

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

By WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Central thought of the poem:

The poet feels absolutely bored and disturbed living in the crowded and busy city of London. Even the grey stones of the pavement beside the roads of the city dispel him. Naturally he seeks to escape from the city life and go to Innisfree, an island of his boyhood dreams.

The poet is determined to go to the island of Innisfree as he believes, peace prevails there. He went to Innisfree in his boyhood and enjoyed peace and solitude there. It remained ever fresh in his memory. Now, he argues that even if he does not get absolute peace in the island of his dream, he is sure to have some. What attracts the poet more are some strange sights and sounds of the island. He prefers to live there a life of simplicity in a hut covered with twigs. He will make nine rows of beans and set up beehives for honey.

The morning will appear as a blushful maiden veiled by mist and fog in the island of Innisfree. There the song of cricket would please his ears. The noonday there will appear in purple, blue and red mingled together, instead of white noon full of scorching rays of the sun elsewhere. The evening air will be filled with the flapping of the little song birds, linnets and their twittering will add lustre to it. Finally, the midnight sky at Innisfree has a peculiar glimmering colour instead of all pervasive darkness or blankness. This is how the poet has drawn a dreamy picture of Innisfree where he is determined to go to enjoy solitude and peace leaving the disturbing city life behind.

Themes in *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*

Throughout '*The Lake Isle of Innisfree*' the poet engages with themes that include nature, peace, and spirituality. These three themes are all interrelated. Yeats asks the reader to regard nature as he does, valuable in and of itself, without human intervention. It is a place to find peace and connect with the world on a deeper, spiritual level because it is so far from that which we commonly experience in day to day life. The isolated nature of this natural area that he's longing for is also an important element of his happiness. It is an escape from industrialism as well as from other people.

Analysis of *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*

Stanza One

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

The speaker begins by telling the reader of his intentions, he will, "arise and go now," to the isle of Innisfree. In this first line, the word "go" is repeated twice, the Yeats made this choice

to provide special emphasis on the importance of the speaker's action. The speaker is determined, he must, and will, go to Innisfree. The second line provides additional details as to what he is going to do when he gets there. He plans to create a "small" home for himself. The use of the word "small" in this line gives the impression that he is going to be the only one living in the house, without any family or relations of any kind. He plans to build the cabin from clay and wattles (sticks and rods). Once he's living in his small cabin, he dreams of having "nine" rows of bean plants and a hive for presumably, many honeybees, as in the next line, the glade (or small clearing in a forest), is filled with their sound.

Stanza Two

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

The second quatrain of *'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'* provides the reader with the reasoning behind his desire to travel to Innisfree: to find some peace. This stanza also contains the important metaphorical relationship that Yeats sets up between the notion of peace and nature. He describes peace as "dropping slow," "from the veils of...morning to...the cricket[s]." Yeats relates peace to morning dew. In the glade, he will be surrounded by it, from the leaves on the trees to the grass on the ground, "where the cricket sings." Continuing on, the poet describes three more times of the day and the magical qualities they possess on the lake isle of Innisfree. The imagery calls up sequences that further emphasize the importance of the daydream to the speaker, midnight "glimmer[s]," noontime glows purple, and the evening is full of the beating of "linnet's wings" (a small brown and gray finch, with a reddish-brown breast).

Stanza Three

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

It is at this point in the poem that the speaker shakes himself out of his daydream in which he has described the scenes on the lake isle of Innisfree, and begins to address the real world. Once again he states he is going to leave for the isle, reinforcing the importance of the other uses of "go" in the first quatrain. This constant repetition of the action of leaving his home to create a new one, presents the question of, is he actually ever going to go? Has this dream been something he is now going to realize or does it only exist in his mind? These questions remain pertinent as the poem concludes.

Yeats continues the stanza by telling the reader that the speaker hears the water lapping at the shore all day and night. This dream has become a mantra, it is an obsession that has come to haunt him, and it is no more prevalent than when he “stand[s] on the roadway, or on the pavements grey.” It is now evident that the speaker is wishing to escape a world that is antithetical to his ideas of peace and happiness. It seems that the speaker lives in a city, or at least somewhere in which he is surrounded by roads and pavements, both of which are not classical manifestations of nature.

The poem concludes on a very somber note. The poem’s last line, “I hear it in the deep heart’s core” refers to the sounds of the waves lapping on the shore. The haunting images of the lake isle of Innisfree are heard not in his head but in his heart. The reader is left with unanswered questions regarding the reality of the speaker’s plan to, “go now, and go to Innisfree.” Will the speaker ever make it from his current home to the peace he needs to achieve happiness? Or will he remain in his city or town, stuck in a fantasy daydream he will never realize