

The School Boy

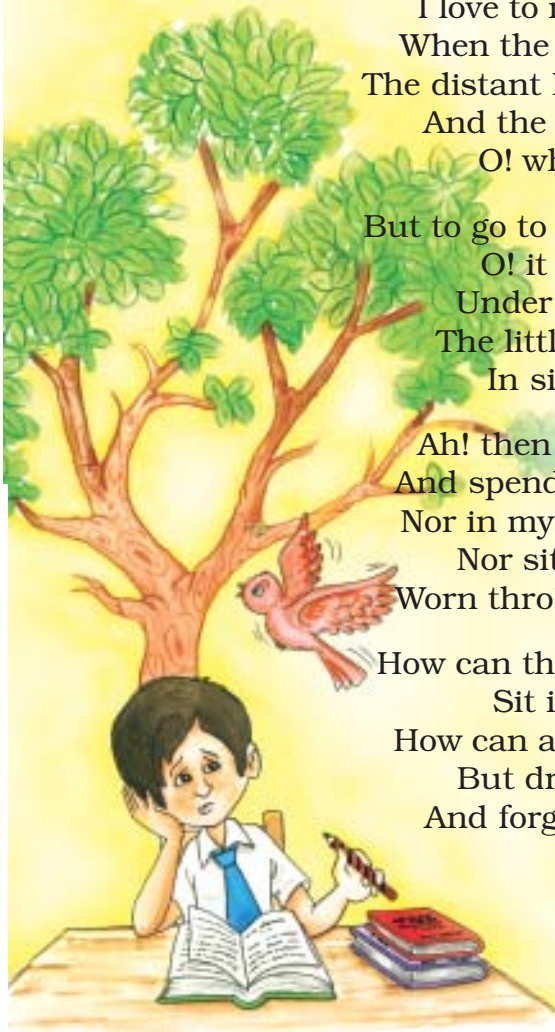
The school boy in the poem is not a happy child. What makes him unhappy? Why does he compare himself to a bird that lives in a cage, or a plant that withers when it should blossom.

I love to rise in a summer morn,
When the birds sing on every tree;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the skylark sings with me.
O! what sweet company.

But to go to school in a summer morn,
O! it drives all joy away;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day,
In sighing and dismay.

Ah! then at times I drooping sit,
And spend many an anxious hour.
Nor in my book can I take delight,
Nor sit in learning's bower,
Worn thro' with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy,
Sit in a cage and sing.
How can a child when fears annoy,
But droop his tender wing,
And forget his youthful spring.



O! Father and Mother, if buds are nip'd,
And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are strip'd
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and cares dismay,

How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear?

WILLIAM BLAKE

glossary

nip'd: (nipped) 'to nip something in the bud' is to stop or destroy it at an early stage of its development

strip'd: stripped

plants strip'd of joy: if joy is taken away from plants

working with the poem

1. Find three or four words/phrases in stanza 1 that reflect the child's happiness and joy.
2. In stanza 2, the mood changes. Which words/phrases reflect the changed mood?
3. 'A cruel eye outworn' (stanza 2) refers to
 - (i) the classroom which is shabby/noisy.
 - (ii) the lessons which are difficult/uninteresting.
 - (iii) the dull/uninspiring life at school with lots of work and no play.

Mark the answer that you consider right.

4. 'Nor sit in learning's bower
worn thro' with the dreary shower'

Which of the following is a close paraphrase of the lines above?

- (i) Nor can I sit in a roofless classroom when it is raining.
- (ii) Nor can I learn anything at school though teachers go on lecturing and explaining.
- (iii) Nor can I sit in the school garden for fear of getting wet in the rain.



Read the following poem and compare it with *The School Boy*.

The One Furrow

When I was young, I went to school
With pencil and footrule
Sponge and slate,
And sat on a tall stool
At learning's gate.

When I was older, the gate swung wide;
Clever and keen-eyed
In I pressed,
But found in the mind's pride
No peace, no rest.

Then who was it taught me back to go
To cattle and barrow,
Field and plough:
To keep to the one furrow,
As I do now?

R.S. THOMAS

The Other Way Round

- ❑ Quicksand works slowly.
- ❑ There is no egg in eggplant, no ham in hamburger and neither apple nor pine in pineapple.
- ❑ Boxing rings are square.
- ❑ There are noses that run and feet that smell.