

The Wild Swans at Coole

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

Answer the following questions on the poem *The Wild Swans at Coole*:

- 1. Who is the speaker in the poem?**
- 2. What is the setting of the poem?**
- 3. What sort of a life did Yeats find at Coole?**
- 4. Explain what the following phrases signify.**
 - a) “companionable streams”**
 - b) “lover by lover”**
- 5. Discuss the memory of Yeats in the poem.**
- 6. Explain, ‘The trees are in their autumn beauty’.**
- 7. Discuss the contrast used in the poem.**
- 8. What’s the meaning of ‘Unwearied still, lover by lover’?**
- 9. What do the wild swans at Coole symbolize? How does the symbolism inform the theme of the poem?**
- 10. Which Yeats do you find in this poem.**
- 11. Write a short note on the structure and form of the poem.**
- 12. Identify the three main characteristics of the verse pattern used in this poem.**
- 13. Sum up in 50 of your own words the main gist of this poem.**