LONDON

William Blake



WHAT HAPPENS? A walk through the city reveals suffering and restrictive institutions.

BIG IDEA **Oppression is a system shaping bodies, voices and even the ways people imagine freedom.**

FOUR EVIDENCE FRAGMENTS · ZOOM IN, THEN EXPLAIN

“each chartered street,”

Repetition

The description of legally controlled space applies to both the street and the river, suggesting pervasive restriction.

“The mind-forged manacles I hear:”

Metaphor

Imprisonment becomes psychological as well as material.

“Runs in blood down palace walls.”

Violent imagery

The soldier’s distress becomes an accusation against royal power.

“the marriage hearse.”

Oxymoron

A union associated with new life is fused with death.

FORM

Four quatrains with alternating rhyme; the recurring patterns can suggest an enclosing social order.

CONTEXT

Published in Songs of Experience (1794), the poem attacks suffering within supposedly civilised institutions.

COMPARE IT WITH…

Checking Out Me History: institutional control. The Emigrée: contrasting visions of a city.

VOICE, TONE & FEELINGS · FOLLOW THE SHIFTS

Stanza 1

OBSERVANT AND TROUBLED

A first-person walker encounters restrictions in streets, river and faces.

Stanzas 2–3

ACCUSATORY

Repeated cries connect private pain to mental constraint, Church and monarchy.

Stanza 4

BITTER AND DESPAIRING

The focus on young people and marriage implies that suffering reproduces itself.

FULL POEM: use your anthology. Evidence fragments are prompts for close reading.

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