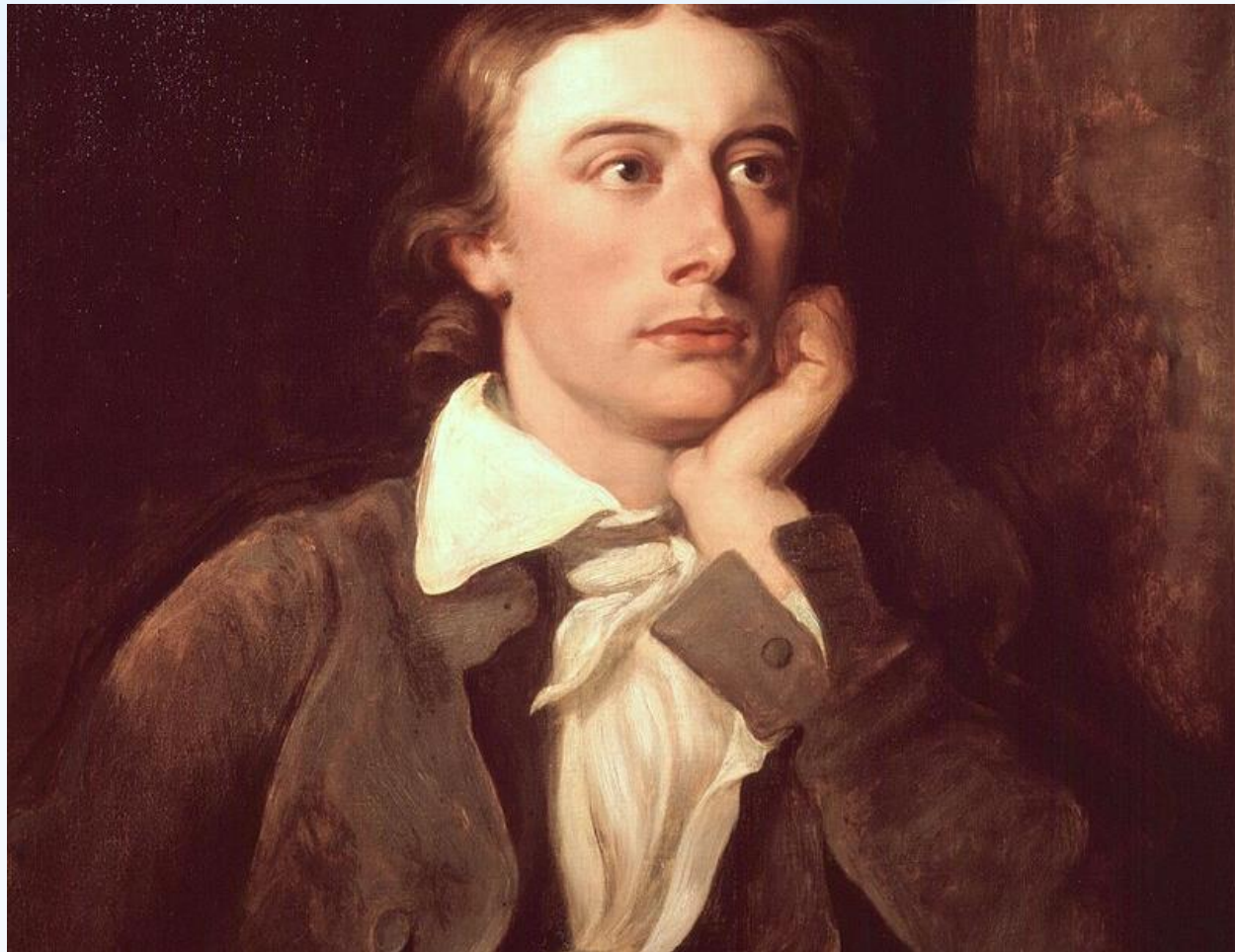




ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET

BY JOHN KEATS



John Keats was an English Romantic poet. He was one of the main figures of the second generation of Romantic poets. Although his poems were not generally well received by critics during his lifetime, his reputation grew after his death, and by the end of the 19th century, he had become one of the most beloved of all English poets. He had a significant influence on a diverse range of poets and writers.

OVERVIEW

'On the Grasshopper and Cricket' is a fourteen line poem or a sonnet in which the poet expresses his view that the nature is always inspiring a poet to compose poetry through its various aspects. For Keats, seasons may change, but nature would never cease to inspire the poet and sing its songs. During the extreme heat of the hot summer, when the birds stop singing, the earth continues to sing. The birds hide under the shade of the trees and fall silent. A voice runs from hedge, to hedge, taking the lead in the extreme weather and sings delightfully. That is the voice of the grasshopper. He sings endlessly, but when tired it rests under some pleasant weed. During extreme winter, too, the birds stop singing. There is a death like silence in which the nature seems to have gotten enveloped. Frost spreads its blanket over all elements of the nature. Despite that, a shrill sound comes from under the stones, it's the cricket who is singing. Cricket's song restores the warmth that had gotten lost. People hear the song and to many it seems as if the grasshopper was singing from the grassy hills.

ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET

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 long 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.

SUMMARY

It is not a story-poem. Grasshopper is a symbol of hot summer. Cricket is a symbol of very cold winter. Every poet has found great beauty and poetry in spring and fine weather. Keats is different. He finds nature beautiful in all seasons not excluding the hot summer and cold winter.

The earth is always singing. The birds stop singing in the hot summer. They seem to have fainted in the hot sun. They hide themselves in cooling trees. At that time a grasshopper can be seen flying from hedge to hedge and singing delightfully. He sings tirelessly. When tired, he rests beneath some weed.

The birds are silent in very cold winter too. Then, the earth expresses its pleasure through different beings. On a frosty winter day, there seems to be utter silence. Then suddenly this silence is broken not from the trees but from the stones. It is the song of a cricket. The song seems to be increasing in warmth every moment. The people hear it in their houses. To someone half-asleep, it may seem to be a grasshopper's song coming from grassy hills.

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 feelings, have a music and meaning of their own.

ANS: It is true that poetry is made of words arranged in a beautiful order. The words create music and produce a certain rhythm because of various poetic elements such as rhythm, rhyme and meter, fused harmoniously into one another.

2. 'The poetry of earth' is not made of words. What is it made of, as suggested in the poem?

ANS: The poetry of the earth is made of various sounds, the never-ending song through summer and winter.

WORKING WITH THE POEM

3. Find in the poem lines that match the following.

(i) The grasshopper's happiness never comes to an end.

ANS: "He has never done with his delights".

(ii) The cricket's song has a warmth that never decreases.

ANS: "The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever."

4. Which word in stanza 2 is opposite in meaning to 'the frost'?

ANS: 'Warmth'.

5. The poetry of earth continues round the year through a cycle of two seasons. Mention each with its representative voice.

ANS: The two seasons that seem to create a continuous natural cycle are summer and winter. The grasshopper's song is a representative voice of the summer and the cricket's song is a representative voice of the winter.

HOME ASSIGNMENT

- *Make a picture collection of insects that you find in a meadow.*
- *Categorize them based on their season of appearance.*