

THE

CHIMNEY

SWEEPER



Theme Of The Poem

'The Chimney Sweeper' is a poem by William Blake, published in his 1789 collection Songs of Innocence. The poem is told from the perspective of a young chimney sweep, a boy who has been sold into labor by his father. The sweeper meets a new recruit to the chimney sweeping gang named Tom Dacre, who arrives terrified. After the speaker tries to measure Tom, Tom dreams of an angel who sets the chimney sweeps free, allowing them to play in green fields and then ascend to heaven. This dream seems to suggest that if they boys are obedient workers, they will get into heaven. Implicitly, though, the poem takes issue with this idea, suggesting that it's a form of indoctrination of the Church. The companion poem of the same title, published in Songs of Experience, makes this position - that promises of heavenly salvation are simply a means to exploit child labour - crystal clear.