a symbol of Ireland. One's home country is often called "the motherland," and the citizens may be thought of as that country's children. Ireland, then, would be the mother of the rebels. (Yeats himself uses the image of Ireland as a mother in his poem "Remorse for Intemperate Speech," and the Proclamation of the Republic, which was read out during the Rising, refers to the citizens as Ireland's children.) As citizens who make up the country, the remaining community now has the mother's job of "nam[ing] her child"—that is, remembering the rebels' names and honoring them for their deaths. The symbol of the sleeping child adds a new dimension to the poem's characterization of the rebels and also helps the speaker in his quest to find an appropriate response to their fate.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 62-64:** "As a mother names her child / When sleep at last has come / On limbs that had run wild."

POETIC DEVICES

RHETORICAL QUESTION

The speaker uses rhetorical questions to convey his conflicted feelings and uncertainty. In the fourth stanza, the speaker asks four different questions about the rebels. It is not merely that he has questions, but the fact that his questions cannot be answered—and that he *continues* to ask questions even after he knows they cannot be answered—that conveys how difficult it is to know how to respond to the Rising.

The speaker first asks in line 59, "O when may it suffice?" In other words, when it comes to situations like the rebels', how much "sacrifice" will "suffice" to achieve a goal? He does not find an answer to this question, but he also denies that it *can* be answered: "That is Heaven's part." Humans can never be completely certain what their efforts will achieve, so the question "What is necessary to achieve our goal?" is not the kind of question they can answer. Nevertheless, the speaker cannot help asking the same kind of question again in line 67: "Was it needless death after all?" That is, was it necessary for the rebels to die to help secure independence?

Asking this question again when the speaker has already judged that it cannot be answered shows how difficult it is for him to arrive at one settled response. He would like to simply put aside his questions and doubts and honor the rebels for their bravery. Still, he cannot help wondering what their bravery achieved and how it might have misled them. Maybe all the brave acts in the world will never be enough to reach the goal. On the other hand, maybe these brave acts weren't even *needed* to reach this goal. Should he pity them for their fruitless effort? Or should he criticize them for their bad judgment?

Once again, though, the speaker rejects these questions. It is "enough," he declares, to "know they dreamed and are dead." He doesn't need to know what their deaths accomplished to know he should honor them for being willing to die. And yet, he still asks one final question: "And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?" He still wants to know what drove them to their deaths. This question, too, goes unanswered. He moves instead to writing out the rebels' names in tribute. But even as the poem ends by honoring the rebels, its multiple unanswered questions show how difficult it was for the speaker to arrive at this response.

The questions also undercut any straightforward political message that readers might take away from the poem. The speaker honors the rebels, and the rebels used violence to try and achieve their goal. But that doesn't mean that violence itself should always be honored or admired; the speaker emphasizes that there is far too much doubt about the rebels' judgment and effectiveness for that. Suggesting that the rebels should be honored but not necessarily imitated is part of what makes this poem so complex. The rhetorical questions help create that complexity.

Where Rhetorical Question appears in the poem:

- **Line 59:** "O when may it suffice?"
- **Line 65:** "What is it but nightfall?"
- **Line 67:** "Was it needless death after all?"
- **Lines 72-73:** "And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?"

OXYMORON

The poem's refrain contains an oxymoron in the phrase "terrible beauty." Beauty is usually thought of as pleasing, attractive, and desirable. Something terrible is repellent—something *not* desired. So the reader must struggle to understand what the apparent contradiction of "terrible beauty" might mean—just as the speaker and the whole Irish community have to struggle to find the right response to the Rising.

The poem's reference to comedy in line 37 can help the reader think through what "terrible beauty" might mean. If the rebels have "resigned [their] part" in the "casual comedy," that means they have taken up parts in a tragedy instead. Tragic drama has famously been described, by the philosopher Aristotle, as creating the emotions of terror and pity in its audience. The

audience still wants to watch a good tragedy, however, because there is something attractive or beautiful in the play, as well as something terrible. The audience might admire noble characters in the play and be moved by their story.

This is how the speaker seems to feel about the Rising. There was a beautiful heroism alongside the terrible destruction. In fact, even more paradoxically, it was the terror that *made* the beauty. Many Irish citizens were critical of the Rising before the leaders were executed. But after their deaths, that criticism turned in part to sympathy and admiration. The rebels showed the true extent of their heroism when they died for their cause, so it is their deaths that transformed their lives into stirring, moving stories that would become part of Ireland's national story. With his oxymoronic phrase "terrible beauty," the speaker captures just how difficult it is to respond to the Rising, and how grief and admiration are tightly intertwined in that response.

Where Oxymoron appears in the poem:

- **Line 16:** "A terrible beauty is born."
- **Line 40:** "A terrible beauty is born."
- **Line 80:** "A terrible beauty is born."

REFRAIN

Throughout, the poem reveals just how conflicted the speaker has been in his feelings about the rebels and his response to the Rising. The refrain serves to counterbalance that conflict. By repeating the refrain three times, the speaker emphasizes its truth. However much uncertainty and doubt he may feel, he has no doubt that *this*, at least, is certain: "All" is "changed" or "transformed" "utterly: / A terrible beauty is born."

The speaker's certainty about this statement comes, in part, from how open-ended it is. The speaker emphasizes that the rebels have been changed—but he does not specify just *how* they have been changed. Have they been changed into something glorious, like heroes? Or into something troubling, like stones? The speaker spends the poem working through this question, noting that in the Rising, there is a "terrible beauty." Which outweighs the other—the terror or the beauty? Or in other words, are the gains worth the losses? Again, the speaker can't quite answer this question, but the refrain indicates that he is at least sure that both aspects are present.

But while the refrain registers these questions and conflicts, it also makes another claim that is more definite: something has been *born*. The poem describes the leaders who died during the Rising, but by making the refrain about birth rather than death, the speaker asserts that the true meaning of the Rising does *not* lie in death. Even more than being the end of something, the Rising was the beginning of something. It might not be the immediate beginning of Irish independence, but it is nonetheless the beginning of a new chapter in Ireland's history. From now on, the story of the Rising will be part of Ireland's story and will shape the future course of the country.

The rebels staged the Rising at Easter hoping that it would reenact Christ's death and resurrection with a new life for Ireland. In saying something has been born, the speaker suggests that the rebels, in some sense, succeeded. This more hopeful perspective emerges as the speaker's ultimate response to the Rising because it is repeated firmly in the refrain.

Where Refrain appears in the poem:

- **Lines 15-16:** "All changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born."
- **Lines 39-40:** "Transformed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born."
- **Lines 79-80:** "Are changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born."

SIMILE

The speaker uses a simile to convey his conflicted feelings about the rebels, by choosing an image that has multiple implications. In lines 61-62, the speaker says that the community's job as mourners is to "murmur name upon name, / As a mother names her child." The mother softly speaks the child's name after they have fallen asleep, as the community speaks the rebels' names after they have died. On the one hand, this image is a tender and sympathetic one. The mother is loving and protective towards her child, and a child generally represents goodness and innocence. Seen this way, the image suggests that the rebels are blameless and noble, and that the community cares deeply for them.

On the other hand, the simile also suggests something thoughtless and uncontrolled in the rebels' actions. The child falls asleep after having "run wild" (line 64). And so, the speaker suggests, the rebels died after acting with wild, uncontrolled violence. Maybe they, like children, couldn't help what they were doing—maybe they felt compelled to act as they did. But if so, that is part of what the speaker criticizes them for. When he asks in lines 72-73, "And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?", he again asks if their political zeal clouded their judgment about their actions. There, the syllable "wild" in "bewildered" calls back to the image of the frenzied child and suggests that the rebels may have been similarly out of control.

The speaker is torn through the whole poem between what can be criticized in the rebels and what must be honored. The simile of the sleeping child helps capture that conflicted response in a single image.

Where Simile appears in the poem:

- **Line 62:** "As a mother names her child"

- **Lines 63-64:** "When sleep at last has come / On limbs that had run wild."

METAPHOR

In several instances, the speaker uses metaphors to express his thinking about the rebels in a more powerful and suggestive way than straightforward assertion could do. In stanzas one and two, the speaker uses the metaphor of drama to express how drastically his sense of the rebels has changed. In lines 36-37, the speaker explains how the rebels have "resigned [their] part / In the casual comedy." This image ties back to line 14, when the speaker said they lived "where motley is worn." In other words, the speaker used to believe that everyone's role in life was essentially a comic one—nothing too serious and nothing too terrible. Thanks to the Rising, however, all that has changed. With their deaths, the rebels left the "casual comedy" and entered, by implication, a tragedy.

This metaphor of drama helps express the speaker's new view in a more powerful way. He could have simply said, "I never took the rebels very seriously. Now, after their deaths, I see their lives had a serious purpose after all." But by linking their lives to dramatic tragedy, the speaker invites readers to think of great tragic figures they may know from literature—such as Oedipus, Antigone, Hamlet, or King Lear. Readers are often struck with horror and pity at these characters' fates. Over centuries, readers have also remembered their stories. By connecting the rebels to these tragic heroes, the speaker helps the reader better understand the horror and pity he feels, while also suggesting powerfully that the rebels' stories will live on.

Likewise, the speaker could simply have said, "The rebels cared enormously about their political goal and didn't care about anything else." But the metaphor of the heart of stone (in lines 41-44, and then again in line 58) does more: it captures both what was noble *and* what was terrible about this single-minded devotion. On the one hand, when readers imagine this stone in the "living stream," they get an impression of something steadfast, immovable, not swayed by the changing currents around it. This firmness could be an admirable quality of character. On the other hand, when readers imagine this stone in place of a heart, they may feel horror at the thought of someone losing all human feeling.

Metaphors can often suggest multiple ways of thinking about an idea, because there are multiple connections the reader could make between the original idea and the image to which it is compared. The speaker uses metaphors this way to suggest a range of different emotional responses and to make those emotions more vivid for the reader.

Where Metaphor appears in the poem:

- **Line 14:** "where motley is worn:"
- **Lines 36-37:** "He, too, has resigned his part / In the casual comedy;"
- **Lines 41-44:** "Hearts with one purpose alone / Through summer and winter seem / Enchanted to a stone / To trouble the living stream."
- **Line 56:** "The stone's in the midst of all."
- **Line 58:** "Can make a stone of the heart."

REPETITION

The poem uses a variety of forms of repetition to create a number of different effects. In stanza one, for example, the speaker uses epistrophe with the repetition of the phrase "polite meaningless words" at ends of two consecutive clauses. Here, the repetition helps recreate the thing the speaker is talking about. "Polite meaningless words" includes the trite kind of small talk which often uses the same conventional phrases over and over: "How are you?" "Nice weather we're having." By repeating this phrase, the speaker reinforces that sense of monotonous repetition.

Anaphora in stanza two helps the speaker build a sense of expansion. He describes just four of the many Irish rebels in detail. But repeating "This" at the start of lines 24, 26, and 31 creates the impression that he is looking at a large crowd of people and just picking a few examples to concentrate on—though he could have picked many more. Pointing to each example with "this" creates the sense of a list which could have gone on much longer. The repetition expands the reader's sense of just how much was sacrificed for the sake of political goals.

The speaker also uses diacope in a number of places. In stanza three, for example, diacope appears in the phrase "minute by minute." The stanza describes rapid, continual change occurring with almost every moment. Repeating "minute" within the phrase—and then repeating the entire phrase three times—replicates the way, in real time, one minute is quickly followed by the next and the next and the next. The diacope of "murmur name upon name, / As a mother names her child" similarly replicates the thing it describes. The speaker imagines the community saying all the names of the rebels, one name after another. The succession of "name ... name ... name" (along with the repeated syllable of the single word "murmur") across the lines captures what the speaker imagines more closely than if he said, for example, "murmur all of the names."

The speaker also repeats variations on the same word. This device, called polyptoton, helps capture the movement of the speaker's train of thought. One idea suggests another, related but different, and the connection is made clear by the way the two ideas use related words. For example, the speaker reminds himself that, for the rebels, it is "not night but death." The thought of their deaths provokes a question about their

deaths--were they necessary? This question then provokes a response: it is "enough / To know they dreamed and are dead." This response, in turn, provokes a new question: "And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?" The related words show the speaker's mind moving from one idea to the next, revealing how many thoughts and questions the rebels' deaths inspire.

Finally, the speaker uses epizeuxis in the poem's refrain in lines 15 and 79. Here, the repetition of "changed, changed" is a simple and effective way of emphasizing this central idea of the poem. In struggling to draw the right conclusion about the Rising, the speaker's clearest judgment is that the rebels were radically transformed by their political action and deaths. Repeating "changed" underlines this point. It also gives the speaker a chance to clarify his point by adding "utterly." The rebels weren't just changed—they were *completely* changed.

Where Repetition appears in the poem:

- **Line 6:** "Or polite meaningless words"
- **Line 8:** "Polite meaningless words"
- **Lines 15-16:** "All changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born."
- **Line 24:** "This"
- **Line 26:** "This"
- **Line 31:** "This"
- **Line 36:** "He, too"
- **Line 38:** "He, too"
- **Lines 39-40:** "utterly: / A terrible beauty is born"
- **Line 47:** "cloud," "cloud"
- **Line 48:** "Minute by minute"
- **Line 50:** "minute by minute"
- **Line 55:** "Minute by minute"
- **Line 60:** "part," "part"
- **Line 61:** "name upon name"
- **Line 62:** "names"
- **Line 65:** "nightfall?"
- **Line 66:** "night," "death"
- **Line 67:** "death"
- **Line 70:** "dream"
- **Line 71:** "dreamed," "dead"
- **Line 73:** "died"
- **Lines 79-80:** "Are changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born."

CLIMAX (FIGURE OF SPEECH)

The poem's refrain, and the final lines in stanza four leading up to the refrain, are arguably a subtle example of climax. In each case, the speaker builds up to the most important, conclusive lines and words, not only for emphasis, but also for suspense. The reader is given time to wonder *how* the speaker will conclude.

The refrain begins, "All/Are changed, changed utterly" ("Transformed utterly" in line 39). The speaker says first that something is changed; then that it has been *radically* changed. Now, at the end of the line, the reader wonders *how* it has been changed. And so the speaker concludes with the kind of change that has occurred: "A terrible beauty is born." Within this line, too, the speaker delays the key word. The reader briefly wonders, "A terrible beauty is—what? Lost? Seen? Dead?"

And then the vital word comes: "born." This word is so significant because the poem is, on the face of it, about death. The speaker is trying to decide what the rebels' deaths mean. Were they foolish and unnecessary? Were they patriotic and heroic? Did the rebels ultimately gain more than they lost? By ending with the word "born," the speaker answers this question. He places the final emphasis not on loss and death but on new life. The refrain has a climactic structure because it leads up to this all-important word, as the speaker homes in more and more closely on the most precise, definitive truth about the Rising.

The climax structure is even more pronounced the last time the refrain appears. The speaker begins with a list of names: MacDonagh, MacBride, etc. They are the subjects of the sentence. Then he follows with some descriptive clauses: "Now and in time to be," "Wherever green is worn." The reader is kept waiting for the verb of the sentence, asking: "What *about* the rebels? What did they do?" This is the question the speaker himself has been trying to answer for the whole poem. By delaying the verb, the speaker brings the reader to experience, briefly, the same conflict and uncertainty that he has experienced.

Then the speaker finally gives the verb—the rebels are "changed, changed utterly." And then comes his most conclusive judgement: "A terrible beauty is born." Making this the last line of the poem emphasizes how important it is. All these dramatic effects would be lost if the speaker had written instead, "And Connolly and Pearse, / Are changed, utterly changed/ Both now and in time to be, / Wherever green is worn." The climactic structure builds suspense as the reader draws close to the key idea and then emphasizes that idea when it comes.

Where Climax (Figure of Speech) appears in the poem:

- **Lines 15-16:** "All changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born."
- **Lines 39-40:** "Transformed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born."
- **Lines 75-76:** "MacDonagh and MacBride / And Connolly and Pearse"
- **Lines 77-80:** "Now and in time to be, / Wherever green is worn, / Are changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born."

ALLUSION

In the title, in the refrain, and in some of the poem's key images, the speaker alludes to other well-known texts and ideas. These allusions help clarify the complex meaning of the Rising, especially its spiritual meaning.

The title "Easter, 1916" alludes most obviously to the day when the Rising began—Easter Monday, 1916, the day after Easter Sunday. Easter is the most significant feast of the Christian calendar. It is the day, according to Christian belief, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, rose from the dead. His resurrection proved that he was divine, and it gave all humans hope that they, too, could have life after death. The rebels staged the Rising deliberately at Easter to signal that they hoped to give new life to Ireland—by their deaths, if necessary. By titling the poem "Easter, 1916"—instead of, say, "The Rising," or "April 24, 1916"—the poet/speaker focuses attention on this important symbolism. The title, along with the refrain, emphasizes that something *has* been brought to life. This emphasis ultimately gives a message of hope to a complex and conflicted poem.

The refrain "A terrible beauty is born" also alludes to Aristotle's *Poetics*, a famous text about tragic drama. In this text, Aristotle writes that a well-written tragedy brings on the emotions of "pity and terror" in the audience. The speaker applies this paradoxical combination of beauty and terror to the Rising, finding meaning in it by comparing it to a great work of tragic drama. As with tragedy, its key figures can move and inspire the audience even though they die.

The speaker attempts to soften the harshness of death by representing death as sleep in lines 63-65: "What is it but nightfall?" This image is partly a biblical allusion. After Christ's resurrection, it was common for biblical writers to call death a kind of sleep, since they believed the dead would "awake." For instance, St. Paul uses this idea when he writes, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The belief that the dead would ultimately be resurrected to life with God is the great source of hope for Christians, and the speaker awakens that hope with his biblical allusion—which makes it all the more devastating when he then rejects the idea in line 66: "No, no, not night but death." The poem's final emphasis may be hopeful, but the speaker insists that the reader feel the full tragic cost of the Rising before moving towards that hope.

The image of the heart as a stone is also a biblical allusion. God says through a prophet, "I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). A heart of flesh is one that loves and feels, as opposed to a stony heart that is hard and uncaring. For readers who recognize this allusion, the image of the stony heart will carry a negative meaning. The rebels with hearts devoted to "one purpose alone" have lost some sort of love they ought to have had for other purposes and people. Of course, the stone image could also have a positive meaning, representing the steadfast dedication of the rebels to their purpose. The biblical allusion, then, adds complexity to the metaphor of the stone, making it an effective way for the speaker to express his conflicted response to the rebels.

Where Allusion appears in the poem:

- **Line 16:** "A terrible beauty is born."
- **Line 25:** "And rode our wingèd horse;"
- **Line 40:** "A terrible beauty is born."
- **Line 58:** "Can make a stone of the heart."
- **Line 65:** "What is it but nightfall?"
- **Line 80:** "A terrible beauty is born."

CONSONANCE

The poem often uses consonance to reinforce the *ideas* the words are conveying through the *sounds* of those words. It also uses consonance to create a sound of unity and harmony at key points in the poem.

In stanza two, for instance, the speaker uses repetition of harsher, more striking sounds, like /t/, to reinforce a sense of unpleasantness or aggression in the people he describes. He describes one man in lines 31-34 as a "drunken, vainglorious lout" who "had done most bitter wrong / To some who are near my heart"; in lines 17-20, he also describes "[t]hat woman" who "spent" her days in "ignorant good-will" and "Her nights in argument."

In stanza three, lines 60-64, when the speaker wants to create a very different sense of quiet and tenderness, he repeats softer, gentler sounds like /r/, /l/, /m/, and /n/:

> our part
> To murmur name upon name,
> As a mother names her child
> When sleep at last has come
> On limbs that had run wild.

With these gentle, euphonious consonants, the speaker creates in the sound of the poem the same sort of atmosphere—a mother speaking softly to her sleeping child—that the poem is actually describing.

The speaker also uses consonance of the /b/ sound in the poem's refrain: "A terrible beauty is born." Repeating the same consonant sound in the three key words of the refrain gives the line a unified sound and so gives it a greater sense of finality—which is appropriate for the line that ends stanzas one and two and also ends the poem.

Where Consonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "m," "t," "m," "t," "c"

- **Line 2:** “C,” “f”
- **Line 3:** “F,” “c,” “k”
- **Line 5:** “d,” “d,” “d”
- **Line 6:** “l,” “l,” “ss,” “w,” “s”
- **Line 7:** “l,” “w,” “l,” “s”
- **Line 8:** “l,” “l,” “ss,” “w,” “s”
- **Line 11:** “p,” “p”
- **Line 13:** “th,” “th”
- **Line 14:** “l,” “l”
- **Line 15:** “ll,” “ch,” “c,” “h,” “tt,” “r”
- **Line 16:** “t,” “rr,” “b,” “b,” “t,” “b,” “r”
- **Line 17:** “t,” “w,” “w,” “nt”
- **Line 18:** “n,” “n,” “n,” “t,” “w”
- **Line 19:** “t,” “t”
- **Line 20:** “t,” “w”
- **Line 21:** “W,” “w”
- **Line 22:** “W”
- **Line 23:** “r,” “rr,” “r”
- **Line 26:** “h,” “h,” “f”
- **Line 27:** “h,” “f”
- **Line 28:** “H,” “h,” “f”
- **Line 29:** “S,” “s,” “s,” “s”
- **Line 30:** “S,” “s”
- **Line 31:** “m,” “d,” “d,” “m,” “d”
- **Line 32:** “d,” “l,” “l,” “t”
- **Line 33:** “t,” “tt”
- **Line 34:** “t”
- **Line 35:** “h”
- **Line 36:** “H,” “h,” “h”
- **Line 37:** “c,” “c”
- **Line 38:** “H,” “h,” “h,” “r,” “n”
- **Line 39:** “T,” “r,” “n,” “r,” “tt,” “r”
- **Line 40:** “t,” “rr,” “b,” “b,” “t,” “b,” “r”
- **Line 42:** “mm,” “m”
- **Line 43:** “n,” “n,” “t,” “t,” “t,” “n”
- **Line 44:** “T,” “t,” “t”
- **Line 45:** “r”
- **Line 46:** “r,” “r”
- **Line 47:** “m,” “c,” “m,” “c”
- **Line 48:** “M,” “m”
- **Line 49:** “m”
- **Line 50:** “m,” “m”
- **Line 51:** “h,” “h”
- **Line 52:** “h”
- **Line 53:** “l,” “l,” “m,” “h”
- **Line 54:** “h,” “m,” “c,” “ck,” “c”
- **Line 55:** “M,” “m”
- **Line 56:** “m”
- **Line 60:** “p,” “p”
- **Line 61:** “m,” “rm,” “r,” “n,” “m,” “n,” “n,” “m”
- **Line 62:** “m,” “r,” “n,” “m,” “r,” “l”
- **Line 63:** “l,” “l,” “m”
- **Line 64:** “l,” “m,” “n,” “l”
- **Line 65:** “t,” “t,” “t,” “n,” “t”
- **Line 66:** “N,” “n,” “n,” “t,” “n,” “t,” “t”
- **Line 67:** “n”
- **Line 68:** “F,” “f”
- **Line 69:** “F,” “d,” “d”
- **Line 70:** “d”
- **Line 71:** “d,” “d,” “d,” “d”
- **Line 72:** “l”
- **Line 73:** “l,” “d,” “d,” “ll,” “d,” “d”
- **Line 74:** “t,” “t,” “t”
- **Line 78:** “r,” “r,” “r,” “r”
- **Line 79:** “ch,” “ch,” “tt,” “r”
- **Line 80:** “t,” “rr,” “b,” “b,” “t,” “b,” “r”

ENJAMBMENT

The speaker strategically uses enjambment (and its opposite, the end-stopped line) to convey to the reader where he feels a greater sense of doubt or of certainty, and to help reproduce that feeling in the reader.

When the line is enjambed, the reader is left wondering where the speaker's ideas will go next. The speaker uses enjambment in the most pronounced way in spots where he, too, has been seeking answers to difficult questions. Line 60, for example, is enjambed and ends with "our part." The reader is left wondering at the end of the line, "What *is* our part?" This is the question the speaker has been struggling to answer for himself with the poem; he's been asking how to respond properly to the Rising. With this enjambed ending, he essentially causes the reader to ask the same question.

There is a similar effect with enjambed lines later in that same stanza. When line 70 ends with "enough," the reader wonders, "What is enough?" And when line 72 reads, "And what if excess of love," the reader asks, "Yes, what if? What *is* the consequence of 'excess of love'?" The poem seeks both to offer an appropriate, definitive response to the Rising and to show how difficult it was to arrive at that response. By helping recreate the speaker's sense of questioning and uncertainty in the reader's mind, enjambment helps the reader understand that difficulty.

By contrast, the end-stopped lines convey a greater sense of certainty. This sense is appropriate for the poem's refrain. As the most repeated idea in the poem, it seems also to be the idea about which the speaker feels most sure. And so the speaker has end-stopped lines where the refrain appears, at lines 15-16, 39-40, and 79-80. Lines 77-78, which lead up to the final refrain, are also end-stopped. The punctuation and pauses at the ends of these lines slow the reader down and create a greater sense of finality and drama at the poem's conclusion.

Where Enjambment appears in the poem:

- **Line 3:** "grey"
- **Line 4:** "Eighteenth"
- **Line 7:** "said"
- **Line 8:** "Polite"
- **Line 9:** "done"
- **Line 10:** "Of," "gibe"
- **Line 11:** "To"
- **Line 13:** "I"
- **Line 17:** "spent"
- **Line 18:** "In"
- **Line 21:** "hers"
- **Line 22:** "When"
- **Line 26:** "friend"
- **Line 27:** "Was"
- **Line 31:** "dreamed"
- **Line 32:** "A"
- **Line 33:** "wrong"
- **Line 34:** "To"
- **Line 36:** "part"
- **Line 37:** "In"
- **Line 41:** "alone"
- **Line 42:** "Through," "seem"
- **Line 43:** "Enchanted," "stone"
- **Line 44:** "To"
- **Line 46:** "range"
- **Line 47:** "From"
- **Line 49:** "stream"
- **Line 50:** "Changes"
- **Line 57:** "sacrifice"
- **Line 58:** "Can"
- **Line 60:** "part"
- **Line 61:** "To"
- **Line 68:** "faith"
- **Line 69:** "For"
- **Line 70:** "enough"
- **Line 71:** "To"
- **Line 72:** "love"
- **Line 73:** "Bewildered"

EXTENDED METAPHOR

Stanza three is an extended metaphor or allegory representing aspects of human life and society through a scene from nature. The use of extended metaphor allows the speaker to comment more subtly on the rebels as he moves away from outright criticism towards a more mixed judgment.

Stanza three could be read as a straightforward description of how life proceeds in the natural world as opposed to human society. But since the stone that begins and ends the stanza is a symbol or metaphor for the rebels, the poem invites the reader to see the rest of the stanza as a metaphor also. The stone is "in the midst of all" in this natural setting, just as the rebels live "in the midst of all" in the urban setting of houses and offices. All the elements of nature change "minute by minute," as most humans adapt constantly throughout their days and, indeed, throughout their lives, to pursue different needs and different goals. The moor-hens diving for food and calling to the moor-cocks for mates represent those basic biological needs and the life cycle through which all humans must go. The extended metaphor allows the speaker to create a large-scale picture of all the aspects of life that the rebels, with their single goal, have chosen to put aside.

This metaphor is a more subtle way of commenting upon the rebels because it allows for both positive and negative judgments. On the one hand, by representing ordinary human life through animal life, the speaker could be saying that most humans pursue insignificant goals—that their lives are not much more enlightened than animals' lives—and that the rebels have gone beyond mere animal life with their dedication to an idealistic goal. On the other hand, the rebels are represented by a stone, which has even *less* life than a horse or a bird does. So, the speaker could also be saying that the rebels have ignored or overlooked some vital aspects of human life in their total dedication to one political cause.

But all these ideas are expressed through a metaphor the reader must interpret. The extended metaphor, then, creates more ambiguity. Stanza two contains direct criticism of some of the rebels, but stanza four praises them while also questioning them. The extended metaphor in stanza three, thanks to its ambiguity, helps the speaker shift into this more mixed perspective and draws the reader into his sense of uncertainty.

Where Extended Metaphor appears in the poem:

- **Lines 41-56:** "Hearts with one purpose alone / Through summer and winter seem / Enchanted to a stone / To trouble the living stream. / The horse that comes from the road, / The rider, the birds that range / From cloud to tumbling cloud, / Minute by minute they change; / A shadow of cloud on the stream / Changes minute by minute; / A horse-hoof slides on the brim, / And a horse plashes within it; / The long-legged moor-hens dive, / And hens to moor-cocks call; / Minute by minute they live: / The stone's in the midst of all."

VOCABULARY

Gibe (Line 10) - A taunt or mean-spirited joke.

Motley (Line 14) - The brightly colored costume traditionally worn by a jester or clown.

That woman (Line 17) - The woman referred to here is Countess Constance Markievicz. Yeats had known the Countess since the 1890s and was good friends with her. She fought in the Easter Rising and was sentenced to death by the

British authorities, but her sentence was reduced because she was a woman. When the Sinn Féin party declared Irish independence in 1919, she participated in the government it formed. She died in 1927.

Rode to harriers (Line 23) - Participated in formal hunts. "Harrier" refers to a kind of hound used for hunting hares and more broadly to the huntsmen who accompany those hounds.

This man (Line 24) - The man referred to here is Patrick Pearse. Pearse was a teacher and poet who became a political revolutionary and one of the leaders of the Easter Rising. When the rebels declared Irish independence, Pearse was elected president of the new Irish Republic and read the Proclamation of the Irish Republic from outside the General Post Office. After six days of heavy fighting, Pearse gave the rebels the order to surrender. Pearse was one of the 15 Irish leaders executed by a British firing squad.

Wingèd horse (Line 25) - Pegasus, an immortal winged horse from Greek mythology. By striking the ground with his hoof, Pegasus created a spring on Mount Helicon, the home of the Muses—the goddesses who inspire literature, science, and the arts. Pegasus's association with the Muses makes him a popular symbol for poetry.

This other (Line 26) - The man referred to here is Thomas MacDonagh. MacDonagh was a literary critic and poet who was a friend of Patrick Pearse. He was one of the leaders of the Easter Rising and signed the Proclamation of the Irish Republic. He was also executed by a British firing squad.

This other man (Line 31) - The man referred to here is John MacBride. MacBride was an Irish nationalist who offered the rebels his services when the Rising began. He was given a commanding role of the Irish forces and, after the Rising, was executed by British troops.

Vainglorious (Line 32) - Vain, boastful, excessively proud of oneself.

Lout (Line 32) - An impolite, aggressive, or badly behaved man.

Some who are near my heart (Line 34) - This line refers to Maud Gonne, the Irish nationalist and estranged wife of John MacBride, and to Gonne's daughter. Yeats loved Maud Gonne deeply for years and she inspired many of his poems. He was shocked and disturbed when she married John MacBride. The marriage was unhappy, as MacBride abused both her and their daughter.

Resigned (Line 36) - Given up.

Plashes (Line 52) - Plunges into water.

Moor-hens (Line 53) - Medium-sized female water birds, also called marsh hens.

Suffice (Line 59) - Be enough.

England may keep faith (Line 68) - In 1914, the British Parliament passed the Government of Ireland Act 1914, also known as the Home Rule Act, which provided home rule for Ireland. Home rule would have meant a more independent form of self-governance for Ireland, though the country would have remained part of the United Kingdom. When World War I began in 1914, implementation of the Act was postponed until the end of the war. The speaker here points out that the British powers might have followed through with the Act and granted Ireland home rule even without the Rising.

MacDonagh (Line 75) - Thomas MacDonagh was a literary critic and poet who was a friend of Patrick Pearse. He was one of the leaders of the Easter Rising and signed the Proclamation of the Irish Republic. He was also executed by a British firing squad.

MacBride (Line 75) - John MacBride. MacBride was an Irish nationalist who offered the rebels his services when the Rising began. He was given a commanding role of the Irish forces and, after the Rising, was executed by British troops.

Connolly (Line 76) - James Connolly. Connolly, one of the boldest Irish nationalists, was the de facto commander-in-chief of the Irish forces during the Easter Rising and a formidable leader. As one of the Rising's leaders, he was also executed by British troops.

Pearse (Line 76) - Patrick Pearse (see entry for "This man").

Green (Line 78) - The color traditionally associated with, and symbolizing, Ireland.

FORM, METER, & RHYME

FORM

"Easter, 1916" is divided into four stanzas of different lengths:

Stanza 1: 16 lines
Stanza 2: 24 lines
Stanza 3: 16 lines
Stanza 4: 24 lines

Each individual stanza is further divided into quatrains by the poem's rhyme scheme, which creates four-line units rhymed *abab*.

Some readers of the poem have found symbolic significance in these structural units. The Easter Rising took place on April 24, 1916. April is the fourth month of the year, and the poem is divided into four-line units. The 24 lines of the second and fourth stanzas may represent the 24th day of April; the 16 lines of the first and third stanzas may represent the year 1916. Since the poet highlights the date's importance in the title, it is plausible that he would also embed the date into the poem's form.

The stanzas help structure the speaker's thought process in the poem, from his initial dismissive attitude to his final attitude of respect. Stanza one describes how he used to mock the rebels

before the Rising; stanza two describes how many rebels used to live more sociable, artistically driven lives before the Rising. Stanza three combines criticism of the rebels with admiration through the symbol of the stone; stanza four wavers between judging and honoring the rebels, but ultimately ends with honor.

Dividing the poem into stanzas also creates an opportunity for the speaker to use a refrain throughout the poem (at the end of stanzas one, two, and four) to repeat his most important message. While the stanzas convey the development of the speaker's feelings, the refrain signals, even from the first stanza, that the speaker sees something both tragic and profound in the Rising.

METER

"Easter, 1916" is written in a mix of loose iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter, but there are also frequent variations on this pattern for particular dramatic effects. Recall that an iamb consists of two syllables in an unstressed-stressed pattern (da DUM); in tetrameter there are four iambs per line, while trimeter has three.

Trimeter is not common in English verse as a way of writing an entire poem, though a pattern of alternating between tetrameter and trimeter (what's known as common meter) is often used. Here, the frequent trimeter creates a chant-like quality to the poem, giving it almost the sound of an incantation or spell. This haunting, spell-like quality is appropriate for a poem that commemorates the dead and ends by naming them. It was an Irish tradition to recite the names of the dead, and this recitation was even believed to have a certain magical quality that could make the dead somehow present.

Some of the poem's lines are perfectly iambic, like lines 17-20:

> That wo- | man's days | were spent
> In ig- | norant | good-will,
> Her nights | in ar- | gument
> Until | her voice | grew shrill.

Again, though, within this overall trimeter structure, the speaker varies the rhythm. The final lines, for example, can be scanned like this:

> Now and in time to be,
> Wherever green is worn,
> Are changed, changed utterly:
> A terrible beauty is born.

Here, the varied rhythm creates several dramatic effects. Coming after two regular iambic lines, the stress on "Now," the first syllable of line 77 creates a trochee (stressed-unstressed), breaks the pattern and catches the reader's attention. It also gives extra emphasis to the word, insisting that the rebels are to be honored at this very moment. The three stressed syllables in a row of "changed, changed utterly," slow the reader down in preparation for the end of the stanza and the poem, while the unstressed syllables at the end of the line (a feminine ending) create a sense of suspension rather than finality, as the reader moves to what is actually the last line. The last line re-introduces a regular pattern with "terrible beauty is," though it isn't the usual iambic rhythm: it is dactylic (stressed-unstressed-unstressed). The additional unstressed syllables lengthen the line, continuing to slow the poem down. This longer line, together with the even metrical pattern and the final stressed beat, creates a sense of finality and conclusion at the poem's end.

RHYME SCHEME

The poem's overall rhyme scheme is *abab*, so that the line endings go:

ABABCDCDEFEF, etc.

However, the speaker substitutes slant rhymes for perfect rhymes in many of the lines. Many of the line endings share the same consonant, for example (consonance), but have different vowels: "thought" and "lout" at the end of lines 30 and 32, or "dive" and "live" in lines 53 and 55. The generally regular rhyme scheme contributes to the spell-like or incantatory quality of the poem's sound. The imperfect rhymes, meanwhile, make the rhyme scheme less emphatic and keep the poem from acquiring too much of a sing-song or monotonous tone.

The words that end a poetic line are often particularly significant, and the rhyme scheme can have the effect of linking these significant words together. When the words are related in sound, the reader more easily sees how they are related in meaning. Lines 41 and 43, for example, rhyme "alone" and "stone." The rhyme highlights the fact that it is *because* the rebels dedicate themselves to "one purpose alone," to one single goal, that their hearts have become like "stone," utterly fixed and unchanging. Other rhymes make the contrast between two words and ideas even more striking. For example, lines 37 and 39 rhyme "comedy" and "utterly." "Utterly" describes the rebel's total transformation *away* from his past role in life's "casual comedy." Pairing these two words highlights the sudden, drastic shift from one identity to the other.

SPEAKER

The speaker is a witness to the Easter Rising who wants to find the appropriate response to this profound historical event. He is a citizen of Dublin who appears to have only a distant acquaintance with the rebels at first, but he later reveals details of their lives as if he knew some more intimately. Because these details link the speaker so closely with the poem's author, W.B. Yeats, this guide assumes that the speaker is also a man and so

uses male pronouns throughout.

Over the course of the poem, which is told from the first-person point of view, the speaker reveals how his judgment of the rebels has changed thanks to the Rising. The first two stanzas show how dismissive the speaker is towards them, lamenting the lives they gave up rather than supporting their political goals. The third stanza is torn between admiring them for their dedication and criticizing them for blind zeal. The fourth stanza shows how the speaker ultimately shifts to acknowledging the rebels' "dream" and honoring them for their heroic, fatal commitment to that dream.

The speaker is not identical to Yeats, but there are important parallels between them. The speaker is distant towards the rebels in the poem's first stanza. Yeats, however, had respectful friendships with a number of them, including Pearse and MacDonagh. For years, Yeats loved a fiery Irish nationalist, Maud Gonne, who married John MacBride—the "other man" mentioned in line 31. MacBride abused Gonne and her daughter, and so when the speaker says this man has "done most bitter wrong / To some who are near my heart," he is essentially expressing the poet's own thoughts.

In the late 1890s and early 1900s, Yeats was, like Gonne, enthusiastic about Irish nationalism and independence. But in the decade leading up the Rising, he lost some of that enthusiasm, in part because he disagreed with the rebels about the use of violence. In a letter at the end of April 1916, Yeats wrote, "I know most of the Sinn Fein leaders & the whole thing bewilders me for Connolly is an able man & Thomas MacDonough [sic] both able & cultivated. Pearse I have long looked upon as a man made dangerous by the Vertigo of Self Sacrifice." In May 1916, Yeats wrote, "I had no idea that any public event could so deeply move me." The letters, which use some of the same words that appear in the poem, show how the speaker's strong, conflicted feelings mirror Yeats's own response to the Rising and its leaders.

SETTING

To the extent that the poem has a specific setting, it takes place in Dublin, the capital city of Ireland. The most significant events of the Rising took place in Dublin, and much of the city's architecture dates to the 18th century, so the description of "grey / Eighteenth-century houses" likely refers to the stone buildings constructed during that period.

The poem also suggests Ireland more generally as its setting, in that it assumes its readers are Irish citizens. The references to "[t]hat woman," "[t]his man," etc. in stanza two would most easily be understood by people who lived near the rebels and knew them personally. When the speaker talks of "our part" and says "[w]e know," he seems to imagine a group composed of Irish citizens who would be honoring the rebels who fought for Irish independence. It is Irish citizens who would wear green, as the speaker imagines in line 78, and read this poem on future occasions to continue honoring their memory.

Stanza three markedly leaves the urban setting behind to enter a pastoral scene set in nature, among streams, clouds, and animals. This stanza is strongly metaphorical, however, and does not refer to any specific natural spot in the way that the opening lines refer to Dublin.

CONTEXT

LITERARY CONTEXT

As a poem that mourns the dead, Yeats's "Easter, 1916," is a kind of elegy. But it differs from some of the most famous elegies in English—such as John Milton's "Lycidas," Percy Shelley's "Adonais," and Alfred Lord Tennyson's "In Memoriam"—in that it is focused not on a single individual but rather on a historical and political event. In this sense, important literary precedents include other political poems, like the English poet Andrew Marvell's "An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland." Marvell's poem was written during the English Civil War, when Oliver Cromwell led the Parliamentary army to victory against the royal army. Marvell tries to arrive at the right response to Cromwell and his followers, as Yeats does here for the Irish who rebelled against the established English power. Both poems reveal, through their conflicted responses, how difficult it can be to interpret history and judge political conflicts.

Yeats's own poems are also important precedents for this one. He used the trimeter form of "Easter, 1916" in a poem called "The Fisherman." Like "Easter, 1916," this poem registers frustration with Irish politics and envisions a more ideal hero who could serve as an appropriate symbol for the country at its best.

Later poets would also draw inspiration from "Easter, 1916" for their own poems about key political-historical events. For instance, the English poet W.H. Auden wrote a poem about the outbreak of World War II titled "September 1, 1939." Auden refers to the date of the event in his title, as Yeats does with "Easter, 1916," and uses the same trimeter form as Yeats. And, like "Easter, 1916," "September 1, 1939," ends with a muted message of hope about the public service the poet can perform with his art.

The Irish poet Seamus Heaney also drew on Yeats to write about the ongoing effects of the Easter Rising. The quest for Irish independence ultimately resulted in the southern Republic of Ireland becoming independent while Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom. Violent struggles broke out in the late 1960s between those who wanted Northern Ireland to join the Republic of Ireland and those who wanted it to remain part of the United Kingdom. Heaney

chronicled this violence in "Casualty," a poem that also uses the trimeter form of "Easter, 1916." Auden and Heaney's poems show how Yeats's poem proved an inspiring model for later poets struggling to find direction and meaning at traumatizing moments in history.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

"Easter, 1916," is a commemoration of the Easter Rising, which occurred when Irish nationalists led a rebellion against British rule to try to win independence for Ireland. When W.B. Yeats was born in 1865, Ireland was a colony of the British Empire. In 1800, Ireland had been joined with Great Britain to form the United Kingdom. The Irish Parliament (the legislative branch of government, similar to the United States Congress) was abolished; the Irish were represented instead by the British Parliament.

Many Irish nationalists opposed the union with Great Britain and worked for decades to restore Home Rule (self-government for Ireland). In 1914, a Home Rule Bill was passed in the British Parliament. Its implementation was postponed, however, until the end of World War I, which had just broken out. Irish nationalists decided to lead a rebellion against British rule before the war was over, and leaders established a Military Council to plan the rising. Patrick Pearse was director of Military Organization; James Connolly and Thomas MacDonagh were members of the Military Council; John MacBride later helped lead the rebel troops.

The Rising was planned for Easter Monday, April 24, 1916. Armed rebels seized key sites in Dublin, the country's capital city, including the General Post Office. Pearse, whom the rebels elected president of the new Irish Republic, declared Ireland an independent state. The British declared martial law and worked to suppress the rebellion by force. In the gunfire between Irish and British troops, hundreds were killed and thousands were wounded. On April 29, as the Irish were surrounded and outnumbered, Pearse ordered all troops to surrender.

The British then arrested thousands of Irish citizens. Many were released, but fourteen of the leaders were ultimately sentenced to death and executed, including Pearse, MacDonagh, MacBride, and Connolly. Before the Rising and immediately afterwards, many Irish citizens had been apathetic or hostile towards the rebels. But after the executions, the Irish public became more sympathetic towards the rebels' cause and more hostile towards the British. The Easter Rising, then, though unsuccessful in the moment, did ultimately help promote the cause of Irish independence.

After the Rising, the pro-independence party Sinn Féin won a large majority of Irish parliamentary seats. In 1919, Sinn Féin formed its own government and declared independence for Ireland. For two years following, the Irish Republican Army fought British forces in the Irish War of Independence. In 1921, Ireland was divided and the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed. Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom, but in the south, the Irish Free State was created as a semi-independent dominion within the British Empire. In 1949, on the 33rd anniversary of the Easter Rising, the Irish Free State became the fully independent Republic of Ireland.

Yeats's poem became part of the way Ireland remembered the Rising. On the 50th anniversary of the Rising, for instance, a Dublin newspaper distributed commemorative posters of the General Post Office under the headline "A Terrible Beauty is Born."

MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- Other Poems on the Easter Rising — A collection of 10 poems written on the occasion of the Easter Rising, all with commentary by Dr. Lucy Collins of University College Dublin. (https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/1916/words-of-the-rising/poll-pick-your-favourite-1916-easter-rising-poem-34382257.html)
- The Easter Rising — Resources on the Easter Rising from the BBC. (https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-35873316)
- Reading of "Easter, 1916" — A moving reading of "Easter, 1916" by Northern Irish actor Liam Neeson. (https://youtu.be/VLt_OuzW9n0)
- Dublin Rising 1916-2016 — A virtual tour of Dublin, narrated by Irish actor Colin Farrell, that overlays the contemporary city with the city as it was in 1916, and provides historical background on the Rising. (https://dublinrising.withgoogle.com/tour/gpo/)
- W.B. Yeats Biography — An account of W.B. Yeats's life, with a focus on his development as a poet. (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-butler-yeats)

LITCHARTS ON OTHER WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS POEMS

- An Irish Airman Foresees his Death
- Leda and the Swan
- Sailing to Byzantium
- The Lake Isle of Innisfree
- The Second Coming
- The Wild Swans at Coole
- When You Are Old

HOW TO CITE

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