

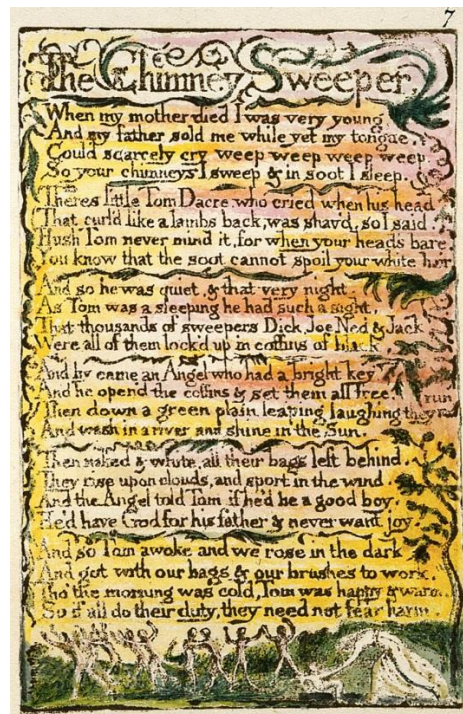
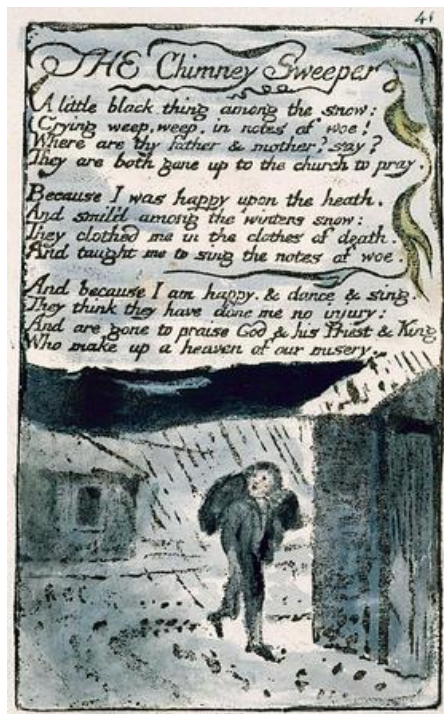
WILLIAM BLAKE

SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

- We will see a Prezi presentation about William Blake, his life and works. After that, we will read some poems from two of his most important books of poetry, *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794).

BEFORE READING

- We will read two different poems titled, “The Chimney Sweeper”. These poems talk about child labour in England in the 18th century.
 - What are chimney sweepers?
 - What did they do?
 - How old do you think they were?
 - Why do you think children were usually chosen to be chimney sweepers?
 - Have you seen chimney sweepers before? Maybe this [video](#) may seem familiar.
- As you know, Blake usually illustrated his books of poems. Have a look at these two illustrations:



- Can you compare them?
- What are the emotions that you get from them?
- Will they give you an idea of the tone of the poems?
- In your opinion, which one belongs to *Songs of Innocence* and which one to *Songs of Experience*?

- You will find some of these words in the poems. Can you match them with the appropriate image?
 - soot, coffin, leap, sport, heath, woe



- Here you have some more words from the poems. Match them with their appropriate definition:

- Scarcely
- Weep
- Curl
- Spoil

- To cry, to shed tears.
- To diminish or destroy the value or quality of something.
- Barely, only just; almost not.
- To form or cause to form into a curved or spiral shape.

“THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER” Reading Activities

- Here you have the first “**The Chimney Sweeper**”, from *Songs of Innocence*. We will read the poem and analyse the different stanzas. But first, watch this [video](#).

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry " 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!"
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.

- What is the rhyme? And the rhythm?
- Can you find an example of **alliteration**?
- Are there any other literary devices in this stanza?
- What do we know about the narrator of the poem?

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved, so I said,
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

- What is the rhyme? And the rhythm?
- Can you point out the **simile** in the stanza?
- Who is the new character introduced?
- Why is his head shaved?

And so he was quiet, & that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping he had such a sight!
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, & Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black;

- What is the rhyme? And the rhythm?
- Who are some of the new characters?
- What do you think the “coffins of black” represent?

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins & set them all free;
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing they run,
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.

- What is the rhyme? And the rhythm?
- Why is the Angel important in this stanza?

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father & never want joy.

- What is the rhyme? And the rhythm?
- Are the bags a **metaphor** of any other thing?
- What is the Angel's condition for Tom

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

- What is the rhyme? And the rhythm?
- Why is Tom happy and warm?
- Does he believe the dream?

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- Now we will read the second **“The Chimney Sweeper”**, from *Songs of Experience*. We will read the poem and analyse the different stanzas.

A little black thing among the snow,
Crying "weep! 'weep!" in notes of woe!
"Where are thy father and mother? say?"
"They are both gone up to the church to pray.

- What is the rhyme? And the rhythm?
- Can you find any **alliteration** in this stanza?

Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winter's snow,
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

- What is the rhyme? And the rhythm?
- What is the colour contrast presented in this stanza?
- Why are the clothes “of death”?

And because I am happy and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and his Priest and King,
Who make up a heaven of our misery."

- What is the rhyme? And the rhythm?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (In pairs or small groups)

- Which images associated to INNOCENCE can you identify in both poems?
- Which are the things or images that threaten such innocence in the poem?
- How is EXPERIENCE dealt with in the second poem?
- Can you find any parallelism in these poems? (Repetition of words, images...)
- What is the role of religion in both poems? Is it the same?
- Do you notice any difference in how the parents are presented in both poems?
- How does Blake comment or criticise society in these poems?
- Compare the final verses in both poems:

“So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.” Vs. “And are gone to praise God and his Priest and King, / Who make up a heaven of our misery.”