

Discussing the Poem

I can discuss, learn and perform a poem.



Read the poem again with your talk partner and then answer the questions.

Answer to a Child's Question

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Do you ask what the birds say? The sparrow, the dove,
The linnet and thrush say, 'I love and I love!'
In the winter they're silent – the wind is so strong;
What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud song.
But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,
And singing, and loving – all come back together.
But the lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
That he sings, and he sings; and forever sings he –
'I love my Love, and my Love loves me!'



1. What does the title tell you about the poem? Do you think this is a good title? What other title could this poem have?

2. What birds are mentioned in this poem? Use a dictionary to help you describe them.

Bird	Description

3. This poem is made up of rhyming couplets. (Rhyming couplets are pairs of lines in a poem which follow on from one another and rhyme.) What do the birds which are mentioned in the first rhyming couplet of the poem say?

4. When do the birds not sing? Why do they not sing then?

5. The poet does not mention the word 'spring' to describe when the birds start to sing. What words are used to describe the coming of spring in the poem?

6. What is meant by this line? Explain in your own words.

'But the lark is so brimful of gladness and love'

7. When describing the lark's singing, what is the poetic effect of repeating the word 'sings'?

8. Would you have answered the child's question in the same way? What do you think birds are saying when they sing?

Discussing the Poem Answers

1. What does the title tell you about the poem? Do you think this is a good title? What other title could this poem have?

The title tells you that the poem will be the answer given to a child's question. I think it is a good title because it makes you want to find out what the question was and what the answer is too. Other titles for the poem could be 'Why Birds Sing' or 'The Beauty of Bird Song.'

2. What birds are mentioned in this poem? Use a dictionary to help you describe them.

Bird	Description
Sparrow	A small, brown and grey bird
Dove	A cooing small-headed bird
Linnet	A brown/grey bird with a reddish chest
Thrush	A brown and black songbird with a loud song
Lark	A small pale brown songbird that sings as it flies

3. This poem is made up of rhyming couplets. (Rhyming couplets are pairs of lines in a poem which follow on from one another and rhyme.) What do the birds which are mentioned in the first rhyming couplet of the poem say?

The sparrow, dove, linnet and thrush say, 'I love and I love.'

4. When do the birds not sing? Why do they not sing then?

The birds do not sing in winter because the weather is not very good. The poem says that, 'the wind is so strong.'

5. The poet does not mention the word 'spring' to describe when the birds start to sing. What words are used to describe the coming of spring in the poem?

The coming of the better weather at spring time is described in this way: 'Green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather.'

6. What is meant by this line? Explain in your own words.

'But the lark is so brimful of gladness and love'

It means that the lark is full up of gladness and love and so he is extremely glad and happy.

7. When describing the lark's singing, what is the poetic effect of repeating the word 'sings'?

The repetition has the effect of emphasizing how much the lark sings. This is supported by the use of the word 'forever' to express that the lark keeps on singing.

8. Would you have answered the child's question in the same way? What do you think birds are saying when they sing?

I would answer in a similar way. I think the birds are feeling happy at the beauty of a nature during good weather and that they are enjoying feeling the sun on them.