CHAPTER-02

THE SCHOOLBOY

THEME OF THE POEM

The poem throws light on the mindset of a school boy. He is unhappy. He loves outdoor life. He hears the birds sing. The blowing of horn by the huntsmen pleases him. He wants to enjoy the company of the skylark. But he can find such joy only on a summer morning.

Instead of living like a free bird, the boy is made to go to school. It makes him sad. He hates going to school because of his cruel old teacher. There the small children spend the day from morning to evening and get disappointed.

Sometimes the boy sits for hours with his head hanging down but he is caged. He finds no joy in reading his book. The school is a cheerless place for him. He gets fed up with the shower of words from his teacher.

The boy compares himself to a bird who is born free to fly and enjoy life but he is caged. He cannot sing in a cage. The boy has the feeling of being a prisoner at school. He is all the time afraid of the teacher. As a caged bird he lets his wings droop down and forgets to share the joy of spring.

The poet calls upon the parents not to be so harsh or cruel to the children. School going kids are as delicate as birds and flowers. They need fresh air and free movement to grow healthy and happy. Keeping them under excess cage will make them unhappy.

If a plant is denied air and is kept in dark, it won't grow well and never bear fruit.

Ah then at times I drooping sit, And spend many an anxious hour; Nor in my book can I take delight, Nor sit in learning's bower, Worn through with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy Sit in a cage and sing? How can a child, when fears annoy, But droop his tender wing, And forget his youthful spring!

O father and mother if buds are nipped, And blossoms blown away; And if the tender plants are stripped Of their joy in the springing day, By sorrow and care's dismay,

But to go to school in a summer morn, - O it drives all joy away! Under a cruel eye outworn, The little ones spend the day in sighing and dismay.

I love to rise in a summer morn, When the birds sing on every tree; The distant huntsman winds his horn, And the skylark sings with me. O what sweet company! How shall the summer arise in joy, Or the summer fruits appear? Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy, Or bless the mellowing year, When the blasts of winter appear?

The School Boy - William Blake

The second verse then makes it clear as to why the poem is named 'The School Boy'. Blake describes school as being able to 'drive all joy away', which, in all honestly, is occasionally true

The first verse sets a cheerful scene of a summer morning, accompanie by singing birds and the hitsman's horn. It does not relate clearly to the title of the poem, which creates an odd sense of curiousity

The concluding verse is another that I do not particularly understand. I think that it is speculating about how, if the winter is so harsh, the summer can even exist.

I do not really understand the third verse, but i think it says about how at school you cannot read for long periods of time - Nor in my book can I take delight. The fourth verse includes the line that is referenced to in Skellig. This verse (in my opinion), remarks upon how children enclosed in a classroom will forget how to be happy. Possibly.

The penultimate verse remarks on what would happen if plants were stuck in a stuffy classroom;p they would wilt and die, and not be joyful