

Hopkins Inversnaid

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What Might You Be Asked?

Themes

- Grandeur and magnificence of God's creation
- God's presence in nature
- The purpose of life - living as God intended
- Mental suffering, despair, separation from God
- Sin and redemption



What Might You Be Asked?

Style

- Unconventional language
- Imagery of nature
- Strict poetic forms



Inversnaid

- Hopkins spent some time as a priest in Glasgow and probably visited the area around Loch Lomond in 1881.
- 'Inversnaid' comprises four four-line stanzas. The first three stanzas are single sentences but the last contains two sentences.



This darksome burn, horseback brown,
His rollrock highroad roaring down,
In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

* The poem is divided into rhyming couplets, each of which conveys the movement of the running water they describe.

* Dramatic language: Hopkins likens the stream to a galloping horse – ‘horseback brown’ – as it roars down the ‘highroad’ of rocks.

* Compound words such as ‘rollrock’ are Hopkins’ own but they make complete sense in the context of the poem.

* ‘Rollrock’, with its repeated ‘r’ and ‘o’ sounds perfectly captures the movement of the water as it swirls and tumbles around the rocks in the waterfall, sometimes carrying them with it in its rush to the lake waters below.

A windpuff-bonnet of fawn-froth
Turns and twindles over the broth
Of a pool so pitchblack, fell-frowning,
It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

- * Wonderfully sensual metaphor: the froth that gathers on top of the water in a little pool is compared to a fawn-coloured 'windpuff-bonnet'.
- * Portmanteau word, 'twindles' describes the froth twisting, turning and dwindling as it nears the whirling centre of the pool.
- * Run-on lines suggest the movement of the stream.
- * Light-hearted tone changes as Hopkins looks into the 'pitchblack, fell-frowning' whirlpool.
- * He feels pulled down by despair, just as anything caught in the black waters of the whirlpool is drawn down and drowned.
- * Although Hopkins celebrates the vigour and beauty of the natural world, there is still a sense that darkness and depression are ever present.
- * Onomatopoeic 'rounds and rounds' with its broad, long vowel sounds adds to the gloomy feeling of these lines.

Degged with dew, dappled with dew
Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through,
Wiry heathpacks, fitches of fern,
And the beadbony ash that sits over the burn.

* Language becomes gentler and tone more positive in the third stanza.

* Hopkins' focus shifts slightly as he describes the landscape around the stream.

* Dialect words such as 'Degged' and 'braes' make the language more colloquial than formal, which is appropriate for a poem about a remote, rural part of Scotland

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

* Hopkins moves from description of the burn to a general reflection on natural wilderness.

* He says that without places the world would be 'bereft' – a strong word more commonly associated with the loss of a loved one.

* As in 'Spring', when Hopkins celebrated the 'weeds, in wheels, [that] shoot long and lovely and lush', there is a sense here that what is natural is what is best.

* These ordinary plants belong in their environment and such places should be left untouched and unchanged.