

## **ODES BY JOHN KEATS:**

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### **Fragment of an Ode to Maia**

Mother of Hermes! and still youthful Maia!  
May I sing to thee  
As thou wast hymnèd on the shores of Baia?  
Or may I woo thee  
In earlier Sicilian? or thy smiles  
Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,  
By bards who died content on pleasant sward,  
Leaving great verse unto a little clan?  
O give me their old vigour! and unheard  
Save of the quiet primrose, and the span  
Of heaven, and few ears,  
Rounded by thee, my song should die away  
Content as theirs,  
Rich in the simple worship of a day.

## Lines on the Mermaid Tavern

Souls of Poets dead and gone,  
What Elysium have ye known,  
Happy field or mossy cavern,  
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?  
Have ye tippled drink more fine  
Than mine host's Canary wine?  
Or are fruits of Paradise  
Sweeter than those dainty pies  
Of venison? O generous food!  
Drest as though bold Robin Hood  
Would, with his maid Marian,  
Sup and bowse from horn and can.  
I have heard that on a day  
Mine host's sign-board flew away,  
Nobody knew whither, till  
An astrologer's old quill  
To a sheepskin gave the story,  
Said he saw you in your glory,  
Underneath a new old-sign  
Sipping beverage divine,  
And pledging with contented smack  
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.  
Souls of Poets dead and gone,  
What Elysium have ye known,  
Happy field or mossy cavern,  
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

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## Ode (Bards of Passion and of Mirth)

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,  
Ye have left your souls on earth!  
Have ye souls in heaven too,  
Double-lived in regions new?  
Yes, and those of heaven commune  
With the spheres of sun and moon;  
With the noise of fountains wond'rous,  
And the parle of voices thund'rous;  
With the whisper of heaven's trees  
And one another, in soft ease  
Seated on Elysian lawns  
Brows'd by none but Dian's fawns  
Underneath large blue-bells tented,  
Where the daisies are rose-scented,  
And the rose herself has got  
Perfume which on earth is not;  
Where the nightingale doth sing  
Not a senseless, tranced thing,  
But divine melodious truth;  
Philosophic numbers smooth;  
Tales and golden histories  
Of heaven and its mysteries.  
Thus ye live on high, and then  
On the earth ye live again;  
And the souls ye left behind you  
Teach us, here, the way to find you,  
Where your other souls are joying,  
Never slumber'd, never cloying.  
Here, your earth-born souls still speak  
To mortals, of their little week;  
Of their sorrows and delights;  
Of their passions and their spites;  
Of their glory and their shame;  
What doth strengthen and what maim.  
Thus ye teach us, every day,  
Wisdom, though fled far away.  
Bards of Passion and of Mirth,  
Ye have left your souls on earth!  
Ye have souls in heaven too,  
Double-lived in regions new!

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## Ode on a Grecian Urn

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new;  
More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
For ever panting, and for ever young;  
All breathing human passion far above,  
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
What little town by river or sea-shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?  
And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be; and not a soul, to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! fair attitude! with brede  
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Written by [John Keats](#) in May 1819

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## Ode on Indolence

Each one the face a moment whiles to me;  
Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd  
And ached for wings, because I knew the three;  
The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name;  
The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,  
And ever watchful with fatiguèd eye;  
The last, whom I love more, the more of blame  
Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek,—  
I knew to be my demon Poesy.

They faded, and, forsooth! I wanted wings:  
O folly! What is Love? and where is it?  
And for that poor Ambition! it springs  
From a man's little heart's short fever-fit;  
For Poesy!—no,—she has not a joy,—  
At least for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons,  
And evenings steep'd in honey'd indolence;  
O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,  
That I may never know how change the moons,  
Or hear the voice of busy common-sense!

And once more came they by:—alas! wherefore?  
My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams;  
My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er  
With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled beams:  
The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,  
Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May;  
The open casement press'd a new-leaved vine,  
Let in the budding warmth and throstle's lay;  
O Shadows! 'twas a time to bid farewell!  
Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine.

So, ye three Ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise  
My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass;  
For I would not be dieted with praise,  
A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce!  
Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more  
In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn;  
Farewell! I yet have visions for the night,  
And for the day faint visions there is store;  
Vanish, ye Phantoms! from my idle spright,  
Into the clouds, and never more return!

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## Ode on Melancholy

No, no! go not to Lethe, neither twist  
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;  
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kist  
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;  
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,  
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be  
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl  
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;  
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,  
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall  
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,  
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,  
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;  
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,  
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,  
Or on the wealth of globèd peonies;  
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,  
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,  
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;  
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips  
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,  
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:  
Ay, in the very temple of Delight  
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,  
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue  
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;  
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,  
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

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## Ode to Apollo

In thy western halls of gold  
When thou sittest in thy state,  
Bards, that erst sublimely told  
Heroic deeds, and sang of fate,  
With fervour seize their adamant lyres,  
Whose chords are solid rays, and twinkle radiant fires.

Here Homer with his nervous arms  
Strikes the twanging harp of war,  
And even the western splendour warms,  
While the trumpets sound afar:  
But, what creates the most intense surprise,  
His soul looks out through renovated eyes.

Then, through thy Temple wide, melodious swells  
The sweet majestic tone of Maro's lyre:  
The soul delighted on each accent dwells, –  
Enraptur'd dwells, – not daring to respire,  
The while he tells of grief around a funeral pyre.

'Tis awful silence then again;  
Expectant stand the spheres;  
Breathless the laurel'd peers,  
Nor move, till ends the lofty strain,  
Nor move till Milton's tuneful thunders cease,  
And leave once more the ravish'd heavens in peace.

Thou biddest Shapspeare wave his hand,  
And quickly forward spring  
The Passions – a terrific band –  
And each vibrates the string  
That with its tyrant temper best accords,  
While from their Master's lips pour forth the inspiring words.

A silver trumpet Spenser blows,  
And, as its martial notes to silence flee,  
From a virgin chorus flows  
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.  
'Tis still! Wild warblings from the Aeolian lyre  
Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire.

Next thy Tasso's ardent numbers  
Float along the pleased air,  
Calling youth from idle slumbers,  
Rousing them from Pleasure's lair: –  
Then o'er the strings his fingers gently move,  
And melt the soul to pity and to love.

But when Thoujoinest with the Nine,  
And all the powers of song combine,  
We listen here on earth:  
Thy dying tones that fill the air,  
And charm the ear of evening fair,  
From thee, great God of Bards, receive their heavenly birth.

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## Ode to Fanny

Physician Nature! Let my spirit bleed!  
O ease my heart of verse and let me rest;  
Throw me upon thy Tripod, till the flood  
Of stifling numbers ebbs from my full breast.  
A theme! a theme! great nature! give a theme;  
Let me begin my dream.  
I come — I see thee, as thou standest there,  
Beckon me not into the wintry air.  
Ah! dearest love, sweet home of all my fears,  
And hopes, and joys, and panting miseries, —  
To-night, if I may guess, thy beauty wears  
A smile of such delight,  
As brilliant and as bright,  
As when with ravished, aching, vassal eyes,  
Lost in soft amaze,  
I gaze, I gaze!  
Who now, with greedy looks, eats up my feast?  
What stare outfaces now my silver moon!  
Ah! keep that hand unravished at the least;  
Let, let, the amorous burn —  
But pr'ythee, do not turn  
The current of your heart from me so soon.  
O! save, in charity,  
The quickest pulse for me.  
Save it for me, sweet love! though music breathe  
Voluptuous visions into the warm air;  
Though swimming through the dance's dangerous wreath,  
Be like an April day,  
Smiling and cold and gay,  
A temperate lilly, temperate as fair;  
Then, Heaven! there will be  
A warmer June for me.  
Why, this, you'll say, my Fanny! is not true:  
Put your soft hand upon your snowy side,  
Where the heart beats: confess — 'tis nothing new —  
Must not a woman be  
A feather on the sea,  
Sway'd to and fro by every wind and tide?  
Of as uncertain speed  
As blow-ball from the mead?  
I know it — and to know it is despair  
To one who loves you as I love, sweet Fanny!  
Whose heart goes fluttering for you every where,  
Nor, when away you roam,  
Dare keep its wretched home,  
Love, love alone, his pains severe and many:  
Then, loveliest! keep me free,

From torturing jealousy.  
Ah! if you prize my subdued soul above  
The poor, the fading, brief, pride of an hour;  
Let none profane my Holy See of love,  
Or with a rude hand break  
The sacramental cake:  
Let none else touch the just new-budded flower;  
If not — may my eyes close,  
Love! on their lost repose.

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## Ode to Psyche

O Goodness! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung  
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,  
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung  
Even into thine own soft-conchèd ear:  
Surely I dream'd to-day, or did I see  
The wingèd Psyche with awaken'd eyes?  
I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,  
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,  
Saw two fair creatures, couchèd side by side  
In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof  
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran  
A brooklet, scarce espied:  
'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,  
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian  
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;  
Their arms embracèd, and their pinions too;  
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,  
As if disjointèd by soft-handed slumber,  
And ready still past kisses to outnumber  
At tender eye-dawn of aureoan love:  
The wingèd boy I knew;  
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?  
His Psyche true!

O latest-born and loveliest vision far  
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!  
Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,  
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;  
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,  
Nor altar heap'd with flowers;  
Nor Virgin-choir to make delicious moan  
Upon the midnight hours;  
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet  
From chain-swung censer teeming;  
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat  
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,  
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,  
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,  
Holy the air, the water, and the fire;  
Yet even in these days so far retired  
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,  
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,  
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.  
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan  
Upon the midnight hours;  
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet  
From swingèd censer teeming:

Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat  
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane  
In some untrodden region of my mind,  
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,  
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:  
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees  
Fledge the wild-ridgèd mountains steep by steep;  
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,  
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;  
And in the midst of this wide quietness  
A rosy sanctuary will I dress  
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,  
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,  
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,  
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same;  
And there shall be for thee all soft delight  
That shadowy thought can win,  
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,  
To let the warm Love in!

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## To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spare the next swath and all its twinèd flowers;  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,  
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—  
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft  
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

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## Ode to a Nightingale

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:  
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
But being too happy in thine happiness,  
That thou, light-wingèd Dryad of the trees,  
In some melodious plot  
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.  
O for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!  
O for a beaker full of the warm South!  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
And purple-stainèd mouth;  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;  
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
And leaden-eyed despairs;  
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,  
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:  
Already with thee! tender is the night,  
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays  
But here there is no light,  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;

Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves;  
And mid-May's eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy!  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that ofttimes hath  
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
As she is fated to do, deceiving elf.  
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades  
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep  
In the next valley-glades:  
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?

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