

Topic - Critical Analysis of William Blake's poem 'The Chimney Sweeper'

- ⇒ The Chimney Sweeper is a poem by William Blake, published in his 1789 Collection of 'Songs of Innocence'. The poem is told from the perspective of a young Chimney Sweep, a boy who has been sold ~~by~~ into labour by his father.
- ⇒ The poem comprises the agony of children who were forced to live a miserable life. The children had to survive and earn their livelihood by sweeping chimney at a very young age during the time of William Blake. Its popularity lies in that it depicts the innocence of the children.
- ↳ "The Chimney Sweeper" as a representative of sorrow! -
- ⇒ As this poem is about the young chimney sweepers, the speaker details how he got involved in sweeping chimney business. He says that his father put him into the work as a chimney sweeper after the death of his mother.
- ⇒ The speaker also recounts the story of his fellow chimney sweeper, Tom, who was hurt when his head was shaved. The narrator consoles him, and he goes to sleep. Tom had a dream in which he saw that all sweepers are in coffins. An angel comes and sets the children free. Then they play happily in the sun, and the angel tells Tom that he will have a heaven of his own.

Major themes in "The Chimney Sweeper" : —

Hardship and Childhood : — Early on, the poem establishes a sense of the hardship in the lives of young poor boys in the 18th Century London. The reader quickly learns that the speaker's mother is dead, and that he was sold by his father into labor. The poem offers a brief glimpse of what childhood should be, actually like.

⇒ The poem makes no efforts to romanticize this life, portraying it as intensely impoverished and tough. Indeed, the poem argues that this is a kind of exploitation that effectively robs the children of their childhood, stealing their freedom and joy.

Religion and Redemption : — On the surface of it, "The Chimney Sweep" is a poem about salvation from a life of hardship. Young boys, forced into working London's chimneys, look to religion as way of finding hope amid the misery. This hope, they seem to think, comes from the Christian religion.

On a surface level, Tom's vision undoubtedly does offer a brief glimpse of hope and salvation. An Angel visits him, bringing a message from God. This Angel frees the dead boys, and they are allowed to frolic freely in nature before ascending to heaven. This part of the dream seems legitimate and rings true to Blake's ideas about childhood — that it should be free, imaginative, and joyful.

Thus, the poem ends with a sense of uneasy resolution, as though Tom's suffering is somehow solved by the Angel's visit. Both he and speaker wake up the next morning, pick up their tools, and head to work.