

William Blake: *The Tyger* from *Songs of Experience*

and *The Lamb* from *Songs of Innocence* (p.718-723)

The Lamb:

1. Give four words to describe the lamb as pictured by the poet.
2. Why is it appropriate to use such simple language in addressing the lamb?
3. What question is asked in the poem? Is an answer given? Is it a satisfactory answer for the little lamb?
4. What similarities does the poet see between the lamb and his maker?
5. What does the lamb seem to represent?
6. What does the creator do for his creation in the first stanza?
7. How does the second stanza respond to the questions asked in the first stanza?
8. What are you told directly about the speaker? What inferences can you draw from this information?
9. Christ called himself a lamb because, like the Passover lamb slain to save the people of Israel, he sacrificed himself for the people. What might this imply about the fate of the young speaker in the poem?
10. How do you think the voice of the speaker in *The Lamb* is different from the voice of the speaker in *The Tyger*? Why do you think the questions in *The Lamb* get answers?

The Tyger:

1. How does the poet imagine the tiger being made? Describe the process.
2. What characteristics must the maker of this creature have? Why?
3. What religious question is raised? Is any answer given, or implied?
4. Where in the poem does the speaker wonder if the tiger may have been created by God? What imagery tells us that the speaker also suspects that the tiger could be a demonic creation?
5. List the images that suggest a human creator—like a blacksmith or goldsmith.
6. What imagery suggests that the tiger could be a force of enlightenment? Of revolutionary violence?
7. The last stanza virtually repeats the first. What is the significance of the one word changed in the last stanza?
8. How does the poem represent people's simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from evil?
9. How does this poem complement "The Lamb"? What does the tiger seem to represent?
10. Why might Blake have placed this poem among his songs of "experience"?

**Why do human beings commit evil? Why does God allow innocent children to suffer?* Such questions profoundly disturbed Blake. One of his early conclusions about the problem of good and evil is his idea that "Without contraries (opposites) there is no progression (growth)." How does *The Tyger* and *The Lamb* reflect what Blake termed "two contrary states of the human soul"? In what sense are these contrasting states essential to human beings?