

William Blake
from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*

William Blake (1757-1827) was an English poet not well known in his own lifetime but one who, much later, was hailed as a revolutionary and precursor of the Romantic Movement. He worked in near poverty as a book illustrator, writing, illustrating, and publishing his own books of poetry. He is primarily known today for his first two books, *Songs of Innocence* (1789), and the expanded *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794), from which the following poems are taken.

The Lamb
Songs of Innocence

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|----------------------------------|----|
| Little Lamb, who made thee? | |
| Dost thou know who made thee? | |
| Gave thee life & bid thee feed, | |
| By the stream & o'er the mead; | |
| Gave thee clothing of delight, | 5 |
| Softest clothing woolly, bright; | |
| Gave thee such a tender voice, | |
| Making all the vales rejoice! | |
| Little Lamb, who made thee? | |
| Dost thou know who made thee? | 10 |
| | |
| Little Lamb I'll tell thee, | |
| Little Lamb I'll tell thee! | |
| He is callèd by thy name, | |
| For he calls himself a Lamb; | |
| He is meek & He is mild, | 15 |
| He became a little child; | |
| I a child & thou a lamb. | |
| We are callèd by His name. | |
| Little Lamb God bless thee. | |
| Little Lamb God bless thee. | 20 |

The Chimney Sweeper
Songs of Innocence

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, & in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
 That curl'd like a lamb's back, was shaved, so I said,
 "Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare,
 You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair." 5

And so he was quiet, & that very night,
 As Tom was a-sleeping he had such a sight! 10
 That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, & 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 and set them all free;
 Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing they run, 15
 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. 20

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 and warm;
 So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

The Chimney Sweeper
Songs of Experience

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, 5
 And smil'd 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, & dance & sing,
 They think they have done me no injury, 10

And are gone to praise God & his Priest & king,
Who made up a heaven of our misery.”

London
Songs of Experience

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man, 5
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear:

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackning Church appals, 10
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace-walls.

But most, thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear, 15
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

The Tyger
Songs of Experience

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies 5
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare sieze the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art, 10
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp 15
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee? 20

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?