

Poetry by the English poet William Blake
Songs of Innocence, 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 curled 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."

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 locked up in coffins of black.

And by came an angel, who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins, and let them all free;
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and 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, and never want joy.

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

Words: chimney sweeper (n.) – *Kaminkehrer*; scarcely (adv.) – *kaum*; Soot (n.) – *Ruß*; pasture (n.) – *Weide*; Countenance Divine (n.) – *das Angesicht Gottes*; chariot (n.) – *(Streit-) Wagen*; cease (v.) – *ablassen, aufhören*



Jerusalem
by William Blake (1804)

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountain green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

Sources of the poems: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/54684>;
<http://romanticism.co.za/chimney-sweeper/>; source of the picture : <http://romanticism.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/H.-The-Chimney-Sweeper.jpg>

Tasks:

- With your partner, decide who gets to analyse which poem.
- Tell your partner what your poem is about and listen to what your partner tells you about his / her poem.
- Together, contextualise the poems, i.e. explain their connection to the time in which they were written.