

# CLASS NOTES

Class: XII

Topic: A Thing of Beauty

Subject: English

Poet: John Keats



**Theme:** The poem conveys the message that a thing of beauty is a constant source of joy. Beauty is intransient and gives us the same pleasure again and again. It provides with eternal joy and never fades away. Beauty plays a very important role and helps to remain happy and joyful in this sad, mundane world.



(John Keats :1795-1821)

**About the Poet:** John Keats was one of England's greatest poets. He was born in London on 31 October 1795. As a teenager, Keats became passionately fond of poetry and when he was about 18 he wrote his first poem, one entitled 'Imitation of Spenser'. In 1815 John became a student at Guy's Hospital in London. But he continued to write poetry. In 1816 he had a poem published for the first time, in a magazine called The Examiner. It was a sonnet called 'O Solitude!'. Also in 1816, Keats passed his exams. Then in 1817, he published a book called 'Poems'. However, it was not a success, attracting little interest. Nevertheless, Keats continued writing. His epic poem Endymion was published in 1818. During 1818-1819 Keats continued to write great poems including 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Hyperion', 'The Eve of St Agnes' and 'Ode to Autumn'. However in 1820 Keats fell ill with tuberculosis. He went to Italy in the hope that the climate might help. Nevertheless, John Keats died in Rome on 23 February 1821. He was only 25. Keats was buried in the Protestant cemetery.

## Main Points :

- Based on a Greek legend, the poem is an excerpt from 'Endymion'.
- According to the poet a beautiful thing is a constant source of joy. Its loveliness only increases.

- It gives sweet dreams and peaceful sleep, fine breathing and good health. Hence a boon to all.
- We are surrounded by jealousy and disappointment.
- The ignoble qualities make our life gloomy and miserable resulting in suffering and pain.
- A thing of beauty removes the gloom (sadness) from our spirits.
- The sight of nature such as – clear streams of water, daffodils (a flower), musk-rose and forest thickets- make our lives sweet, soothing and happy.
- This beauty is also experienced in grandeur of dooms that we have imagined for our powerful dead forefathers – Doom – refers to the ruins of the great deeds of the legendary heroes.
- Lovelier than lovely tales, the incessant beauty of nature is pouring unto us like an immortal drink through an endless fountain from the heaven meaning that nature’s beauty acts as an elixir for humanity.

**Major features:** Rhyme Scheme: aa bb cc



**Poetic Devices:**

**Alliteration:** Noble Natures, Some shape, Cooling covert, Band to bind

**Metaphor:** Heaven’s brink, Bower quiet, Sweet dreams, Flowery band, Unhealthy and over darkened ways. The pall, Dark spirits, Endless fountain of immortal drink.

**Transferred Epithet:** Unhealthy and over darkened ways, Gloomy days

**Personification:** Shape of beauty

**Images and Symbols:** All the senses are involved – bower, flowery band, the sun, the moon, Trees old and young, green world, musk-rose etc.

**Important Expressions -**

**Bower** – A pleasant place in the shade under a tree.

**Wreathing a flowery band-** The things of beauty are like wreaths of beautiful flowers.

**Endless fountain-** A fountain of eternal joy and immortality pours into the heart and soul of man.

**Grandeur of the dooms** – The magnificence that we imagine for our mighty dead forefathers on the dooms day.

**Think as you read:**

1. How do ‘daffodils’ and ‘rills’ enrich the environment?
2. What, according to the poet, removes the pall of gloom?
3. Why does a thing of beauty not pass into nothingness?
4. What do you understand by the inhuman death of noble nature?
5. What do we wreath on every morrow?