**John Keats** (1795-1821)

Born in London, middle-class family. Two Brothers, George and Tom, orphaned from 1810

-> Keats trained as a physician (medical doctor)

*Poems* (1817) *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes* *and Other Poems* (1820)

Dies of consumption.

La Belle Dame Sans Merci, To Autumn, Ode to a Nightingale, Ode on Melancholy, Ode to Psyche

On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer, Hyperion, The Fall of Hyperion, The Eve of St Agnes

Sensual, concrete imagery (sight, hearing, touch, smell) ballads, Hellenism, Platonism

From letters:

“A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually in for—and filling some other Body—The Sun, the Moon, the Sea, and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none; no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all of God's Creatures.” (1818)

“at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in [literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature) & which [Shakespeare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare) possessed so enormously - I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact & reason.” (1817) - > Shakespeare: “Chameleon poet”

“I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of the Imagination—What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth—whether it existed before or not” (1817)

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| Ode on a Grecian Urn |
|  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness, |  |
| Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time, |  |
| Sylvan historian, who canst thus express |  |
| A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme: |  |
| What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape | *5* |
| Of deities or mortals, or of both, |  |
| In Tempe or the dales of Arcady? |  |
| What men or gods are these? What maidens loth? |  |
| What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape? |  |
| What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy? | *10* |
|  |  |
| Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard |  |
| Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on; |  |
| Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd, |  |
| Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone: |  |
| Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave | *15* |
| Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare; |  |
| Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss, |  |
| Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve; |  |
| She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss, |  |
| For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair! | *20* |
|  |  |
| Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed |  |
| Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu; |  |
| And, happy melodist, unwearièd, |  |
| For ever piping songs for ever new; |  |
| More happy love! more happy, happy love! | *25* |
| For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd, |  |
| For ever panting, and for ever young; |  |
| All breathing human passion far above, |  |
| That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd, |  |
| A burning forehead, and a parching tongue. | *30* |
|  |  |
| Who are these coming to the sacrifice? |  |
| To what green altar, O mysterious priest, |  |
| Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies, |  |
| And all her silken flanks with garlands drest? |  |
| What little town by river or sea-shore, | *35* |
| Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel, |  |
| Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn? |  |
| And, little town, thy streets for evermore |  |
| Will silent be; and not a soul, to tell |  |
| Why thou art desolate, can e'er return. | *40* |
|  |  |
| O Attic shape! fair attitude! with brede |  |
| Of marble men and maidens overwrought, |  |
| With forest branches and the trodden weed; |  |
| Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought |  |
| As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral! | *45* |
| When old age shall this generation waste, |  |
| Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe |  |
| Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st, |  |
| 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all |  |
| Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.' |  |

**La Belle Dame Sans Merci**

Ballad

I.

O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms,

Alone and palely loitering?

The sedge has wither’d from the lake,

And no birds sing.

II.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms! 5

So haggard and so woe-begone?

The squirrel’s granary is full,

And the harvest’s done.

III.

I see a lily on thy brow

With anguish moist and fever dew, 10

And on thy cheeks a fading rose

Fast withereth too.

IV.

I met a lady in the meads,

Full beautiful—a faery’s child,

Her hair was long, her foot was light, 15

And her eyes were wild.

V.

I made a garland for her head,

And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;

She look’d at me as she did love,

And made sweet moan. 20

VI.

I set her on my pacing steed,

And nothing else saw all day long,

For sidelong would she bend, and sing

A faery’s song.

VII.

She found me roots of relish sweet, 25

And honey wild, and manna dew,

And sure in language strange she said—

“I love thee true.”

VIII.

She took me to her elfin grot,

And there she wept, and sigh’d fill sore, 30

And there I shut her wild wild eyes

With kisses four.

IX.

And there she lulled me asleep,

And there I dream’d—Ah! woe betide!

The latest dream I ever dream’d 35

On the cold hill’s side.

X.

I saw pale kings and princes too,

Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;

They cried—“La Belle Dame sans Merci

Hath thee in thrall!” 40

XI.

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,

With horrid warning gaped wide,

And I awoke and found me here,

On the cold hill’s side.

XII.

And this is why I sojourn here, 45

Alone and palely loitering,

Though the sedge is wither’d from the lake,

And no birds sing.