

# **The lake Isle of Innisfree**

**\_ By William Butler Yeats**

**About the Author**



The poem 'The lake Isle of Innisfree' was written by William Butler Yeats in 1888. He, an Irish poet and dramatist did much to shape Irish literature in the twentieth century.

Apart from his contribution to poetry and drama, he was one of the founders of Abbey Theatre. He received the noble prize for Literature in 1923.

He also wrote the introduction to the English translation of Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali.

He claimed himself to be one of the last romantics; poets who wrote during the Romantic Era and spoke about man's alienation from nature and a need for man to reconnect with nature and conserve it.

## **Background to the Poem**

When Yeats was a child, his father had read to him from the book 'Walden' by Henry David Thoreau, which was about simple living in natural surroundings.

Yeats described his inspiration for the poem by saying that while he was a teenager; he wished to imitate Thoreau by living on Innisfree, an uninhabited island in Ireland.

He suggests that when he was living in Sligo, Ireland he would walk down the city street and long for the simplicity, charm, and serenity of the countryside.

The sound of a splashing fountain on a busy London street reminded Yeats of the lake that he had previously seen, and inspired him to create the poem. In the poem Yeats imagines going to a world of lake - water and natural beauty, completely removed from the hustle and bustle of the city.

## **Summary**

The poet is reminded of his past, his boyhood, when he visited the peaceful Lake Isle of Innisfree. He wants to go there and says that he will live there all alone. He wants to build a small cabin with clay and wattles. He would grow beans and get a honeybee hive for honey to survive on.

The poet describes the peaceful natural surroundings of the lake. He says that the scene of the cloudy mornings, the shining stars, the glowing Sun and birds flying in the sky give him peace. He feels relaxed to hear the pleasant sound of the cricket's song.

The poet feels the urgency to go to the lake Isle of Innisfree. In the depth of his heart, he can hear the sound of the lake waters hitting the shore. It is as if the lake is calling him. He hears the sound everywhere - either on the crowded roads or the grey - coloured pavements of the city in which he lives. This indicates that he wants to escape from the artificial life of the city into the peaceful surroundings of nature.

## **First stanza**

**I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,**

**And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;**

**Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,**

### **And live alone in the bee-loud glade.**

In the first quatrain, the poet describes how he would live in Innisfree.

The opening line suggests his determination to go there. This is followed by his plan to be away from the restless life of the city and lead a very calm and simple life all by himself.

He will make a small cottage of clay and sticks and grow his own beans on a small piece of land in Innisfree. He will have honey from his own hive.

The poet has a deep longing to lead life in the glade, listening to the music of the bees.

### **Second stanza**

**And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,**

**Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;**

**There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,**

**And evening full of the linnet's wings.**

In the second quatrain, the poet gives some glimpses of the life that he expects to find in Innisfree.

In such a place, he will find peace. The pace of life will be slower and Nature will take over.

He will thus breathe calmness in the morning and enjoy the brilliance of the midnight.

The purple-coloured light of the noon as well as the flying birds in the evening will be delightful experiences for him.

The magical qualities of day and night in Innisfree are the reasons that he wants to go there.

### **Third stanza**

**I will arise and go now, for always night and day**

**I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;**

**While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,**

## **I hear it in the deep heart's core.**

In the third and the last quatrain, the poet reiterates the need to fulfill his desire. It is strengthened by his memories of the waves of the lake producing mild music while striking against the shore.

His longing is further increased when he contrasts the life in cities with that in the countryside.

Standing on the pavement or a roadway amidst traffic and crowds, he yearns for the idyllic island and listens to the music of the waves deep in his heart.

His desire to escape the urban life becomes an obsession in this quatrain and Innisfree lurks in his heart as a symbol of peace and happiness.

### **I. Q.1.What kind of place is Innisfree? Think about:**

#### **a. the three things the poet wants to do when he goes back there**

**(stanza I)**

**Ans:** Innisfree is a beautiful place where nature is in its frill swing.

#### **b. what he hears and sees there and its effect on him**

**(stanza II)**

**Ans:** The poet wants to build a small hut of clay and wattles. He will have a nine bean-rows and a hive for the honeybees.

#### **c. what he hears in his "heart's core" even when he is far away from Innisfree**

**(stanza III)**

**Ans:** He hears peace come dropping and the cricket sing. He sees the midnight shine and a purple glow at noon. Evenings are full of linnet's wings. He feels happy and gets peace of mind. The poet hears the lake water lapping the shore with low sounds.

**Q. 2. By now you may have concluded that Innisfree is a simple, natural place, full of beauty and peace. How does the poet contrast it with where he now stands?**

**(Read stanza III.)**

**Ans:** The natural beauty of Innisfree is used and explained in contrast with the roads and pavements in city. The pavement is of grey colour which symbolises decay and death.

**Q. 3. Do you think Innisfree is only a place, or a state of mind? Does the poet actually miss the place of his boyhood days?**

**Ans:** The natural beauty of Innisfree is not the creation of the poet's fancy. It is a real place that gives solace to the frustrated souls. The poet longs to live at such a beautiful and peaceful place. He misses it a lot.

**II. Question 1.**

**Look at the words the poet uses to describe what he sees and hears at Innisfree**

**a. bee-loud glade**

**Ans:** These words create the picture of the hive and honeybee humming all around. It is in the glade.

**b. evenings full of the linnet's wings**

**Ans:** Linnet is a bird with wings. When it flutters its wings, it looks beautiful. And when the bird sits on a tree amidst beautiful natural scene, it leaves an indelible impression on the minds of the beholder.

**c. lake water lapping with low sounds What pictures do these words create in your mind?**

**Ans:** It is an ordinary but bewitching scene. The waves strike the lake's shore to create a pleasing and soothing sound.

**Q. 2. Look at these words:**

**... peace comes dropping slow Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings**

**What do these words mean to you? What do you think "comes dropping slow ... from the veils of the morning?" What does "to where the cricket sings" mean?**

**Ans:** These words mean that peace surrounds that area at dawn. The pleasing and melodious sound of cricket greets the morning. It adds sweetness to the serenity of the place.

### **Additional Questions:**

#### **Short answer type questions**

##### **Q.1. When and where will the poet experience 'peace'?**

**Ans:** The poet will experience 'peace' in the lap of nature at the Lake Isle of Innisfree. He will observe the beautiful trees, insects, birds and bushes. The calm and cool atmosphere of the forest will give happiness to him.

##### **Q. 2. How does the poet describe the lake's waves?**

**Ans:** The poet says that the lake's waves hit its shore and create a low sound. It gives him aesthetic pleasure. He hears it and enjoys it. It also gives him solace and comforts. He finds his peace of mind.

##### **Q.3. Why does the poet want to go to Innisfree?**

**Ans:** The poet wants to go to Innisfree to enjoy its natural beauty. Its morning, noon and evening are different from the cities where high-rise buildings touch the sky. He hears the pleasing sound of birds and gets peace of mind.

##### **Q. 4. Where is the poet standing? How is it different from Innisfree?**

**Ans:** The poet is standing on the roadway or on the pavements of grey colour. This colour epitomises decay. He compares that with the floral beauty of Innisfree. However, standing even there, he can hear the sounds of the lake water lapping by the shore. He hears it in the core of his heart.

##### **Q.5. What does the isle of Innisfree stand for the poet?**

**Ans:** The isle of Innisfree stands for unadulterated natural beauty. A visit to Innisfree gives immense joy, pleasure and peace to the poet. The sounds of honeybees, crickets and the lake water lapping by the shore tempt him to go there again and again. He will be contented with living in a small cabin and working at a small farm.

**Q.6. Is the poet's going to Innisfree merely an attempt to escape from the harsh realities of city life?**

**Ans:** No doubt, Innisfree provides all what the poet yearns for. Even standing on the doorway or on the grey pavement of the city, he escapes to the natural world of the lake isle of Innisfree. The sounds of the birds and the lake water lapping by the shore echo in the core of his heart. This escapism gives him immense pleasure and peace.

**Long answer type question**

**Q.1. Why is the poet deeply attached with the Lake Isle of Innisfree? Explain.**

**Ans:** Innisfree is a simple lake island where the poet has spent his childhood days. The poet is in search of peace and calmness which the Lake Isle of Innisfree can provide him. The environment is natural and peaceful and the poet desires to visit this island. According to the poet, on this island peace comes down slowly in the small drops. Moreover, he is very much attracted by the melodious sounds made by the cricket. In fact that sound has deep impact on the poet. The poet believes the lake's waves hits the shore and crease at low sound which gives aesthetic pleasure. Really, he wants to visit the island Thus, it can be said that he is deeply attached to the lake Isle of Innisfree

**Q. 2. What does the lake isle of Innisfree stand for the poet? Is it merely an escapism or a revolt against the superficiality of urban life?**

**Ans:** The Irish lake isle of Innisfree stands for pure natural beauty, pleasure and peace. It provides a stark contrast to the hectic and artificial life in a city. Amidst the natural surroundings, he will build a small cabin. He will grow beans and build a hive for honeybees. The sounds, sights and music that he enjoys there, haunt him. The isle transcends peace and tranquillity. No more the sounds of car and vehicles on the roads. Here what he hears is the sound of honeybees and crickets. It is escapism as well as a revolt against the hectic and artificial life of the city. The sights and sounds of Innisfree never leave him. Even standing on the roadway or on the grey pavement in the city, he hears the low sounds of the lake water lapping by the shore in the core of his heart.

**Value based questions**

**Q.1. What does nature do for mankind?**

**Ans:** Nature has great healing power. When we sit in the lap of nature, we forget our

sorrows. Our mind becomes fresh and we start our days with new energy. Besides, nature fills new hopes in human beings. For this, as human beings, our friendship with nature is quite essential.

**Q. 2. What moral lesson does this poem teach us?**

**Ans:** 'Go back in nature' is the message of this poem. This poem teaches us that we should build a cabin in a solitary place and enjoy nature which has magical power. Obviously, nature unfolds itself in a solitary place and allows to enjoy its music. We must take this immortal lesson from this poem.

**Extract Based Questions (3 marks each)**

**Read the extract given below and answer the question that follow:**

**Q. 1:**

**And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;**

**a. What does the word 'there' in the above lines refer to?**

**Ans:** 'There' in the above lines refer to Lake Isle of Innisfree.

**b. How does peace enter the huts of peasants?**

**Ans:** Peace enters the huts of peasants through the morning dew drops.

**c. Name the literary device used in the poem.**

**Ans:** Metaphor.

**Q. 2:**

**While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.**

**a. Name the poem and the poet.**

**Ans:**



Poem: **The Lake Isle of Innisfree.**

Poet: **W.B. Yeats.**

**b. What does "It" in the second line stand for?**

**Ans:** "It" refers to the lake water.

**c. Give the noun form of the word "deep."**

**Ans:** Deepness / Depth.

**Q.3:**

**And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to Where the Cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer and noon a purple glow  
And evenings full of the linnet's wings.**

**a. What did the poet see in the morning?**

**Ans:** The poet saw dewdrops which seemed to be dropping peace.

**b. What did the poet hear?**

**Ans:** The poet heard the song of the crickets.

**c. Find a word from the extract which means "weak, faint, unsteady light."**

**Ans:** Glimmer.

**d. Write the rhyming scheme of the given stanza.**

**Ans:** abab.

**e. What does the stanza suggest about the poet?**

**Ans:** The stanza suggests that the poet loves to be in the lap of nature.

**f. Name any two things the poet is fond of.**

**Ans:** Cricket's song, the evening when linnets are flying, a bright moon lit midnight.

**Q. 4:**

**I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made.  
Nine beam rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,  
And I live alone in the bee loud glade. '**

**a. What does the poet wish to build at Innisfree?**

**Ans:** The poet wishes to build a small cabin at Innisfree to be made with sticks and clay.

**b. What does "Innisfree" symbolise?**

**Ans:** Innisfree symbolises a place of peace and tranquillity.

The poet wishes to stay at Innisfree:

**c. Why does the poet wish to stay at Innisfree?**

**Ans:**

(a) To live in peaceful environment; and

(b) To escape from hectic schedule-of the city life.

**Q.5:**

**I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made :  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.**

**a. Write about any two things the poet wants to do when he goes back to Innisfree.**

**Ans:** Two things that the poet wants to do when he goes back to Innisfree are:

(a) Build a small cabin of clay and wattles.

(b) Have nine bean rows and a hive for honeybee.

(c) Live alone in the bee loud glade. (Any two)

**b. Why does the poet miss the place?**

**Ans:** The poet misses the place because he longs for the peace and tranquillity of Innisfree, a place where he spent a lot of time as a boy.

**c. Trace a word from the extract that means "open space".**

**Ans:** Glade.

**Q. 6:**

**"And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow - Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings"**

**a. Name the poet.**

**Ans:** The poet is W. B. Yeats.

**b. Which place is the poet referring to in the above lines?**

**Ans:** The place which the poet is referring to in the above lines is the Lake Isle of Innisfree.

**c. What is the poet looking for?**

**Ans:** The poet is looking for peace and serenity.

**Short Answer Type Questions (2 marks each)**

**(About 30-40 words each)**

**Q. 1: Describe the person, the place or the thing brought vividly to life by the poet.**

**Ans:** The Lake Isle of Innisfree by W. B. Yeats vividly describes an island in the lake of Innisfree. The island is an incredibly peaceful place. The island is also a place of great natural beauty. Yeats describes many different aspects of its appeal, from the various birds and insects to the striking light at different times of day. This is a landscape that has not been damaged or diminished by human interference.

**Q. 2: Why does the poet want to go to Innisfree?**

**Ans:** The poet wants to go Innisfree in search of peace. He does not like the noisy place as London is. He wants to live in a place which. The poet craves for some peace and hence he wants to go to Innisfree. There he wants to make a small cabin and grow beans. He wants to live there alone.

**Q. 3: How is the city life different from the life at the Lake of Innisfree?**

**Ans:** The poet does not like the city life. The pavements are dull and grey. There is chaos all around. But there is nature's beauty all around in Innisfree. It is a dream place for the poet which exists in reality. There is a perfect harmony on the island between the plants and the weather.

**Q. 4: Briefly describe one major theme of the poem "The Lake Isle of Innisfree".**

**Ans:** A major theme in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree", is nature versus civilization. What we value in life is often the exact opposite of what civilization brings with it. Nature allows us to explore the various forms of life but civilization has certain set rules with which we have to abide.

**Q.5: What is the tone of the poem?**

**Ans:** The poem has a very calm and relaxing tone. The reader may picture a person physically going to this place called Innisfree but the narrator of the poem is visiting this place in his imagination. It helps him to relax and escape the rush of modern living.

**Long Answer Type Questions (4 marks each)**

**(About 80-100 words each)**

**Q. 1: In the poem 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', what does the poet find so attractive about 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'.**

**Ans:** The thing that the poet finds so attractive about Lake Isle of Innisfree is its promise of peace. The poet, then, long for this place which affords a sense of contentment and relaxation far from the busy modern life. The poem's slow and regular meter helps to convey this languid, dreamy effect. There is also the vivid impressionistic description of the colours and beauties of this place, and the soothing stir of nature which is so different from the strident noise of the city where the poet actually is, as the final stanza makes clear.

The poet, then, is physically trapped in the city, but he can imagine the beauty of Innisfree and this gives him spiritual sustenance. This is one of Yeats's early lyrics, exhibiting a familiar romantic sensibility in its praise of the deep purity and beauty of nature which is contrasted with the drabness, shallowness and sterility of modern urban living.

**Q. 2: In your opinion, what words or phrases used by the poet are the most effective in bringing the person, place or thing of life? Give reasons for your answer.**

**Ans:** Throughout the poem, Yeats uses a variety of imaginative phrases to capture the essence of the lake Isle. He brings the island to life by referring to the different birds and insects there. He comments on how "the cricket sings" and refers to "linnet's wings". This gives a sense of energy on the island, and reminds us of what a natural place it is.

The line "and live alone in the bee-loud glade" correctly captures the point that Yeats is trying to make about the island. It is an isolated place, where he can enjoy the solitude.

In the second stanza of the poem, Yeats describes how the light changes on the island throughout the day. He tells us that "noon's a purple glow". This light brings the entire lake Isle to life.

Finally, Yeats manages to capture the sounds of the island. He tells us that he can hear "water lapping in low sounds by the shore". Yeats uses alliteration to recreate the sounds. By repeating the letter "l" so many times, we get a sense of the slow and gentle movement of the water.

**Q. 3: Does the poem celebrate the theme of escapism? Explain.**

**Ans:** The poem focuses on Innisfree as a place of escape for the speaker. The speaker describes Innisfree as a simple, natural environment where he will build a cabin and live alone. 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' expresses the idea that nature provides an inherently restorative place to which human beings can go to escape the chaos and corrupting influences of civilization. In this poem, the speaker/Yeats longs to live in the simplicity of nature, with no extraneous distractions of city life or the superfluous habits, customs, and daily routines of an increasingly fast-paced, modern world. The speaker is only dreaming of "getting away from it all. "Even if he never goes, he will at least have the mental escape. This is the saving grace; even if he cannot get out of the city, he can imagine the escape as he can will himself to hear the lake water lapping even while standing on the pavement in the city. There is another appeal/implication that one can never go back to the past place of nostalgia and youth, but through imagination and reflection, one can always have the

mental escape and memory of another time and place.

## **The lake Isle of Innisfree**