

The Chimney Sweeper

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!'
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curl'd like a lamb's back, was shav'd: so I said
'Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.'

And so he was quiet, and that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!—
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black.

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free;
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run
And wash in a river, and shine in the Sun.

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind;
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father, & never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

Left side poem

1. Who is the speaker?
2. How did the speaker begin to work as a chimney sweep?
3. How old do you suppose he was?
4. Describe the speaker's relationship with Tom Dacre. Use the text to support yourself.
5. Line 12 contains a metaphor. What is it and what is the metaphor?
6. What is not only so sad, but ironic in lines 19-20?
7. The last line contains the conclusion set off by the word "So". What is so terribly sad about this conclusion?
8. Is this a song of innocence or experience? Read the second poem before making this decision.

The Chimney Sweeper

A little black thing among the snow,
Crying! 'weep! weep!' in notes of woe!
'Where are thy father and mother? Say!'—
'They are both gone up to the church to pray.

'Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smiled among the winter's snow,
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

'And because I am happy and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and His priest and king,
Who made up a heaven of our misery.'

Right side poem

1. How many speakers do you have? Who are they?
2. Both poems have the children crying "weep! weep!" This can be seen two ways and helps to discern the age of the children. What two ways can you view them crying "weep! weep!"
- 3) Where are the boy's parents?
4) The boy says they are misguided. Why?
- 4) 5) What do you make of the word "heaven" in the last line not being capitalized?
- 5) 6) Is this a song of innocence or experience? Base your answer on textual support

After reading both poems, how do the romantics view childhood?

William Blake, Romantic or Realist?

Thought Tug-of-War

Romantic

Directions: Read William Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Innocence* and "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Experience*. As you read, find **evidence from the text** to categorize Blake as either a romantic or realist. Write your annotations and evidence in the spaces provided.

Realist

Now, **using evidence from the text**, write a well thought-out paragraph of your interpretation of Blake and his poetry. Do you feel that Blake has mostly a romantic or realistic point-of-view regarding the topics of the poem? You probably have evidence that proves he has both, but which thoughts (evidence) won the "thought tug-of-war?"

Child Labor

William Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper" paints a picture of the harsh world of child labor. During this time, children were used as chimney sweepers because they were so small. Of course, only poor families would hire out their children to work in such terrible conditions. Sadly, our modern world also partakes in child labor even more terrible than that of what Blake describes. Please read, "[21st Century Slaves](#)" from the *New York Times Upfront* magazine and answer the questions below.

Link: <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/sites/default/files/assess/file/upfront031714-21stcenturyslavery.pdf>

You can also find this article by googling "21st Century Slaves by Alessandra Potenza"



1. What are some specific examples of modern forms of slavery?
2. How are most victims lured into slavery?
3. In part, human trafficking fueled by the demand for what?
4. For what purpose is the article written?
5. How are Blake's poems and this article alike? Think about how both authors make the issues in their work *personal* for the reader.