

# Ode to the West Wind



# Ode to the West Wind: Formal features

- ode: a genre ,a long lyric poem,serious and dignified in subject,tone and style,sometimes with elaborate stanzaic structure, often written to celebrate an event or in individual.



# Summary

The speaker invokes the “wild West Wind” of autumn, which scatters the dead leaves and spreads seeds so that they may be nurtured by the spring, and asks that the wind, a “destroyer and preserver.”

The speaker says that the wind stirs the Mediterranean from “his summer dreams,” and cleaves the Atlantic into choppy chasms, making the “sapless foliage” of the ocean tremble, and asks for a third time that it hear him.

The speaker asks the wind to “make me thy lyre,” to be his own Spirit, and to drive his thoughts across the universe, “like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth.” He asks the wind, by the incantation of this verse, to scatter his words among mankind.

Speaking both in regard to the season and in regard to the effect upon mankind that he hopes his words to have, the speaker asks: “If winter comes, can spring be far behind?”

# Canto 1

*Canto*: a section or division of a long poem. Derived from the Latin word (**cantus**) meaning song the term originally signified a section of a narrative poem of such length as to be sung by a minstrel into one singing.

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

In the opening stanza, the speaker appeals to the wild West Wind. The use of capital letters for “West” and “Wind” suggests that he is speaking to the Wind as if it were a person. He calls the wind the “breath of Autumn’s being”, thereby further personifying the wind and giving it the human quality of having breath.

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,  
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

This stanza describes the dead Autumn leaves. They are not described as colorful and beautiful, but rather as a symbol of death and even disease. The speaker describes the deathly colors “yellow” “black” and “pale”. Even “hectic red” reminds one of blood and sickness. He describes the dead and dying leaves as “Pestilence stricken multitudes”. This is not a peaceful nor beautiful description of the fall leaves. Rather, the speaker seems to see the fall leaves as a symbol of the dead, the sick, and the dying. The wind then comes along like a chariot and carries the leaves “to their dark wintry bed”, which is clearly a symbol of a grave.



The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

The speaker continues the metaphor of the leaves as the dead by explaining that the wind carries them and “winged seeds” to their graves, “where they lie cold and low”. He uses a simile to compare each leaf to “a corpse within its grave”. But then, part way through the second line, a shift occurs. The speaker says that each is like a corpse “until” the wind comes through, taking away the dead, but bringing new life. The use of the word “azure” or blue, to describe the wind is in sharp contrast to the colors used to describe the leaves.

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

With this stanza, the speaker describes the wind as something which drives away death, burying the dead, and bringing new life. It brings “living hues” and “ordours” which are filled with new life.

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and Preserver; hear, O hear!

Here, the speaker again appeals to the wind, calling it a “wild spirit” and viewing it as a spiritual being who destroys and yet also preserves life. He is asking this spirit to hear his pleas. He has not yet made a specific request of the wind, but it is clear that he views it as a powerful spiritual being which can hear him.

# Canto 2

# Canto 2



Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,  
Loose clouds like Earth's decaying leaves are shed,  
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Again, the speaker addresses the wind as a person, calling it the one who will “loose clouds” and shake the leaves of the “boughs of Heaven and Ocean”. This reads almost as a Psalm, as if the speaker is praising the wind for its power.

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread  
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,  
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Again, the speaker refers to the wind as a spiritual being more powerful than angels, for the angels “of rain and lightening” are described as being “spread on the blue surface” of the wind. He then describes these angels as being “like the bright hair” on the head of an even greater being.

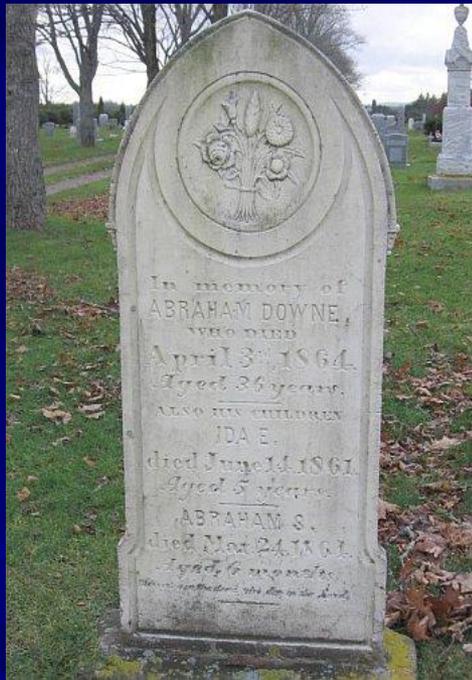
Of the dying year, to which this closing night  
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre  
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

The speaker then explains that the storm approaching is the impending doom of the dying year.

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere  
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: O hear!

The speaker then describes the wind as the bringer of death. He has already described it as the Destroyer. Here, he describes it as one who brings “black rain and fire and hail..” Then, to end this Canto, the speaker again appeals to the wind, begging that it would hear him.

# Themes



1 - Shelley believes in drastic change that will purify the world and open forth the new horizon of life and hope. So, he addresses the seeds that are deeply buried in the human minds. These seeds are aspiring to be activated and endowed with a new life to bring about a utopian world.

2 - Shelley desired to obtain that peculiar strength of the wind to restore his youth, he wants even to fly side by side with the wind though he may sacrifice his real existence. Being a dead leaf implies an abstraction of life but in this death Shelley gains an inspiring eternity and everlasting influence on men

. So, the poet is not concerned with death through melancholic realization , but through considering death as a way for survival over the dead realities of life

# Imagery

- Creates a picture of leaves flowing in the wind
- Hear: wind blowing, leaves crinkling, and the trumpet
- Smell: rain, burning fire, and the ocean
- Touch: wind and rain



# Conclusion

- The author of this poem did a good job at showing the impact of the wind and its power.
- It was very descriptive with lots of imagery.
- The rhyme scheme contributed to the poem because it was a subtle but effective way to rhyme. The rhyming was not overbearing and forced.

Thank you

The text "Thank you" is written in a white, elegant cursive font. It is centered horizontally and partially overlaid by a bright, glowing orange starburst or lens flare effect. The background is solid black, which makes the white text and the orange glow stand out prominently.