

On the Grasshopper and Cricket

Unlike The Ant and the Cricket (page 21), which tells a story, this is a nature poem. In it, the grasshopper and cricket do not appear as characters in a story. Rather, they act as symbols, each suggesting something else. Read the poem and notice how 'the poetry of earth' keeps on through summer and winter in a never-ending song. Who sings the song?

The poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead,
That is the grasshopper's — he takes the lead
In summer luxury — he has never done
With his delights, for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.

The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stone there shrills
The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost;
The grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

JOHN KEATS

glossary

wrought: brought about

shrills: comes through loud and clear

working with the poem

1. Discuss with your partner the following definition of a poem.
A poem is made of words arranged in a beautiful order. These words, when read aloud with feeling, have a music and meaning of their own.
2. 'The poetry of earth' is not made of words. What is it made of, as suggested in the poem?
3. Find in the poem lines that match the following.
 - (i) The grasshopper's happiness never comes to an end.
 - (ii) The cricket's song has a warmth that never decreases.
4. Which word in stanza 2 is opposite in meaning to 'the frost'?
5. The poetry of earth continues round the year through a cycle of two seasons. Mention each with its representative voice.

Same is different

- The bandage was wound around the wound.
- The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- They were too close to the door to close it.
- There is no time like the present to present the present.