

## To Autumn - John Keats

### The one about Autumn

The poem 'To Autumn' is an 'Ode' which means that it is dedicated to Autumn. Keats wrote the poem to celebrate the season and the various changes which take place during the time. The poem is about autumn and covers the three stages of the season - the beginning when fruit/plants are ready to harvest, the middle when animals go into hibernation and things begin to die, and the end as winter begins

#### **Key Quotes:**

- 'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' the first line of the poem suggests that Autumn is a season of change but despite this, it is a calm season.
- 'Thee sitting careless on a granary floor' by personifying Autumn suggests that Autumn can be a season which can be quite thoughtless in the changes it brings.
- Keats personifies autumn and addresses it directly - 'thou watchest oozings'. He implies that Autumn 'behaves' as if it has all the time in the world even though time is passing by.
- The last line 'And gathering swallows twitter in the sky' shows that winter is drawing in and time is coming to an end - it could represent the circle of life.

#### **Context:**

- Keats was a romantic poet and wrote a lot about nature and the natural world.
- Keats died at the age of 25, he was worried that he would leave no lasting impression on the world - this poem could be his attempt to leave his mark and be remembered.

#### **Structure:**

- The first stanza is a celebration and it suggests that Autumn begins in a rich and calm way.
- In the second stanza, Keats speaks directly to Autumn and makes the suggestion that Autumn is in no rush to move on.
- The final stanza shows change, just as the season is changing from Autumn to Winter, Keats recognises this and is accepting of the fact he cannot control this.

#### **Possible themes and links:**

- The passing of time - *Afternoons*, *Death of a Naturalist*, *As Imperceptibly as Grief*
- The natural world - *Excerpt from The Prelude*, *Death of a Naturalist*.

Keats named his poem 'To Autumn' as he wanted to celebrate the season.

## To Autumn

Autumn is a season of change.

'Close bosom friend' suggests that autumn works with summer to produce wonderful things.

The verb 'conspiring' suggests that autumn is quiet and secretive.

Autumn is able to 'trick' nature and the wildlife into thinking that summer will never end.

Keats speaks directly to Autumn. This suggests that Autumn can clearly be seen everywhere.

'Drows'd with the fume of poppies' could imply that autumn is intoxicating and overwhelmingly beautiful.

Autumn has time to observe the changes it has made and enjoy the difference it has made to nature.

This implies nature needs to be reassured, that it is a season which should be admired.

This suggests that Autumn has done its job and winter is on its way.

The adjective 'mellow' suggests that autumn is calm and that the changes are not disruptive.

The adjective 'maturing' to describe the sun suggests that time is passing.

'Ripeness to the core' suggests that autumn is the best season and represents the peak time in life.

Keats uses words such as 'plump' and 'o'erbrimm'd' to show the abundance of food that autumn creates.

Autumn is personified and this suggests that Autumn works hard to make the changes in the season. However, the word 'careless' implies that it is effortless.

Autumn needs to rest due to all the changes 'she' has made.

Due to the changes autumn has made, Spring has been forgotten. This implies autumn is powerful.

In the last stanza, Keats uses language associated with death such as 'soft-dying', 'wailful' and 'mourn'. This could imply that autumn is dying and that Keats's own life is coming to an end.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!  
Close bosom friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with his how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;  
To bed with apples the moss'd cottage trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
They hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
Drows'd with the fume of poppies while thy hook  
Sparest the next swathe and all its twined flowers;  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozing hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, -  
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn,  
Among the river sallows, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft  
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

John Keats

The last line could suggest that Keats is ready for death and to 'move on' just as the 'swallows' are 'gathering' to move on to warmer climates.