

Name: _____ Class: _____

A Poison Tree

By William Blake
From Poetry Foundation • 1794

William Blake (1757-1827) was an English poet during the Romantic era who wrote extensively about God, nature, and the beauty of the human imagination. Although Blake is now an important literary figure in history, he was not recognized for his work during his lifetime. As you read "A Poison Tree," consider the relationship between friendship, anger, and morality, and take notes on Blake's use of symbolism.

[1] I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath,¹ my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:²
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

[5] And I waterd it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.³

And it grew both day and night.
[10] Till it bore⁴ an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole;
[15] In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.



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1. **Wrath (noun):** extreme anger; fury
 2. **Foe (noun):** enemy or opponent
 3. **Wiles (noun):** devious or cunning strategies designed to manipulate or persuade someone to do what one wants
 4. **Bear (verb):** to produce

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. In the first stanza, what happens when the speaker told his friend that he was angry? [RL.1]
What happens when the speaker does not tell his foe about his anger? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

2. What is the tone of stanza 2? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer. [RL.4]

3. In the third stanza, what does the apple symbolize? Support your answer with evidence from the text. [RL.3]

4. What does the speaker's foe do with the apple? What is the result? How do you know? [RL.3]

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. Why do you think the speaker tells his friend that he is angry with him? Why doesn't the speaker tell his foe that he is angry with him? Would you do the same? Explain your answer.
2. Reread stanza three. According to the speaker, what happens when you continue to be angry? Is this something a person should do? Explain your answer.
3. Consider the consequences of the speaker's actions. What is Blake trying to convey about friendship, forgiveness, honesty, anger, and morality?
4. In the context of this poem, what is a friend? According to you, what is the difference between a friend and a foe?