

The Chimney Sweeper

When my mother died I was very young,¹
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry “Weep! Weep! Weep! Weep!”
So your chimneys I sweep and in soot I sleep.⁴

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.”⁸

And so he was quiet, and that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!¹⁰
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black;

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;¹⁴
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.¹⁸
And the Angel told Tom, if he’d be a good boy,
He’d have God for his father and never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.²²
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

-- *William Blake*

Questions:

Research and Discussion Questions

How does child labour affect children?

How does religion affect you and how you see your position in life?

QUESTIONS

1. What is the theme of this poem?

2. What is the purpose of the poem?

3. What is the tone of this poem?

4. What is the poem critical of?

5. What does the "black coffins" (line 12) symbolize?

6. Why is the angelic figure mentioned in the poem?

7. What happened in stanza 3?

8. What is the message in the fourth stanza?

9. According to the poem, what is Tom's character?

10. **Visualization:** Create a visual representation of the poem through drawing or a collage. Highlight key elements such as the chimney, soot, and the characters.

11. **Drama:** Take the perspective of a chimney sweeper and express your thoughts and emotions in a monologue or dialogue.